



NISHTHA

Centre for the Empowerment of
Women and Children

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

2024 - 2025

Golden Jubilee Year 1975-2025

50 YEARS

*Let your life lightly
dance on the edges of
time like dew on the
tip of a leaf.*

— Rabindranath Tagore

VOICES OF LOVE AND LIGHT : CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF NISHTHA



It gives me great pleasure to write a few lines about Mina and the dedicated team she has led at Nishtha for decades, in the service of deprived communities, particularly girls and women.

Such humane activities in the area of "social good", for girls and women, is sorely needed. I have attended many meetings where I have always been amazed at the level of "rights awareness" that Nishtha has been able to generate in young people, particularly girls and their family members. Mina and her team members are held in high esteem in and around the villages and slum areas of Baruipur and remote villages of South 24 Parganas in West Bengal.

Child in Need Institute (CINI) considers Nishtha a valuable ally, in our joint mission to improve the lives of all young people to remain in school, delay marriage and acquire the skills required to build a healthy India. All of you as friends, well-wishers and donors who support Nishtha, please do so with the firm belief that your contribution is going towards creating peace and harmony in the community where they are active.

Dr Samir Narayan Chaudhuri
Secretary & Founder Director of CINI
(Child in Need Institute)



My life is so far away from your region and looks so different. I was allowed to go to school as a girl, I was allowed to study and take up a profession. I was able to decide for myself who I wanted to spend my life with and start a family. I always had enough to eat and enough money to be able to support other people. I never had to suffer violence.

I am very grateful for all of this and I have always realised that none of this can be taken for granted. I feel all the more responsible for supporting girls and women who have to fight for good living conditions, education and a self-determined life, and for making their path at least a little easier.

In my eyes, Nishtha is an organisation that does great work in these areas. Projects like Sukanya are a shining example of the successful promotion of girls and women and the attempt to make men realise how much society can benefit from educated, self-determined women who go their own way without coercion and violence.

I am delighted to be able to support this great work of Nishtha. Even though my life takes place far away, my thoughts are often with you, dear Mina, and the wonderful women and girls you work with. I sincerely wish you continued happiness, success and God's blessing for your work.

Ms. Gabriele Weischer and Mr. Wilhelm Weischer,
Former Managing Director, now Advisor at BabyOne Franchise- und Systemzentrale GmbH.
A Mentor with Heart, a Friend with Vision, and a True Strength of Nishtha.



On behalf of Yoga Gives Back, I want to express deepest gratitude and respect for everyone at NISHTHA for its historic milestone.

Half century of dedicated work by NISHTHA team has changed so many lives, empowering tens of thousands of women and girls whose lives were uplifted thanks to NISHTHA.

In 2010, I had the fortune to visit NISHTHA for the first time thanks to late Ms Barbara Piner. We wanted to support NGO in India who was empowering women with micro-loan programs. Starting with 55 women, our partnership grew to assist 550 women in the last fifteen years with our micro-loan program. It has been so rewarding to witness how women are smiling more and speaking up with confidence. We also added SHE scholarship for higher education for 300 young girls to achieve college degrees every year, which has seen inspiring outcome for the last 12 years.

I visit NISHTHA every year with our Ambassadors and supporters. All of us treasure our visit as it is life-changing for us to learn the real challenges, hardship, resilience, peer support and strength of women and girls our programs support. Meeting and hearing their stories in person, as well as learning how NISHTHA management and social workers dedicate their lives for many underserved women and children are truly eye-opening and deeply moving. It inspired to do more each time!

Yoga Gives Back is supported by communities in over 30 countries around the world and it is our responsibility to continue to educate our supporters with the real stories of our fund recipients in India and the amazing work NISHTHA continues to commit to improve lives.

Kayoko Mitsumatsu, Founder & President - Yoga Gives Back (YGB)



I have had the privilege of knowing Mina Das and the Nishtha family for nearly three decades, and I have seen them grow from strength to strength, despite crippling challenges such as a global pandemic, devastating natural disasters and the roll back in women's and girls' rights due to local, national and global forces. Through it all, the courage, resilience and passion of the women and girls Nishtha works with, as well as the Nishtha team of staff and volunteers has been an inspiration. Their work is a testament to what women and girls can do to become true, compassionate leaders. They are what this world needs.

Shalini Nataraj, Vice-president of Programs, WE Trust



It has been my pleasure to work alongside Nishtha for almost 12 years. During that time I have seen the organization go from strength to strength. Nishtha is an incredible force for good in the world, offering practical solutions to entrenched problems. Most of all though, Nishtha is a place of connection, solidarity and unity, where everyone who is involved is invited to participate in making the world a better place and where everyone, no matter who they are, is treated with dignity and respect. In this atmosphere, people grow and become more than they ever thought they could be – including, of course, the thousands of young women who become inspirational leaders. Nishtha is a unique organization and a beacon of light at a time when that is more precious than ever.

Akashmitra, Head of Programmes, The Karuna Trust (UK)

GURU PRANAM

The Nishtha established in 1975 is a very special Voluntary Organization situated at Baruipur mainly working for restoring faith in the potential power of the rural daughters and mothers of the 5 blocks covering 300 villages of the South 24 Parganas. I have been associated with this movement for more than four decades. It caters to the various needs of our neglected mothers and their children. I am happy to know that the number of beneficiaries has now been over 33,000.

This exclusively women's organization has been looked after by the qualified women with Ms Mina Das as its Secretary since the very inception of the organization. This notable organization has changed the very face of the family structure of these 5 blocks. Visitors from outside are also surprised to note the areas of operation of the various projects in the fields like social, economic, legal, capacity building, gender understanding, leadership training, health assistant training, community training, disabled management and education of girl children. Almost every year I have the opportunity to address a cross section of the beneficiaries. What I much to my superb satisfaction see, are the beaming faces of the thousands of mothers.

I remember we of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture in recognition of the quality service provided to the arge number of neglected women, selected the Nishtha for receiving the prestigious Vivekananda Award in 2014.

The huge financial liability for the smooth operation of these projects is the main issue of stress and stains no doubt since no Govt. grant/help is forthcoming. But it is heartening to note that some 20-25 benevolent organizations, business houses and well-meaning persons of divinity, al over the globe, come forward to alleviate the pressure.

I pray to the Holy Mother Sarada Devi to keep Her saving hands on the heads of the organizing persons and on the donors as well. I also pray that Ms Mina Das and her associates would be able to run it smoothly as they are all devoted, prayerful, self-sacrificing and empathic.

Love and best wishes to all concerned,



**Srimat Swami Suparnanandaji Maharaj,
Secretary,
Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture,
Kolkata - 700029**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Guru Pranam	01
Table of Contents	02
From the Desk of the Secretary	03
Area of Operations	04
Nishtha's Collectives	06
• Collective Social Action focus on Child Marriage	
• Collective & Individual Economic Action	
Legal Assistance	15
Capacity Building	16
• Empowering Girls through Education	
• Gender & Leadership Training	
• Kishori Shakti	
• Safe Shelter & Night Shelter	
• Day Centre	
• Digital Learning Centres	
• Sensitisation of Men	
o Fathers	
o Changemakers	
o Youth Club members	
o Youth in the Community	
o Men in the Community	
• Bhalobasha- Enabling the Disabled	
Projects - At a Glance	25
Donors & Well-wishers	27
Audited Financial Statements	28



FROM THE DESK OF THE SECRETARY



*The one who plants trees,
knowing that he will never sit
in their shade, has atleast
started to understand the
meaning of life.*

— Rabindranath Tagore

50 Years of Nishtha: A Journey of Courage, Transformation, and Unshakable Sisterhood.

This year, Nishtha completes 50 years—a milestone that carries not just a number, but five decades of relentless struggle, deep love, silent pain, and triumphant hope. What began as a small dream rooted in the soil of South 24 Parganas has grown into a vibrant, grassroots women's movement led by the very women and girls once considered powerless.

Over these years, we have nurtured a powerful community of over 18,000 girls and 19,000 women—each one a survivor, now a change maker. They are no longer silent witnesses to injustice; they are the voices of courage, the hands of rescue, and the hearts of compassion.

The leaders of women and girls' groups of Nishtha are not afraid to risk their own safety to protect another. Many of them are victims of violence, some are single mothers struggling to feed their children. Yet, the moment they hear of another sister in distress—be it abuse, trafficking, or child marriage—they leave everything behind, even their livelihood, to reach her. With no hesitation, no fear—only love and fierce solidarity.

The leaders of our girls' groups are our pride, our power, and our future. In the silence and fear of COVID-19, when the world hid away, they walked into danger to feed the hungry, heal the sick, and comfort the forgotten. They became the lifeline of hundreds. In those darkest days, they shone the brightest. That's when we knew—Nishtha has raised not just leaders, but fearless saviours.

Our girls are now trainers, motivators, and guides to other organisations across the state. They are shaping not just their own destiny but that of many others. They are changing mind-sets, confronting patriarchal systems, leading village dialogues, and fearlessly protesting violence and injustice. They are no longer victims. They are visionaries.

Even now, Nishtha continues to face threats and struggles as a small grassroots women's organisation. We are fighting legal battles in court, sometimes under life-threatening conditions. There are days of exhaustion, days when we feel helpless. But then, we look into the eyes of our girls—those eyes that carry dreams of a just, violence-free world—and we rise again.

Through their unstoppable courage, we've seen a powerful shift—child marriage, school dropouts, and gender-based violence have dropped, while girls' school enrolment has doubled. Once, education was a distant dream; today, those same girls are doctors, engineers, teachers, nurses, and police, railway, and bank employees. Over 2,500 young women now run their own businesses, feeding their families with pride. They rose from silence and struggle—each success a tear turned into triumph, lighting the way for thousands more to dream.

I consider myself incredibly blessed to witness this miracle every day. This is not just an achievement; it is a divine gift. The biggest success of Nishtha is not just what we have done, but who we have built—an unstoppable force of women and girls who now lead from the front.

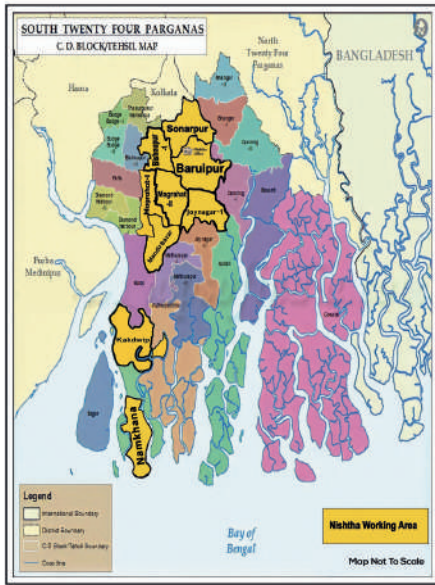
Our goal was always clear: to create an organisation where the very girls and women we serve become the driving force of change. Today, we stand tall and proud, knowing that dream has come true.

With folded hands and a heart full of gratitude,

Mina Das
Secretary, Nishtha

AREA OF OPERATIONS

This year our area of operations has expanded from 7 to 9 blocks of South 24 Parganas district and from 311 to 369 villages.



Nishtha Works in Some 369 Villages of 9 Block of South 24 Pgs

9

BLOCKS
369 VILLAGES

- BARUIPUR
- BISHNUPUR-I
- MAGRAHAT-I
- MAGRAHAT- II
- NAMKHANA
- SONARPUR
- KAKDWIP
- JOYNAGAR-I
- MANDIRBAZAR

Blocks	Names Of Villages
<p>Baruipur – 97 Villages (82 old + 15 new)</p>	<p>Atghara, Badartala, Bagdaha, Bakultala, Balbalia, Begampur, Bejeorancha, Belgachhi, Beliaghata, Beralia, Betberia, Birel, Bosepukur, Brindakhali, Chakarberia, Champahati, Chandanpukur, Chandipur, Chandokhali, Dadpur, Dakshin Kalyanpur, Dakshin Sashan, Debipur, Dhanberia, Dhaphdapi, Dhopagachhi, Doulatpur, Durga, Durgapur, Fultala, Gadkhali, Ganeshpur, Gangaduara, Gazirhat, Gobindapur, Gocharan, Gopalpur, Hardaho, Hariharpur, Hogla, Indrapala, Jagadishpur, Kalikapur, Kalyanpur, Kanthalberia, Keshabpur, Keyatala, Khanpur, Khasmallik, Kholapota, Kismat Goyalberia, Kumarhat, Kundarali, Madanpur, Madhabpur, Madhubanpur, Madhya Kalyanpur, Maheshpur, Majlishpukur, Malayapur, Mallickpur, Mamudpur, Mirpur, Mojlispur, Nabagram, Nachangachha, Najirpur, Narayantala, Nihata, Nore, Olberia, Padmajala, Panchghara, Paschim Madhabpur, Paschim Ramnagar, Puranandapur, Purba Mallikpur, Purushottampur, Rajgara, Ramchandrapur, Ramgopalpur, Ramnagar, Ranabeliyaghata, Ratanpur, San Pukuria, Sashan, Serpur, Shankarpur, Shibrampur, Shibsuti, Sikharbali, Sitakundu, Sonagachi, Subuddhipur, Surjyapur, Teka, Teurhat, Tongtala, Tripuranagar, Uttar Bhag, Uttar Kalyanpur, and Uttar Sashan.</p>
<p>Bishnupur – I 61 Villages (59 old + 1 new)</p>	<p>Andharmanik, Balakhali, Balarampur, Baniberia, Baspara, Bhandaria, Bhanru, Biddyadharpur, Bijayrampur, Chaknetayi, Chamni, Charakdanga, Dakshin Kazirhat, Damdama, Darihanta, Darikeoradanga, Dudhbesali, Durgabati, Fingadhauri, Gabberia, Gangrai, Gazir Hat, Gouripur, Gurguriya, Halderchak, Hanta, Heriya, Jagaddal, Julpia, Kalicharanpur, Kalmikhali, Kastekumari, Kazirhat, Keoradanga, Keyapukur, Kholsemari, Kochpukur, Majher Roshkhali, Manikjore, Manshatala, Matshyakhali, Mestakhali, Moni Rampur, Nepalgunj, Netrana, Nunechariya, Nurshidarchak, Paharpur, Paikhala, Panaqua, Pirkhali, Prasadpur, Ramkrishnapur, Rampur, Rashkhali, Salpukur, Shibpur, Tapna, Ucchekhali, Umarpota, Betberia.</p>

AREA OF OPERATIONS

Blocks	Names Of Villages
Magrahat – I 8 Villages (3 old + 5 new)	Bahirpuya, Rangeelabad, Jalghora, Belgachhia, Belia, Inayatpur, Khanpur, Garkhali.
Magrahat – II 122 Villages (115 old + 7 new)	Alaberia, Alida, Altaberia, Amratala, Atasura, Azamkhali, Baganchi, Bagdah, Bagerhat, Bahadurpur, Banasundaria, Bankardar, Barat, Behari, Benipur, Beramara, Bilandapur, Birsha, Boro Mukundapur, Byaspur, Chakdaha, Chakeswari, Chakparan Kantakhali, Chaltaberia, Chattra, Choto Mukundapur, Dadpur, Daiji, Dakshin Bagnor, Dakshin Ramnagar, Dakshin Mamudpur, Darir Chak, Dhamua, Dhaniramchak, Dhanpota, Dihi Kalas, Dihi Narayani, Dodalia, Ganakhati, Godberia, Gokarni, Golabari, Gopinathpur, Goruhata, Haludberia, Hansogaria, Harishankarpur, Hasuria, Hatkhola, Hotar, Inayatpur, Ishwaripur, Jalashi, Jaldhapa, Jalghar, Jayen Khan, Jaypur, Jhinki, Jugdia, Kalapaharchauk, Kalas, Kamar Pukur, Kamdebpur, Kantapukur, Karamonuraj, Karimabad, Keshabpur, Koramonuraj, Kuldia, Madhabpur, Magurpukur, Maheshpur, Mahitalab, Maitala, Maitir Hat, Majilpur, Makhaliya, Makhaltala, Mandirtala, Manirampur, Mirzapur, Mitani, Mohanpur, Mollar Chauk, Morjada, Moukhali, Multi-I, Multi-II, Nainan, Najra, Naria, Nonapadma, Noriya, Panchpara, Parankhali, Parui, Paschim Belaria, Paschim Dadpur, Purba Hotar, Radhanagar, Ramchandrapur, Ramnathpur, Ranganberia, Ratna, Raypur Dayarampur, Salegoria, Sarbanandapur, Sarberia, Shalika, Sherpur, Shyampur, Sirakol, Sitarampur, Tapukur, Tararat, Tasarala, Tatir Hati, Tilpi, Urelchandpur, Uttar Bagnor, Uttar Mamudpur, Uttar Radhanagar
Namkhana 34 Villages (33 old + 1 new)	Amrabati, Arjunpur, Baliara, Baidyabheri, Bijaybati, Bishalakshmipur, Budakhali, Dakshin Durganagar, Debnagar, Deyangunj, Durgabati, Durganagar, Durgapur, Dwariknagar, Faridpur, Fatikpur, Fedric Island, Frasersgunj, Ganeshnagar, Ganeshpur, Haripur, Ishwaripur, Madangunj, Maitir Bandh, Mousani, Nabagram, Nadabhanga, Narayangunj, Narayanpur, Chaturtha Gheri, Paschim Chandanpiri, Rajnagar, Shibnagar, Uttar Chandanpiri
Sonarpur 14 Villages	Bamangachi, Bargachiya, Baruli, Bibirchowk, Dakshin Kashipur, Gangadharpur, Kamlat, Kodalia, Langanberiya, Radhaballavpur, Raghunathpur, Rajpur, Shrirampur, Talpukur
Kakdwip 5 Villages	Bamanagar 6 Gheri, Akshaynagar, Prasadpur, Moynapara, Gobinda Rampur 5 Gheri
Joynagar – I 27 Villages	Baloi Jhaka, Chandaneswar, Charaghata, Dhosa, Gabberia, Gangpukur, Godabor, Godabor Banstala, Goyalberia, Kismat Goyalberia, Kayastha Gorha, Karabeg, Khakurdaho, Maniknagar, Neutala, Padmerhat, Punpuya, Purba Gabberia, Purba Chandaneshwar, Paschim Chandaneswar, Ramchandrapur, Raynagar, Shantipur, Shrikrishna Nagar, Uttar Raghunathpur, Paschim Shyamnagar, Kantapukuriya.
Mandirbazar 1 Village	Raypur Dayarampur

NISHTHA'S COLLECTIVES

VISION

A world free from discrimination, illiteracy, child-labour, violence and war.

MISSION

Empowerment of women to fight for equal opportunities, equal rights and equal dignity.

A MILESTONE IN OUR JOURNEY

This year holds special significance for Nishtha as five decades ago we embarked on our mission to empower women, in 1975. Women's empowerment is beyond individual progress; it is social transformation, which requires us to challenge norms and move against the mainstream to change the existing power dynamics. Social transformation becomes possible when a critical mass of people rally behind the shared mission. We have steadily moved towards mobilising this critical mass.

Over the years, we have explored and refined various strategies to achieve this mission, with collective action emerging as the most effective. Today, we take pride in having fostered 900 collectives, reaching over 43,300 individuals; including 17,000 women, 20,000 girls, and an expanding network that now includes boys and men.

OUTREACH OF COLLECTIVES

Outreach of Collectives	2011-12	2023-24	2024-25
No. of Mahila Mandals (Women's groups)	481	1314	1404
No. of members	5203	15685	17285
No. of Kishori Vahinis (12 to 18 years old)	414	1188	1278
No. of members	5822	18520	20120
Balak-Balika Vahinis (9 to 11 years old)	148	321	346
No. of members	1203	3840	4361
No. of Youth Groups (18 to 24 years old)	5	30	35
No. of members	811	5780	6283



Trajectory of Girls and Women's Collective

Balak-Balika Vahinis//Kishori Vahinis//Youth Groups & Federation//Mahila Mandals//Grannies

9-11 YEARS OLD

12 -18 YEARS OLD

18-24 YEARS OLD

ADULTS

ELDERLY

COLLECTIVE SOCIAL ACTION

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES THROUGH COLLECTIVE ACTION

Over the past five decades, our strategy of forming and working through collectives has proven to be the most powerful driver of change. While much remains to be done, we have made significant strides in reshaping the rural landscape for girls and women in South 24 Parganas. Last year's and this year's report highlights the unwavering efforts of our collectives and team, as they continue to challenge power dynamics, shifting them in favour of women and paving the way for a more equitable future.

Trajectory of Effective Leadership of Collectives

Effective Leadership	2022 - 2023		2023-2024		2024 - 2025	
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Mahila Mandal Leaders	12.5	161	23.8	313	25.71	361
Kishor Bahini Leaders	22	255	35	392	38.73	495



Collective Social Action – At a Glance

Collective Social Actions to Prevent Injustice against Women and Girls			
Actions	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Violence/Rape	05	08	11
Denial of education/childhood -Trafficking	51	67	89
Denial of education/childhood - Child Marriage	891	945	1177
Denial of education/childhood - Dropout	3521	3864	4011
Prevention of forced marriage (Above 19 Years)		91	112
Domestic Violence	2920	3247	3574
Prevention of Child labour		151	203
Against Cyber crime		5	4
Rehabilitation of women who have returned from marital home		18	31

Collective Resists Digital Violence



A group of ten girls from the Kishori Vahini in Namkhana had been on a picnic in the first week of February, 2025. It was a day of fun and frolic. The cheerful moments were captured in smiling photos and shared on social media.

Shockingly, in a matter of days, those pictures were digitally morphed into obscene ones and uploaded on the hacked Facebook account of one of the girls. The digital violence spilled into the real world. Abuse poured in through comments, in the form of vulgar remarks and rape threats. Tragically, their own neighbours in moral panic, misled by lies ostracised the girls for actions they had neither done nor encouraged. The traumatised girls considered ending their lives. This could have marked the end of their story. Fortunately, it did not, because the other Kishori Vahini members rose in support of their friends. While they huddled in a meeting to discuss the issue, outside the boys and the community members hurled accusations and threats of physical harm. Terrified but unbroken, drawing from their collective strength and training, they informed Nishtha and the local police.



Within hours, help was on the way. Nishtha's senior staff arrived, aware of the danger but determined to stand with the girls. By then hundreds of girls and women from neighbouring Kishori Vahinis and Mahila Mandals too reached and a formed wall of solidarity.

The police initially struggled to control the crowd, so, the Officer-in-Charge (OIC) of Namkhana Police Station arrived with reinforcements, including two female constables. They took the girls' statements, seized the hacked mobile phone and involved the cyber cell to trace the culprits. For the first time in days, the girls felt relieved.

The next day, several boys from the village, some known to the girls, were arrested, including, a relative of one of the victims! Shortly thereafter the OIC of the Police Station addressed a community meeting and warned all to face the full force of the law if they dared to harass or malign the girls.

This is not merely a case of cybercrime or gender-based violence—it is an example of how community collectives can turn a moment of crisis into a movement for change that echoes beyond their village.

Kishori Vahini Rescues Howrah Girl

On the evening of 11th December, 2024, Brishti Kayal, member of Nore village Kishori Vahini in South 24 Parganas district, came to know that her maternal cousin, Swastika was missing from her village under Budge Budge II Block, (where Nishtha does not work). Shattered by her sudden disappearance her parents rushed to the Nodakhali Police Station to lodge a complaint. But instead of help, they met with delay.

Brishti rose to the occasion. She called her aunt and uncle to her village immediately and summoned an urgent meeting of the Kishori Vahini that night itself. They shared Swastika's story with the group. There was fear, concern and frustration but also solidarity, and a sense of duty. They decided that the very next morning, Brishti, along with 5-6 Kishori Vahini members and Swastika's parents, would go to Nishtha.

The Nishtha team on hearing the details; realised that this could be more than a missing person's case. This could be a case of child trafficking, and time was running out. Without wasting a moment, Nishtha's team members, along with Brishti, the parents and the girls met the Superintendent of Police (SP) of Nodakhali. The girls demanded urgent action.


The SP not only assured them of action but personally contacted the Nodakhali police and ordered immediate action. Then the police acted swiftly. The very next day, Swastika was traced in Tollygunge where she had been taken through deception of sightseeing. She was rescued and brought back to Nodakhali Police Station, and produced before the Child Welfare Committee CCWC, where she stayed for three days before being sent to the Bibirhat Rehabilitation Home, where she remained for 1.5 months.

On 31st January 2025, Swastika returned home broken, and traumatised but not alone. The Kishori Vahini stood beside her, offering support. Today, Swastika is enrolled in Class IX in a school near her cousin's home. She walks to school with the girls who saved her life. She has found her feet again.



POWER OF COLLECTIVES - ADVERSITY TO ACHIEVEMENT

A GLIMPSE INTO A FEW OF THE 1000 ODD CHILD MARRIAGE CASES WHICH HAVE BEEN AVERTED OR NULLIFIED

	Incident	Response	Outcome
1.	<p>Anjali Naskar is from a poor family in Kantakhali village of Bishnupur I block. In 2017, when she was barely 14 years old and studying in Class 8; her family, without her knowledge or consent, arranged her marriage for societal approval.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the Nishtha Kishori Vahini (KV) members heard of her plight, they left no stone unturned. They rallied the villagers, the Community Influencers and Leaders. After a tense drama they could stop the marriage. Five group members went to the groom's house to warn them that child marriage is a crime. The KV ensured that she returned to school. Monitored her situation, provided her emotional support. Provided her educational materials to hygiene kits. Nishtha encouraged her to sit for the very competitive General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM) entrance exam; for a three-year government-run nursing course open only to science students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mahila Mandal (MM) were sensitised and prepared to stand up against such injustice in the future. She secured 1st division with >70% marks in her Secondary Examination and 1st division with >80% marks in her Higher Secondary Exams in 2021. She did very well in the science in her secondary examination She cleared the GNM exam in 2024 and is studying in M R Bangur Hospital, Tollygunge. Upon completion the course guarantees a government job with starting salary of ₹34,800 with perks.
2.	<p>16-year-old Sumaiya Laskar* lived with her elderly grandparents as her father had passed away and her mother had moved to Kolkata for work. It was a struggle to make ends meet. Even as she was preparing for her secondary school final examinations scheduled for 10th February, 2025, struggling to make ends meet, her grandparents arranged her marriage with a 34-year-old widower with 2 children on 10th January, 2025.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the newly formed KV members heard of what was to happen, 2 members informed Nishtha. MM members along with KV tried to prevail on the grand parents to stop the marriage. When the pleas went unheard, they used the influence of a local leader. KV investigated the potential groom and found that he had been married twice earlier, and both of his wives were missing. They informed the police, and the man was arrested. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 10th February, Sumaiya walked into the examination hall. Her results are awaited. 

POWER OF COLLECTIVES - ADVERSITY TO ACHIEVEMENT

A GLIMPSE INTO A FEW OF THE 1000 ODD CHILD MARRIAGE CASES WHICH HAVE BEEN AVERTED OR NULLIFIED

	Incident	Response	Outcome
3.	<p>Qaisha was born into a humble family of a vegetable vendor. Her father, the sole breadwinner, sold vegetables in Nadia district, striving to provide for his wife and three children. Sadly, in 2016, he was murdered for reasons unknown.</p> <p>The family was engulfed in darkness. Her mother found some embroidery work but the meagre income was barely enough to feed her children. Qaisha, the eldest, was forced to join her mother in embroidery work.</p> <p>In May 2024, when she was 16 and had passed her secondary school examination, her marriage was arranged. The gossip hinted that it could be a case of trafficking masked in the name of tradition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In June 2024, the KV came to know of her plight. They met Qaisha and her mother to understand the situation. • They assured her mother that they would bear the burden of Qaisha's education, clothing, food, and healthcare. • They gathered small amounts of food from the community to support her family. • They reminded her of the Child Marriage Prohibition Act. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their unity and compassion moved her mother. She finally relented, allowing Qaisha to return to school. • She secured about 50% marks in her secondary school exam. • Now she is admitted for higher secondary schooling. • Since January 2025 she is the leader of her KV under Magrahat II block group.
4.	<p>Pallabi Mondal from Dwariknagar, lived with her parents, and younger brother. Life was modest but hopeful until 2021, when she was in Class VII.</p> <p>Her father left for Maharashtra in search of work but did not return. Her mother, Sumita, a homemaker, was thrust to work as a domestic helper in multiple households, But poverty is cruel and relentless, those her children were good students; Sumita's resilience began to crack as Pallabi approached Class X.</p> <p>Sumita began searching for a groom. A proposal came quickly. The man was twice Pallabi's age. The wedding was set for 29th December, 2024.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torn between her mother and her future, five days before her wedding (24th December), she ran away to a friend's house. She contacted the Nishtha KV that had once told her about rights, choices, and courage. And they came. • Returning home wasn't easy. Emotions ran high. There were silences, sobs, slammed doors. But the KV and MM members continued coming. They helped Sumita see that her daughter's rebellion was a prayer for a better life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This year, 2025, Pallabi sat for her higher secondary board exams. Her dream of becoming a teacher is once more blooming. • She says, "One day, I will stand before a classroom, not as someone's wife, but as a teacher. I will tell my students, especially the girls, that it's okay to be afraid — and it's powerful to fight for your future."



POWER OF COLLECTIVES - ADVERSITY TO ACHIEVEMENT

A GLIMPSE INTO A FEW OF THE 1000 ODD CHILD MARRIAGE CASES WHICH HAVE BEEN AVERTED OR NULLIFIED

	Incident	Response	Outcome
5.	<p>Dipika Sardar, a bright and ambitious 16-year-old girl, from a marginalised family remained dedicated to her studies. She passed her secondary school exams in May 2024 with 60% marks. Instead of continuing her education her family decided that marriage was a better option. She was secretly and forcefully married to an unknown man in May.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appalled by the information the KV reasoned the illegality with her mother. Unfortunately, she was unable to take a stand against her family. Then they met Dipika's in-laws and reminded them of the Act against child marriage. They counselled her and rebuilt her self-esteem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faced with legal repercussions, Dipika's in-laws had no choice but to send her back to her parents' home. She was admitted for higher secondary schooling. Now she is studying in class XII.

***Some names have been changed to protect identity.**

***KV – Kishori Vahini**

***MM – Mahila Mandal**

By plucking her petals you do not gather the beauty of the flower.

— Rabindranath Tagore



COLLECTIVE ECONOMIC ACTIONS :

Nishtha encourages economic enterprises either through women's collectives or individually to provide primary income to promote women's economic independence, esp. for those who are suffering from poverty and gender injustice.

Collective Economic Actions : At a Glance

Sl No.	Name of Village	No. Of Economic Enterprises	No. of Women Working	Type of Economic Enterprises
1	Jaldhapa	13	135	1 phuchka (cereal shell for savoury snack), 3 pickle (preserve), 6 grass mat making 1 bori, & 2 misc.
2	Shikarbali	10	110	1 blacksmith, 2 pottery, 2 jute work, 4 jute rope making & 1 misc.
3	Tripura Nagar	7	76	1 lace, 1 candle, 1 designer sari making & 4 misc.
4	Shibstuti	4	44	1 lace & 3 misc.
5	Alida	5	55	1 kantha (traditional embroidery), 1 Comforter in Summer/ Blanket in Winter, 1 Stone piercing in Sari & 2 silver design work
6	Radha Nagar	3	33	1 zari work on saree & 2 pickle (preserve) making
7	Kalikapur	3	33	3 misc.
8	Indrapala	3	33	3 Fish Business
9	Daulatpur	3	33	2 mat making and 1 bag making
10	Dakshin Sasan	2	22	1 bidi making & 1 farming
11	Tongtala	1	25	1 jeans pants stitching
12	Bhanru	1	24	1 bori making
	TOTAL	55	623	21 Types



Groups of 10 to 11 members collectively run economic enterprises. This year the collective enterprises have bounced back to earlier scale of operations for the first time after the lockdown. This year 39 entrepreneurs producing mats and bori have received loans for purchase of raw materials. Several women have aced their trades and transformed challenges into stepping stones.

Every member has saved ₹50 each month from their profits for their daughter's higher secondary education expenses, ensuring that their daughter is not forced to drop out due to financial hardship.

Nirman - the sanitary napkins production enterprise which started in 2022 to break menstrual taboos and promote menstrual hygiene by providing good quality napkins at low-cost, has broken even this year.

This year a five-member team produced 2,58,000 sanitary napkins at a cost of ₹2,80,000, including raw materials, packaging, and annual maintenance cost. Of which 58,800 napkins were rejected during quality control. Of the balance 1,99,200 napkins, 16,200 were distributed free of cost. The remaining 1,83,000 pads, or 30,500 packets of 6 napkins, were sold at the rate of ₹18 per packet. Generating revenue of ₹5,49,000. After subtracting the production cost of ₹2,80,000 the team had ₹2,69,000 towards labour and profit. The daily income of each member stood at ₹344.87.

Besides, Mahila Mandal members independently sell a packet for ₹ 24 earning a margin of ₹ 6 per packet. Another, dedicated team of five members reached over 16,200 menstruates on menstrual hygiene.



INDIVIDUAL ECONOMIC ACTIONS: RISING FROM THE ASHES

A glimpse into some successful individual enterprises

KALPANA'S PAAN (BETEL LEAVES) BUSINESS

Five years ago, Kalpana's life changed in an instant when her husband, the sole breadwinner of their family, passed away, leaving her and their young daughter Suparna. At that time, Suparna was studying in Class V, and Kalpana, a homemaker had never stepped outside alone—not even to buy vegetables.

The world appeared dark and uncertain. Luckily, Kalpana's elder sister became her anchor, offering not only financial help but also emotional strength. In time, Kalpana began working as a domestic helper in nearby homes. Though the income was meagre, it was a start.

In 2024, her story, caught the attention of a member of the Mahila Mandal, group. She connected her with the group and Kalpana became an active member. The members brainstormed how Kalpana could build a sustainable livelihood and came up with the idea of a paan (betel leaves) business, as vendors come to purchase the paan which is grown locally. They pooled funds for the seed money for her to begin business. She learned to buy directly from wholesalers at better prices and began supplying to local vendors and markets. Every step from negotiating prices to handling money was new and daunting, but Kalpana embraced it all with silent grit.

Today, Kalpana's business, though uncertain and modest, has been running successfully. With the income, she can put food on the table and support Suparna's education.

In October 2024, Suparna was enrolled in a project, which supports the education of vulnerable girls. This year, Suparna has appeared for her secondary (Class X) school board examination.



SUSMA'S CLOTHES VENDING BUSINESS

Susma Sardar's childhood was snatched away due to poverty. She was married at the tender age of 14 to a rickshaw puller nearly twice her age. The income was barely enough to survive. By the time she turned 18, the legal age of marriage, Susma was already a mother of three, one son and two daughters.

There were days when her children cried out of hunger and Susma had nothing to offer—not even words of comfort. Her husband, indifferent at best and angry at worst, only added to her misery. She would sit in a corner, tears flowing silently, making sure her children didn't see her break down.

By 2023, when she was 38, she had convinced herself that her life had no value; if she disappeared, no one would even notice. Coincidentally, the members of the Mahila Mandal noticed, they asked, "Are you okay?" That simple gesture cracked the shell she had built around her heart.

They listened to Susma and told her that she mattered. They provided her with a small fund to begin clothes vending venture. She started going from village to village on a bicycle, carrying bundles of clothes in the scorching heat. It was backbreaking work, but for the first time, she was living with a purpose.

Today, at 40, Susma is the foundation of her family. Her income feeds her children, buys their books, pays their school fees. Her eldest son will complete his graduate degree in this year. The next is a daughter who is studying in the 2nd year of college. She has another daughter, who is studying in class XI.

Susma often says, "Had the Mahila Mandal, not come into my life, I wouldn't be here. I didn't just get help—I got my life back."



BHAGABATI'S BITTER GOURD CULTIVATION

In 2007, Bhagabati was married not due to tradition, but for survival to Raj Kumar Giri, from Ishwaripur village in the coastal region of Namkhana. She was just 13 and he was a fisherman, working long and hard, casting his net in the river with the hope of bringing home a little more than the day before. Life wasn't easy but there was love, laughter, and the quiet hope of a better tomorrow.

But in 2021, everything changed in a heartbeat. One evening, Raj Kumar was returning home after selling fish with the day's earnings. A goon stabbed him from behind, looted him and left bleeding. Though he survived, he was never the same again.

Bhagabati stepped forward because there was no other choice. She began fishing in the river, joining other village women, determined not to let her children's dreams drown in poverty. But fate was not done testing her. In September 2024, a crocodile had entered the river. Fishing was banned. In an instant, her only source of income was gone.

In her darkest moment, she reached out to the Nishtha's Mahila Mandal. She poured out her pain, her fears, her helplessness. On 12th November, 2024, the Mahila Mandal arranged a loan of Rs. 30,000. later— a lifeline when she needed it most.

She wasted no time. Within five days she leased a big plot of land for bitter gourd cultivation. The crop flourished within months. She sold her produce between mid-January and the first week of March 2025 and earned around ₹48,000. It was enough to care for her husband, buy his medicines, educate her children, and begin repaying her loan. Their two children, are now in Class XI and Class IX. Not riches but dignity! Not luxury but self-worth!



LEGAL ASSISTANCE

If you cry because the sun has gone out of your life, your tears will prevent you from seeing the stars.

— Rabindranath Tagore

This year marks a breakthrough in our legal intervention efforts. Since the start of legal intervention, the first verdict has been pronounced this year and it is in our favour! After a 6 year-long battle the High Court pronounced its judgement on the 27th March, 2025. The ruling holds the perpetrator guilty and grants compensation of Rs 4 lakh to the survivor of sexual violence under POCSO. We feel vindicated and rejuvenated. The long and arduous journey of seeking justice by moving the courts is challenging for the poor and vulnerable to sustain in the face of a more powerful and resourceful adversaries. This judgement has reinforced our sometimes wavering faith in the judicial system, proving that even though time consuming, the poor too can get justice.

The demand for Nishtha’s legal assistance in 2024-25 has increased over earlier years fuelled by confidence in Nishtha’s work and impact of word-of-mouth publicity. The landmark victory has set the stage for more women and girls to seek legal support and stand up for their rights.

All efforts are made by the Mahila Mandals and Nishtha team to mediate a conflict locally. This year they arbitrated 719 cases out of court, about two cases daily. When mediation does not lead to resolution then they file a case in the court if the survivor or victim’s side is willing. This year, 32 cases—approximately three per month have gone for legal intervention. Home visits are made to provide support for all complex cases.

TRAJECTORY OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP OF COLLECTIVES

Outreach of Progs	2011-2012	2023-2024	2024-2025
Legal Training/Camps	NA as trainings were informal	15	18
Out of Court settlement	2177	3593 (673 new + 2920 earlier) cases	4312 (719 new + 3593 earlier) cases
Legal intervention (Cases in Court)	09	82 (13 new + 69 earlier) cases	113 (32 new + 81 earlier) cases

TOTAL CASES IN COURT - AT A GLANCE

Abuser	No. of cases 2023-24	No. of cases 2024-25	Abuse
Husband	32 (4 new + 28 earlier)	37 (5 new + 32 earlier)	Mental & physical torture; including 8 Murder Cases
In-Laws	9 (3 new + 6 earlier)	16 (7 new + 9 earlier)	Mental & physical torture
Parents	21 (no new)	25 (4 new + 21 earlier)	Physical torture and forced marriage
Boyfriend	18 (4 new + 14 earlier)	27 (9 new + 18 earlier)	Cyber Crime, Abductions, Blackmailing, etc.
Neighbour	2	4 (3 new + 1 earlier)	Sexual offence against minor girls
Cybercrime		4 (new)	Online harassment, stalking, identity theft, and circulation of private images without consent
TOTAL	82	113	

CAPACITY BUILDING

EMPOWERING GIRLS THROUGH EDUCATION

At Nishtha, we firmly believe that education is the most powerful catalyst for transforming the lives of girls. Ensuring every girl remains in school and continues her education through college remains at the heart of everything we do. Our commitment goes beyond classrooms – we strive to create an environment where girls are equipped with the knowledge, confidence, and agency to resist child marriage, prevent early pregnancy, and rise above gender-based discrimination, violence, trafficking, and exploitative labour and they are able to unlock their potential and shape their future.



BREAKING BOUNDARIES THROUGH EDUCATION

Jayashree Mondal from Morjada village, has been a member of the Kishori Vahini since 2016 and received inputs on the empowerment of girls and women. For the last eight years she has regularly received tuition fees and educational materials support. Last year, in July 2024, she passed her ITI course in Surveyor (vocational training in land surveying, measurement and mapping) from Magrahat ITI College. In a society where technical and land-related professions are dominated by men, Jayashree's achievement is a symbol of courage, resilience, and hope. It is an achievement that few girls in her district have ever dared to dream.

Today she conducts surveys for a fee as a self-employed professional. Her average monthly income is around ₹8,000 to ₹9,000.

Jayashree has decided to stand up for the women who are thrown out by in-laws, denied shelter by their own families, or coerced by their sons to sign away property rights because they lack knowledge of their legal entitlements. She has begun educating girls and women in her village and neighbouring villages during group meetings about land rights, property ownership, and legal protections to ensure that they do not remain helpless or uninformed. While shaping her own destiny she is lighting the way for countless others to follow.

COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

- Educational support was provided to 7720 girl children for tuition fees, educational materials, clothing and hygiene kits. The hygiene kits, distributed monthly, include sanitary napkins, toilet soap, hair oil, toothpaste, toothbrush and other necessities.
- Monitored girls' attendance and performance to address challenges
 - more than 85945 home visits
 - 1402 high school visits
 - 3125 tuition class inspections
- 131 In-School gender and health education classes conducted.



NO. OF GIRLS SUPPORTED ACROSS DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION

Academic	No.	Professional	No.
Up to Secondary School	4810	Nursing	95
Higher Secondary School	1537	Fashion Designing	15
Graduation College	1021	Diploma in Elementary Education	11
Post Graduation (Including 1 in agriculture)	179	Hotel Management	03
		Law	03
		Paramedical	02
		Loco Pilot	01
		Air Hostess	01
		ITI Polytechnic	02
TOTAL	7547		174
GRANDTOTAL			7720



COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

- 95 girls successfully completed their Bachelor's degree studies. Among them 15 girls went on to pursue postgraduate education. 95 girls enrolled in vocational training programs to gain employable skills and self-reliance.
- 680 (96%) of the 708 eligible girls appeared for the Secondary School Board Examination (Class X) and 100% passed the exam in May 2024.
- 100% of 557 eligible girls appeared for the Higher Secondary School Board Examination (Class XII) and all of them (100%) passed.



FORGING AHEAD ON THE PATH OF ASPIRATIONS

Glimpses into the lives of some of the girls receiving support

	Situation	Support	Result
1	<p>Sohini Barik from Alida village in Magrahat-II. She joined the KV in 2020, when she was in class IX. Her father earns about ₹8-9000 per month by making jewellery. This would have sufficed for the family of 4 if her mother kept good health. When faced with resource crunch, she found her father favouring her younger brother over her. The gender bias was hurtful.</p> <p>In 2021, a young wife was found dead under suspicious circumstances. This tragic incident disturbed Sohini and shaped her aspiration to become a lawyer to represent women's causes at minimal cost.</p> <p>She appeared for LLB entrance exam in 2024, but missed admission to a government college by a few marks. Her father felt unable to support her education. Sohini turned to Nishtha for support.</p>	<p>The Nishtha team recognised Sohini's potential and took immediate steps to ensure she could continue her education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She has secured a seat in Jyotirmoy School of Law, a private law college. • She is determined to seek justice for the voiceless. 
2	<p>Indrani Barik from Maheshpur, despite resistance has been defying societal norms and expectations from a young age. She has been a good student all through. Currently, she is studying English Honours from Surendra Nath College, in Kolkata. Her desire to challenge stereotypes and join NCC was met with strong objections from her family, particularly her father. The community too ridiculed her. She shared her struggle in a KV meeting when she was in class VI.</p> 	<p>The Nishtha team visited Indrani's house and encouraged her father to reconsider his stance. for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one-on-one discussions importance of breaking gender stereotypes • few group sessions on gender discrimination and women's empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indrani's father agreed, on the condition that her studies must not suffer. • She participated in NCC, where she earned B and C grade certificates and won gold medal in shooting – especially in 10-metre air pistol. She won silver medals in run and best cadet. • Other girls are inspired to pursue their passions

	Situation	Support	Result
3	<p>Deepannita Kar was born 17 years ago in a poor family in Mohanpur village. Her father is a daily wage labourer and mother a seasonal agricultural worker. Even their combined income sometimes leaves them struggling for two square meals a day. Her continuing experience is that her brother, older by five years is cherished while she is sidelined.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When she was in class VI, aged 12 years, she shared her story of neglect with Nishtha's social worker and asked for support. She stood up for her right to education and told her parents that Nishtha would support her. She joined KV when she was 12 years old. Nishtha supported her education costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In February 2024, she appeared for her secondary school board examinations, and she passed earning star marks (602 out of 700 - 86%). Ironically, her brother has dropped out of college this year, leaving his bachelor's degree incomplete. She is determined to prove that a daughter can achieve as much as a son—if not more!
4	<p>Mallika Naskar is from a conservative village, Bhanru. Mallika grew up watching her brother receive everything she longed for: new books, private tutors, warm words of encouragement. While she was expected to obey, serve, and eventually disappear into someone else's home. He studied under a proper light whereas she had to make do with a kerosene lamp.</p> <p>Her father's attitude crushed her spirit yet her heart held onto one fragile dream of becoming a doctor.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2020, when she was in class VII, Nishtha reached her. They and the KV provided emotional support to share her brokenness and financial support for her education. Her father, silent for so long, said, "You've done something I never believed you could." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2023, she passed the secondary school board exam with 1st division (452 marks and star marks in science group). In February 2024, in Class 11 Science, she scored 463 out of 500 – 92.6%. She has appeared for her higher secondary school board exam this year.

	Situation	Support	Result
5	<p>Nisha Mondal, is from Durgabati village in Baruipur. At 14 years of age she lost her father in 2022. Grief stricken her mother; Rekha fell ill. Before she could recover another cruel twist awaited them. They were thrown out of the house by their grandparents.</p> <p>The weight of loss and displacement was unbearable for them. The upheaval forced Nisha to abandon her education.</p> <p>An additional challenge for Nisha is that she has one hand. So besides a physical handicap she is sometimes plagued by self-doubts about her ability to manage her future.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Sept- Oct 2022, our social worker brought Rekha for monthly counselling by a psychiatrist. • The MM collected food supplies to meet their basic sustenance needs during this challenging time. • Nisha was admitted to a Government High School in class IX by the MM leaders in Dec, 2022. • KV members have introduced Nisha to other young women with disabilities and have carved their own paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rekha began showing signs of recovery with treatment. • Nisha recently appeared for her secondary school board Examinations, which began on 10th February, 2025 • Nisha is exploring skill-training options suited to her abilities.
6	<p>Beauty Manna is from Umarpota village near Baruipur. In October, 2022, when in class VI, her father; a daily wage earner drowned in an accident. This shattered the world of Beauty, her mother, and aging grandparents.</p> <p>They received no support from the extended family. Beauty's mother eventually found employment as a maid in Kolkata. This meant leaving Beauty in the care of her frail grandmother.</p> <p>Beauty was forced to leave school after class VI. None noticed her struggle and pain other than a KV member around June-July 2023.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The KV member informed the KV leaders. They in turn told Nishtha. • Nishtha met the grandparents to have Beauty readmitted in school. • Nishtha provided her educational support since October 2023, • The KV brought her books and notebooks and encouraged her to return to school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Today (2025) she is studying in class IX. 

*The highest education is that
 which does not give us
 information but makes our
 life in harmony with all
 existence.*
 — Rabindranath Tagore

KISHORI BIKASH - SHAKTI

An exciting project because the alumni of Bikash and Bikash Rashmi groups helm this initiative to support and develop the leadership of grassroots Kishori Vahinis. This initiative is being implemented across 10 newly formed Kishori Vahinis each in Namkhana and Magrahat-I blocks (by Nishtha); and in four other grassroots organisations:

- Kalugachhi Vivekananda Seva Sanstha
- Sabuj Sangha
- Sarbodaya Sangha
- Chetana Sangha



Rooted in the belief that education, leadership, and collective voice can break through entrenched barriers, the project focuses on empowering girls and engaging their mothers through structured training. This year, more than 900 girls and 70 mothers have been reached through 45+ participatory training sessions using role-plays, discussions, and interactive methods. These sessions tackled critical issues such as gender equality, leadership, community engagement and prevention of violence. As a result, young leaders are raising their voices against child marriage, discrimination, and violence; while mothers have become allies in creating supportive environments at home.

DAY CARE CENTRE

The Centre nurtures 100 vulnerable girls from 16 villages to continue their education without the fear of dropping out, child marriage, abuse, and exploitation. Most of these girls are survivors of violence, daughters of single parents, or from families where both parents work, leaving them unprotected and vulnerable. Like earlier years, this year too, the girls were picked up from home early morning and returned in the evening to prevent their exploitation in the house or outside.

At the Centre they received education aligned with the West Bengal government schools' curriculum, along with life skills, computer literacy, sports, arts, and spoken English. Nutritious daily meals were provided. Alongside, weekly counselling by a psychologist, regular unit tests, and guardian meetings ensured their emotional and academic well-being.

In 2024-25, 18 girls graduated from college; 11 are pursuing post-graduation or B. Ed degrees, 2 have completed B. Ed, and 5 have completed post-graduation. 7 girls passed the secondary school examination in May 2024, and another 22 appeared for the secondary school board exam in February, 2025. Since 2013, 31 alumni have broken barriers and carved out successful careers as teachers, nurses, paramedics, beauticians, and entrepreneurs.

SHELTER (SINCHAN & NIGHT SHELTER) FOR CHILDREN OF SEX WORKERS

Since 2013, the Night Shelter has provided a safe haven to 32 children and 8 infants born to 25 commercial sex workers. They receive protection, education support, two nutritious meals a day, hygiene kits, new clothes during Pujas, and winter garments. They attend formal schools and grow up in a clean, nurturing environment, developing confidence through dance, drama, music, and art classes. The shelter has transformed lives. This year one girl has cleared the Class X board exam and two girls have gained employment as government nurses, breaking the cycle of poverty and stigma.

DIGITAL LEARNING CENTRE

Through these centres, across four locations –Nishtha Office, Sarada Bhawan (Day Care Centre), and one village each in Magrahat-II and Namkhana blocks; we bridge the digital divide, opens pathways to modern employment, self-reliance, and confidence for rural girls and youth.

- This year 250 students enrolled for basic and advanced computer courses, each spanning six months. Tailor-made advanced modules are offered for further specialisation or employment. 40 learn on Chrome books and 210 on desktops Besides, alumni return to practice and sharpen their skills.
- Additionally, 60 girls enrolled in a year-long Spoken English course to improve communication skills essential for the job market. The course is divided into six months of basic and six months of advanced learning.

Besides, a group of 20 students received grooming and interview preparation training to enhance their professional readiness



The roots below the branch claim no rewards for making the branches fruitful.
— Rabinranath Tagore

SENSITISATION TRAINING FOR MEN

The gains made through our years of struggle began to unravel as child marriage, trafficking, and gender-based violence surged once again in the wake of multiple crises starting from COVID-19 lockdowns, to the devastation of cyclones Amphan and Yaas, and the fresh waves of cyclone Remal in May and Dana in October 2024. Recognizing that sustainable change requires shifting deep-rooted patriarchal mindsets, Nishtha placed strong emphasis on engaging men—the primary decision-makers in families—as allies in building a just, equitable, and violence-free future. We worked with five groupings of men:

- **Fathers of Kishori Vahini members**
- **Changemakers**
- **Youth club members**
- **Youth in the community**
- **Men in the community**



FATHERS OF KISHORI VAHINI MEMBERS

This year, we conducted nine interactive training sessions for 150 fathers, focusing on empowering them to become protectors and promoters of their daughters’ rights and peer motivators. They explored crucial themes such as:

- gender justice and equality
- responsible decision-making in families
- the need to eliminate child marriage and
- dreams for their daughter’s dignified and educated futures.

CHANGEMAKERS

Over the past three years, Nishtha has catalysed male community members from passive observers into a bold changemakers. Their numbers have increased from 10 of 2 groups to 277 from 30 groups. They have been oriented on gender justice and social responsibility. These men, once silent bystanders, now raise their voices against gender-based violence, promote education for girls, stand against child marriage, and empathically redefine masculinity.



No./years	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
No. of Changemakers	10	197	277
No. of groups	2	22	30

YOUTH CLUB MEMBERS

In 2024–25, a total of 622 youth club members were reached through 31 structured sessions across various villages. The efforts revolved around challenging toxic norms and educating them to promote respectful behaviour in community spaces, thereby making villages and roads secure and welcoming spaces for girls and young women.



SENSITISATION TRAINING FOR MEN

YOUTH IN THE COMMUNITY

During this year, 355 community youth participated in 24 small group sessions and 155 one-to-one counselling sessions focused on gender sensitisation. These sessions addressed the harmful effects of harassment, unsafe public spaces, particularly on isolated roadside areas, and other forms of abusive behaviour faced by young women and girls.

Through open conversations and real-life examples, the young participants gained a better understanding of gender equality, empathy, and the importance of respectful behaviour. As a result, 89 young boys took a proactive step by supporting Kishori Vahini leaders in organising meetings, awareness drives, and sensitisation sessions with other youth and men in the community. Their growing involvement marks a positive shift—these boys are now emerging as allies in the movement for girls' safety.



MEN IN THE COMMUNITY

We conducted nine intensive training sessions with 150 adult men, focusing on empowering them to become protectors, promoters, and champions of their daughters' rights. The sessions explored themes such as gender equality, responsible fatherhood, and the critical role men play in building a violence-free home and community environment.

Beyond training, we also reached over 200 men through 28 community sensitisation efforts aimed at fostering a violence-free family environment. Many participants expressed a renewed commitment to creating safe and nurturing spaces for their children—especially daughters—and pledged to challenge harmful practices and behaviours in their communities.



BHALOBASHA DAYCARE CENTRE FOR DISABLED

Since 2017, Bhalobasha Centre has been providing comprehensive care for the holistic development and rehabilitation of disabled children under one roof and free of cost. In 2024-25, 60 special children received the following therapy, services, and special education tailored to their individual needs:

- Physiotherapy - 2,950 sessions
- Special Education - 4,720 sessions
- Occupational Therapy - 1,248 sessions
- Speech Therapy - 768 sessions
- Psychological Counselling - 540 sessions
- Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PMR) Doctor Services & Psychiatric Treatment - 240 children

Besides, this year, 10 children transitioned to mainstream schools; a testimony to the power of early intervention, individualised care, and our commitment to inclusive education.

Impact Stories

Rik's Journey of Hope and Progress

Rik Molla, a young child with developmental delays, began receiving therapy at the age of two. He is from Malancha, in Mallikpur. Earlier, the therapy took a heavy toll on the family—both emotionally and financially. At one point, Rik's father even lost his job due to the frequent absences required for his son's care. Things changed when Rik arrived at Nishtha. They found a place that offered clear guidance and comprehensive care under one roof. Rik was enrolled in physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and special education all tailored to meet his specific needs.

Initially, Rik could not crawl, sit, or recognize his family members. He lay in bed, with saliva dripping from his mouth. Within one year of consistent support, he can sit on his own, speak, eat with his hands, and shows encouraging signs of cognitive and emotional development

Yaman's Transformation

Yaman Laskar, a 10-year-old boy from an economically disadvantaged family, in Sangrampur, Kalikapota came to Nishtha three years ago. Born with Cerebral Palsy, he had no movement in his right hand, which caused him to withdraw from others. He avoided interacting with children his age, and his parents unaware of his condition did not seek medical help. They didn't view it as an illness, believing instead that he would naturally improve over time.

When Yaman started school, a teacher noticed his difficulties and referred him to Nishtha. We began treatment but the delay had already taken a toll.

In the beginning, Yaman couldn't use his right hand at all he was unable to hold a pencil, feed himself, or share items with others. However, after three years of consistent therapy and care, Yaman has made remarkable progress. Today, he can write with his right hand, eat on his own, and even carry a water bottle from one place to another.

Most importantly, Yaman has shed his feelings of inferiority. He now plays with other children and studies in Class V of a mainstream school.



PROJECTS AT A GLANCE

Sikkhai Hatiyar

Aims to build a gender-just society. It fosters 1,080 girls and women's groups, nurturing leadership, creating income-generation opportunities for mothers to support their daughters' education, and engaging community men to embrace gender equality.

Jagriti

Aims to build a responsive support system—empowering women and girls to access timely help, assert their rights, and become agents of change. Supports the formal education of 750 vulnerable girls while fostering strong peer groups and nurturing leadership skills.

Unnatir Udaan

This project nurtures the leadership of 700 girls across remote villages. Through their groups, these young leaders act as vigilant guardians against child marriage, trafficking, and child labour, challenging deep-rooted injustices and protecting the rights of their peers.

Kishori Bikash Shakti

Aims to promote peer group leadership-building initiative. Twenty-one alumni of the Bikash and Bikash Rashmi projects, actively strengthening newly formed Kishori Vahinis in four other organisations in West Bengal, as well as 20 new Kishori Vahinis within Nishtha.

Sahas

Challenges the deep-rooted concept of early marriage. It provides space for 150 girls to voice their thoughts, assert their rights, and redefine their futures.

Natun Diganta

Shares the vision of Sikkhai Hatiyar—to empower girls and women. Launched in the vulnerable coastal regions of West Bengal in the aftermath of the pandemic and cyclone Amphan, it aims to build a gender-just future through resilience, knowledge, and community support. It offers 435 girls' education, awareness, and skill-building opportunities.

SHE

Aims to build careers, shape economic contributors, fearless leaders, and powerful change-makers. It supports 300 girls' pursuit of higher secondary education, post-graduation, and professional courses at reputed colleges, universities, and institutions.

Bikash / Bikash Rashmi, Kishori Bikash Jyoti & Kishori Bikash Urja

These flagship initiatives support leadership development amongst underprivileged in remote villages. By providing children with opportunities for holistic development these projects are cultivating a generation of brave young changemakers who are committed to building a just and inclusive society. The alumni of Bikash and Bikash Rashmi have emerged as pillars of strength and role models within their communities.

Girls to Girls

Aims to protect at least 80% of the 100 targeted girls from child marriage, child labour, and trafficking enabling them to seize opportunities and grow.

Unnita Phase III, Rokeya Phase III & Unnitar Prasar Phase II

Aims to provide equal access to education, protection, and developmental resources to empower 3700 vulnerable girls and women. Beyond education, these initiatives are dedicated to building powerful girls' and women's collectives for sustainable and transformative change.

Sukanya

Aims to reduce school dropout, child marriage, trafficking, and forced labour among girl children. The almost three-year-old project supports 210 girls and women.

Alor Pathey

Aims to develop the leadership potential of 224 girls and women to reduce school dropouts and child marriages protect and advance the rights of their peers.

Jagaran

Aims to stop school drop outs. Jagaran provides educational support to 158 girls to continue in formal schooling and overcome barriers to development.

PROJECTS AT A GLANCE

Support to Bright Students

This project has supported five outstanding students to prepare for the NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test, a standardised entrance examination in India for admission to undergraduate medical courses) to be held in May 2025; to move out of the poverty trap.

Night Shelter & Sinchan

Please refer to page no. 21 for details.

Bhalobasha

Please refer to page no. 24 for details

Digital Learning Centre (Swabalamban, Natun Aalo and Namkhana Digital Centre)

Please refer to page no. 21 for details.

Sister Aid Livelihood Programme

Aims to promote livelihoods for women. 539 women are united in 50 collectives to run individual and joint businesses. These women also save money for their daughter's higher education.

Alokita

Aims to develop leadership, empowerment, and a just and equal society. The project empowers 400 vulnerable girls and women to rise as community leaders, service providers, and catalysts of change.

Grow Supported Initiative (up to Sept 2024)

Aims to empower Nishtha's staff, leaders, collective members, volunteers, and frontline service providers through continuous capacity building.

Nirman - The Pad Project

Please refer to page no. 13 for details.

Aalo

Provides scholarships, educational materials, clothing, and hygiene kits to 20 survivors of violence to continue formal education and rebuild their lives with dignity, and resilience.

Tejaswini

A powerful arm of Nishtha, dedicated to supporting women and girls in their legal and emotional fight for justice. Currently, 81 cases, including trafficking, murder, domestic violence, rape and POCSO violations, are ongoing in various courts.

Voice for Victims

Aims to transform family and community attitudes towards women and girl survivors of violence by sensitising key male decision-makers on gender-based discrimination and cruelty. More than 800 fathers and brothers have been sensitised this year.

Other Income Generation Programmes – Jeans, Mat and Bori (lentil dumplings) making Units

1 group consisting of 25 members of jeans pants stitching at Tongtala

Two groups, each with 11 members, are producing Bari (lentil chunks, a popular food in West Bengal) and also making mats to supplement their regular income.

Day Care Centre

Please refer to page no. 21 for details.

Humanitarian Relief for Cyclone Affected Families

Humanitarian aid was provided to 3,321 families, especially in the coastal area of Namkhana, affected by cyclone Remal. The aid included dry food and hygiene kits. Additionally, over 1,500 young women received sanitary napkins, soap, and detergent.



Nishtha Team

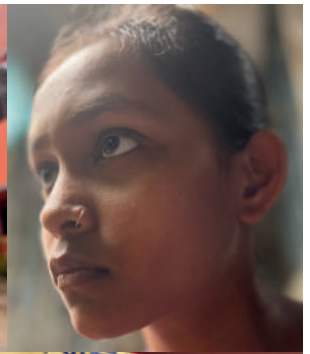
DONORS AND WELL WISHERS

SL. No.	Name of Doner
1	The Karuna Trust (UK)
2	Azim Premji Foundation (APF)
3	EdelGive Foundation
4	American Jewish World Service (AJWS)
5	Hao Ran Foundation
6	WE Trust
7	Yoga Gives Back (YGB)
8	Youth Making a Difference Worldwide, USA
9	American Friends of EdelGive Foundation
10	Asha For Education
11	Association for India's Development (AID)
12	BODHI Australia
13	Foerder Verein V. Inner Wheel, Cosefeld (Germany)
14	Kanailal Raha Foundation
15	Mariwala Health Initiative
16	The Ramakrishna Foundation
17	World of the Open Heart

SL. No.	Name of Doner
1	Ms. Dhriti Deb & Dr. Arun Deb
2	Dr. Samir Narayan Chaudhuri
3	Ms. Annelie Fabry
4	Ms. Linda McCann and Mr. Patrick McCann
5	Ms. Gabriele Weischer and Mr. Wilhelm Weischer
6	Ms. Elizabeth and Mr. David Steinglass
7	Dr. S. Bhagat
8	Dr. Abhyuday Mondal
9	Dr. Padmanava Sen
10	Dr. Agniva Roy
11	Ms. Melanie Banerjee
12	Mr. Prabir Kumar Sen
13	Mr. Amit Pamecha
14	Dr. Frauke Thiel
15	Ms. Ratnabali Sengupta
16	Dr. Valerie Apted
17	Mr. T. Krishnaswami, His Brother And Sister

AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2024-25

NISHTHA			
VILLAGE – SUBUDDIPUR (DE PARA), P.O-BARUIPUR, SOUTH 24 PARGANAS, KOLKATA-700144			
STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE PERIOD OF 1ST APRIL, 2024 TO 31ST MARCH, 2025			
Particulars	FOREIGN	LOCAL	TOTAL
INCOME :			
Grant & Donation (2024-2025)	3,55,26,819.3	1,70,97,861	
Add : Grant received in 2023-2024 for 2024-2025	1,07,78,416.3	59,00,795.62	
Less : Received in Advance for 2025-2026 in 2024-2025	75,79,424.82	79,44,192.28	
Total Grant Available For 2024-2025	3,87,25,810.78	1,50,54,464.34	5,37,80,275.12
INDIRECT INCOMES			
Interest On Fixed Deposits Received	1,16,148	-	
Add : Accrued Interest On 31-03-25	6,48,453	4,11,607	
	7,64,601	4,11,607	
Add : TDS on Above	84,957	45,661	
	8,49,558	4,57,268	13,06,826
Old Liability Written Back	0	36,24,782	36,24,782
BANK INTEREST			
Interest on Savings Bank A/c	8,60,331	3,45,803	12,06,134
SOURCES OF FUND			5,99,18,017.12
EXPENDITURE :			
Administrative Cost	10,74,095.76	7,50,507.83	
Personnel Cost	42,34,201	29,27,393	
Programme Cost	3,14,39,900	1,03,85,284	
Bank Charges	60,927.28	0	
	3,68,09,124.04	1,40,63,184.83	5,08,72,308.87
Purchase/Construction of Fixed Assets	13,77,985	95,000	14,72,985
APPLICATION OF FUND			5,23,45,293.87
Contribution Towards Future Development			75,72,723.25
			5,99,18,017.12





NISHTHA

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