

A Proposal of  
**‘JAGARAN’**  
Empowerment of Girls

Area of Implementation

Phingedauri & Damdama Villages of Bishnupur – I Block,  
South 24 Parganas District, West Bengal, India

Proposed By

**NISHTHA**

Subuddhipur, Depara, Baruipur,  
South 24 Parganas District, West Bengal, India

## **BASIC ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION**

Name of Project	<b>“JAGARAN”</b>
Project period	April 2017 to March 2018.
Area of Implementation	Phingedauri & Damdama Villages of Bishnupur – I Block of South 24 Parganas District, West Bengal, India
Name of the organisation	NISHTHA.
Organisation address	Vill – Subuddhipur, De para, PO – Baruipur, Dist . – South 24 Parganas, Kolkata – 700144, West Bengal, India.
Contact	Name: Mina Das Phone - 03324339865, 03324331925, Email – nishtha.wb@gmail.com
Organisation type	Society Regn.: Registered under West Bengal Societies registration Act of 1961 in 1983.  FCRA no. 147110101 of 23 <sup>rd</sup> June 1985.

## **ABOUT ORGANIZATION**

‘NISHTHA’ is a grassroots women’s organization. Born in the mid-seventies, from the very inception its aim was to empower the women/children through awareness building on their rights and demand such rights on necessity. Presently, Nishtha is operating in more than 250 villages of four blocks (Baruipur, Bishnupur – I, Magrahat – II & Sonarpur) of South 24 Parganas district. The major activities of Nishtha include:

- **Education:** Nishtha believes that education of girls as key factor for empowerment & support over 4000 girls with tuitions fees, uniform, education materials etc.
- **Group Formation:** Nishtha’s forms different age based groups and builds their capacities on different social issues to reduce gender based violence. 1000 members are in Kids Groups (Balak- Balika Vahini), 4,500 members in Adolescent Groups (Kishor-Kishori Vahini), 3500 members in Adult Women’ s Groups (Mahila Mandals) and Senior Women’s Groups.

- **Awareness Generation:** Nishtha conducts series of awareness generation activities like theatre, wall writing, rallies, leaflets distribution, formal and informal discussion with parents, community members and key stakeholders etc. for building a society where women are not discriminated or subjected to violence.
- **Reproductive Health Education:** Nishtha conducts series of training and awareness amongst girls and women on reproductive health issues. Along with that it also helps the women to access the birth control measures of their choice through community based distributors or village resource persons.
- **Economic Empowerment:** About 2000 women are now self employed after receiving proper training and required support from Nishtha through the Women's Groups.
- **Night Shelter and Day Care Centre for Sex Worker's Children:** These children are highly neglected and vulnerable to face abuse, violence and later on become in conflict with law or forced to take up her mother's profession.
- **Elderly women Support:** The situation of elderly women of poor families is very pathetic. She has devoted all her productive years to her family and her self-less work is highly neglected. Nishtha runs a program called Adopt a Granny programme for the shelter less, helpless old women.
- **Sustainable Agriculture:** Nishtha sensitises youths and encourage them to be the promoter of organic farming to protect bio-diversity and soil health. These youths then sensitise other farmers in the area to minimize the use of chemicals and promote the use of alternative organic mechanism

The campaigns against child marriage & trafficking, domestic violence, reproductive rights and gender discrimination has endeared the organization in government and non-government circles by its inherent qualities.

## **BACKGROUND**

In the rural areas the parents do not feel it prudent to send their girl children to school and feel it as rather non- productive. They regard it as a luxury and also worry that if their girls become well educated then they have to search for a better bridegroom who will cost a dowry beyond their limits. Normally, the birth of a girl is not a happy event, but as a burden. Those fortunate girls, who get the opportunity to go to school, are also pressurized to abandon education owing to their marriages. The distance of the schools from their home is also a big obstacle. The school authorities and the teachers are also not gender sensitive and seem to be careless about the problems of the girls. In general, this type of attitude and environment for girls becomes the major causes for girl students' drop out.

Various factors which lead to drop out of the schools in great numbers are:

- Girls who fail in the exams or perform poorly are taken immediately out of school as compared to boys as parents feel that education is not relevant for the girls and the first opportunity they get where the girl under – perform is taken as an opportunity to take them out of school.
- Adolescent Girls having to travel some distance to High schools from homes because of the relatively lesser number of High schools as compared to primary schools. Also, the toilet facilities in most of the schools are not up to the mark for the growing adolescent girls.
- Most of the girls who go to school are either first generation learner or her parents are not adequately educated to understand the importance of education of their girl child.
- Parents feel that a grown up and educated girl will require more dowry and a better bridegroom which will not be economically possible for the parents. Also, if they marry their girl early the parents will not be morally responsible in case of the girl faces any incident of eve teasing or if they fell in love or run away from home.
- Girls are often taken out of school and put to work be it inside the house (cooking & other household work, sibling care or taking care of cattle) or outside the house to add to the family income.

One of the main tools in both awareness building on rights and empowerment is education, especially for the girl child. Various factors make Girls' education up to the end of High School absolutely essential for their liberation and full development:

- They receive essential information and knowledge. They also get into the habit of collecting information through books/computer and get familiarized with a huge source of enjoyment as well as knowledge opens for them.
- They can spend a good amount of time each day with their peers and teachers and in turn they will learn to mix with the world, outside the limits of their homes
- They can spend the day time within a safe shelter, when their parents go out to work. They are thus safe, not only from molestation and its threat, but also from being pressurized for early marriage – sometimes trafficking in the name of marriage.
- By the time the girls leave high school, they are of age, physically, mentally, emotionally and intellectually mature. They are confident, somewhat self-reliant, ready to enter adult life, begin to earn and marry, if they wish so. They have learnt to live with dignity and negotiate peacefully with the outside world including the employers on the one hand and husbands and the in-laws on the other.

- During and after schooling they may also learn a marketable trade and earn a reasonably good living and may not be left in the lurch in case they are driven out from their husband's house.

The situation of West Bengal in context of education of girls is even worse as the state stand at fourth in gross dropout rate from Class I – X only after Bihar, Sikkim and Rajasthan (Information source: Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India. The interlinking relation between the dropout rate and child marriage is well known to all of us. As girls drops out because of marriage and of the dropped out girls are married earlier. The relation between the above mentioned information and data can be well understood as according to the Rapid Household Survey (NFHS – III) conducted across the country, West Bengal stands at number three position in child marriage only after Bihar and Rajasthan with an average of 54.9 percent. Phingedauri & Damdama villages of Bishnupur – I Block of South 24 Parganas in West Bengal are no exception in terms of above disqualifying attributes for women and adolescent girls. Being part of the agrarian chain under threat of urbanization of late, the area and people are even more vulnerable with loss of ancestral security of land and agricultural activities. The urbanisation is not only eating up a lot of agricultural land, but is also paving the way for increase in the evils of urbanization, especially trafficking of young girls. We, therefore, need to be doubly alert to protect the girls in the area.

## **GOAL**

The goal of the project is to ensure retention of 238 mainstreamed at risk students of 2 villages (Phingedauri & Damdama villages) of Bishnupur – I Block of South 24 Parganas district, West Bengal and empower them with formal education and adequate knowledge, information and training.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- To ensure education of the 238 identified vulnerable girls till they complete college education.
- To reduce the dropout rate to 20% of the supported girls.
- To promote a conducive environment for development of girls by building a positive consensus among the parents, stakeholder and community as a whole regarding the education of the child and ensuring education friendly environment in family and community.
- To enhance computer skills of the higher secondary and college going girls.
- To enhance spoken English skills of elder girls of class XI & XII and college.
- To enhance spoken English skills of girls of class IX & X.

- To enhance spoken English skills of smaller girls till class VIII.

### **STRATEGIES**

- Providing education support to the girls to ensure retention in mainstream school of already admitted 238 girls of Jagaran project.
- Trying to reduce the factors which make the girls become victims of dropouts, neglect, torture, forced labour and child marriage like lack of awareness, gender, school dropout etc.
- Forming group of girls who will be well aware on their rights, act as peer educators and raise their voices against the problems faced by them.
- Providing spoken English trainings to 20 elder girls of class XI & XII and college.
- Providing spoken English training to 20 girls of class IX & X
- Providing spoken English training to 25 girls till class VIII.

### **ACTIVITIES**

In total 238 vulnerable girls will be supported through the project. Out of these 238 vulnerable girls:

- **Sixty Six (66)** will be of **Graduation level**.
- **Fifty three (53)** will be of **Higher Secondary level**.
- The rest **One hundred & nineteen (119)** girls will be **up to Secondary level**.
- Providing support to the vulnerable 238 girls students to continue their education:
  - a. For girls up to Secondary Education:
    - i. Facilitating the process to ensure admitting of the identified at risk girls into formal school for continuing their mainstream education.
    - ii. Providing educational supports which includes:
      1. Tuition fees of Rs. 100 per month for 11 months (no support in December as that is examination and result month & students normally don't seek tuitions during that month)
      2. Education Materials worth Rs. 300 as per the need of the girls.
    - iii. Arranging regular spoken English classes separately for 25 girls till class VIII and also for 20 girls of class IX and X.
  - b. For students of Class XI & XII:

- i. Facilitating the process to ensure admitting of the identified at risk girls into higher secondary schools for continuing their mainstream education.
    - ii. Providing associated educational support which includes tuition fees worth Rs. 300 per month for 11 months.
    - iii. Arranging spoken English classes for 20 girls of class XI and XII and college.
  - c. For girls of graduation level:
    - i. Facilitating the process to ensure admitting of the identified at risk girls into college for continuing their mainstream education.
    - ii. Providing associated educational support in the form of stipend worth Rs. 400 per month for 11 months.
    - iii. Arranging spoken English classes for 20 girls of class XI and XII and college.
- The girls supported will be organized in groups. These groups will conduct weekly meetings amongst themselves and Nishtha representative will go once a month to oversee the group and build their capacity on Group and its importance, gender issues, importance of education & ill effects of Early Marriage, Adolescence & Reproductive Health, Child Rights etc. These groups will be collectively conducting various awareness generation activities in their community.
- The mother of the supported girls will be organized in mother's groups. Like adolescent girls, women's group (Mahila Mandal) will also conduct weekly meetings amongst themselves and Nishtha representative will go once a month to oversee the group and build their capacity on Group and its importance, gender issues, importance of education & ill effects of Early Marriage, Adolescence & Reproductive Health, Child Rights etc. These groups will be stand by their daughters and help them to conduct various awareness generation activities in their community, stop early marriage, drop out, domestic violence or even alcoholism.
- The social worker will be conducting regular home visits to the girls supported so that s/he can act as a watchdog & mentor for these girls by ensuring strong rapport with girls and their family members, estimating the situation of education and protection of the girls and making the family aware about various social issues.
- Providing 6 days of capacity building training to the leaders and co-leaders of Kishori Vahinis so that they become well equipped with information and make them up to

date with which they can raise their voices against deprivation, discrimination and violence against girls and women.

- Organizing a get together of women so that together these women can understand their collective strength so that they can act as a group of pressure builder to ensure education of girl child, stop early marriage, gender discrimination, child labour and gender based violence, etc., which are the main cause of dropout.
- Conducting regular home visits and meetings with parents of these girls to sensitize them to create an education and child friendly discrimination free environment in the family.
- 5 of the 20 girls who have completed their job training and also selected 20 girls from Class XI & XII and college will be provided with Spoken English classes as these days Spoken English is very highly needed and which becomes the major barrier for girls from rural and vulnerable background to compete with their urban counterpart. These 25 girls will be provided training in two batches by a qualified teacher once a week.
- Three tutors will be selected for taking up spoken English class till level VIII, IX - X and XI-graduation.
- Tracking the progress of implementation and assess the improvement of the project through MIS.

## **BUDGET**

The total of for the period April 2017 to March 2018 is Rupees Nine Lakhs Twenty Eight thousand and fifty only (INR 9,28,050/-) is the estimated budget of the program. The detailed budget is attached as annexure to this proposal.

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