

A Proposal on Empowerment of Girls

'JAGARAN'

Period of Proposal

April 2020 – March 2021

Area of Implementation

**6 Villages of Bishnupur – I Block,
South 24 Parganas District,
West Bengal, INDIA**

Proposed by

NISHTHA

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West Bengal, India**

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NISHTHA :-

Nishtha being the grass roots level women organisation has been working for the empowerment girls and women residing in nearly 300 villages of five Community development Blocks of South 24 Parganas. Education is supposed to be the prime intervention for their true empowerment

OUR VISION :-

Nishtha strives for ushering in a brave new world that would deny all discriminations on the basis of sex, class, caste, creed, religion or colour; where woman and man would have equal rights, equal opportunities and equal dignity; where children would not have to toil hard to earn their food; where all children would go to school; where the old and the infirm would have the respect they deserve; where there would be no violence and no war.

OUR MISSION :-

The Mission of Nishtha essentially aims at empowering the women for establishing them as mentally, socially and economically independent human being.

Generation of awareness seems to be one of the prime weapons for eradicating discrimination from the society and make the women to get rid of perennial subjugation and violence in the male dominated society. Nishtha vehemently opposes both physical and psychological torture on girls and women. To protect the girls and women from these awful incidences, it thrives for organising street theatre, wall writing, rallies, leaflets distribution and formal and informal discussion with the community members and the key stakeholders as well.

An innovative modality i.e. formation of groups with the kids, adolescents, women and senior women which are popularly known in local language as Balak- Balika Vahini, Kishore-Kishori Vahini, Mahila Mandals and Boristho Mahila Dol developed by Nishtha has received wide acceptance in the Government and Non-Government sectors.

Development of fellow feelings and aloof from self-centredness and gender discrimination through group formation right from the tender age has been proved to be very much ideal hence, Balak Balika Bahini has been formed involving the kids.

About 1000 kids of the Balak- Balika Vahini interact with their parents regarding gender based discrimination, depriving the girl children from education, early marriage of the adolescent girls are the major hindrances towards empowerment of girls and women in their own ways. These Balak Balika Bahini actively take part in the programmes undertaken by the Kishor-Kishori Bahinis in order to materialise the mission of Nishtha. Nishtha organises special orientation training programme for the groups leaders of Balak Balika Bahinis in order to facilitate them to equip other members of their respective groups.

Kishore-Kishori Bahini appears to be an effective forum for the adolescents to freely have discussion with the issues related to them. There are altogether more than 4,500 members in the Kishore-Kishori Bahini can freely discuss their personal feelings and problems among their peers in their own groups and try to find out the probable remedies to come out from those problems. They take effective role in admitting the dropout children in schools and many a time collect money to extend support to the poorest children to continue their studies in school. Under the leadership of Nishtha's social workers, Their participation in programmes like Right to Education, Ecological and other rights of the children and Adverse effects of Child Marriage make the community members much more sensitive to these issues.

Due to active role of Mahila Mandal, rural women have become vocal against the discriminations, torture and domestic violence on the girls and women in the society and act as pressure group. Members of the women groups have gradually become empowered about their legitimate rights and extend their helping hands to other deprived and oppressed women in their own communities and sometimes they provide safe shelter to those women who badly need such assistance. Nishtha organises skill development training programmes for enhancing earning of the women and provide seed money to initiate their small enterprises through these women groups.

Boristho Dol comprising the women of age group 55 years and above stand by the Mahila Mondal and Kishori Bahinis in case of their moral support is required.

Keeping in view of Gandhiji's Gram Swaraj, Nishtha has been working with the active involvement of the group members of all those groups. All these persons are from among the village girls and women who are sufferers of violence and injustice. All the groups have been working for their own women and girls. Their untiring efforts against violence, protect

the girls and women, take action to improve their environment, speak up against violence, and advocate for their rights have brought forth a significant change in the villages.

A social network of all these four types groups has been developed and giving birth new ideas, and facilitate changes in the attitudes and behaviors of villagers. All these group-members often starve unless there is work for them. Being wage labour they work for 15 to 16 hours a day to earn two square meals. In spite of all these odds they also stand by their fellow members in case of their need.

With initiative of Nishtha's vocational training programmes through the Women's Groups, about 2000 women have become self-employed. About 580 women who were compelled to leave their homes for violence and torture incidents have brought under counselling and effective timely intervention facilitated them to go back their own homes.

Since Nishtha believes that education is root of all problems and major hindrance against the empowerment of girls and women for girls so, its all programmes education gets top priority. A brief profile of such programmes is mentioned below:

NISHTHA'S ENDEAVOURS :-

- **Night Shelter and Day Care Centre for Sex Worker's Children** : For highly neglected and vulnerable kids especially girls facing abuse, violence and become in conflict afterwards with law or forced to take up her mother's profession.
- **Sarada Bhawan** : This day care centre provides facilities for skill development training and organic farming. It's is a complete centre for girl centric education and empowerment. Nishtha proposes to run a High School for girls and a training centre on the numerous vocations for enhancing capacity earning and will be well acquainted with the important social issues through various trainings.
- **Campaign**: For sensitizing the community in order to prevent violence against women and girls, a massive campaign is organised during Anti-Violence Fortnight every year.
- **Adopt a Granny Programme**: Aged women of poor families are in extremely alarming state and they remain uncared in most of the cases. Family members forget their contribution towards the family. They don't have land and any other asset in their name, so, they become dependent on other for their bare necessities. Hence, for these

shelter-less, helpless old women, this programme has been continuing by Nishtha.

- **Mass awareness generation:** Trafficking especially of young girls is rampant practice in Nishtha's operational area. Therefore, Nishtha organises ample awareness generation activities right from forming village level child protection committees, involving stakeholders to prevent possible cases of trafficking and also to rehabilitate the victims of trafficking back to the mainstream society.
- **Maintaining and Preservation bio-diversity:** Nishtha has been organising ample programmes for orienting the farmers as well as the local youth about the adverse effects of using chemical pest and promotion for botanical pest and bio-farming. Local youths have been found to take the challenge for sustainable agriculture and enthusing farmers to adopt the healthy practices.

Nishtha believes in concerted efforts of both Govt. and NGO organisations. For achieving desirable changes Nishtha always take effective initiatives the support and participation of all stakeholders like officials of Govt. Departments, other Development organisations, Panchayat and community people etc.

Following outstanding appreciations in the form of awards have been received by Nishtha for its commendable efforts

- **Ashoka Fellowship** 1995 for promotion of groups of adolescents and women for their empowerment.
- **Apeejay India Volunteer Awards** 2011 for extraordinary work in promoting volunteer work with over 5000 volunteer base.
- **Vivekananda Medal** 2014 from The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture for extraordinary self-less work for the community.
- **Best NGO in West Bengal** for adolescent empowerment 2016 from CINI.
- **Champion of Youth award** received from EMpower, USA in the year 2017.

FOREWORD

Plight of Indian girls and women is extremely deplorable. They have been deprived of their basic rights and subjugated by generation after generation. South Parganas is the one most backward district being

endorsed by the Govt. of West Bengal. Cases of crime against women are ample in number and the district stands at the apex from the point of view of highest number of kidnapping and cruelty by husband or his relatives (Source: District wise Data on crime against women 2013 - National Crime Records Bureau). Major technique has been used for dominance by keeping them ignorant by way of not allowing them to be educated. Experience shows that only education can make them equipped to bring about worthwhile changes in their lives and they can be self reliant.

Majority of girls happen to be the first generation learners and do not get any support at their own families. Lack of conducive environment both in the families and in the community they cannot perform well in the studies and become dropped out from school. As a result of which the girls become vulnerable for being married at an early age and work as wage labour in farming and in other works. Due to this they become vulnerable to abuse and violence. The girls are unable to exercise their right to education, health and even choice their life partners. Child labour and involvement in anti-social activities in case of boys have also been evident here.

Entire areas are almost mono-cropped so, farmers get yield once a year and the quantum of yield is insufficient to feed their own families throughout the year. Another major problem is water-logging, huge cultivable lands remain submerged during the rainy season largely affect the farming. Daily wages labourers/ agriculture labourers are the common occupation of marginalised people which fetch very poor earning. Though the Govt. has fixed the rate of wages but the labourers are not getting the approved rate of wages. So, a bulk of younger population goes the cities to work as wage labour. Being unskilled the wage rate is also very much poor for them. Because of abject poverty trafficking especially among the girls is wide spread in this area. Early marriage and early pregnancy are very common phenomena.

For transforming the fate of girls and women, education has been proved to be the best option. Education opens the world to them and through education they can develop themselves to stand on their own feet and lead a decent life. Their involvement in education can save them from early marriage, early pregnancy, domestic violence or being child labour. Only educated girls can bring about meaningful changes in the society where girls and women will no longer be the victims of social injustice.

Nishtha has been able to form Mahila Mandal and Kishori Bahinis bringing 10000 women and adolescents. All these adolescents have come up as well-informed and confident girls who not just negotiate with their

parents not to force them to marry and continue education but also support their fellow girls to fight against such age old norms making their lives almost hale. Now, all the stakeholders are also coming with their strong support for them after being sensitized by Nishtha

Jagaran Project came into being in 2014 to stand by these vulnerable girls to fulfil their dream of leading a life of their own choice. During this period, with the continuous support under this project about 174 girls have become able to continue their studies up to the college level which was completely impossible a few years back. A few girls have become succeeded to study in University also. These girls have acknowledged their indebtedness to ASHA for Education for providing the needful support for achieving the battle for dignity.

GOAL

Ensure retention of 148 at risk girl students of 6 villages of Bishnupur – I Block of South 24 Parganas district, West Bengal and empower them with formal education in mainstream schools and adequate knowledge, information and training.

OBJECTIVES

- I. Ensuring retention and continuation of 148 identified vulnerable girls till their completion of college education and reduction of dropout rate to 20% of the total project supported girls.
- II. Collectivisation of the girls in group viz. Kishori Vahini (adolescent girls group) to enhance their collective strength and courage. Enhancing their knowledge with regard to their basic rights, on reproductive health and hygiene and clear understanding on gender based discrimination and challenge the patriarchy as well.
- III. Collectivization of the mothers of the supported girls into Mahila Mandal (Women's group) for making them well informed and provide required support to their daughters to continue their studies as long as they can and to eradicate gender based injustice and violence from the community.
- IV. Enhancing level of awareness of parents, stakeholders and community members on the benefit of girls' education and creating a conducive environment for girls' education in their respective villages.

- V. Augmenting the skill through various training to the project supported girls for enhancing their competence to ma great extent to bag suitable job for making them self-reliant and support their own families.

BENEFICIARIES:

DIRECT

- **148 vulnerable girls** – to be supported under the project for continuing education, skill building and empowerment as a whole.
 - i. Fifty seven (57) at the Graduation level.
 - ii. Twenty six (26) at the Higher Secondary level.
 - iii. Rest sixty five (65) girls will be up to Secondary level.
- **148 women** – Mothers of these supported girls involved in Mahila Mandal and will capacitated as well.

INDIRECT

- **465 family members** of the vulnerable girls supported.
- **Entire villages** (Phingedauri & Damdama) – Project activities will have a positive impact over all the villagers for continuation of education of girls in their own village and reduction of child marriage, violence and discrimination against girls and women etc.

OBJECTIVE WISE ACTIVITIES

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES
I. Ensuring retention and continuation of 148 identified vulnerable girls till their completion of college education and reduction of dropout rate to	i. Ensure smooth admission of 148 supported girls into mainstream educational institutions (schools / colleges). ii. Provide needful support to the vulnerable 148 girls to continue their education: A. For girls up to Secondary Education: i. Enhance the process to ensure admitting of the identified at risk girls into formal school for continuing their education in formal school.

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES
<p>20% of the total project supported girls.</p>	<p>ii. Support them with required educational materials worth Rs. 300 to each project supported vulnerable girls with tuition fees amounting to Rs. 100 per month for 11 months (no support in December as examinations are held and progress reports are prepared in this month so they don't attend tuition centres)</p> <p>B. For students of Class XI & XII:</p> <p>iii. Ensure admitting the identified at risk girls in higher secondary schools for continuing their education in formal school.</p> <p>iv. Support them with required educational materials including tuition fees amounting to Rs. 300 per month for 11 months.</p> <p>C. For girls of graduation level:</p> <p>v. Ensure admission of the identified at risk girls into college for continuing their education.</p> <p>vi. Support them worth Rs. 400 per month for 11 months for attending the tuition centres.</p>
<p>II. Collectivisation of the girls in group viz. Kishori Vahini (adolescent girls group) to enhance their collective strength and courage. Enhancing their knowledge</p>	<p>i. Collectivise 148 girls supported into groups in their own geographical area.</p> <p>ii. Organise bi-monthly meetings with the groups to instil among them the life skill, leadership, training on reproductive health and so on.</p> <p>iii. Held informal sessions for the members by their respective group leaders.</p> <p>iv. Make them involved in various developmental initiatives.</p> <p>v. Organise capacity building training for 6</p>

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES
<p>with regard to their basic rights, on reproductive health and hygiene and clear understanding on gender based discrimination and challenge the patriarchy as well.</p>	<p>days duration for the core group members of 25 girls to be precise, the leaders and co-leaders of the groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vi. Held informal sessions in every quarter for the group leaders by the core group members to disseminate their learning. vii. Interaction on regular basis with the groups for motivating the members to raise voice against school drop outs and child marriage by the core group members. viii. Organise one day get together to realise their strength and share experience.
<p>III. Collectivization of the mothers of the supported girls into Mahila Mandal (Women's group) for making them well informed and provide required support to their daughters to continue their studies as long as they can and to eradicate gender based injustice and violence from the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Collectivise the mother's of supported girls into groups. ii. Held bi-monthly meeting with women's group members. iii. Conduct get-together of 500 women to enhance cohesiveness among them so as to they can work as a pressure group to ensure education of girl child, stop early marriage, gender discrimination, child labour and gender based violence, etc., acting as the major barriers of girls development. iv. Held informal sessions with the group leaders. v. Make them involved in different developmental programmes. vi. Make uninterrupted rapport with the community members to provide latest information on atrocities and discrimination against women and girl children as well.

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES
<p>VI. Enhancing level of awareness of parents, stakeholders and community members on the benefit of girls' education and creating a conducive environment for girls' education in their respective villages.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Conduct monthly home visits for sensitising the parents and other family members regarding importance of girl child education, ill-effects of early marriage and other social issues etc. ii. Held small group sessions with the community members. iii. Conduct one formal meeting and series of informal meetings with all the stakeholder in order to sensitise regarding importance of education, drop outs, ill effects of early marriage, gender discrimination, and gender based violence and make them acquainted with the project related relevant information. iv. Conduct stakeholders meeting to ensure support of them on the issues related to education and prevention of early marriage of girls etc.
<p>IV. Augmenting the skill through various training to the project supported girls for enhancing their competence to ma great extent to bag suitable job for making them self-reliant and support their own families.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. For those vulnerable girls have not been able to complete their secondary examination and cannot continue their education further, 20 such girls will be identified and vocational training will be arranged for them for making them capable of getting job and make them self dependent. II. On completion of their job training those 20 girls and another batch of 20 girls from Class XI & XII will be undergoing Spoken English classes as this is very much necessary requirement for having job or service. Due to lack of proficiency in speaking English, girls are facing trouble in getting good job. These 40 girls will undergo the said course in two batches and a qualified teacher will take session once a week for this course.

BUDGET :

The total budget amount Rs. 7, 82,600.00 for the period April 2020 to March 2021 has been estimated for running this project activity. Detailed budget is attached her in the attachment.
