

Proposal from Nishtha: USHA

Prepared by: Mina Das (Nishtha Secretary) - nishtha1975@gmail.com submitted in September 2020

Asha contact (co-steward) – Padmanava Sen (Padmanava.sen@gmail.com)

To mitigate the Effects of Covid and Amphan and threatening condition of girl children in remove village of South 24 Parganas

Lockdown has restricted movement of people and most of our beneficiaries are daily wage earners. If they do not work then they have to starve. None of them could go out so their incomes stopped. Other than this our beneficiaries were small and marginal farmers, shared croppers who cultivated vegetables and leafy green crops in small fragments of land to run their families.

No buyers came to buy their crops, because they could not, so they could not sell their vegetables /harvests anywhere. Later some buyers started coming and are coming even now but they are selling at prices quoted by buyers which are far below the usual prices. If there are lesser buyers bargaining cannot be done. So, people fell into hard days. With no work, no money, no food, and the ration doled out by the government being insufficient especially single parents, destitute grannies and the disabled their conditions became insufferable.

After this the terrifying, destructive Amphan Super cyclone destroyed everything. Houses, kitchen utensils, clothes, furniture all disappeared. So far they had a roof over their heads which Amphan snatched in its fury. They now started living in broken houses, roofless, along with harmful, insects and poisonous snakes and reptiles. Adding insult to injury came torrential downpours of the monsoons. The past 3 days has seen incessant rain because we are in the thick of the monsoon season- so it will rain. In this ultimate, hazardous condition, people are hapless and have lost mental peace and equilibrium.

In various villages where Nishtha has girl's groups and women's groups, which have leaders got down to save people in whatever capacity they could. Young girls armed with bicycles, visited the remotest parts of these villages to enquire about the well-being of these people. They gathered information from people if government rations were being distributed equally to the villagers. Other than this they enquired as to whether they were receiving the benefits of various government schemes. They are trying to stop child marriages and violence against girls and women.

Violence and abuse on women and girls increased alarmingly in lockdown. After Amphan disaster child marriage, trafficking, and school dropouts started. The parents said they would not send their children to school. They reasoned that their entire families had to wander to

various places in search of work to earn a livelihood to sustain their households. Amphan destroyed vegetable fields in full growing season, as it did to fruit orchards. Toy-like, twisting and turning large houses, large trees, electric poles, mobile towers, Amphan caused devastation in its fury. Breaking through barricades salt water from the sea drowned entire fertile fields. Maybe these saline fields will remain unproductive for 3 to 4 years. The rains that took place 5 days back has broken the rest of the barricade. We wonder what will happen. People are in perilous states in a menacing situation. Families had received some rations from the government and Nishtha storing them for 'rainy days'-to serve in distressing times like a nest egg. Men sold these rations to buy liquor and drink out of frustration. Even now men are drinking, beating their women and children, peaking domestic violence to the fullest.

Our leaders at Nishtha are trying very hard to save these women and girls. They are also trying hard so girl children can continue with online classes. They are requesting familiar teachers so that they can coach girls in small groups. They are trying very hard. However, we are limited in our resources however hard we try.

Traffickers have gone active. Luring parents with dowry free marriages for their daughters, good jobs in cities they are kidnapping girls from parents to unknown lands. We at Nishtha are panicking that the girls we see now 50 % of them may disappear within a month with fake marriages and promised jobs in the dark underworld of trafficking.

As a women's organization Nishtha's biggest duty now is to protect each girl so that each one does not become a victim of child marriage or get trafficked or drop out from school.

To achieve this easy way is, to ensure retention of girls in formal schools because they can be tracked immediately upon absence from school for 2 or 3 days. If the girl is not at school Nishtha tracks down her places of visit, whichever relative it is, by collecting the address or phone numbers. If families do not give contact addresses or phone numbers, the police and ChildLine are contacted for help for tracking. This is the way we have kept track of the girls over time, this way child marriages have been stalled, stopped trafficking and prevented school dropping outs. **ASHA FOR EDUCATION** has helped Nishtha tremendously over a long period of time in prevention of child trafficking, child labour, child marriages, gender discrimination and gender-based violence against girls and women in our district.

South 24 Parganas is a notorious district, not only in West Bengal but in entire India. It is a highly populated district and famous for cruelty amongst women and girls. Earlier West Bengal led the list in trafficking; now it stands third. In child marriage West Bengal is in dire straits as a state .40 .7 % child marriages happen in West Bengal whereas in the rest of India it is a total of 26.08%. This is a pointer to the terrible conditions of girls in West Bengal. The villages Nishtha works in, especially 11 to mention, **ASHA FOR EDUCATION** is of tremendous help especially in bringing down child marriage to 10 % and child trafficking to 8% so that these girls

can dream of a dignified life. Complete their education. From Jagaran project 35 girls have graduated. Right now 57 girls are at college among whom many have taken Honours subjects. We have lessened school dropouts to a large extent. Where 80% girls drop out at the secondary stage in West Bengal, Nishtha has brought down the dropout percentage to 30%.

Doing this work Nishtha has gained a lot of experience. When Nishtha with its experience in this complex time is not able to work for girls in its villages, for lack of funds, it wants to take the support of **ASHA FOR EDUCATION** to help protect girls in some villages through formal education. One village has been chosen where there are 24 girls, 14 to 18-year-old girls out of which 15 are secondary students and 9 are in class 11. Their education is influencing the Jagaran Programme in the surrounding villages. These leaders will be more active if they are helped to be educated through another programme. Jagaran leaders will ensure their retention and make it a child marriage free village. If we are given a chance Nishtha can do it. If they are not allowed, then it would be a sad situation. Every girl child in this district must be protected because times are troubled and dreadful. We expect future days would be more treacherous for people have lost the confidence to stand up against odds. Farming fields are lost, lost are their homes and source of food. In this emptiness, our girls have to be protected or all will be lost.

So, Nishtha is trying heart and soul to protect some girl children in a village called Kalash under Magrathat Block-II, near Jagaran Project Area. Nishtha has planned to provide protection to 15 hapless girls of different classes till 10th standard. 9 girls of this village have passed Madhyamik this year and have been admitted in 11th standard by Nishtha through the online process. But their parents are absolutely against such a step since they are shrugging off the responsibilities of these girls. Nishtha yearns to take these girls up to graduation level so that they could take up vocational trainings on English communication and computers. This would make them prepare for the present job markets and aid them in leading a graceful life. Such steps would basically prevent their early marriage or trafficking. Now, the 15 other small girls (just mentioned in the aforesaid lines) are blissfully unaware of the grim situation of their life, they might be married off to a total stranger and pushed into the abysmal depths of misery. Therefore, Nishtha wants to adopt these 15 plus 9 girls and prevent their early marriage or trafficking thereby giving them a dignified life. So a model village could be set up to lead the road ahead.

Name of Organization: NISHTHA		
Name of Project: Usha (Modified Jagaran Project)		
Project Period: 01.09.2020 to 31.03.2021		
S . L	Particulars (For a representative village)	Budget
		2020-21
A	Programme Cost	
1	Tution fees for 15 Secondary Girls (Class 6-10)	26,250.00
	Rs.250 x 15 Girls x 07 Months	
2	Tution fees for 10 Higher Secondary Girls (Class 11 and more)	35,000.00
	Rs.500 x 10 Girls x 07 Months	
3	Educational Materials	
	Rs. 500 x 25 Girls x 1 time	12,500.00
	Sub Total	73,750.00
B	Administrative cost	
1	Stationary	2,000.00
2	Travel Cost for staff,Volenteer etc.	3,500.00
	Rs.500 x 07 Months	
3	Miscellaneous Expenses	1,000.00
	Sub Total	6,500.00
	Grand Total (A + B)	80,250.00

This is a scalable proposal.

If we target 10 villages, the total amount needed will be INR 8,02,500.