



Sustenance

इसलोहोली ए.इ.
Annual Report 2021

Table of contents

03 Message from the President

04 Introduction

05 Programs We Fund

15 Sambhali U.S. Team

18 Financial Reports

19 Voices of Our Supporters

From the President of Sambhali U.S.

Sustenance. It is how we describe what gives support, endurance, or strength.

There is sustenance when a group of girls at the Sheerni Boarding Home help each other through another year of on-line learning. It is in their determination to graduate from secondary school and become the first women in their families to go to college.

There is sustenance when a group of women rise early in the morning to finish household tasks in time to get to a Sambhali Trust Empowerment Center. There, they will not only learn the skills to earn an income but also teach each other the power of mutual support.

There is sustenance when a woman facing another beating from her husband calls the Sambhali Trust hotline and finds she no longer is alone.

And sustenance is access to care and nourishment through the emergency food and medical supplies Sambhali provided as India faced devastation from Covid-19 last spring.

In our annual report, we are honored to share the stories of the women and girls of Sambhali Trust's programs and the staff supporting them. They not only endured a profoundly difficult year; they found ways to sustain each other and to build toward a future where their voices are heard.

You will also read of sustenance closer to home, as volunteers and donors worked together to grow Sambhali U.S. and to tell the story of the women and girls of Sambhali through our inaugural SUSTenance event.

Your generosity of time and treasure was transformed into the programs that brought empowerment rooted in community, the guiding light of education, and the haven of health and safety when all were so greatly needed. It became our Sambhali U.S. (SUS) SUSTenance.

With abundant gratitude,

Shereen



Our Sustaining Mission and Where It Takes Us

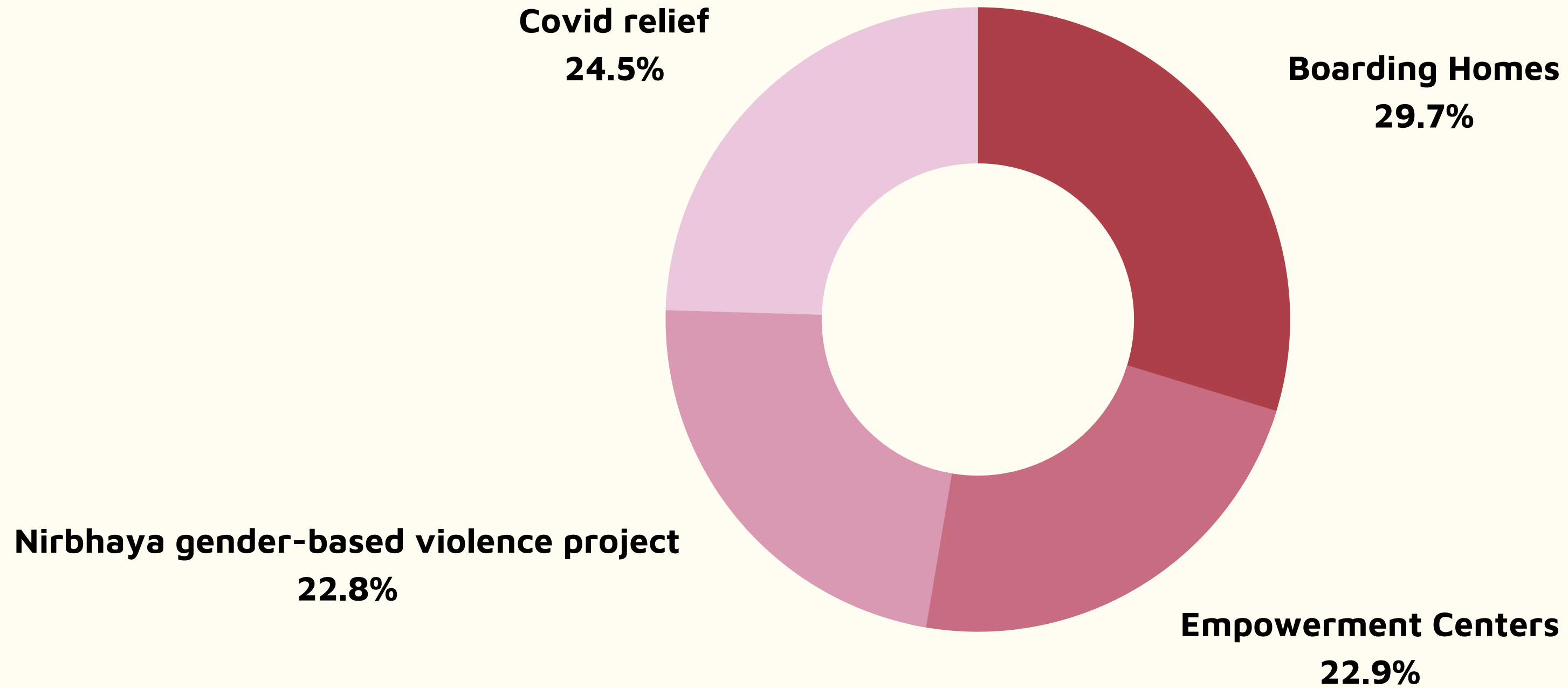
The mission of Sambhali U.S. is to support the courageous women and girls of Rajasthan, India, who seek to raise their voices with dignity and self-confidence, build a road to economic independence, and ultimately determine their own destinies.

At Sambhali U.S., we recognize that the barriers faced by women and girls of Rajasthan are complex and systemic. Rooted in centuries of discrimination, violence, neglect, and poverty, the challenges are interrelated and require a holistic response. We also believe that response is best created and directed by people living in the community.

With your help, Sambhali U.S. is funding programs of Sambhali Trust that tackle these problems in three overlapping areas. First, these programs aim to improve educational services for girls and women by fostering the literacy, numeracy, and vocational skills that help women to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Next, we fund initiatives targeted at ensuring their physical and mental health, safety, and wellbeing. And finally, the programs we support engender a sense of community and empowerment, giving women and girls the confidence to stand together to challenge those who would deny their worth. Through this three-pronged approach, not only will a generation of strong, capable, and talented women emerge, but they will continue to nourish and sustain this progress for generations to come.



In 2021, Sambhali U.S. provided \$70,000 in grants to support the following programs:



Education: The Key to Making Dreams Sustainable

In our rapidly changing and increasingly technological world, basic educational skills are necessary for economic survival and self-sufficiency. India's overall literacy rate of 77.7 percent trails the global average of 86 percent. Rajasthan, with a rate of 69.7 percent, lags behind all but one other state in the country. Even worse, the gender gap in Rajasthan is significant, with male literacy at 80.8 percent, compared with a 57.6 percent rate among females. It is estimated that only 16 percent of girls in Rajasthan complete secondary school.

The programs we fund aim to change this dynamic by providing educational and vocational skills for women and girls, sometimes enabling young women to be first in their families to attend college and graduate school.

The **Sheerni Boarding Home** serves as both a home and an educational base for 25 girls ages 12 to 18. While Sambhali U.S. does not sponsor individual girls, the generosity of Sambhali U.S. donors translated to opportunities for five girls in the Sheerni family in 2021. The Sheerni girls, who come mostly from the rural district of Setrawa, attend a private secondary school in Jodhpur and receive help from tutors and a housemother. In addition to a traditional academic curriculum, the girls also receive computer instruction and develop sewing skills. Once they complete twelfth grade, most will go on to attend college and graduate school.



"I was 8 years old when I first joined Sheerni Boarding Home. I am now 15 and in the 8th grade. My mother was only able to study until the 8th grade and was married off as a child. I am inspired by my teachers. My favorite subject in school is English. I love conversing in English. My aunt advised me that it is important to go to school and study hard, which is what I would say to another girl thinking about attending Sheerni Boarding Home. It is important to be something when you grow up. I am thinking about college already because I can learn and get a job with a degree and achieve my dreams."

Amena, age 15



Sambhali U.S. supported Sambhali Trust's purchase of space that houses a new boarding home known as **Abhayasthali**, or "Fearless Space." Currently, five former Sheerni girls, who graduated from secondary school, live in Abhayasthali while they attend college and graduate school. All are the first women in their families to attend college.

Abhayasthali offers the only viable opportunity for these young women to attend college. Even if they could afford to live on their own, doing so independently is far outside of cultural norms and they would face enormous social pressure from their families and their communities to return to their villages and be married.





Sambhali U.S. funds three Sambhali Trust **Empowerment Centers**. These three, along with others run by Sambhali Trust, provide women and adolescent girls in Rajasthan with vocational training in sewing and embroidery along with classes in Hindi, English, and math. Participants also learn how to start and manage their own businesses. At the end of the program, each graduate receives a sewing machine. Armed with that, along with basic literacy and numeracy skills, these women can embark on a road to self-sufficiency.



Has there been something—a person, place, experience, organization—that changed the trajectory of your life?

For Tara, this “something” has been the skills she’s gained through programs supported by Sambhali Trust. Tara's dream is to give her children a better life and education. At 22 years old, Tara starts her day at 4:00 am working as a rag picker. At 10:00 am she becomes a student at Laadli Empowerment Center, one of the programs that Sambhali U.S. supports. Tara is studying and learning sewing in hopes of starting her own small stitching business—her road to economic independence and fulfilling her dream.

Safety and Wellbeing: The Foundation for Building a Sustainable Future

Sambhali U.S. funds critical programs that promote the safety and the physical and mental well-being of women and girls.

With gender-based violence widespread in Rajasthan, it is crucial that women and girls learn to protect themselves through access to services and safe environments. Sambhali Trust's **Nirbhaya** ("Fearless") project, funded by Sambhali U.S., operates a toll-free helpline that provides direct assistance to women facing gender-based violence. In addition to taking emergency calls and referring women to the police and other services, Nirbhaya provides critically needed direct psychological counseling and legal support.

During the first six months of the 2021-2022 grant, which began on April 1, 2021, Nirbhaya received almost 700 calls from throughout the state of Rajasthan and provided direct services to nearly 100 women in the city of Jodhpur. These services include assistance with filing police complaints, direct legal assistance, and trauma and couples counseling. Nirbhaya also includes a robust educational campaign, holding workshops and distributing information to advise women about their legal rights and the support available through Sambhali Trust. And the Trust provides emergency shelter for women and their children facing gender-based violence.

The educational programs funded by Sambhali U.S. also emphasize physical and emotional health and safety by providing classes in self-defense as well as physical education and yoga. Women and girls at **Empowerment Centers** and **Boarding Homes** also participate in workshops on a wide range of health and safety issues including gender-based violence, health, and nutrition.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic refocused the world's attention on the importance of public health initiatives. During the second devastating wave of COVID-19 that hit India in the spring of 2021, Sambhali Trust mobilized to assist the greater Rajasthan community, building on its work in 2020. With financial support from Sambhali U.S. and others, the Trust provided food rations, distributed essential medical supplies, and produced and distributed masks. At the same time, Sambhali Trust led community-wide health initiatives encouraging mask-wearing and vaccination and held vaccination clinics for participants and their families.





"I was born in Setrawa and I have five sisters. Our mother used to dress us as boys and cut our hair short so she would not have to worry about men treating us badly. That is the only way our mother allowed us to go outside alone. Nobody is earning money in our family. Our father left his job as a stone miner seven years ago. He suffered a bad form of asthma. In the village, we could not go to school. Now, since I live at Sambhali Trust's Boarding Home, I can read and learn new things every day. When I grow up, I want to be a teacher."

Misha, age 9

Rita has been with Sambhali Trust for over 12 years. She first got involved at the Fatima Empowerment Center where she worked on polishing her sewing and embroidery skills while also taking Hindi, English and math classes before joining the Graduate Sewing Center.

Rita's work at The Sewing Center helped her create new relationships and build a family outside of home, a network of new connections in her community. Using her skills and connections, Rita was able to give back to her community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic by creating reusable masks. She was able to make an income through these extraordinarily challenging and unprecedented times while helping keep her community safe. Rita continues to give back by motivating other members of Sambhali to move forward and work to achieve their goals.

Eighteen-year-old Kashvi called Sambhali Trust's Nirbhaya hotline to say she had been held captive since age 9 as a domestic worker in a Jodhpur home. With the help of police, she was rescued and found refuge at Sheerni Boarding Home where she has become a part of the loving Sheerni family.

Empowerment: Rooted in a Sustaining Community



“Women's empowerment refers to the capabilities of a woman that enable her to make every decision of her life. When a woman decides to take the first step towards empowerment, it is benefiting the family, the village, and eventually, the entire country makes progress. In India, for empowering women, we need to change the backward thinking of the people.”

Rekha

To gain their voices and take agency over their lives, women and girls need the confidence that they can challenge societal norms and determine their own futures. That is why the programs that we fund stress female empowerment through curricular and experiential learning.

A critical component of the educational programs at Sambhali **Empowerment Centers** and **Boarding Homes** are workshops on topics that include women's health, legal rights, and women's history. Through interactive workshops, women and girls gain new perspectives on their ability to challenge long-held assumptions and forge their own destinies. At the same time, the Empowerment Centers and Boarding Homes serve as safe places where women and girls can speak about common experiences, support each other, and build a sisterhood.

The **Nirbhaya** gender-based violence project is also a vital part of the community built through Sambhali's holistic approach to empowerment. Survivors regain control over their lives. Some will also go on to participate in Sambhali Empowerment Centers and Boarding Homes building strength through sisterhood.





When you were a child, what did you want to do and be when you grew up? What if your fate was to be a child bride?

That used to be Saroj's destiny. But in 2013 Saroj joined a Sambhali Empowerment Center where she quickly impressed her sewing tutor with her skills. She then joined the Graduate Sewing Center where she has been helping complete Sambhali Boutique orders.

Saroj is now forging her path toward economic independence by taking sewing orders from people in her neighborhood, adding to her family's income. Through her network at Sambhali, she has access to financial support from a Self Help (microfinance) Group within Sambhali Trust and role models who help guide her in shaping the future she envisions.

Women, girls, and their male allies at Sambhali Trust participated in **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence**, an annual international campaign that begins on November 25th, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and runs until December 19th, Human Rights Day. The 2021 theme was “Orange the world: End violence against women now!”



The Sambhali U.S. Team

Our ten-member Board of Directors and numerous volunteers and interns bring their diverse experience and talents to drive Sambhali U.S. forward. Seven of our Board members have either visited Sambhali Trust's centers in India or completed a minimum ten-week volunteer engagement with the Trust. One member has family in Jodhpur. Our team has decades of experience and expertise in fundraising, communications, volunteer engagement, and non-profit-management.

Collectively, these professional and on-the-ground experiences provide the Sambhali U.S. leadership with a greater understanding of how best to support programs in Rajasthan and to direct funds to achieve the greatest impact. Our six committees encompass board members and many other devoted volunteers. They meet regularly, strategize, and work to advance our mission. The committees include Communications, Development, Executive, Finance, Governance and Board Development, and Volunteer Engagement.

The members of the Board of Directors also share a commitment to responsible and transparent management. This is reflected in the gold ranking we have earned with the charity rating organization GuideStar. [Read more about our Board of Directors here.](#)

Board Members at Sambhali Trust



Tanmay
Juneja



Sarah Abedin



Esther
Rodriguez

Spreading the Sustenance

In 2021, the Communications and Development committees collaborated to launch SUStenance events to give our supporters an easy way to share their passion for the work of Sambhali U.S. (SUS). The events can happen in a living room or online—or a hybrid of both. In May of 2022, we will hold the first SUStenance event for a corporate affinity group.

Guests learn about our sustaining impact on the lives of women and girls in Rajasthan by viewing video messages directly from them and from Sambhali Trust's founder and leader Govind Rathore. There are interactive segments, and a board member provides information and answers questions. All we ask of the host is to bring people together and tell them why they choose to sustain the women and girls of Rajasthan through Sambhali. The board co-host helps them with everything from the invitations to the thank-you notes. It's simple and meaningful—so much so that some attendees have been moved to become donors and volunteers. That's true SUStenance.

Meet Some of the Volunteers from Our Communications Committee



Hayley Corey

"As a communications volunteer, I help spread the word about the work of Sambhali U.S. and the empowering stories of the women and girls in India impacted by the organization's support. It's incredibly powerful learning how these women and girls are changing their trajectory."



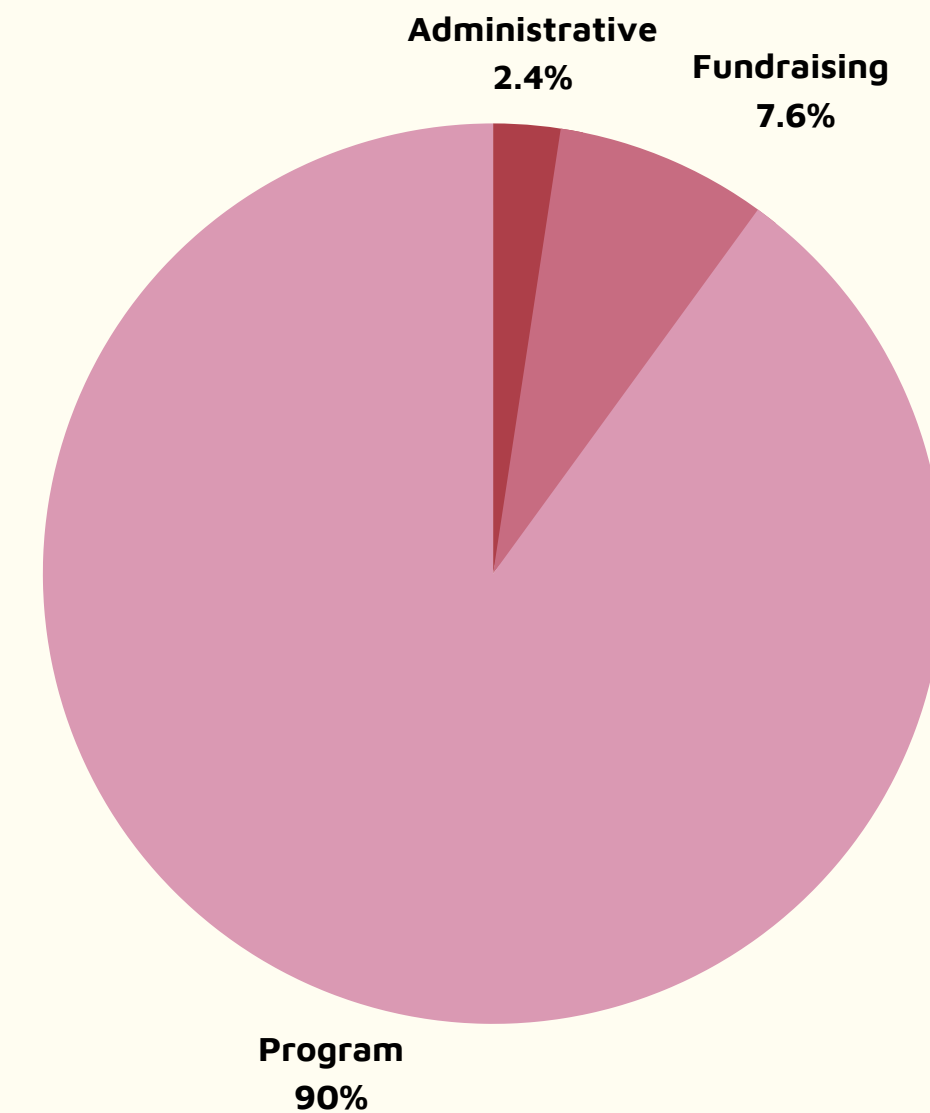
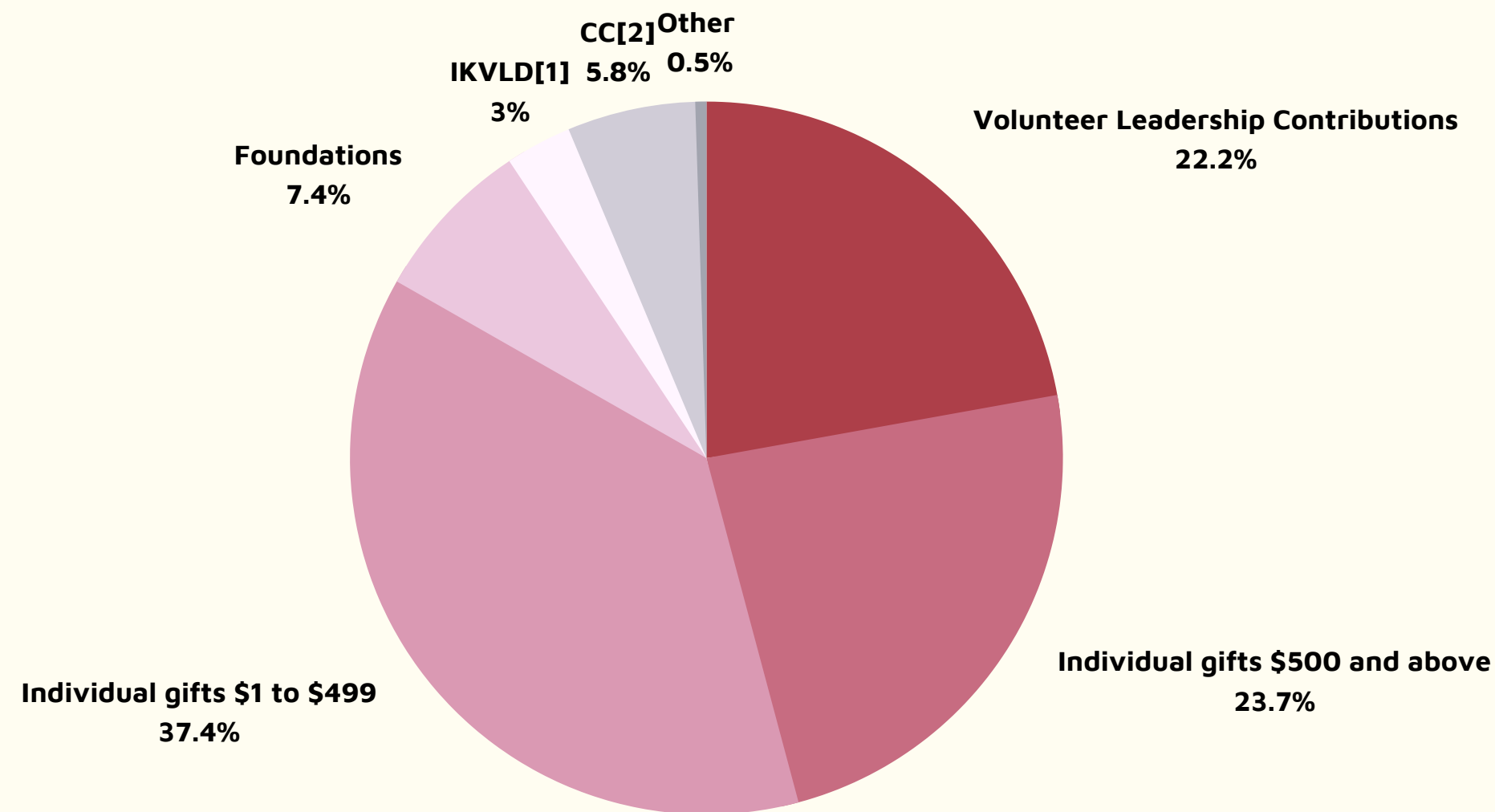
Anush Iyer

"As part of the Communications Committee, I volunteer as a web developer to manage the Sambhali U.S. website and also as a graphic designer. Being part of Sambhali U.S. has been a privilege for me. It truly is incredible to see the impact that Sambhali U.S. has brought about to help empower women and girls in Rajasthan, India. I am very proud to be a part of this wonderful organization."

We appreciate the generous support of our growing and diverse group of donors for investing over \$73,000 in Sambhali U.S. in 2021. By maintaining an all-volunteer organization and keeping administrative and fundraising expenditures low, Sambhali U.S. ensures that these contributions make a direct impact on the women and girls of Rajasthan. Last year, 90% of our total expenditures went directly to Sambhali Trust programs.

Income

Expenses



[1] In-kind volunteer leadership donations

[2] Corporate Contributions including matching donations

"Why do you support Sambhali U.S.?"

“

I SAW THE INSPIRING AND EMPOWERING WORK BEING DONE FOR AND WITH YOUNG WOMEN IN JODHPUR. IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO MAKE THIS PROJECT KNOWN OUTSIDE OF INDIA. SAMBHALI U.S. MAKES THIS POSSIBLE.

”
NANCY BRANDT

“

The simple answer is because I have seen Sambhali U.S. founder's extraordinary commitment to support women, regardless of race or religion. The organization's commitment to supporting the many ways Rajasthani women and girls are raising their voices and rebuilding their lives through Sambhali's programs is inspiring.

”
WAHIDA KARMALLY

“

The saying 'When women support each other, incredible things happen' makes me think of the women and girls of Sambhali.

”
KATHY BUTLER

“

Supporting girls' and women's empowerment is a cause close to my heart. I trust that the money I send is actually going to the intended beneficiaries and that the projects are conceived, guided, and directed by Indian people.

”
CATHERINE BERGMANN

“

I CAN'T THINK OF ANY CONTRIBUTION THAT GOES MORE DIRECTLY TO ACTUALLY HELPING PEOPLE. THERE ARE NO GIANT CEO SALARIES, NOT A LOT OF PROMOTION OR ANYTHING ELSE. SO EVERY DOLLAR YOU GIVE IS HELPING SOMEONE WHO REALLY NEEDS IT.

”
BOB MACAULEY

“

I am deeply moved by the intense dedication of Sambhali staff and volunteers in providing life-changing skills and knowledge to help women and girls create futures that would otherwise have been unimaginable. Sambhali U.S. is a key player enabling Sambhali Trust to reach more women and girls in increasingly meaningful ways.

”
JAN GOLDSTEIN

“

I love connecting with these girls, I learn so much from them. They are so dedicated to building a life for themselves.

”
KHUSHBU PATEL

Adventures in Altruism

Travel planner Erica Gragg lists India as one of her favorite global destinations. Her company, Escape to Shape, incorporates wellness, exploring new cultures, and giving back into the small group adventures it leads. In 2018 and 2019, this meant a stop at Sambhali Trust on its India tour.

Erica learned about Sambhali Trust through one of her travel partners in India. “The thing that stuck out the most is that they are doing something to empower young women. I love that by these women’s lives changing, it’s actually changing the generations to come.”

“There was a mutual excitement about them meeting us and playing with us, and we were so excited to be a part of it,” said Jeremy Fitzgerald who participated in the 2019 visit with her mother, also named Jeremy. “The connections happened so quickly.”

Erica echoed the sentiments. “There was a sense of connection and sharing that was really powerful and profound. We danced with them. They taught us Bollywood dances and sang songs.” The travelers had tears in their eyes when it was time to say goodbye.

The group had brought gifts for the students at Sambhali Trust – school supplies, nail polish, and the like – but their support didn’t stop there. In November 2019, Erica asked them to consider supporting Sambhali U.S on Giving Tuesday, the annual day of generosity after Thanksgiving in the U.S. They responded with an enthusiasm that helped launch Sambhali U.S.



Erica Gragg with students at Sheerni Boarding Home



Andrea Maltzer and students at the Sheerni Boarding Home

In 2020, when the Covid pandemic had seemingly shut down the world and enclosed everyone inside their homes, one of the travelers—Andrea Maltzer—began hosting free, weekly online yoga classes for about 25 people, most of whom had traveled together, “to keep everyone’s spirits high and healthy and [foster] a sense of community. It became very therapeutic and meaningful,” stated Erica. The group dubbed themselves the Saturday Yoga Tribe.

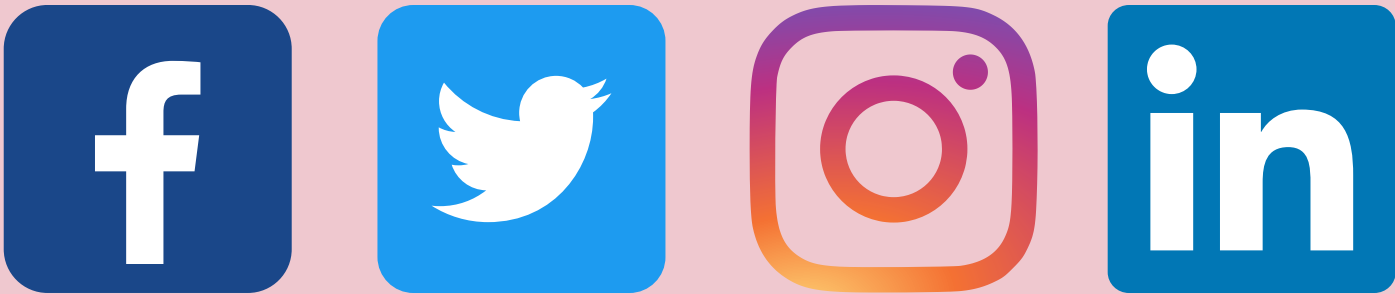
When Andrea wrapped up the classes in May 2021, the group wanted to thank and honor her for all she’d done to help them get through a very difficult time. It was a time when India was overwhelmed by the highest cases and death rates the world had seen, and the Saturday Yoga Tribe donated to Sambhali U.S. in Andrea’s name.

In that same month, many members of the Fitzgerald family donated to Sambhali U.S. as a Mother’s Day gift to the senior Jeremy. Soon after, it was the younger Jeremy’s birthday, and she ran a Facebook birthday campaign for donations to Sambhali U.S.

Donations to Sambhali U.S. rooted in Escape to Shape have totaled over \$5,000. “You can see from the donations the level of care and concern and really wanting to help keep Sambhali doing what it’s doing,” said Erica.

Jeremy credits Erica for helping make it all possible. “It’s not just a day visit. It stays with people. The support is very specific and direct, and it couldn’t happen without Erica and Escape to Shape.” The next trip is scheduled for February 2023, and it is sure to be just as meaningful.

For more information about **Sambhali U.S.** visit our website,
subscribe to our newsletter, and follow us:



100 Grant Ave.
Takoma Park, MD 20912
301-664-4146
info@sambhalius.org
EIN: 84-2288467