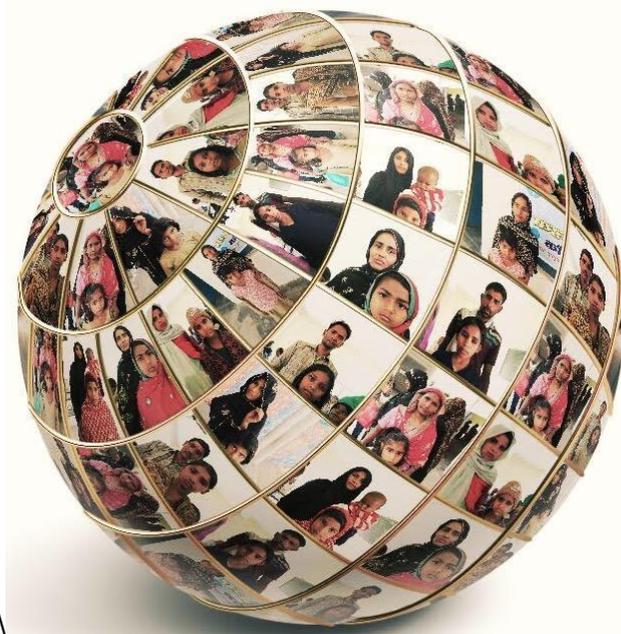


## SUKANYA SCHOLARSHIP PROJECT

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*Sukanya Scholars with parents in the camp*

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**VIDYA GYAN INDIA, Village KOTA (Saharanpur), U.P., India**

**ENCOURAGE EDUCATION. CULTIVATE KNOWLEDGE. ENABLE DEVELOPMENT.**



**Summary:** *Vidya Gyan sponsored 233 Sukanya Scholarships with an outreach in about 18-19 government primary schools following the visits and/or contacts with about 30 schools in 6 NPRCs in blocks Baliakheri and Gangoh of district Saharanpur.*

**Focus:** Young/adolescent girls and young women with the immediate goals: (1) securing better future for them, (2) quality and robust education to realize their full potential, (3) promotion of health through good nutrition, personal hygiene, and pro-health habits.

**Why India?** Because, India is an emerging economy with about 120 million girls under 10 years' old- a good age for cognitive and intellectual development. Of those, 75-80 million girls living in rural India are perhaps less privileged than their urban counterparts. Possibly half or more of them, attending a rural government primary school, may be “forgotten” in their own homes with far fewer opportunities. Why? Just consider the following:

- Preference for son; low value and neglect of girl child, female infanticide, higher childhood mortality; thousands of female fetuses aborted each month.
- Nearly half of India's girls (47%) married below the legal age of 18; ~18% below the age of 15.
- Lack of toilets in rural areas- women at risk of rape and sexual assault. The school dropout rates are significant and fewer girls in rural India have the opportunity for education beyond 10<sup>th</sup> grade- financial issues; no schools; social issues, and/or lack of parental willingness due to their own limited education

**Role of Mothers:** They nurture children beginning with parenting, education, nutrition, health, sanitation leading to the future economic security and independence. However,

- Women in rural India are often less well-educated with no economic security and independence of their own. They lack the empowerment to provide little or nothing for their own daughter(s); female literacy only ~ 65.5% (male literacy rate 82%). Now think about a girl born in such an economically disadvantaged family in rural India? Little or no HOPE for her future!

**VIDYA GYAN BELIEVES THAT WOMEN EMPOWERMENT** must start early and continue until the forgotten Sukanyas (girls) attain motherhood no sooner than age 18. In that spirit, Vidya Gyan undertook the following projects:

1. **SUKANYA SCHOLARSHIPS (SS):** Building a nest for girls under Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY); only to be used by the Sukanya when she has attained the age of 18 for education and/or marriage. Accordingly, Vidya Gyan:
  - Held 3 SS camps with post offices on site in the targeted communities (Table I on page 4) and initiated 233 Sukanya Savings accounts on the spot. About a dozen accounts were also opened by the State Bank of India. The parents, particularly, the mothers were coached about the benefits of SSY during the meetings and how/why they can/should secure the future of their daughters?
  - Offered Sukanya Scholarship of Rs. 500 which was matched by parents in equal amount to open a savings account (minimum Rs. 1000 required to open). We believe in the “Partnership with Parents” model so the parents have the ownership and assume responsibility to keep the accounts in good standing.

- Supported girls currently enrolled in government primary schools (generally from disadvantaged families) as verified by the respective school headmaster.
- Coached parents to develop the habit of mind- Rs.100/month to appreciate the power of incremental savings and deposit the required minimum of Rs.1000/year.
- Promised an additional SS of Rs. 200/year for the next five years when the required minimum (Rs.1000/ year) is deposited and the girl continued her education.

**OFFICE OF BASIC SHIKSHA ADHIKARI (BSA)** played a critical, crucial, and essential role in more ways than it can be described in words. While we missed the presence of BSA and his senior staff during the camps, their support, encouragement, and introductions with school headmasters and NPRC coordinators helped us carry our mission. The targeted areas included NPRCs: Kota and Pundain (Baliakheri block) and Gangoh, Budhakhera, Jhadban and Randheri (Gangoh block). Many schools were visited and discussions held with headmasters. The meetings were also held with parents from several schools in Kota NPRC. Following the meetings and discussions with different stakeholders, the camps were held at the locations and dates shown in Table I (page 4).

2. **STATIONERY FOR STUDENTS:** We noted that many children had no writing notebooks. Consequently, Vidya Gyan decided to launch a pilot project of distributing 2000 notebooks in select primary schools in Kota area. Unfortunately, the vendor delayed the delivery of the notebooks. Recently, school headmasters have recommended that the notebooks be distributed in July 2016.
3. **PROMOTE BETI BACHAO BETI PADHAO (BBBP) IN COLLEGES:** An effort was made to encourage the participation of students from high school and beyond to create posters and/or write essay to raise awareness and importance of BBBP, a critical initiative for the transformation of our society. However, the participation was limited due to inadequate publicity and the uncertainty of the camp dates. We had intended to invite 3 entries from each college to hold a regional competition and recognize the best posters and essays during the camp.  
An important outcome of this project is the possibility of a locally conceived and developed BBBP video through collaboration between the Government Girls Inter College and primary school in Kota. The initial steps including DIOS approval, funding by Vidya Gyan India, and a meeting among stakeholders are completed.

### **CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED:**

1. The biggest challenge faced was the lack of availability of District Officials due to the unanticipated elections for Jila Panchayat, MLA, and MLC one after another. In the end, we held the camp as best as possible with the support/help we were able to get. The postponement of the camp dates a couple of times (first due to school closure and then the elections) led to uncertainty to the whole process.
2. Initially, the Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC), with a branch in Kota and Gangoh, had assured us to open SS accounts but it backed out less than a week before the first camp on February 17. It was the biggest setback, frustration, disappointment, and OBC's failing in its commitment to rural community. *More surprising to note here is that none of OBC branches were authorized to open/operate SSY accounts in the entire Saharanpur district.*

3. Thanks are due to Post Master General and the staff in Saharanpur for opening SSY accounts at various locations at a relatively short notice. However, the post offices in Saharanpur area were completely out of the Passbooks which were to be delivered in a week or so following the initiation of the accounts. The unanticipated delay in the delivery of passbooks, by as much as 5-6 weeks, led some village folks question our intentions and integrity- an unforeseen but unfortunate indeed.
4. Advance planning and scheduling meetings was an equally interesting challenge.
5. A short survey conducted by Vidya Gyan revealed that while most girls aspired to become teachers (their role models everyday), there are some dreamers to become doctors, police officers, or beauticians. Clearly, their dreams can be realized only if they continue to remain in the schools/colleges and that is what Vidya Gyan hopes to accomplish even if we make a difference only for limited number of dreamers.

**FUTURE PROJECTS:** The challenges aside, Vidya Gyan remains committed to its mission of empowering the forgotten Sukanyas in rural areas of Saharanpur, expanding its network of government primary schools/communities around Kota and Gangoh. Accordingly, Vidya Gyan's Board of Directors have committed to undertake the following projects:

1. **Sukanya Scholarships:** Plans to hold 6-8 camps and offer about 1000 Sukanya Scholarships to grades 1-5 girls using the "Partnership with Parents" model. We hope that the camps will be comprehensive to include health checkups/promotion and education as the major themes with and assistance of the District Magistrate and other relevant officers. The camp dates will be determined following the announcement of dates of UP Assembly elections due in late 2016/early 2017.
2. **Rs. 200/year for Next Five Years.** Vidya Gyan will monitor the wellbeing of Sukanya Scholars and deposit Rs. 200 in their SS accounts.
3. **Stationery to Students:** Expand distribution of stationary to more schools depending on the outcomes of the pilot project.
4. **Sanitary Pads for Girls:** Continue to explore the implementation of the project in collaboration with DM, CMO, and/or Panchayat Raj. The possibility of manufacturing of sanitary pads by women for women and offer low cost sanitary pads to girls in rural schools. This will supplement the initiative announced by UP government. It is currently a significant public health issue in rural India which forces many girls to drop out of the school because of social and cultural inhibition.
5. **BBBP:** Continue raising awareness about BBBP among older students through posters/essay competitions or other means in consultation with DIOS.

### **VIDYA GYAN'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ PROJECTS (November 2014- March 2016)**

**Fund Raising:** Thanks are due to the generosity of friends, family, trust, corporate, and businesses; funds raised thereby sponsored the projects discussed above and below.

**Project 1 (March 2015). Vidya Gyan's Seed Grant (about \$33,000)** awarded to J.P. Adarsh Vidya Mandir Inter College, a co-educational institution for the project KOTA PRIDE (Projects and Resources for Integrated Development and Engagement) for Students and Teachers with a major focus on:

- A new library including a staff position

- Development of physics, chemistry, and biology labs
- Science/mathematics text book lending program (with a priority for girls)

The recipient institution (with Vidya Gyan’s assistance) has requested approval by the Home Ministry under Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA); the approval is awaited.

**Project 2 (March 2015). Rural Health and Education Camp:** The camp was chaired by the then Saharanpur DM who was accompanied by CDO and other district level officers including DIOS and BSA staff; CMO and 3 physicians from Primary Health Centers; 3 nurses; a lab technician; a pharmacist; and support staff served a total of 413 patients, primarily women and children, from 12 villages within a few kilometers of the camp site. It includes: Blood and Malaria test; immunization of children and pregnant women, and the distribution of contraception, iron tablets, and nutrition supplement

**Project 3 (April 2015). Resurfacing of Village Access Road** at the request of Vidya Gyan and paid for by the District Magistrate’s critical fund.

**Project 4 (April-June 2015). A Fund Drive for Nepal Earthquake Relief:** We collected \$2596 and sent to US based Ekal Foundation; building schools in Nepal.

**Project 5 (June 2015). Cooperative Bank Branch at Kota** through Vidya Gyan’s advocacy and efforts.

**Project 6 (August 2015). Successful Registration of ‘Vidya Gyan India,’** a sister organization to implement and monitor various projects in India. Vidya Gyan India has also begun fund raising efforts in India. We plan to seek tax-exempt status in the near future.

**TABLE I: SCHOOLS/ VILLAGES SERVED**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>SS accounts</b>	<b>Villages served</b>
KOTA +	February 17	117	Kota, Seedki, Lakhnor, Saidpura, Naya Gaon, Madki, Kurali & Umahi (Kota (26) and Kurali (21) topped the list)
JHARBAN	March 1	88	Jharban, Kalsi, Mohamadpura Gujjar, Radaur, Kutub Kheri, Dhanwa & Doobhar (Doobhar (29) and Jharban (19) topped the list)
SUKHERI	March 2	28	Sukheri and Lakhnauti (Perhaps missing a school in the list)
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>233</b>	<b>18-19 villages</b>

+Includes SS accounts from a minicamp in KOTA on March 3 at the request of school headmasters/parents who could not come on February 17. There were also a couple of inquiries from Gangoh area but it was not feasible to hold minicamps there.