

Encourage Education. Cultivate Knowledge. Enable Development.

(Established November 2014) <http://www.vidya-gyan.org/>



Purpose of Vidya Gyan: Focus on young/adolescent girls and young women, the future mothers. The immediate goals include: (1) securing better future, (2) quality and robust education to realize their full potential, (3) promotion of health through good nutrition, personal hygiene, and pro-health habits.

VIDYA GYAN'S ANNUAL NEWSLETTER (November 2015)

We are very pleased to share our accomplishments and possible future projects under consideration by Vidya Gyan. Your ideas are always appreciated/welcome. You can send us an email at vidyagyan2014@gmail.com or call us at +651 528 6763.

FUND RAISING (since inception in November 2014): Thanks are due to the generosity of friends, family members, trust, corporate, and businesses, we have raised a total of over \$43,000 in cash including Nepal Earthquake Relief fund. In addition, we have received stocks worth about \$20,000 (as of now).

OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS/PROJECTS:

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, in Kota (Saharanpur), a rural area, for

- 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), and ➤ Initiating a mentoring program.

The recipient institution, with Vidya Gyan's assistance, has been undergoing a mandatory approval process by India's Home Ministry under Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). We anticipate the formal approval soon to enable funds transfer and get the project underway during India visit.

Project 2 (March 2015). Rural Health Camp: 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.

- Blood and Malaria test,
- Immunization of children and pregnant women, and
- Distribution of contraception, iron tablets, and nutrition supplement

Project 3 (April 2015). Resurfacing of Village Access Road: At the request of Vidya Gyan, the access road was resurfaced which was 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 who is building schools and undertaking other charitable efforts in Nepal.

Project 5 (June 2015). Cooperative Bank Branch: Vidya Gyan's advocacy and efforts were successful in getting government approval for a bank's branch in the village which will be primarily used by the farmers for loans for fertilizer and other agriculture related projects/needs.

Project 6 (August 2015). Registration of 'Vidya Gyan India': We have successfully registered a sister organization which will be Vidya Gyan's face and will carry out/monitor future projects in India.

FUTURE PROJECTS:

Sanitary Pads for Rural Communities: Our readers may not be familiar that the adolescent girls in rural India have little or no access to sanitary pads during the naturally occurring period of menstrual cycle. In the emerging India's rural areas, the girls not only miss school during the menstrual cycle, but many of them drop out of school because of the shame, inhibition, and difficulty in managing the personal hygiene.

Fortunately, there are now indigenous machines to manufacture sanitary pads which are relatively inexpensive to install and reportedly the manufacturing cost of sanitary pads could be a few rupees/pad. A related issue is the safe disposal of the used sanitary pads for which there are low cost incinerators. There is also a project underway by a team of MIT graduates to produce low cost disposable pads using environmental friendly natural products for safe disposal.

While we have done due diligence on several of these machines, the ground reality will be assessed in the upcoming visit. Through visits of a couple of manufacturers and seeing the machines in operation, we will analyze the cost-benefit ratio, and assess if one or more machines can be installed, operated, and managed by a team of women in the rural settings. Vidya Gyan, with your support, would consider sponsoring one or more of these machines if we can confidently overcome the day to day operational, distribution, and management issues and make this micro-industry a worthy and sustainable project by and for the women in rural India.

Other Projects during India visit: The overarching theme during India visit, besides Sukanya Scholarship project, is networking, networking, and more networking to learn and re-learn about the developmental needs of rural India.

1. Talk with community leaders, school professionals, government officials to assess infrastructural needs for initiating future Vidya Gyan projects and/or advocating on their behalf.
2. Seek regulatory tax exempt status in India for 'Vidya Gyan India' which should allow tax deductible contributions made by individuals in India.
3. Work diligently to get FCRA approval and if possible get the library project off the ground/formally inaugurated.
4. Persuade secondary schools in select area(s) to host a debate competition around Republic Day under the sponsorship of Vidya Gyan and offer appropriate awards to the winners.
5. Recruit university/college students as paid interns to develop and undertake Vidya Gyan's current or future projects. In turn, we will offer them the opportunity to be mentored by Vidya Gyan's friends in the US.
6. Attend a conference in India, organized by Chicago based India Development Coalition of America, to build a network and gain a better/deeper understanding of India focused NGOs on education, health, and rural development. Similarly, I plan to attend a networking event for Uttar Pradesh NRIs and gain an understanding of developmental projects that could be of interest to Vidya Gyan in the future.
7. Discussions are also underway to visit Haryana, Punjab, and Odisha to assess the feasibility of holding camps for opening saving accounts and offer Sukanya Scholarships, and other projects where Vidya Gyan may partner with other like-minded organization/individuals, and initiate fund raising.

Vidya Gyan is your organization; it needs your continuing support both voluntary and monetary. Your ideas/input are equally critical for Vidya Gyan's growth and building partnerships with individuals, community organization, and business/corporate. Please consider donating generously to help those in need to be better educated and nurtured to realize their full potential.