

# ANNUAL UPDATE

# INDIA

## VARANASI



**Together with your sponsorship, children and families are making positive changes in Varanasi. Learn more about the valuable ways we work with children and communities.**

This year, education and career planning were top priorities. Students were empowered with information, resources and opportunities to help them learn and succeed.

Together, parents and youth learned about the importance of girls' education, parental engagement and the community's role in promoting education. As a result, young people — and their families — have a brighter future ahead.



**1,530**

Parents learned about inclusive education



**2,903**

Youth participated in the Child Creative Festival



**6,865**

Children learned about student governance

**“PLAN IDENTIFIED ME AS VULNERABLE TO CHILD MARRIAGE. (THEN) I WAS ENROLED IN CLASS. I AM HAPPY AND THANKFUL.”**

Aarati, 14-year-old Sponsored Child





**NAME: KANCHAN**

**AGE: 19 YEARS OLD**

**DREAMS TO BE: A  
POLICE OFFICER**

**“MY PARENTS SACRIFICED A LOT. IT IS TIME I START WITH SOMETHING THAT SUPPORTS MY JOURNEY.”**

## Meet Kanchan

**Like the child you sponsor, Kanchan is making steps towards achieving her goals and building a stronger future for herself.**

Kanchan is an outstanding student who loves to read. Her favourite subject is history, and she's passionate about Indian culture. And while cultural norms may disregard girls' education, Kanchan is on the path to a bright future.

## Facing Obstacles — With Support

Kanchan's large family didn't believe girls need to attend higher education, and discouraged her from taking Service Commission exams to get a government job.

Yet Kanchan is active in her Plan India community. She participated in the International Day of the Girl Takeover Event, and has a leadership position. She also has access to Plan India's Paramarsh resources.

Paramarsh is a unique service for career guidance and counselling services, enabling at-risk young women like Kanchan to make informed life choices. Through the programme, Kanchan and her parents participated in a series of dialogues to help facilitate a supportive environment for Kanchan to pursue her dreams.

## Leading by Example

Yet even with her parents' eventual approval and Kanchan's acceptance into college, the financial obstacles were still high. Through Paramarsh resources, Kanchan was able to start her academic journey towards higher education: She received a scholarship from the International School of Canada for a 6-month-long course. Now Kanchan is enrolled as an undergraduate in Political Science with Honours from the School of Open Learning University.

In leading by example, Kanchan will help create change in her community so that other girls can pursue their dreams.



*Kanchan is a role model*

# OUR PROJECTS IN VARANASI ARE HELPING CHILDREN THRIVE



Empowered students and engaged parents have addressed issues related to school enrolment and retention, especially for girls.

## EDUCATION FOR ALL



**Education is key to children's growth and independence.** Yet many children, especially girls, are unable to access their right to an education due to socio-economic and gender barriers. And, girls are often left out of leadership roles.

The Sopaan Project aims to improve educational access and gender equality in school. This year, 10,256 parents, teachers and students attended meetings to learn about the importance of girls' education, parental engagement and the community's role in providing support. The project also helps form Child Cabinet student government programmes. In Varanasi, 1,296 children formed 108 Child Cabinets.

As a result, children developed leadership skills, adults are clear about their responsibilities for encouraging children's education, and student enrolment and attendance increased.



## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE



**Many youth lack the information and support needed to develop employable skills and plan for their futures.** The Paramarsh Career Guidance Support project helps young people by providing resources for future planning.

As a result of the programme, hundreds of young people accessed educational opportunities, parents were better able to support their children, and participants became change-makers and peer role models.

A career fair was a highlight of the programme this year, providing 513 adolescents with information on technical programmes and vocational training opportunities. In addition, a Parents' Meeting helped adults learn how to support their children's dreams for the future.

"There was a financial problem at my house and my father stopped my studies. Plan staff told me that it is very important to study, then she also called me to a meeting. We also went to the career fair, and now I'm back in school." - **Gudiya (14) from Varanasi**



# YOUR SUPPORT MEANS BETTER FUTURES



The best is yet to come — and together we will continue to work for a brighter future for the children in Varanasi.

- Drop-out rates for pupils remain high. Through Project Sopaan, we will continue to advocate for improved school enrolment and help students stay in school.
- Many adolescents lack information about sexual and reproductive health. Trained Peer Educators will help address the challenges of adolescents and youth. Youth Groups will help provide resources on reproductive health rights and services.
- 15% of women aged 20-24 were married before age 18. We will continue to promote the welfare and well-being of girls and young women — especially those at risk of early marriage.

Thank you for your continued support.



“We at Plan India are deeply indebted to our donors and hope we get more chances to work on successful collaborations in the future.”

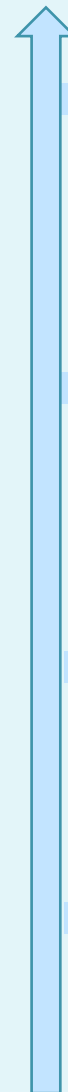
**Shyam Prakash Singh**  
Programme Area Manager

## THE PLAN EFFECT



Your sponsorship commitment is turned into effective long-term change – providing help for self-help. We involve children at the centre of all projects, bringing effective and sustainable solutions to families and communities. With Plan's Effect, your commitment helps empower communities to transform their lives and futures.

## THE LAST 12 MONTHS



**JULY**

**10,525**

Girls learned about their constitutional rights



**AUGUST**

**26,461**

Youth attended sessions with peer educators



**NOVEMBER**

**3,115**

People learned about child marriage through puppet shows



**DECEMBER**

**544**

Peer educators trained on sexual and reproductive health

