

## Varanasi India

**Positive changes are happening in Varanasi. Learn more about how we're supporting children and girls' rights through our collaborative, equality-driven work.**

Plan International has been a proud partner of communities in Varanasi, also called Kashi or Benares, since 1999. Located in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, Varanasi – with its temples and proximity to the Ganges River – is considered one of the seven sacred Hindu cities.

Though close to 100% of children in Uttar Pradesh are enrolled in primary school, just 69% make it to secondary school. Gender inequality in education is a serious issue in this region, as 77% of men are able to read compared to just 57% of women.

This year, with your help, we connected with 9,720 families in a massive 'back to school' community enrolment campaign spanning 136 villages in Varanasi. 102 volunteers stepped up to become tutors and mentors, helping students in reading and maths so that no one falls behind.

**"Thanks to Plan's continuing education programme, I am currently attending university."**  
– Mumak (17)



Students reading books from their new library.

### Impact in Numbers

# 2,240

**children have been enrolled in school**

# 29,920

**students improved their handwashing technique**

# 22

**clean water fountains installed at local schools**

# Knowledge Is Power



**NAME:**

**Nakshatra**

**AGE:**

**12 years old**

**DREAMS TO BE:**

**An engineer**

**“School is very important to me. I see how it helps children, especially girls, become independent and reach their goals.”**



## **Meet Nakshatra**

**Like many girls in Varanasi, Nakshatra is optimistic about achieving her goals and building a strong future.**

Since Nakshatra's father died, the student has been living with her mother, aunt and sister. Their economic challenges and some powerful lessons in leadership are pushing Nakshatra to build a brighter future.

## **Determination for Education**

Nakshatra and her sister are breaking a cycle in their family: unlike their aunt and mother, both girls are getting an education. Today, Nakshatra is in Grade 7, and her sister has completed Grade 10.

Most women in Nakshatra's community earn money as maids or as daily wage workers. Today, Nakshatra's family is in debt. Knowing the heavy weight of poverty, Nakshatra dreams of becoming an engineer so that she can support her family and buy them a new house or things like chairs and a bed for her mother. Nakshatra knows that education is a fundamental tool – not only to achieve her own goals, but also for all children, particularly girls.

## **Learning and Leading**

Since 2023, Nakshatra and her sister have been members of Plan International's Children's Forum, a Youth Leadership Programme with a special focus on empowering young women.

As a member of the Children's Forum, Nakshatra is committed to getting children back to school. Until today, with Plan International's support, she helped four girls get back to school, including her older sister.



Nakshatra, her sister and their friends play carrom, an Indian board game.

**We Currently Work With 4,487 Sponsored Children In Varanasi**

# Projects That Support Lasting Change

## Health and Hydration

**Children in Varanasi are vulnerable to water-borne illnesses.**

Many children don't have regular access to handwashing, healthcare or clean drinking water. As a result, sicknesses like diarrhoea are prevalent. Left untreated, these illnesses cause alarmingly high rates of fatalities in young children.

We have teamed up with 146 schools to install permanent 'hand hygiene corners' that make regular handwashing easier than ever. In total, 29,920 students have learned more about how to properly wash their hands.

We also worked with 950 healthcare service providers to discuss the early identification, prevention and treatment of water-borne illnesses. Today, local health centres have 20,000 sachets of nutrient-rich rehydration tablets.



The inauguration of a new water filter at a school in Varanasi.

# 6,600

**Students now have clean drinking water at school**



Young women made educational placards about domestic violence and girls' rights.



Shraddha is one of 20,000 young women who have learned more about online safety.

## Safer Together

**14.4 million young women nationwide were married before their 18th birthday.**

We are working with community members of all ages in Varanasi to empower girls and young women, strengthen existing safety mechanisms and educate everyone about girls' rights. In addition to training 10 youth advocates and 8,595 girls and women about local laws that protect girls' rights, 150 girls stepped into leadership roles as part of the 'International Girls' Day' takeover event.

We're also taking a closer look at online safety and security, as many crimes that happen online go entirely unreported. As part of the 16 Days of Activism campaign, more than 20,000 young women learned more about gender-based violence online.

**"I'm more cautious now about what I post and which friend requests I accept."**

— Shraddha, 11-year-old, from Varanasi

# You're Supporting a More Equal Future



Roshni, 16-year old, Sponsored Child, has been involved with Plan International since childhood.

**Together, we're working to create a more just world.**

- Girls in Varanasi are continuing to drop out of school at alarming rates. We will strengthen our remedial tutoring programmes to support the continued education of all students.
- Using a combination of vocational training and alternative education facilities, we will also help provide students with options for ways to stay in school in accessible, realistic ways.
- 25% of young women in Uttar Pradesh are married before their 18th birthday. We will continue to work with schools, parents and local leaders to raise information about girls' rights.

## Message from Plan Staff

"Your support has enabled us to improve services, facilitate access to education and healthcare and empower communities. Your contribution has been instrumental in helping us drive positive change and leave a lasting impact on our community."



Shyam Prakash Singh,  
Programme Area  
Manager,  
Varanasi

## The Plan Effect

Sponsored children are at the centre of everything we do, and they help plan our programmes based on what's important to them. Sponsors' donations are a gateway into a community. This helps build trust and credibility to attract even more funds from new sources. This makes more sustainable programmes possible in sponsorship communities. This powerful synergy is something we call The Plan Effect.

## Progress in Numbers

**250**

**children have  
returned to school**

**6,000**

**new mums  
planted healthy  
home gardens**

**136**

**new libraries were  
built in the  
communities**

**23,000**

**boys and men  
learned about  
girls' rights**