

# The Veerni Project 2018 - 2019



**“A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and transform.”** Diane Mariechild

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# ***Mission Statement***

***'Veerni' in Hindi means a woman of strength and courage. Our mission is to educate and empower girls living in villages in the outskirts of Jodhpur in order that they may live healthy and fulfilling lives free from social and economic discrimination.***

***Our intention is to make every young girl admitted to our program a 'Veerni' in her own right, capable of making independent and powerful life choices.***

***We consider education to be the pillar from which all empowerment begins. To this end, Veerni provides a safe, secure and nurturing environment in which girls receive an excellent secondary and high school education, alongside nutrition, health care and a balanced physical and extracurricular regimen. We endeavor to provide viable vocational options, so that Veerni girls are capable of leading independent lives and being actively involved in their communities.***

## **VISION**

***Veerni believes that true democracy depends on the full participation of women in their communities, and that education is the most effective instrument to secure this end. We envision a world where all girls, irrespective of class, caste and economic status can exercise their basic human rights and make independent life choices.***

## Women in India Today

We cannot deny that the world still shows a profound neglect for women's health, education and wellbeing. In India, some progress has been made in respect to women's maternal mortality rates. Interestingly, at the G8 meeting in Hokkaido, leaders for the first time discussed maternal deaths as a crucial obstacle to development. In India, maternal mortality rates have improved steadily, and programs have been put in place to ensure safe motherhood. In certain states, such as Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, women get 1400 rupees (\$32) to spend on whatever maternity service they choose. Whatever programs are in place, most of the funds don't necessarily reach the population who needs it. Public health for rural women remains a huge challenge and there is little change in the 26 years that Veerni has worked in the villages of the Thar Desert. There is no cancer screening, particularly for cervical cancer, the biggest killer of women in India.

India's agricultural productivity remains appallingly low but employs 60% of the population. It contributes just one percent to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Many of the Veerni girls come from agricultural backgrounds. For many mothers of Veerni girls, it is still their main unpaid occupation. They want their daughters to have a better future.

Importantly, in the last election, as many as 21 million women were not on the voter rolls including many Muslim women. There is still a social resistance in some families and communities to allow women to vote. Due to the skewed sex ratio - 50 million women missing - the number of missing women can determine election outcomes negatively.

The female labor force in India remains very low at 27% versus near 80% for men. Women's employment has a strong impact on GDP. As a result, India ranks 120 out of 131 countries in female labor force. As we all know, valuing women and girls is a critical factor in making societies more prosperous.

In this challenging context for women, all the above shows how important the work of the Veerni Project is in educating young women for a better future in India and for them to access the workplace to take their rightful place in Indian society.

# The Veerni Institute

The Veerni Institute, since 2005, is a full-fledged boarding facility for girls only, opened during the school term of July through April, located in the city of Jodhpur.

The girls come from low-income families from far-away villages where secondary schools are non-existent or too difficult to get to. They attend secondary schools in the city and live at the Veerni Institute. The boarding facility model aims at optimizing educational opportunities for those children from rural Rajasthan, a segment of the population most susceptible to child marriage. At present 91 girls are housed at the Veerni Institute.

## Schools:

The Veerni girls are attending two private schools called the Apex School and the Gopal Bal Vatika School. The schools have been providing transportation to the facilities for the Veerni girls.

S. No.	Name of school	Number of girls
1	Apex Senior Secondary School	37
2	Gopal Bal Vatika Senior Secondary School	54
	<b>Total</b>	91

The following items have been issued to each girl:

Name of item (each girl)
Stationery
Books
Notebooks
Uniforms
Shoes and Socks
School Bag
Other stationery (covers, label, pen, pencil, erasers, sharpeners and geometric box)
Hair-oil
Soaps (for bathing and washing clothes) and soap case
Comb
Toothpaste and toothbrush
Shampoo
Brush for washing clothes

## Extra Tuition Classes

The girls receive additional help with their schoolwork. Veerni has arranged extra tuition classes for all the girls at the Institute. For senior classes 10, 11 and 12, teachers were appointed for Mathematics and English in the month of August. For classes 6 to 9 and 11 extra classes are arranged at the Veerni Institute, led by Ms. Saroj Kanwar and Ms. Vimlesh.

## Academic Results

Results for academic year 2018-19

Class	Number of girls	Passed
Class 6	10	10
Class 7	11	11
Class 8	16	16
Class 9	17	17
Class 10	11	11
Class 11	10	10
Class 12 (Arts)	14	14
Class 12 (Science)	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>91</b>

## English Skills Class

Good knowledge of the English language is very important in today's environment because knowing English will certainly pave a way to better employment opportunities in a competitive environment. Therefore, it is very important that we try and equip our girls at the Veerni Institute with English language knowledge. Capacity building is the prime priority of education which is not possible without a good command of English.

English is a second language for the girls at the Veerni Institute. These girls are coming from rural areas where they hardly hear English words. As a result, it is more challenging for them to learn the English language.

On August 8, 2018, English language classes commenced at the Veerni Institute. Mr. Adhiraj, Director of St. Xavier School, was appointed for the job, along with two other teachers who come every day to the Veerni Institute to provide English lessons to the Veerni girls. The course is named: "English Made Easy" and the aim is to enable and build confidence in the resident girls at Veerni. This would enable them to face the outside world with a better approach. For this reason, the course has been spread into 72 sessions, plus a couple of revision sessions in-between, in such a way that their study and holiday weeks are not affected, and the course continues smoothly. In the first phase, 45 girls were selected for the English class. Their teaching method is very different from the traditional teaching methods; they use audio-visual aids and projectors which make it a lot of fun for the girls. The girls are enjoying the English class and they eagerly await each lesson.

With the comfort of knowing English as a second language, the students are showing real changes in their lifestyles. Looking back at the two interaction sessions we had before the start of the project, it was evident that the understanding of the language was merely 10%-15% in most of the students which has now gradually increased to at least 40% - 45%.

Apart from the understanding part, only 5% of the student's present were able to recognize and were familiar with the spoken language. This percentage has also increased to 75% – 80%, i.e., most of them now understand the simple phrases said to them. Another major area of development is their thinking skills in a language; from day one we were working on their thinking skills in the specified language where they have shown enormous improvement. When we started, the percentage of students who were capable of thinking in English was almost 0% which has now changed to 35% -40%. Responses to simple phrases and conversational skills have also improved to a great extent. The girls are more confident and can start conversations without fear. Their learning process could be accelerated by giving them more exposure to the language in the form of repeated hearing of the conversational videos and audios during the time they spend in the dining hall.

The following are the objectives of the English class:

1. To provide the highest possible quality in English language teaching to all the girls of the Veerni Institute in a fun and relaxing way.
2. Enhance and encourage the use of English language in specific skills (Reading, Speaking, Writing and Grammar).
3. Getting to know current technology news (current information technology).
4. Improve the quality of students.
5. Enhance the communication skills in the girls so they will have a better future through the English language.
6. To bring a positive change not only in the lives of girls but in the society.



## Half -Yearly Examination

In the month of December, half yearly examinations were conducted for all the girls. Results of half yearly exams were declared on January 21, 2019. All the girls have passed their exams with good marks and are now focusing on the annual examinations.

## Sewing, Arts and Crafts

Sewing and Arts and Crafts classes are conducted regularly at 5:00pm at the Veerni Institute.



## Computer Skills Program

Last year, the computer lab was established with 22 computers and furniture. The lab has internet connection and Wi-Fi.

In this current academic year, computer classes were started on July 25, 2018. We are providing quality education and practical orientation to the Veerni girls under a qualified training instructor. 90 Veerni girls have been benefiting from the computer course. School syllabus is also followed by the computer teacher so girls will achieve good academic marks in their annual exams.

Veerni's aim is to train the Veerni girls to become skilled, productive and creative in computer-related jobs.

A qualified teacher was hired for the computer lab along with a qualified assistant. Veerni's matron is also teaching a computer course to the Veerni girls. The teaching methodology is focused not only on theoretical knowledge of computer but also providing appropriate and inexpensive active learning materials. This active learning material helps to clarify the concept of students by providing them with hands-on experience.

The following are computer courses currently being offered:



## Introduction to Computers

Veerni girls have very little experience with computers because of their rural background and most of the girls had never seen a computer prior to joining the Veerni Institute. The goal of this course is to illustrate how important computers are in modern society and their value in solving problems. Initially, the course was conceived to boost the concept of introducing a course on computer operations and functions. Specific topics include the use of software applications, the Internet, basic computer functions and the proper identification of computer hardware components.

## Keyboarding

Typing is a key component of computing. Many job hunters lack adequate keyboarding skills. This course enables girls to learn the basics of touch-typing by using a computer program, such as FastType for Windows. Senior girls who have been already attending computer classes in previous years can use a typing program to improve their speed and accuracy.

## Basic & Advance Course

The objective of the course is to impart basic level computer appreciation program with more emphasis on hands-on training. The program can equip the girls to use the computers in their day-to-day life for professional and personal reasons. After completing the course, the incumbent will be computer literate and will be able to:

- Acquire confidence in using computer techniques available to users;
- Recognize the basic components of computers and terminology;
- Understand data, information and file management;
- Microsoft Office (in detail): Knowledge of Microsoft Office is extremely important when searching for a new job. Many employers expect job seekers to have a basic understanding of Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint. This class typically covers the basics of how to set up a document, use a spreadsheet and create a presentation. (Like Create documents using Word processor, Spreadsheet & Presentation Software)
- Understand computer networks, Internet;
- Browse the internet, content search, email and collaborate with peers;
- Use e-Governance applications;
- Use computer to improve existing skills and learn new skills.

The total duration of the courses are 47 hours, consisting of: Theory 15 hours, Tutorials: 7 hours and Practical 25 hours.

Classes are conducted every evening from 6:00 to 7.00pm.



## Self-Defense Classes

Self-defense, especially for girls and women, is of the utmost importance in the world we live in today. Women, usually referred to as the weaker sex, are considered easier targets. In a country like India, where the cases of gender violence are on the rise, many cases unreported, self-defense for girls and women has become a necessity. The mindset of the people, including the victim and the witness, is to ignore it and not report it. We as responsible citizens of an independent country, fail to realize that these instances of harassment can lead to more heinous crimes against girls and women. Therefore, the importance of learning self-defense techniques for the Veerni girls is a priority, and help the girls become vigilant of their surroundings.



There are so many stories of women who face sexual violence or random attacks by strangers, as well as being abused by people they know and trust. In fact, many women who are training in self-defense usually choose to begin after they have been a victim of assault.

The outcome of the self-defense classes are:

- Improving girls' self-confidence
- Helping to reduce dependency on others
- Being able to handle dangerous situations
- Develop self-discipline
- Improve girls' physical conditions
- Improve girls' street awareness
- Creating a positive influence in the girls' life



The self-defense training began on August 1, 2018 with qualified teachers. The course is provided for all Veerni students. Each Veerni girl will have the opportunity to learn self-defense training. The girls will be divided into three groups and each group will be instructed by one teacher. The training sessions are conducted every Sunday for one hour.

## Health Care Activities

The Veerni Institute takes issue of well-being of its students very seriously. The girls are treated by an experienced physician at the Veerni Institute in case of any medical issue.

Veerni is careful about the safety and well-being of every girl and takes no chances when it comes to their health. We understand the worries that the parents/guardians may have for their child's wellbeing when staying at the Veerni Institute.

Dr. A. S. Deora, senior physician, monitors the overall health of the Veerni girls and visits weekly to examine them. Ms. Vimlesh Sharma, a full-time nurse, along with volunteer Syiona Rao looks after the health care services at the Institute daily.

The medical camp is conducted every year. General physique, dental checkup, vision and hearing tests are conducted.

Medical room: The Veerni Institute has a well-maintained room to accommodate the girls falling sick. The medical room is cleaned regularly with antibacterial cleansers. There is a bed in the medical room and bed covers are sterilized and changed on regular basis. The medical room is equipped with first aid medicines.

### **The following health care activities were organized at the Veerni Institute:**

- General Health Camp: July 29, August 5 and August 8. General health camps were organized for all the Veerni girls. Dr. Deora provided his services for these camps.
- Sanitary Napkins are provided to the girls on a regular basis.
- Vaccinations for all the new girls were done on September 21.

## Other Activities and Events at the Veerni Institute

### **Independence Day Celebration**

The 15th of August is the most important day in the history of India. On this fortunate day, India became free after many centuries. The main function is held at Red Fort in Delhi, where the Prime Minister unfurls the National flag. It is an occasion of celebration for every Indian and the whole nation celebrates a holiday from work and pledges to work wholeheartedly for the development of the country and the preservation of Independence. All those who have stood out exclusively in their respective field of work are honored in public meetings. The whole nation pays homage to the security forces who have laid down their lives for the honor and security of the country.

Independence Day was celebrated at the Veerni Institute with great pride and joy. The ground was cleaned and decorated for the occasion. A flagpole was put up at the top in the ground building. There was great enthusiasm among the Veerni students, they were all in uniform.

Parbat Singh performed the flag-hoisting ceremony. All the Veerni girls stood in attention to give a salute to the flag. After the flag ceremony, The Indian National Anthem (Jan Gan Man) was sung. Sweets were distributed to all the girls on the occasion.

### **Teachers' Day Celebration**

Teachers' Day was celebrated with immense zeal by the Veerni girls on the 5th of September. It is a day to pay respect to the teachers and thank them for their efforts and hard work to nurture the students.

The Veerni girls performed many activities on that day, which included acting the part of all the Veerni staff as well as a cultural dance performance. All the Veerni staff were made to sit comfortably while the girls gave these performances to entertain them and add joy to this special day. The Veerni staff were to play a game of passing the parcel that created an atmosphere of joy and laughter. Girls who graduated last year were also invited to the program and gifts were given to them for achieving good marks in grade 12.

### **Cultural Program**

A cultural program was organized on December 2, 2018 at the Veerni Institute. Girls performed group dances and skits. It was attended by all the Veerni staff members. Girls enjoyed the program.

### **Other celebrations:**

The following competitions were also organized for the Veerni girls to motivate them, all the Veerni girls have participated in these competitions: -

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Name of competition</b>	<b>Date</b>
01	Mehndi (Henna)	August 19, 2018
02	Essay writing	September 9, 2018
03	Dance competition	September 23, 2018
04	Painting competition	October 10, 2018
05	Dashra Festival	October 19, 2018
06	Diwali Celebration	October 31, 2018
07	Sports competition: Final of Kabaddi	December 11, 2018
08	Republic Day celebration	January 26, 2019
09	Holi Festival	March 03, 2019





Henna Competition



Essay Writing



Parents' Meeting



Dance Competition



Painting Competition



Sports Competition



Republic Day Celebration

## Lectures

### Health Education:

Health education lectures are given regularly in the Veerni Institute and the topics covered are gynecological/reproductive health issues, eye problems, seasonal diseases, use of sanitary napkins, skin diseases, and other important health related matters. The lectures were given by Ms. Vimlesh Sharma, Ms. Syiona and by Dr. A.S. Deora.

### Lecture on Swine Flu:

On January 9, 2019, a lecture on Swine flu was organized at the Veerni Institute. Dr. A.S. Deora delivered a talk on Swine flu, its current situation, signs and symptoms, treatment guidelines from the Government of India and its preventive measures.

### Lecture conducted by Inner Wheel Club (IWC) of Jodhpur:

On January 31, 2019 a lecture on “A journey from Womb to Women; its problems, challenges and solutions” was conducted by Dr. Shreyans Jain (MD Psychiatrist) at the Veerni Institute. It was conducted through Inner Wheel Club Jodhpur; President, Secretary and Treasures of IWC also visited the Veerni Institute.

### Lecture on Career Planning:

On February 17th, 2019, Mr. Pratap Singh Bhati and Mr. Shakti Singh professors at Jai Narayan College paid a visit to the students at Veerni Institute. They talked to the 10th class students about the careers they can choose to pursue after the board exams and about the opportunities presented by each career path.





## Parents Meeting

Parents meetings are a very important activity at the Veerni Institute. Girls are eagerly waiting to meet their parents each time. They often have lots of stories to tell their parents. The parents are also very keen to know what progress their daughters have made during the month. On the fourth Sunday of each month, parents visit their daughters. Veerni also organizes tea and biscuits for the parents and informs them about their daughter's progress. The following parents' meetings were held during the month of June through January.

S. No.	Date of Parents Meeting
01	June 24th, 2018
02	July 28th, 2018
03	August 26th, 2018
04	September 30th, 2018
05	October 28th, 2018
06	November 25th, 2018
07	January 27th, 2019



## Outings

After a long week of schoolwork, a break over the weekend is welcome for the girls. Veerni arranges a screening of popular movies and projection television programs on the big screen in the Institute. Veerni organizes outings for the Veerni girls during holidays/ Sunday to the city in the buses under the supervision of the Wardens and other Veerni staff. The following outings were organized:

### Visit to shopping mall and a movie show

A shopping mall visit was organized for all the Veerni girls on August 9, 2018. It is the biggest mall in the city. This was the first time most of the girls have seen the shopping mall and they were very happy to see such a big and nice place. They saw different sections in the shopping mall and were very thrilled to visit. After visiting the shopping mall, they were taken to the cinema hall; girls, who are coming from backward villages in Veerni, have never had the experience of seeing a movie in a cinema hall. The movie called Fanny Khan was shown. Fanny Khan is a story of hopes, dreams, and relationships. It's about a father who will stop at nothing to put his daughter on the grand stage as the next singing sensation of India. Veerni girls enjoyed the movie and it was a lifetime experience for them.

### Field Trip to Cowshed (Gaushala)

Trip to the Cowshed was organized on September 19, 2018: Children were shown around the Cowshed and saw the cows and calves living in the shed. They came to know about compost, composting process, types of compost, and benefits of compost. The trip was enjoyable, and the girls came back to the Veerni Institute with fond memories of the Cowshed.

### **Visit to Udaipur**

All the girls went on an educational tour to Udaipur, October 28th to October 29th. The girls asked to visit Udaipur as they wanted to see the natural scenery. The girls visited Fateh Sagar Lake, the aquarium and the rose garden where they enjoyed the toy trains. They also visited City Palace, Duth Talai Lake and Saheliyon-ki-Bari, which is a major garden and a popular tourist attraction in Udaipur. All the girls enjoyed their visit to Udaipur.

### **Visit to the Government Polytechnic Girls College**

To spark the interest of students towards the non-cliché field of education, the Veerini Institute organized an outing for the students of Classes 11 and 12 on March 1st, 2019. 12 students from class 12 and 4 from class 11 visited the Government Polytechnic Girls College; girls were awestruck after getting to know about the not so common fields that include textile and costume designing, project development, dressmaking, and interior designing. Few of the girls expressed a keen desire to pursue their careers in one of the above-mentioned fields.





## Formation of the Veerni Girls' Cabinet

During this current academic session, Veerni has formed a girls' cabinet at the Institute. This is a new addition in the girls' lives. Veerni is actively encouraged to engage girls in both teamwork and leadership activities. We engage them in more formalized leadership opportunities and promote the leadership of all styles and nature. Veerni allows each girl to experience being a minister.

*"There is no limit to what we as women can accomplish."* Michelle Obama

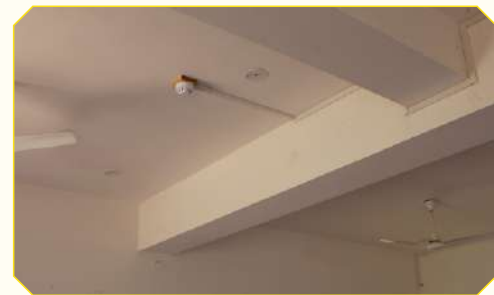
### Name of Veerni Cabinet Members

S. No.	Girls Name	Name of ministers	Responsibly
01	Durga	Education minister	Managing all the educational related work with all the girls.
02	Dura M.L.	Cultural Minister	Responsible for organizing all the cultural events in the Veerni Institute.
03	Hem Kanwar	TV and Other Activities Minister	Responsible for conducting physical activities and TV watching activities.
04	Kalpna	Environment Minister	Responsible for looking after all the plants outside the Institute along with other girls.
05	Kirshna Raj	Sports Minister	Responsible for conducting sports activities and managing sports equipment with the help of Wardens.
06	Marudhar	Cleaning Minister	Responsible for keeping the Veerni Institute clean, managing cleaning material.
07	Padam	Water Minister	Responsible to see water-related issues in the Institute and make other girls aware about not to waste water.
08	Renu	Health Minister	Responsible for looking after all the girls related to their health issues, report to the nurse about the illness of other girls.
09	Sagar	Power Minister	Responsible to make other girls aware about the electricity and encourage other girls to use electronic items appropriately and tell them not misuse electricity.
10	Sanju	Food Minister	Responsible for getting girls ready to have their meals on time and make other girls aware of the importance of food and make sure that the other girls do not waste food.

## Security and Safety

Veerni ensures that it is safe and secure for all the girls, and staff who work at the Veerni Institute. The Veerni Institute is heavily guarded and modern security measures have been implemented to ensure the safety of all the Veerni girls. Matrons are always remaining within the Institute to ensure the safety of the girls. Security personnel are vigilant day and night. They are on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days in a year - including holidays and academic breaks and provide many vital services. The safekeeping of the Veerni girls is one of the top concerns of the Veerni Institute.

- The Veerni Institute is secured by a technology driven multi-pronged security system. It is an intense yet non-intrusive system with 24X7 surveillance and is monitored round the clock by security personnel, patrolling and high definition CCTV cameras.
- **Fire Alarms and Tubes:** The entire building is equipped with alarm-based Fire-fighting systems.
- **The emergency transportation service:** Veerni has a vehicle and a driver for emergency transportation of the girls to the hospital.
- **Identity Cards:** All the girls issued with a school Identity Cards.



## Nutritious Food

On the menu, changes are made as the seasons change, consulting the Nutrition and Diet Experts. The likings and tastes of the students are also taken into consideration in deciding the menu for every season.



## Sports Awareness Programs

At the Veerni Institute, girls are encouraged to take active part in sports. Frequent matches are held between them and girls are divided in four groups named Alfa, Bravo, Delta and Charlie. Girls wear tracksuits and take great interest in all the events. Prizes are given to the winners.



## Inspiring Story of Giving Bank to Society

A person's foundation is based on his position in society and his contribution to society. What people forget is to repay society. The girls at the Veerni Institute, by breaking all the barriers, have set a moral example in front of society. Around 8 to 10 girls residing in village Meghwalon ki Dhani have taken an initiative to educate the kids with a weak educational background. Every day from 3 to 5 after school, the girls carry out extra tuitions for the students of class 1st to 9th. Dhapu being the leader of the initiative has allotted each member with a different subject to teach. All the basic foundational subjects including Mathematics, Science, English, Social Science, etc. are taught along with various cultural and recreational activities. This bold initiative taken by our recent grade 12 graduates is already bearing fruitful results as their extra tuition classes are attended by at least 20 to 25 students every day. We are so proud of the work they are doing.

## Visitors/Volunteers

The following guests visited the Veerni Institute. They saw the computer lab, the sewing and arts and crafts room, and medical room. They also saw all the dormitories and the kitchen at the Veerni Institute.

S. No.	Name of ministers	Date	
		Arrival date	Departure date
01	Ms. Geraldine and Ms. Gjurasic from USA (Genevieve's friends)	April 19, 2018	Same day
02	Ms. Suellen Lazarus	June 4, 2018	Same day
03	Mr. Jaswinder Sehgal (a journalist from Deutsch Welle TV D.W. Global Society (Europe's broadcasting channel).	Sept. 28, 2018	Same day



04	Ms. Jacqueline de Chollet	Nov. 24, 2018	Dec.13, 2018
05	Ms. Sophie Fauchier	Nov. 24, 2018	Dec. 6, 2018
06	Mr. Jaswinder Sehgal (for making documentary on Veerni)	Dec. 1, 2018	Dec. 2, 2018
07	Ms. Fiona, Ms. Ella and Mr. Louis Marr	Dec. 9, 2018	Dec. 13, 2018
08	Ms. Elianna Sabbag (from IF – International Foundation)	Jan. 18, 2019	Jan. 19, 2019
09	Ms. Alexandra Rojkov (A journalist from NIDO magazine Germany. NIDO is a magazine about parenthood and sells 70000 copies. They came to Veerni to cover Lumba Ram and Durga's story.	Jan. 21, 2019	Jan. 24, 2019
10	Ms. Christine Kissinger and Ms. Wendy Jameson	Jan. 21, 2109	Feb. 4, 2019





## Email from visitors: Christine Kissinger and Wendy Jameson

Hello Jacqueline,

Our 19- day trip to India is nearly over! Only a few more days before we fly back. We had an interesting visit to Veerni. Although we weren't there as long as last time, we spent quite a bit of time talking to Mahendra about the developments of the project.

It was fortunate that during our visit there was a presentation talk by members of The Inner Wheel as well as a talk from a psychologist on mental stresses that the girls may be undergoing during exam season. We were even more impressed to see how sensitively and diplomatically Mahendra dealt with the responses.

We also spent time with Mahendra looking at the new style reports he's producing and edited some that he'd translated from Hindi, just to make them grammatically more accurate and 'flow' better. I did say that if ever he wanted to send any regularly to us to proofread that it would be absolutely fine.

Finally, we enjoyed giving out colored pencils and erasers to each girl as a little gift. It was great seeing them again and seeing the changes around the Veerni site...not least of all the chapatti maker in the kitchen and the promotional and motivational photos all around the school. All looks fantastic. You must be so proud of the progress happening here!

All the best Jacqueline and look forward to seeing you again sometime,

Christine and Wendy xx



## **AIF William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India**

Application completed by Joyee Deb and Nilita Vachani

Veerni has had a long-standing need to hire an assistant or associate for Mahendra, someone who can work alongside him, and strategize ways of making Veerni scalable, replicable and sustainable. Given that we are a very small organization, dedicated to putting every dollar we raise directly into the girls' education, board and lodging, we are continually strapped for resources and unable to hire such a qualified and capable professional. I learned of the American India Foundation (AIF) and met with the New York Coordinator of the Clinton Fellowship Program last year. Subsequently Joyee and I worked on an extremely detailed project proposal, creating several original documents for Veerni to qualify as a host organization for AIF. After meeting with the AIF team in Delhi, and arranging their visit to Veerni, (superbly organized by Mahendra at short notice), we are delighted that Veerni has been selected as an AIF host organization and will be hosting a Fellow for the year 2019-2020. This is a huge boost for Veerni in terms of visibility in the Indo-American community. A Fellow will be placed at Veerni for a 10-month period, all costs of travel, board, lodging and salary borne by the Clinton Fellowship program.

The project that Joyee and I conceived requires the Fellow to complete a social impact evaluation on Veerni's work. We have had 121 graduates from the program so far: where are they, what are they doing and what are the measurable impacts of Veerni's education in their lives? Where lie the successes, and in which areas do we need to re-think and re-strategize our interventions? Such an impact evaluation study is crucial for our present and future funders and will provide a substantive body of material to help evaluate, scale and replicate the model. Apart from gathering qualitative and quantitative data, analyzing the results, and writing a report with recommendations, the Clinton Fellow will also work on a regular basis with the Veerni students, offering English conversational classes, help with math and science, and imparting leadership and confidence building skills. We would like her to modernize the Veerni website and build an alum network on WhatsApp.

The partnership with AIF has the potential of being extremely valuable to Veerni in the future. If we can continue to host Clinton fellows on an ongoing basis, we will have a wonderful resource to help support Veerni's growth.

## **Veerni Archives go to Princeton University Archives**

January 2019 marked the beginning of preparing twenty-five years (1993-2018) of archives from the Veerni project for Princeton University. Jacqueline De Chollet worked with Sheila Coker Besson to get them ready. The archives consist of all areas Veerni has been involved in, within the Veerni Project. These areas include Bi-Annual reports, Stories and Visits, Letters and Reports, Nutrition, Articles, Literacy, Lectures, Proposals and Films and Scripts among many other relevant papers that describe the work of a quarter of a century of Veerni's work. Many of these have also been digitalized.



On Tuesday, May 21st Jacqueline visited Princeton University and had lunch at the Faculty Club overlooking the beautiful campus gardens, with Dan Linke, Interim Associate University Librarian for Rare Books and Special Collections from the Princeton University Library. Kelly Bolding, Project Archivist at the Mudd Library, who will oversee the archives joined, as well as Sara Logue, Interim University Archivist. Jacqueline will stay in touch with Kelly to add to the archives. This is a great honor for the Veerni Project to have our archives at such a prestigious college.

## **FROM THE DESK OF MAHENDRA SHARMA, DIRECTOR OF VEERNI**

Over the past decade, the activities of the Veerni project have visibly improved the quality of life of its' students. Veerni had initially addressed the health of women and children specifically, but in doing so, it addressed the whole community. Within the field of health, Veerni ran various projects, including HIV/AIDS awareness, as well as organizing a nutrition team to combat malnutrition amongst children and women. Veerni also worked to dissuade child marriages by educating villagers and raising awareness within communities about the intersecting social, medical and educational issues related to child marriage.



In 2005, Veerni opened the Veerni Institute and this is the prime program of the Veerni Project. The Veerni Institute is a boarding home for deprived rural girls of all castes and religions wherein girls are educated from grades 6-12. There is no discrimination of any kind and girls live in a happy, joyful and cordial environment under guardianship of the Veerni staff. The girls that board at the Institute follow the senior secondary school curriculum. In addition, the Veerni girls attend sports programs, computer training, English speaking classes and self-defense classes. Their health, nutrition and counseling needs are all included at the Veerni Institute.

The academic results of the girls, particularly over last four years, are very encouraging. It is heartwarming for us to see that from 2015 all the girls of the Veerni Institute students passed their final exams. 1,098 girls have received education through the Veerni Institute since 2005. Veerni believes that these girls will be our ambassadors—keys to reorienting the mindset of rural communities.

Veerni has really grown and I believe we need to develop partnerships with other organizations in order to strengthen Veerni in the coming year.

The Veerni Project is being sustained through the tireless efforts of Ms. Jacqueline de Chollet who has dedicated her life to improving the quality of life of rural women. We are grateful to Ms. Jacqueline de Chollet and the other members of the Board of Directors of the Fondation Veerni – Switzerland and the Global Foundation for Humanity - USA for their continuous support. Veerni will endeavor to fulfill their vision, and our achievement will be the greatest expression of our gratitude.

I also take this opportunity to thank all the Veerni team; they are the key to the continued success of the Veerni Project.

## Acknowledgements

The Veerni Project wishes to extend its deep appreciation to all those who have made the Program possible over the last year. Our special thanks to the Board of the Global Foundation for Humanity- USA and the Fondation Veerni- Switzerland, established in June 2017. Thanks to all of our board members contribute to the development and sustainability of the Veerni Project.

We wish to thank our generous donors and to the many visitors who took the time to visit the project in the last year. And to all of our donors through JustGive, PayPal, Network for Good and Pledgling Foundation. Finally to Sheila Besson for all her work on the Veerni archives that went to Princeton.

We also wish to thank our many visitors, including Elianna Sabbag, Patrick and Sophie Fauchier, Lady Chadlington, Rebecca Conway and Alexandria Rojkov of NIDO magazine for their wonderful article on the Veerni Project, and Travel Wallah. Special thanks to Jaswinder Sehgal who made the short movie on Veerni. A very big thank you to Sophie Fauchier for creating the beautiful calendar.

Our deepest thanks to the wonderful team of the Veerni Institute for their care of the girls. Mahendra Sharma, the Director of the Project, now in his 13th year and whose commitment has allowed the project to prosper; to Vimlesh Sharma, the nurse who has been with Veerni for some 15 years; to Syiona Rao, volunteer nurse; Saroj Kanwar, Neelam Kanwar; Mahender Deora; Parbat Singh for his physical exercise program that makes the girls so fit; Pradeep Ghandi, the account manager cum legal advisor; Dr. A.S. Deora, whose medical advice is key to the girls well-being; Shiv Prakash, the computer teacher; the two security guards and two cleaners plus the team of caterers whose food is not only delicious but healthy. Our appreciation to the schools, Apex and Gopal Bal Vatika for their excellent tuition. Finally, to Manish Rao for his sound advice and care of the Veerni Project.

Jacqueline de Chollet, June 2019



## Conclusion

Veerni has seen important changes in the last year. The girls are thriving in their new environment. There have been improvements in the building and safety of the girls through smoke alarms and an increased security system. Better staff conditions have been implemented with a 13th month added to their salaries. The director's salary has been increased to reflect his growing responsibilities. A new English language program has been added to make the learning of English more accessible to the girls. We must remember that English is a third language for them. The project is building on its strengths and seeks to improve every year. A new school approached Veerni and will educate 5 girls as part of their social corporate program. Veerni is looking to get support from the country and develop a funding base for the future. The demand for places continues to grow and there were some 400 applicants for this year alone. The good news is that Veerni, with some funding from Switzerland, will be starting a second program, Veerni Balika, for 20 girls bringing the new total to 110 girls, up from 90. We have secured three years of funding for Veerni Balika.

The challenge remains in that the Veerni Institute requires multiyear funding - seven years of education for each girl- and we will be looking to building an endowment fund to secure the project long term. The problem of child brides continues as there is no policing of the practice. Women and girls in India are still considered second class citizens in many regions, Rajasthan being one of them. But the Veerni girls are gaining strength, confidence and through education will change their communities. Veerni is there to give them their voice so that they can make the changes to society that will empower them to take their rightful place in their country. Together, we can ensure a bright future for these wonderful and courageous young women.



“There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.” Nelson Mandela



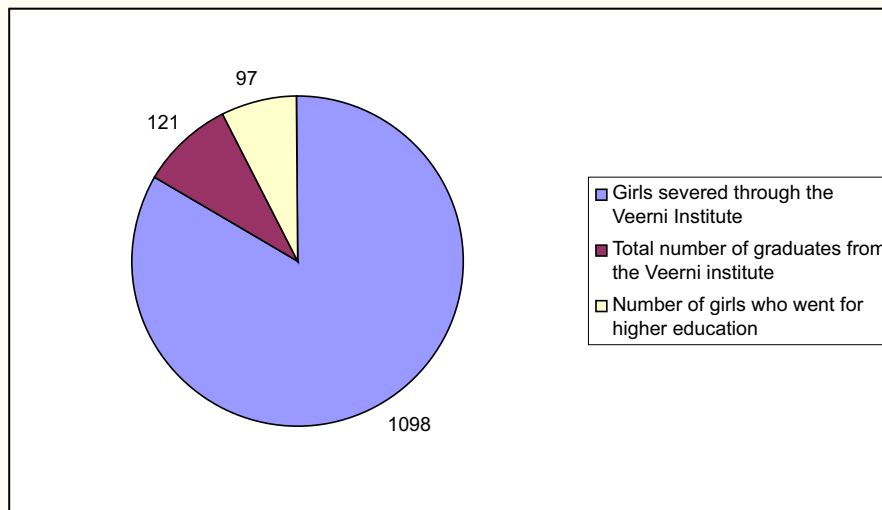
# ANNEXES

## Principles and reflections on guidance for the Veerni Project

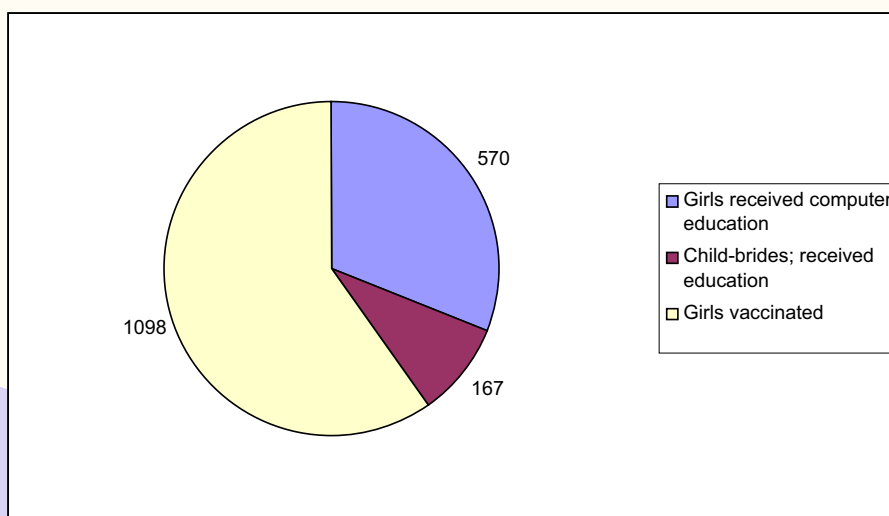
- To Listen
- Not impose our own opinions on a different culture
- Accept the art of the possible – i.e. the things you can change, the ones you cannot change – and acquire the understanding to recognize the difference
- Honesty
- Rigor in the approach to deliver excellence
- Never standing still – always look at the road ahead
- Lack of hubris- it does not matter who gets the credit
- Passion for the cause with discipline (it's an essential part of passion)
- Learn to navigate waters and find the true way forward

## OUR IMPACT

Girls severed through the Veerni Institute	Total number of graduates from the Veerni institute	Number of girls who went for higher education
1098*	121*	97*
Still counting*		

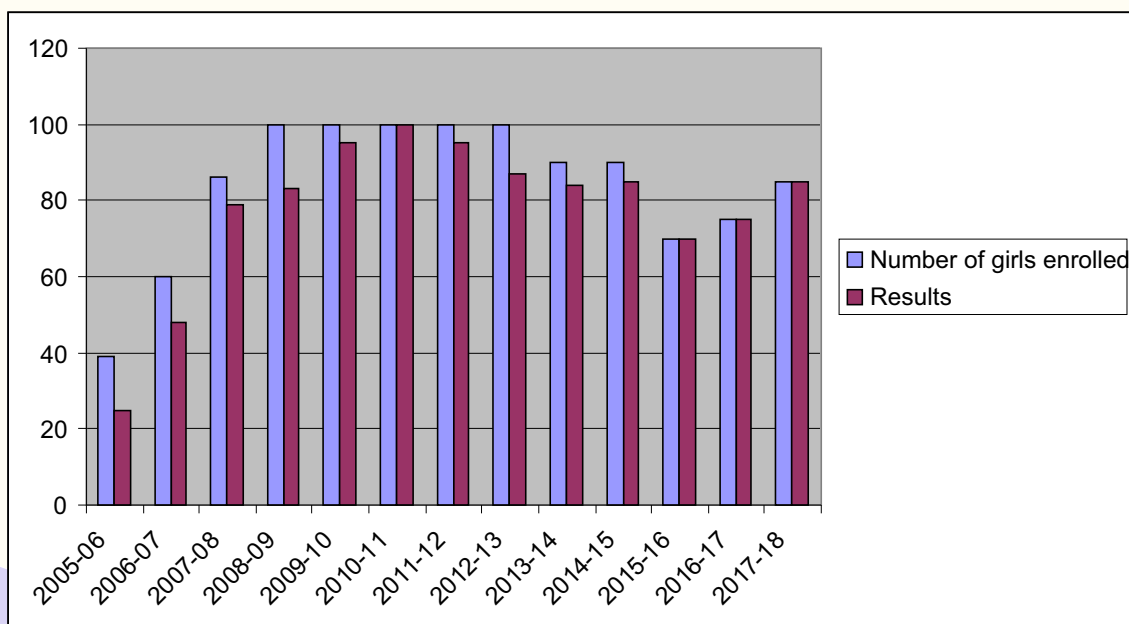


Girls having receiving computer education	Child-brides; received education	Girls vaccinated
570*	167*	1098*
Still counting*		



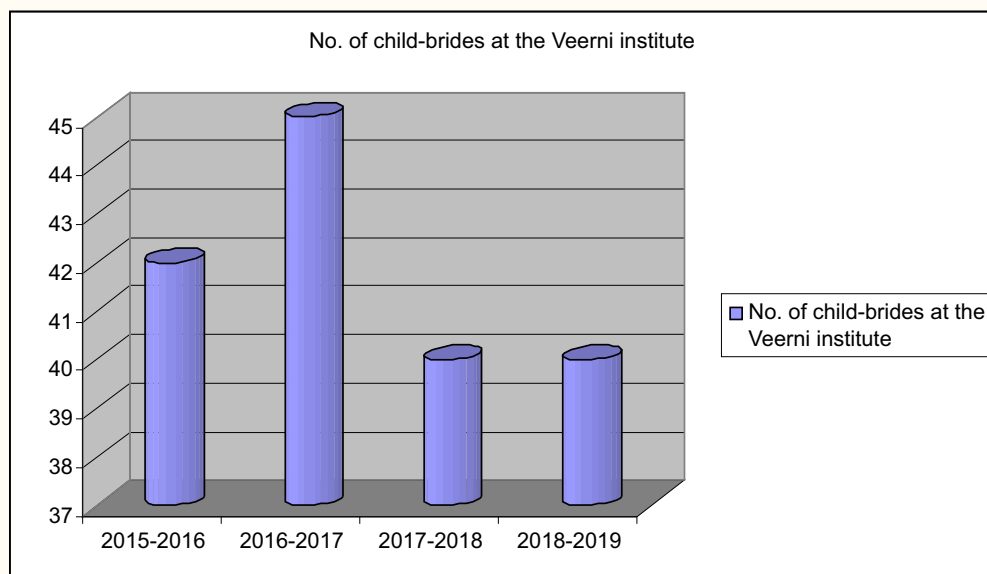
## Academic results from 2005 to 2019

Academic year	Number of girls enrolled	Results
2005-06	39	25
2006-07	60	48
2007-08	86	79
2008-09	100	83
2009-10	100	95
2010-11	100	100
2011-12	100	95
2012-13	100	87
2013-14	90	84
2014-15	90	85
2015-16	70	70
2016-17	75	75
2017-18	85	85
2018-19	91	91



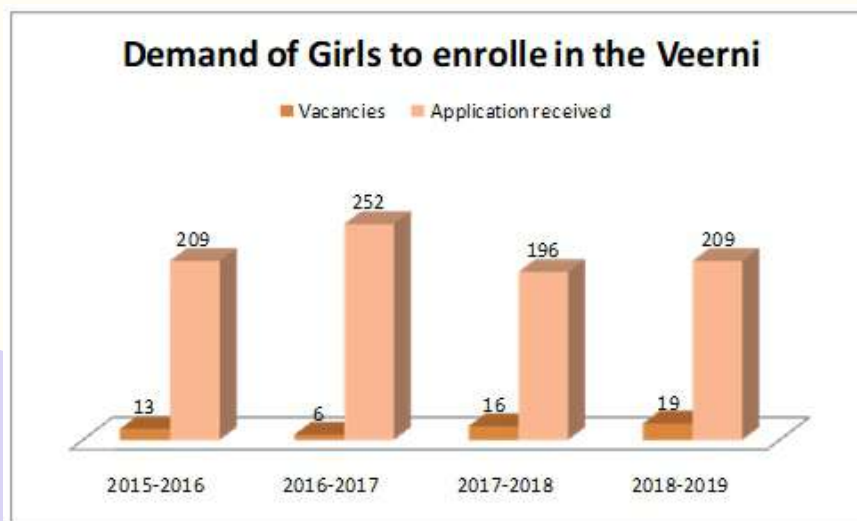
Child-brides have or are attending the Veerni Institute in the last 4 years

Year	No. of child-brides at the Veerni institute
2015-2016	42
2016-2017	45
2017-2018	40
2018-2019	40



Demand over the years

Year	Vacancies	Application received
2015-2016	13	209
2016-2017	06	252
2017-2018	16	196
2018-2019	19	209



# Child Bride Story: Guddi

**Interview with Guddi: December 8, 2018 at the Veerni Institute**

Guddi is now 28 years old and has been married for 7 years. She has two daughters, ages 6 and 2. Her husband is now 43 and is a nice man. His occupation is farming. They live far out of the village on a dirt track. They live in a small hut with no bathroom. They have a Tanka with water. Guddi is an Anganwari worker and spending the money she earns on her own education. She makes 5,000 rupees per month. She organizes vaccinations and registers women for deliveries in hospitals. The referral fee is 500 rupees. Guddi is currently attending coaching class to become a supervisor, for that she needs to clear exams which will be organized by the government of Rajasthan soon. If she becomes a supervisor, she will earn around \$8,000 per year. She is preparing very hard for the examination and we hope she will succeed in it. Guddi graduated in arts in Jodhpur privately. She worked at the Umaid Bhawan hotel in housekeeping and was the first non-Rajput employee at the hotel. After some months she grew unhappy with the work and left. She disappeared from Veerni life and just recently remerged. She was a child bride from the Vishnoi community. Her father is an addict and an opium smuggler. Her mother was blinded in a fight with one their relatives. There is violence in that community. Life has changed in her village of Unchiarda. Tragically her brother died leaving behind one daughter Anita, age 6. Anita's mother married again and abandoned her daughter who is looked after by her grandmother. Her sister lives at home with 3 children, 2 boys who are not educated.



# Four child marriages held in Raj dist, authorities clueless

Geetha Sunil Pillai | TNN

**Udaipur:** In order to hoodwink authorities and evade action by administration, many villagers are holding child marriages before 'Akha Teej'—a day considered auspicious for nuptials and which falls on May 7.

Two incidents of child marriages, wherein four minor boys were illegally married off to younger girls, have been reported from Dungla and Sawa blocks of Chittorgarh district on February 19. All the four illegal marriages escaped the eye of officials such as 'patwaris', teachers, auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs) and anganva-



A feast after a child marriage in Chittorgarh district

di staff who are expected to keep a close watch on society and report such cases.

The incidents came to light after some of the pictures of child marriages were leaked on social media on Sa-

turday. According to sources, three boys of a Tel family in Shambupura village of Sawa sub-block were married off to minor girls from another village on February 19. A similar incident has also been reported in a Jat family from Dungla block. In two pictures, kids are seen performing wedding rituals.

Authorities seemed clueless and police too expressed their helplessness as none from the concerned villages reported the matter to them. Most of the authorities, including the collector and additional SP, were not available for comments.

► 'Staff is not on duty', P 2

## 'Incidents occur when staff is not on duty'

► Continued from P 1

**Udaipur:** The minister-in-charge of Chittorgarh district, Bhajanlal Jatav, said that an inquiry would be held to find the details of these child marriages. "The government machinery is always on alert to prevent child marriages. However, sometimes, incidents happen when employees are not on duty. In such circumstances, it is possible that they may go unreported or unnoticed," Jatav said.

SDM Vinod Chowdhary said he wasn't aware of any of the incidents. "Child marriage is illegal and it is the duty of any person who comes to know of such an incident to report the same to authorities. Had we been informed earlier, we could have taken stringent steps to prevent them," the official said.



File pic of one of the child marriages held in Chittorgarh

a lecturer of sociology opined, "With increasing vigil and surveillance to check child marriages during Akha Teej, villagers too seem to have changed their modus operandi. Realising that the chances of being caught are high on Akha Teej, they are holding marriages early during the peak wedding season as a safer option."



# Raj registers highest number of stillbirth in country

Intishab.Ali@timesgroup.com

**Jaipur:** Struggling to bring down infant mortality rate, the state is facing another major challenge to prevent stillbirths. The state has registered highest number of stillbirth in the country, which is a shame for the state.

According to the recently released Civil Registration System (CRS) 2016 conducted by the Office of the Registrar General, India, the state has registered 25,775 stillbirths in 2016. Uttar Pradesh with 24,816 stillbirths and Gujarat with 12,031 stillbirths are at second and third place respectively in stillbirth registration.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines a still birth as a baby born with no signs of life at or after 28 weeks' gestation.

The highest number of stillbirths in the state, indicating poor delivery of maternal healthcare system in the state.

According to the WHO, the major causes of stillbirth include, child birth complications, post-term pregnancy, maternal infections in pregnancy (malaria, syphilis and

## RISING NUMBERS

DISTRICT	MALE STILLBIRTH	FEMALE STILLBIRTH	TOTAL STILLBIRTH
Jaipur	1,197	1,122	2,319
Udaipur	1,007	929	1,936
Jodhpur	859	616	1,475
Alwar	713	592	1,305
Ajmer	669	550	1,219
Bikaner	639	559	1,198
Jalore	633	471	1,104
Barmer	637	459	1,096

\*Civil Registration System, 2016 released by Office of the Registrar General, India

HIV), maternal disorders (especially hypertension, obesity and diabetes), fetal growth restriction and congenital abnormalities. Almost half of stillbirths happen when the woman is in labour. The majority of stillbirths are preventable, evidenced by the regional variation across the world.

More than 77% of stillbirth were registered from urban areas. The CRS report shows that 19,984 stillbirths were registered from urban areas, while rest of the 5,791

stillbirths were registered from rural areas. The CRS report says, "Higher registration of stillbirths in urban areas could be due to poor netting of still births in rural areas. In urban areas, the share is higher which may be due to better netting of still births from medical institutions."

In 2015, the number of stillbirth registration in the state was even higher in comparison to 2016. In 2016, the stillbirth registration was 27,365, says, CRS 2015.



# VEERNI

EMPOWERING GIRLS

[www.veerni.org](http://www.veerni.org)