

About Veerni

The Veerni Project was founded in 1993 to empower women and girls in the remote rural areas around Jodhpur. The project has been funded by the Global Foundation for Humanity since its inception. The Rajdadiji Badan Kanwar Medical Trust, a locally based trust, administers the project.

In Hindi, Veerni means heroine or woman of strength. The Veerni Project is guided by the core belief that when girls and women are educated and healthy they will have the ability to create positive changes in their lives and communities, and gain economic independence.



Our Mission

Veerni's Mission is to educate and empower girls and women in the desert areas around Jodhpur so they can lead healthy and productive lives free from poverty, coercion and disease. To this end Veerni provides secondary education opportunities and medical programs to help them change their lives.



Why Veerni is needed

Indians often view the girl child as a burden, an investment without return, whereas boys are considered an asset. With the dowry system still in place, girls are often married off at a young age to keep the cost down.

Whilst child marriages are illegal, they still prevail; 29% of urban girls and 56% of rural girls are married before they turn 18. Rajasthan has one of the highest rates of child marriage in India. These marriages cannot be cancelled and the only hope is to delay the age at which married girls will be sent to their husbands and in-laws. Through education and vocational training girls can start to earn some money. They will be able to join their husbands at a later age and be empowered to stand for their rights.



Girls' Education

Education is the main activity of the Veerni Project as Veerni sees secondary education as a priority and the most important route to social change. In 2005 the Veerni Institute was set up in Jodhpur to allow girls uninterrupted secondary education in a safe environment. The Institute has grown from 39 girls in its first year to full capacity with 100 students. Thirteen of these students are child brides.



The girls attend the Brigadier Zabar Singh School in the morning and receive tutoring in the afternoon, particularly in mathematics, science, English, economics and commerce. Extra tutoring on other subjects is organized when needed. The students participate in sports, have sewing and craft lessons, and computer training is provided for classes 10, 11 and 12.

A psychological and career counselor visits the Institute once a month. She counsels the older students on their future and looks after individual cases of girls who are experiencing problems at home or at school. She also counsels the child brides who are often very apprehensive about their future. In addition, health check-ups are conducted on a regular basis.

Veerni graduates feel empowered and quite a few have found employment and gained independence. A number of students have enrolled into college, aspiring to become doctors, lawyers and teachers.