



Fifteen-year-old Priyanka had no idea of her impending marriage until her uncle's daughter told her the family had found a groom for her and were finalising wedding plans.



Forced to drop out of school at 14, Priyanka was confined to her home, spending her day doing household chores, until she joined Shakti. There, she became aware of girls' rights and entitlements and the risks of early marriage.



Shocked and scared at the news, Priyanka turned to Meera, a community child protection worker trained through Aangan's PACT (Parents and Children Against Trafficking and Harm) programme, for help.



Meera spoke with Priyanka's family, telling them of the risks child marriage would pose for Priyanka. She also told them about the government schemes they could access instead, such as the *Kanya Vivah Yojana*, which would enable a better life for their daughter.



The Bihar government's *Mukhyamantri Kanya Vivah Yojana* provides financial assistance to girls from below poverty line (BPL) families. They are given Rs. 10,000 at the time of their marriage, but only if they are legally married after the age of 18 years.



Apart from providing much needed financial assistance to poor families, this scheme mainly aims to curb child marriage and prevent the practice of dowry. According to the Unicef's 2012 report on child marriage in India, Bihar has the highest incidence of child marriage in India at 68%.



Across five communities in Bihar, 67 girls have been identified and linked to the *Kanya Vivah Yojana*. This also means they are safer from violence and abuse. A Unicef study has found that 34% of married girls aged 15-19 have experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence by their husband or partner.