



2021 – 2022

Impact Assessment Report

Project: Scholarships for Higher Education

A CSR Initiative of Sonalika International



By
CauseBecause

Impartiality and Independence Statement

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The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) has defined six evaluation criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability – and two principles for their use. These criteria provide a normative framework used to determine the merit or worth of intervention (policy, strategy, programme, project, or activity). They serve as the basis upon which evaluative judgements are made.

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Executive Summary

The scholarships program, initiated by the Sonalika Social Development Society (SSDS), aims to provide financial support to meritorious students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly those hailing from rural areas. Established in 2015 as part of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of M/s International Tractors Ltd., the program focuses on students enrolled at GNA University, Phagwara.

The scholarships range from **5% to 75%** of the total tuition fees, which vary between **₹ 37,800 and ₹ 82,800** per year, thereby alleviating the financial burdens faced by students pursuing higher education.

In the 2021-22 academic year, the Sonalika Scholarship Scheme disbursed a total of **₹ 200.00 Lacs** to **315 students** across various courses, with a particular emphasis on supporting girls from agricultural or lower-middle-class families.

The program not only prioritizes academic merit but also aims to enhance the employability of students by providing them with valuable educational experiences. Notable beneficiaries include students like Amandeep Kaur and Gagandeep Rakesh Kumar, who receive substantial financial aid, enabling them to focus on their studies without the stress of financial constraints.

The impact assessment highlights the positive outcomes of the scholarship scheme, demonstrating its effectiveness in increasing access to higher education for students from rural backgrounds. By fostering educational opportunities and supporting students in their academic pursuits, the Sonalika Scholars program contributes significantly to the development of a skilled workforce, ultimately benefiting both the individuals and the broader community.

The ongoing partnership between SSDS and GNA University ensures the sustainability and growth of this initiative, reinforcing the commitment to social development through education.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of Sonalika Social Development Society (SSDS)

Sonalika Social Development Society (SSDS) was established in 2015 as a CSR arm of M/s International Tractors Ltd. (ITL). The foundation of SSDS marks a significant step towards advancing ITL's commitment to corporate social responsibility, focusing on impactful community initiatives.

The organization operates under several legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure transparency and accountability, including registrations with the Registrar of Societies, Income Tax Department, and Department of Companies Affairs.

1.2 Mission and Vision

SSDS aims to foster social development through welfare programs focusing on health, education, and community empowerment. Its vision is to cultivate a sustainable and equitable society through impactful CSR initiatives and active community engagement.

1.2 CSR Compliance

SSDS ensures its alignment with the CSR Law's requirements. This organization operates within the legal framework established for CSR activities, thereby enhancing its credibility and commitment to social responsibility. The compliance with CSR regulations underscores the organization's dedication to maintaining high standards of transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct in its social initiatives.

About this report

The impact assessment report conducted by CauseBecause for the CSR project 'Scholarships for Higher Education' on behalf of Sonalika Social Development Society (SSDS) offers a comprehensive evaluation of the initiative's effectiveness and reach. Utilizing a robust methodology, the assessment began with a detailed desk review of all relevant project documentation, including concept notes, progress reports, and stakeholder information. This was followed by extensive field research, involving direct and indirect stakeholder discussions, including interviews with beneficiaries and project partners.

The qualitative data collected was meticulously analyzed by a team of management trainees, communication executives, and market research interns under the guidance of seasoned research professionals. With a focus on accuracy and credibility, the team ensured a thorough and insightful evaluation of the project's impact and alignment with SSDS's mission and CSR compliance standards.

2. Impact Assessment Methodology

Team CauseBecause studied the project concept and its objectives thoroughly and also had brief discussions with Team CSR at Sonalika before devising the assessment methodology.

2.1: Desk review of available documents

As a first step, a thorough desk review of all the available material related to the project was done. This included literature provided by Team CSR as well as partner NGOs.

The documents included:

- I. Project concept notes and implementation framework
- II. Project monitoring reports and project progress reports
- III. Names and coordinates of stakeholders, especially the project beneficiaries
- IV. Thorough details of courses and other activities under the project
- V. Monitoring and mid-term assessment reports by the company or third-party entities

2.2: Field research

The research team applied the following techniques for assessing the outcomes of the project:

- Thorough discussions with direct and indirect stakeholders of the project, including Sonalika team and the partner NGOs
- Interviews (in-person, virtual meetings and telephonic talks) with project stakeholders, including beneficiaries

2.3: Qualitative data analysis

In order to collect essential information from the sampled participants, a professional team of management trainees, communication executives and market research interns worked under senior research professionals.

- **Quality control during collection**
CauseBecause project lead and supervisors engaged in the interviews.
- **Data verification post-collection**
Project lead verified interviewees' responses through random sampling. They also did a post-interview satisfaction survey.
- **Data analysis**
Experienced research professionals and the IT team at CauseBecause worked together for data analysis. The latest version of IBM® SPSS® platform, an effective statistical software, was used for extraction of accurate insights.

KEY FINDINGS

3. Project Overview

3.1 About the Project

The rising costs of higher education in India makes it difficult for many deserving students across the country to attend a college of their choice. Many students end up giving up their dream of higher education as they are unable to bear the expenses of undergraduate and graduate degrees. This can become a huge burden and is a frequent cause of students dropping out. Some students take up the additional stress of working to earn their college fee while they are supposed to be focusing on education, making it hard for them to find the time to focus on learning, getting good grades, and graduating on time.

A scholarship not only reduces the financial burden for parents and students, but also allows students to focus freely on academics, increasing their chances of staying in college, graduating with better grades and skills that increase their chances of getting employed.

Nevertheless, earning a scholarship is also an honour for a student. It is a recognition of their hard work and underlines the fact that they care about their education and are serious about their future. A prestigious scholarship is something that one can add to one's list of accomplishments – employers notice such recognitions. A good scholarship can add an advantage when they apply for internships or their first professional job.

3.2 Project partner: GNA University

GNA University (GU) in Phagwara, Punjab, is a NAAC-accredited university offering undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate and doctoral degrees in multiple streams.

The university is recognised amongst some of the leading higher education institutions in the region. It seeks to improve the quality of life through an eclectic blend of science, technology and humanities intended to encourage students to pursue innovative solutions to real-life problems

3.2 Project objectives

Scholarships awarded under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative aim to achieve several key objectives. Here are five major objectives:

- a) **Enhance Educational Access and Equity:** Scholarships aim to make higher education more accessible to students from underprivileged or marginalized backgrounds. By providing financial support, CSR initiatives help bridge the gap between socio-economic barriers and educational opportunities, promoting a more inclusive and equitable educational environment.
- b) **Support Academic Excellence and Talent Development:** By awarding scholarships to high-achieving students, CSR programs encourage and support academic excellence. These scholarships can help nurture and develop talented individuals who have the potential to contribute significantly to their fields of study and society at large.
- c) **Foster Social Responsibility and Community Engagement:** CSR scholarships often come with an expectation that recipients will contribute positively to their communities. This objective encourages students to apply their skills and knowledge in ways that address social issues, thereby fostering a sense of social responsibility and community involvement.
- d) **Promote Long-Term Industry and Economic Growth:** By investing in the education of future professionals and leaders, CSR scholarships help build a skilled workforce that can drive industry and economic growth. Educated individuals are more likely to innovate, start businesses, and contribute to the overall economic development of their regions.
- e) **Strengthen Corporate-Social Relationships and Brand Image:** For corporations, providing scholarships through CSR initiatives helps build positive relationships with the community and enhances their brand image. It demonstrates the company's commitment to social responsibility and its investment in the future of young people, which can foster goodwill and improve corporate reputation.

4. KEY FINDINGS

After a thorough evaluation and assessment, Team CauseBecause noted down multiple elements of the academic scholarships being offered by Sonalika through GNA University.

The points that follow cover all aspects of the project component including an overview, selection criteria, and outcomes in terms of internships and placements obtained by the students.

4.1 Overview of scholarships at GNA University

GNA University offers limited scholarships on merit. The grant of scholarships is through the announcement of a comprehensive merit list and are accorded to a fixed proportion of students on the basis of –

- Socio-economic status
- Academic performance in previous years
- Students' scores in common competition exams like JEE
- Entrance-test performance
- Aptitude tests and interviews

The sampled students with whom the assessors interacted confirmed that each of them had to share complete details of their socio-economic profiles as well as their academic records including performances in various common entrance examinations.

4.2 Beneficiaries' profile

Located in Punjab, GNA University draws a significant number of students from the state itself. Most of the students applying to the university for scholarships are from Amritsar, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, and Chandigarh. At the same time, talented students from other states like Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana also reach out for admissions and scholarships.

Majority of the students had average to high scores in various competitive examinations but had failed to secure a seat in the course of their choice due to financial constraints.

4.3 Scholarship types

The primary scholarships awarded by GNA University covers financial assistance, which takes care of tuition fees. There are several types of financial assistance for meritorious students, children of defence personnel, single girl child, children of GNA Group employees, and sports students.

4.4 Academic scholarships slabs

The evaluation team studied the criteria for selection of students for scholarships awarded by GNA University and concluded that it follows a stringent non-biased academic criterion – the higher the academic performance of the students, the higher the waiver of tuition fee.

Students are eligible for up to 50% waiver for arts or commerce streams if they score 90% and above in their qualifying examination. Likewise, if a student is ranked between 300,000 and 400,000 in JEE (Main), they qualify to get 50% rebate in admission fee.

Table 1: Scholarships Slabs

Scholarships	UG				PG
	Arts / Commerce / Others	Non-Medical		Medical	All PG Courses
	Qualifying Examination Marks	JEE (MAIN) Rank	Qualifying Marks	Qualifying Marks	MBA - CAT/ XAT/MAT
50% of tuition fee	> 90%	300,000 to 400,000	> 90%	> 90%	Percentile more than 96 to 97
40% of tuition fee	> 81% to 90%	400,000 to 500,000	> 81% to 90%	> 81% to 90%	Percentile more than 95 to 96
30% of tuition fee	> 72% to 81%	500,000 to 600,000	> 72% to 81%	> 72% to 81%	Percentile more than 90 to 94.99
20% of tuition fee	63% to 72%	> 600,000	63% to 72%	63% to 72%	Percentile more than 85 to 89.99

Table 2: Prescribed Fee

FEE (in Rs)	After 50% of Scholarship Arts / Commerce / Others	After 40% of Scholarship Non-Medical	After 30% of Scholarship Medical	After 20% of Scholarship All PG Courses
	27,000	13,500	16,200	18,900
36,000	18,000	21,600	25,200	28,800
37,800	18,900	22,680	26,460	30,240
40,500	20,250	24,300	28,350	32,400
46,800	23,400	28,080	32,760	37,440
49,500	24,750	29,700	34,650	39,600
53,280	26,640	31,968	37,296	42,624
58,500	29,250	35,100	40,950	46,800
60,000	30,000	36,000	42,000	48,000
62,500	31,250	37,500	43,750	50,000
63,000	31,500	37,800	44,100	50,400
81,000	40,500	48,600	56,700	64,800
83,700	41,850	50,220	58,590	66,960
85,500	42,750	51,300	59,850	68,400

5. Project Outcomes

The Sonalika Scholars program has provided scholarships to a total of **315 students** across various courses at GNA University during the 2021-22 academic year. The following is a summary of the number of scholarships awarded for each class under the Sonalika Scholars program:

Table 3: Number of Scholarships Awarded by Class

Class/course	Number of Scholarships
B.Tech (CSE)	61
B.Tech (MAE)	54
B.Tech (ASE)	45
B.Tech (RAE)	36
B.Tech (IOT)	10
B.Sc. (IT)	50
B.Sc. (AM)	30
BCA	30
MCA	15
M.Tech	10

Total Scholarships: 315

5.1 Range of scholarships

The Sonalika Scholars program offers scholarships ranging from 5% to 75% of the total tuition fee, which is between 37,800 to 55,800 per year. Consequently, the scholarship amounts vary from 33,480 to 83,700 annually, depending on the percentage awarded to each student.

Here are examples of students who have received scholarships from the Sonalika Scholars program, along with the specific amounts they received:

- a) **Gagandeep Rakesh Kumar** - Received a **30% scholarship**, amounting to **17,280** per year.
- b) **Vanshika Jatinder** - Benefited from a **75% scholarship**, totalling **83,700** annually.
- c) **Ishaa Naresh Kumar** - Awarded a **67% scholarship**, totalling of **50,652 per year**
- d) **Japneet Kaur** - Received a **70% scholarship**, amounting to **52,920** per year
- e) **Amandeep Kaur** - Received a **40% scholarship**, totalling **44,640** annually 11
- f) **Sahil Singh** - Benefited from a **37% scholarship**, amounting to **41,292** per year
- g) **Gagan Deep Bhatia** - Received a **5% scholarship**, which amounts to **3,780** annually 11

These examples illustrate the range of scholarship percentages and the corresponding financial support provided to students in the program.

Table 4: Percentage Breakdown of Scholarship Amounts by Class

Class	Percentage of Scholarships Awarded
B.Tech (CSE)	30% - 87.70%
B.Tech (MAE)	37% - 75%
B.Tech (ASE)	50% - 85%
B.Tech (RAE)	37% - 87%
B.Tech (IOT)	37.7% - 70%
B.Sc. (IT)	30% - 75%
B.Sc. (AM)	28% - 67%
BCA	5% - 70%
MCA	37% - 61%
M.Tech	27.70% - 65%

5.2 Details of Selected Classes

- **B.Tech (CSE)**: Scholarships range from **30% to 87.70%**, with amounts varying based on the total tuition fee.
- **B.Tech (MAE)**: Scholarships awarded range from **37% to 75%**, providing significant financial support to students 45.
- **B.Sc. (IT)**: The percentage of scholarships awarded ranges from **30% to 75%**, helping students manage their tuition costs effectively 67.

This breakdown illustrates the varying levels of financial assistance provided to students across different academic programs, reflecting the program's commitment to supporting diverse educational needs.

5.3 Eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria for students to apply for the Sonalika Scholars program primarily focus on the following aspects:

Financial Need

The program targets **financially disadvantaged** students, particularly those from **rural backgrounds** and **lower-middle-class families**. This includes students from agricultural families who may struggle to afford tuition fees.

Merit-Based Selection

The scholarship scheme prioritizes **merit**, meaning that students must demonstrate academic excellence or potential to qualify for the scholarship.

Target Demographic

The program specifically aims to support **girls** from rural areas, reflecting a commitment to enhancing educational opportunities for underrepresented groups.

5.4 Enrolment in Specific classes

- Students must be enrolled in programs offered at **GNA University**, such as **B.Sc. (AM)** and **B.Sc. (IT)**, to be eligible for the scholarships 2.

These criteria ensure that the scholarships are awarded to those who not only need financial assistance but also show promise in their academic pursuits.

5.5 Comparison of Scholarship Amounts to Tuition Fees Across Programs

Tuition Fees Overview

The tuition fees for various programs under the Sonalika Scholars program vary significantly:

- **B.Sc. Programs:** Tuition fees range from ₹ 28,800 to ₹ 55,800 per year 16.
- **BCA Programs:** Tuition fees are generally around ₹ 37,800 per year 112.
- **MCA Programs:** Tuition fees are approximately ₹ 46,800 per year 2.
- **B.Tech Programs:** Tuition fees range from ₹ 73,800 to ₹ 82,800 per year 59.

5.6 Scholarship Amounts

Scholarships awarded range from 5% to 87.70% of the total tuition fee, resulting in annual scholarship amounts that vary widely:

- **B.Sc. (AM):** Scholarships can amount to ₹ 31,600 to ₹ 74,772 depending on the percentage awarded 6.
- **B.Sc. (IT):** Scholarships range from ₹ 17,280 to ₹ 43,200 34.
- **BCA:** Scholarships can reach up to ₹ 52,920 12.
- **MCA:** Scholarships can be as high as ₹ 66,160 2.
- **B.Tech:** Scholarships can amount to ₹ 95,940 for higher percentages 5.

5.7. Impact on Student Enrolment

The substantial scholarship amounts significantly reduce the financial burden on students, which has a positive impact on enrolment rates across all programs:

1. Increased Accessibility

- **Financial Relief:** The scholarships provide essential financial relief, making higher education more accessible to students from diverse economic backgrounds. This is particularly important for programs with higher tuition fees, such as B.Tech, where scholarships can cover a significant portion of costs.

2. Diverse Student Body

- **Attracting Students:** The availability of scholarships attracts a diverse range of students, enhancing the academic environment and fostering inclusivity within the programs. For instance, the B.Sc. programs support 21 students, indicating a focused effort to assist students in these fields.

3. Enrolment Trends

- **Higher Enrollment Rates:** Programs with higher scholarship percentages tend to see increased enrolment. For example, B.Sc. (AM) and B.Sc. (IT) programs, which offer substantial scholarships, are likely to attract more students compared to programs with lower financial support.

The comparison of scholarship amounts to tuition fees across various programs highlights a robust financial aid structure that supports student enrollment. By alleviating tuition costs, these scholarships play a vital role in encouraging students to pursue their academic goals, ultimately contributing to a more diverse and inclusive educational landscape. The positive correlation between scholarship availability and enrollment rates underscores the importance of financial support in higher education.

5.8 Placements of students by GNA University

During the assessment exercise, the team learnt that GNA University ensures best match between interests and opportunities for students. The university has a dedicated placement cell called GNA University Training and Placement Department that helps students make informed choices about the right career move. The department assists students in building a career-focused personal development plan, taking into account their strengths, skills, interests and aspirations.

A number of senior professionals and practitioners from the industry are regularly invited to the university for career guidance workshops and seminars.

5.9 Prominent activities by the university to prepare student for placements

The activities include:

- Specific and identified trainings – employability enhancement trainings on soft skills and aptitude, and career-oriented training
- Support in providing internships
- Arranging students' visits to various industry houses
- Conducting international education fairs and career counselling sessions by bringing industry leaders in regular contact with students
- Conducting conclaves/seminars/guest lectures
- Collaboration with the international community for university tie-ups and industry interface

➤ **Prominent companies that recruit students from the university include:**

Bosch, Just Dial, Hero Cycles, Bajaj Sons Ltd, Maruti Suzuki, Radisson Group, Eicher, Mahindra Group, and Bajaj Capital, among many others.

6. Noteworthy outcomes so far

a) Increased access to education

Academic scholarships for deserving students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds have significantly increased their access to higher education. These scholarships often cover tuition fees, and as a result, students who were not able to afford higher education are now pursuing their academic goals without the burden of financial constraints.

b) Economic empowerment

By easing the financial burden of education, these scholarships allow students to focus on their studies without the distraction of financial worries. As they complete their education and enter the workforce, they are better positioned to secure higher-paying jobs, breaking the cycle of poverty and contributing positively to the economy.

c) Enhanced career opportunities

The scholarships from Sonalika in partnership with GNA University come with additional benefits such as mentorship programmes, internships, and networking opportunities. These have helped students build a strong foundation for their careers. With improved access to resources and guidance, scholarship recipients are better equipped to explore diverse career paths, fostering personal and professional growth that might have been challenging without the support of a scholarship.

d) Community impact and social mobility

The positive impact of academic scholarships extends beyond the individual recipients. As these students graduate and enter various professions, they will become role models and contributors to their communities. This creates a ripple effect, inspiring others in their community to pursue education and strive for a better future. Scholarships thus become a catalyst for social mobility, breaking down barriers and fostering a culture of education among those from underprivileged socio-economic communities.

e) Diversity and inclusion in higher education

Scholarships contribute to creating a more diverse and inclusive higher education landscape. By providing financial support to students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, institutions are making sure that a broader range of perspectives and experiences are represented in academic settings. This enriches the learning environment for all students and prepares them for a globalised world where diversity is valued and appreciated.

7. Recommendations

1. Enhanced Awareness and Outreach

To increase participation in the scholarship program, it is essential to enhance awareness among potential students. This can be achieved through targeted outreach campaigns in rural areas and local communities, utilizing social media, workshops, and informational sessions at schools. Engaging with local leaders and influencers can also help spread the word about available scholarships and their benefits.

2. Flexible Scholarship Criteria

Consider revising the scholarship criteria to include not only academic merit but also other factors such as extracurricular involvement, community service, and financial need. This broader approach can attract a more diverse group of applicants and ensure that deserving students who may not excel academically but contribute positively to their communities are also considered.

3. Regular Monitoring and Evaluation

Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation system to assess the impact of the scholarship program on student enrolment and retention rates. Regular feedback from students and faculty can provide insights into the effectiveness of the scholarships and help identify areas for improvement. This data-driven approach can inform future decisions regarding scholarship amounts and distribution.

4. Increased Funding and Partnerships

Explore opportunities for increased funding through partnerships with local businesses, NGOs, and government agencies. Collaborating with these entities can provide additional financial resources and support for the scholarship program. Establishing a fund specifically for scholarships can also ensure sustainability and growth of the initiative over time.

5. Alumni Engagement and Mentorship Programs

Encourage alumni who have benefited from the scholarship program to give back by contributing to future scholarships or mentoring current students. Establishing a mentorship program can provide valuable guidance and support to students navigating their academic journeys, fostering a sense of community and encouraging alumni to remain engaged with the university ¹⁵.

Implementing these recommendations can enhance the effectiveness of the scholarship and tuition fee project, ultimately leading to increased enrollment, improved student outcomes, and a more inclusive educational environment. By focusing on outreach, flexibility, evaluation, funding, and alumni engagement, the program can better serve the needs of its students and the community.









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