

# Case Studies

## Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centers “SANJAH VEHRA / PANJHO VEHRO” or “OUR COURTYARD” in flood affected areas of Punjab & Sindh



“SANJAH VEHRA” (SV) or PANJHO VEHRO (PV) means an abode of peace, child protection and development, ownership, community participation and women’s empowerment; a holistic approach for strong early foundations & learning for children



دبي العطاء  
Dubai Cares

Funded by,  
Dubai Cares  
Implemented by,  
Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)



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## Sanjah Vehrah (SV) - Bringing out the Best

“Sheraz Sikandar” a brilliant and active student of Sanjah Vehra Model Village 48 NP (District Rahim Yar Khan), was not as active and confident before getting enrolled in the center. On his 1st day, he was so frightened and scary as he did not leave her mother’s lap and did not talk to anyone; neither teachers nor children. Actually he had a bad picture of schools and teachers in his mind due to an incident which occurred one year back.



Sikandar Ali, Sheraz’s father, belongs to a middle class family and does a clerical job in a local government school. He told, “One year back I decided to get my son enrolled in the school where I work, at that time Sheraz was only three years old. On the first day, when sheraz went to the school, he saw a teacher beating a student red and blue with a stick. It made him so scary that he started crying badly at once and never got ready to go there or any other school again. I tried many times to take him to the school but he strongly refused which made me upset and worried at times about his schooling”.

His parents were very worried about him. They took him even to some private schools but he couldn’t cope anywhere. Four months ago, Mrs. Sikander came to know about the day care facility in 48 NP model village which was 7 kilometers away from their village, but for the sake of her child’s betterment, she visited the center and met the teachers there. Next day she took her child to Sanjah Vehra for getting him enrolled there; Sheraz was scared as usual. When he reached there he saw that children were singing rhymes and playing together in the compound. He found it interesting and joyful - his fears began to recede; the teachers also interacted with him in friendly and gentle manners which made him more comfortable, but he did not let his mother go away for a whole month. Through discussions the teachers identified Sheraz as a sensitive child comparatively concerned about everything more deeply than others. The teachers nurtured him abilities with love and attention to bring the best out in Sheraz.

In such an encouraging and healthy environment, he proved an active learner through active participations in all programs. Gradually all his fears vanished and he coped with his class, he is now enjoying the company of his mates, and is fully adjusted at the SV; he loves to be at the Sanjah Vehra on time every day. Sheraz proudly says “I love my teachers and I love my friends”.



“It could happen just because of the teachers who give love and affection to my child” his parents said thankfully.

## Sanjah Vehra - Transforms Behaviors

Anum is a 3 years old girl who is enrolled at Sanjha Vehra Basti Lasoori, which is 35Kms far from Kot Addu (District Muzaffargarh). She is the only daughter of her parents, a factor that resulted in over-cautiousness of her parents. Due to over attention and care, Anum became stubborn and careless which made her parents upset at times as she used to ill behave all the times with everyone. Her parents were hopeless as all of their tactics rendered useless.

Three months back her parents enrolled her at one of the SV established by Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) in assistance with Dubai Cares (DC). During the first month of her stay, she kept disturbing and tried to dominate other children during classroom activities and plays. Her teacher says, *“Anum is intelligent however, it was challenging to make her realize how to work and play in groups. Gradually,*



*she has learnt how to work together and it has also developed discipline in her personality through participating in the group activities held in the center”.*

Her mother also visits the SV centre frequently and is very happy with the positive change in her behavior. In the last meeting, she expressed her deep gratitude for the teachers and center for bringing this positive change in her daughter. Her face was shining with a clear sense of satisfaction while she was having conversation with ITA staff.

## Sanjah Vehra – Transforming Behaviors in Children

Qurat-ul-ain lives in a flood affected village, Basti Malook, District Muzaffargarh. She is fifth in the list of her siblings; lack of parental care and proper guidance had a drastic consequence as she started stealing toys, hair pins, and bangles from her friends in the neighborhood.



Her mother was very upset and frequent complaints of her daughter embarrassed her, *“I used to cry and got mad at Qurat-ul-ain as I didn’t find any solution to reform her ill habits”*.

When Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) established Sanjha Vehra (SV) in their village, Qurat-ul-ain was enrolled by her parents. At SV Qurat-ul-ain played who played many other games, started taking interest in a game called “Greeting Circle” that made her realize that stealing is not a good habit and it is her duty to take permission from friends prior using their belongings. She is a completely changed kid now and even readily shares her own toys with friends, as the idea of “Sharing” is incorporated in various activities of SV e.g. sharing meal, toys (available in the centre), and swings etc



## Sanjha Vehra (SV) – a step towards Healthy Pakistan

The rural areas of Pakistan usually have no or little access to health services, medicines and proper nutritional guidance required for healthy bringing of a child. The availability of doctors, Lady Health Workers (LHWs) could play an important role by providing important information to mothers in these rural areas. Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) has arranged lady health workers (LHWs) who visit all of the SVs at least twice a week. These LHWs conduct health sessions with the female community of the area and answer all of their questions in detail. LHWs also conduct sessions with the enrolled children of SVs to motivate them to adopt healthy habits by telling stories that could reveal the importance of healthy habits. To make these sessions with children more interactive, ITA has also provided an ECE Kit “AAO MIL KER SHEEKHEIN” at each centre which contains health related games, colorful health checklists, and puppet show.

SVs are bringing positive change in its area and have transformed ill habits of many enrolled children who were previously used to eat soil. Several mothers visit Early Childhood Development (ECD) Daycare Centres / SVs to share the stories of healthy behavioral change and positive transformation brought in their children.

In one such session at Basti Malook, District Muzaffargarh, a mother shared the story of her son, Shaheer: *“My son used to eat soil; I was very afraid as I tried every tactics to stop my son from eating soil. I even put red chillies in his mouth to punish him, but everything failed. I caught him many times red handed but I was clueless and had no solution”.*



At SV Basti Malook, Shaheer participated in storytelling and game sessions and himself came to know, gradually, that his bad habit of eating soil is harming his stomach and lungs. As he found satisfactory answers to his queries, and came to know the diseases and soil

worms, he himself has started hating his habit of soil eating. “I will not ever eat soil again because I don’t want to go to hospital”, says Shaheer in cute manners.



## **Sanjah Vehrah (SV) - Dreams can come true: an enabled mother's encounter with skills**

*Seven Sanjah Vehras (ECD Centers) have been established in Muzaffargarh's flood affected areas to benefit local communities through the provision of early childhood development program for children aged 6 months to 4+ years as well as health, parenting, and vocational program for mothers and girls. The SVs provide local females a safe space for their children to return to work in the fields, rebuilding homes and reconstructing their lives. On the other hand, Vocational Programs for Mothers & Girls aim to empower females, assisting them in making their own decisions and share economic burden of their household. These are heavily subsidized. The first program's fee was US \$10 for a three month's certified diploma.*

*The first three months "Beauty Care diploma" for females was offered at the SV centre in Basti Malook, Kot Addu, (July – September 2012). Many of the enrolled females aimed to use their skills later for earning.*

*Shahnaz Bilal, mother of two children enrolled at the Basti Malook Sanjah Vehra, just completed her three months diploma as the first batch of graduates. She decided to set up her own beauty parlor. She is 36 years old and had always been passionate to do such a course but could not due to lack of opportunity and limited resources. It was a valuable chance for her to access vocational skills offered by the SV center, where her child was being looked after at the same time. It was quite doable to come along with her children daily who are enrolled in the ECD centre; they attend their ECD program and Shehnaz managed to complete her vocational program.*

*Just after qualifying from the beautician course, Shehnaz has found someone as a partner who has supported her to buy the required products for setting up her own beauty parlor. As there was no such facility in her village in Basti Lal Meer, her parlor is appreciated by local females and is becoming a lucrative source of income too.*

*Shehnaz says, "My husband and me are happy that the center enabled me to earn for my family; I could only dream earlier about this, but my dreams came true just because of this opportunity. Presently, my income is not high but I hope that it will*



*increase gradually especially over Eid, and I am fully determined to keep it up”.*

#### *Transforming lives - Right to Education*

*Shabana; a mother of four children was struggling for her life. She wanted to meet both ends by completing a course of Lady Health Worker-LHW; however, being a mother, the responsibility of taking care of her younger kid was one of the major hurdle to accomplish her goal. It was hard to manage home and study side by side in these crucial circumstances. This not only affected her children's brought up but also her studies as well. Her performance was getting down day by day.*

*She was living in an area where no day care centers were available for the ease of struggling mothers. When she found no other solution; she decided to take her elder daughter out of school so that she could give a helping hand in household chores and looking after her siblings. As the time passed she realized that her decision was not right. In her struggle she was ignoring her children's rights like right to education particularly of her daughter. On the other hand, her result was not as satisfactory as she was expecting.*

*One day one of her friends came to her. She told Shabana that Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi in collaboration with Dubai cares is opening a center named “SANJAH VERAH”, in our locality Basti Malook, where early years children would learn and develop their skills. Sanjah Vehra aims at working for Early Childhood Development (ECD).*



*After listening all about Sajah Vehra, Shabana's eyes were twinkling with joy. This solved most of her problems. She got her young son admitted to the Sanjha Vehra and also enrolled her daughter back to the school. This decision made her life easy and she saw an astounding improvement reflected in her Jan-March 2012 term work with 80% marks.*

*This Sanjha Vehra not only brought comfort to Shabana's life but also to hundreds of women who are benefitting from SVs. She expressed her feelings of joy by saying, “These centers are special gifts for*



*those women, like me in rural areas, who cannot afford much but desire to improve themselves and their family."*

## **Sanjha Vehra- A Conduit of Change**

She wakes up at the crack of dawn to make breakfast arrangements for her family, and sleeps long after everyone has slept so that all her house chores and daily duties have been performed. She disciplines her children so that they are ready to battle with the challenges of the world, but also softens up and spoils them sometimes to make them realize how special they are to her. In days of despair and days of bliss, she is a constant figure who stands unflinchingly by one's side. Indeed a woman is a phenomenal figure without whom the family unit is undeniably incomplete.

Despite all, the story of many women in Pakistan unfolds in a sad way as most people do not acknowledge their right to education let alone their right to choose a profession of their choice. Poor educational status of women in a country is a phenomenon that is pernicious in its construction; it is one that engenders problems like high maternal mortality rates, infant mortality<sup>1</sup> rates and increased incidence of contracting infectious diseases. Thus, educating woman and giving them essential life skills is the need of the hour, and it is something that needs to be realized as a global and national imperative

Shahnaz Bilal of Basti Malook (District Muzaffargarh), like many other women in Pakistan, led a life of compromised servility, where her work was only limited to household tasks. No one in her life had thought about her right to education, her ambitions and her talents- talents that extended beyond the domestic chores. Fortunately, ITA Pakistan initiated a program called the Sanjha Vera (SV) program which was geared towards providing early childhood education; accoutering females with essential knowledge on health and hygiene and offering vocational skill development programs. This SV program was offered in Basti Malook too, and in order to capitalize this situation Shahnaz Bilal enrolled herself and her children in SV Malook. This decision changed her life completely, as the SV program recognized her natural talent and passion to become a beautician, and gave her the essential skill and confidence to take her passion at a more mature level and develop it as a profession.

Today, Shahnaz is a proud owner of the first beauty parlor in Basti Malook, where people from her neighborhood and beyond come for beauty tips, training and treatment. Her

entrepreneurial venture has given an encouraging push to many other girls in her locality, who have also enrolled in the SV program. Thus, the SV program has become a conduit of change, one that allows for stereotypical roles to be inverted and changed for the better.

1-In Pakistan the infant mortality rate has been recorded to be 78 deaths per 1000 live births  
(The USAID/Pakistan Office of Health Maternal and Child Health)

## Sanjha Vehra - a Mother's Dream

In the green fields of Shikarpur lies a beautiful village of Zarkhel with common men living a common life. "My name is Najma and I am 40 years old, living with my 10 children and a husband who has been on bed for the last one year. One of my children died due to lack of facilities and bad environmental condition in our



village. I belong to that group of women in our society who have been the victim of gender discrimination in the male dominant society where women are not empowered with the right to follow their own path and dreams. I am supporting my family with everything I can. I work as maid and in fields in order to fulfill all the basic necessities as well as provide education to my children. I don't want them to face the cruel circumstances of life which I have been through. Life has not been easy for me and I don't want the same for my children. Like a mother would dream for her children, I always wanted them to have quality life, separate bed, lots of toys, quality and free education and a playful environment where they could live their childhood at the fullest.

When I see my children play with cattle and other animals on the streets and come back home with their clothes and head to toe full of dirt, it makes me realize that there is a lot more that I can do for them. I am certain that I am not the only woman who is facing these issues, certainly not the one with the dreams I have been weaving, but there are plenty more out there but their voices might not be getting heard by others. I believe women are more than the way they are being treated.

Just when I thought that things will remain the same for life, I witnessed the arrival of Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi in our village and they approached us with their vision of setting up an Panjhu Vehru (ECD Center) with the support of Dubai Cares. We all were so happy to hear about this that our community decided to donate a portion of land in order to make the

beautiful vision come to life. The lady health workers are also doing a great job and there has been a significant improvement in the health status of our village.

When I look at this Panjhu Vehru (ECD Center) and my children attending the classes being conducted there, I look up and thank my Allah Sayeen that finally my children can have something out of this life. They go to the center daily and learn new things and come back home with a new story to share with me every day. I listen to them and notice the sparkle in their eye, giving me new hopes and an even better future for them”.



## **Sanjah Vehra - Colours come in Life**

My name is Nafeesa. I belong to Khar family. I live in “Basti Laasoori” – a nearby village of Tehsil Kot Addu (District Muzaffargarh). Due to family and local cultural restrictions, I was not allowed to go out and seek education. But I did not let my desire to get education die, so I did Matric and Intermediate as a private candidate. Our family does not support education for girls rather women are supposed to be confined to four-walls. So was my destiny. After intermediate I could not continue my further studies and got married.

But thank God, my husband has been quite supportive. When he realized my eagerness for education, he let me do my graduation as private candidate. But the subsequent birth of my two sons encumbered me with so much domestic responsibilities that the dream for further education seemed a far cry.

One such day, I heard an announcement about a community fare from a nearby mosque I went there with least interest. What a great number of women there was! All that knowledge and information that came to me, was astonishing to me; some institutions with the help of Government is going to establish a center where the children from 6 months to 4 years would be looked after by trained teachers. This information resurrected my desire for education, while coming to home, I decided to start my studies again.

I shared it with my husband, he was bit hesitant but I convinced him that our children would properly be looked after by trained teachers, and more over the women of our own area would be trained and employed by ITA & DC in the centre. I was very enthusiastic as my dreams were about to come true. I decided to continue my studies and get my children admitted in the centre.

I took much information about it from the teachers of “Sanjha Vehra”, and volunteered myself to teach and support children in the evening session in order to be a dynamic part of this progressive caravan.

*“Now I am at ease to start my B.Ed program with zeal and zeal”, expressed Nafeesa joyfully.*