

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

ITA has established seven “Sanjah Vehrahs” (ECD centers) in Muzaffargarh’s flood affected areas. These centers will benefit local communities by providing an early childhood development program for children between 6 months and 4 years old. The centers also provide health, parenting, and vocational programs for mothers and girls. Local women are provided with a safe space to leave their children while they return to work in the fields, rebuilding homes and reconstructing their lives. In addition, vocational programs for mothers and girls aim to empower women, helping them to make their own decisions and to contribute economically to their households. These programs are heavily subsidized. For example, the cost of the first program was US\$10 for a three month certified diploma.

From July through September 2012, the SV center in Basti Malook, Kot Addu offered a three month “beauty care diploma” to local women. Those who enrolled aimed to gain skills that would enhance their future earning potential.

Shahnaz Bilal, a 36 year old mother of two children enrolled in the Basti Malook Sanjah Vehra, recently received her three month diploma as part of the first batch of graduates. She decided to set up her own beauty parlor. Shahnaz had always wanted to pursue such a course but had been unable to do so due to limited resources and the lack of opportunity. The program offered by the SV center provided her with a valuable chance to gain vocational skills while her children were looked after at the same time. After completing the beautician course, Shehnaz found a partner who helped her to buy the required products to set up her own beauty parlor. Before she set up her business, such a facility had not existed in her village of Basti Lal Meer. The local women appreciate Shehnaz’s parlor and it is becoming a lucrative source of income.

Shehnaz says, *“My husband and I are happy that the center enabled me to earn for my family. Previously, I could only dream about this but this opportunity helped my dreams come true. Presently, my income is not high but I hope that it will gradually increase, especially over Eid, and I am fully determined to keep it up”.*

Transforming lives - Right to Education

A mother of four, Shabana was struggling to balance her studies and family responsibilities. She wanted to complete a Lady Health Worker-LHW course, but the responsibilities of taking care of her younger son was one of the major obstacles to accomplishing her goal. In these circumstances, it was difficult to simultaneously manage housework as well as her studies. Her performance was deteriorating day by day.



Shabana lived in an area without any day care centers to help struggling mothers. Unable to find any other solution, she decided to withdraw her elder daughter from school so that she could help with the household chores and in looking after her siblings. As time passed she realized that she had not made the right decision. Focused on her own struggle, she had ignored her daughter's right to education. Her course results were also not as good as expected.



One day, one of Shabana's friends told her that Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi was opening a center named "SANJAH VERAH" in their village of Basti Malook. In this center, young children could learn and develop their skills. After learning about Sanjah Vehra, Shabana's eyes twinkled with joy. This solved most of her problems. She had her young son enrolled in the SanjhaVehra and sent her daughter back to school. Relieved of her childcare

responsibilities, Shabana was able to focus on her studies and received 80% marks during the January to March 2012 term.

This SanjhaVehra not only improved Shabana's life but also those of hundreds of women who are benefitting from SVs. Shabana expressed her feelings of joy by saying, *"These centers are special gifts for women like me who cannot afford much but desire to improve themselves and their families."*

