



APRIL 2019

Story Line of a Street-Child
from Children's Primary Unit to Children's School House – SAVING LIVES series

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March 2019

A long journey

Khan Jan, a 14-year old Afghan refugee belongs to a lower class family living in a large joint family system. He is the first-born among his siblings, having four brothers and two sisters. His father frequently abused him, physically and emotionally. Khan Jan was affectionately close to his mother and maternal grandmother. He recalls from his past - once he came in the house after spending a whole day wandering outside to earn a living for his family but in return, his father physically bruised him terribly. Due to this trauma, he became extremely fearful and decided to never return home.

Around the age of 10, Khan Jan started smoking ‘charas’ because of his association with other street wanderers. Moreover, smoking motivated him to experiment with other drugs. Although never involved with criminal activities, he solely earned money to feed his increasing appetite for drugs.

He reached Karachi Cantt by train – *when*, he is unable to recall – but vividly remembers his drug addiction was fulfilled while living on the streets of Pakistan’s commercial hub.

AAS Trust’s field staff engaged him for treatment and eventual rehabilitation as productive citizen of society.

Children’s Primary Unit (CPU) – Stage I

Khan Jan enrolled for treatment in the Children’s Primary Unit on October 12, 2017 for a 3-month treatment program for addiction and trauma. Initial months were very discomforting for him to adjust into the ‘new’ environment. He was excessively impulsive, angry, sad or lonely depending on his mood. Moreover, his inability to express his emotions led him to suppress his feelings of low self-esteem. His hopelessness about his future during treatment appeared bleak to him often leading to subsequent display of irritability toward others. Flashbacks about his family members, his past environment would make him rigid, uncooperative and regress in long silence.

Gradually, Khan Jan’s non-serious attitude in group settings changed and became attentive under the constant supervision of our dedicated counseling team.

The team applied the PACE *model of care* –

- ✓ **PLAYFULNESS**
- ✓ **ACCEPTANCE**
- ✓ **CURIOSITY**
- ✓ **EMPATHY**

PACE is an approach of four personal qualities allowing adults to support a child's development of their own self-awareness, emotional intelligence and resilience. Over time and with practice, a child will gain strong tools to understand and regulate their emotions. Key to this approach is a deep respect for the child's own experiences relating to family bonding or associations.

At AAS, we provide a supportive space within which children hone and develop their own thinking skills. We help children to reflect upon, understand and then manage their emotions more skilfully.

On completion of the second month, Khan Jan became little hopeful and with proactive counseling, started working on anger management and his low self-esteem. It was his first step toward resolving his inner-shame and sobriety. This was a BIG first step, a BIG success for the entire team of Children's Primary Unit.

Children's Halfway House (CHH) – Stage II

After completing three month of intensive rehabilitative treatment, Khan Jan was in no mood to continuing with his next phase of recovery. The counseling and administrative team were initially unsuccessful in convincing him to enroll in AAS Children's Halfway House. After taking time for contemplation and inner-reflection, Khan Jan agreed. He voluntarily enrolled himself in CHH on January 12, 2018.

The initial period was turbulent and ridden with conflict involving peers and CHH staff. Peers were inclined to manipulate Khan Jan's outbursts causing him to behave in an irrational manner. The counseling team began to immerse him in groups focused on:

- ✓ **LIFE SKILL BASIC EDUCATION**
- ✓ **PSYCH-EDUCATION**
- and*
- ✓ **RELAPSE PREVENTION PLANNING**

During the advanced rehabilitation process, Khan Jan would have occasional urges to run away from the Halfway House but due to timely intervention from CHH staff, he was discouraged from doing so. There came a time when two children ran away during ‘outdoor play’ time but he chose to remain focused on his recovery.

Relapse Prevention Planning groups were of valuable support wherein Khan Jan learnt how to manage cravings and understand factors that can lead to relapse. Individual weekly sessions offered emotional support where he learned about his strengths and weaknesses. His aim was to study in school and to become a ‘better person’.

Toward the end of his enrollment at CHH, Khan Jan began to express his feelings in a more rational and noticeably subdued manner. He became less irritable and more optimistic. He now had a faint but appealing vision of what he wanted himself to be. He wanted to remain steadfast on his recovery.

Children’s School House (CSH) – Stage III Ongoing

Khan Jan joined CSH on August, 31, 2018. He yearns for his family but simultaneously conflicted with the thought that getting education in such a healthy environment couldn’t have been possible without running away from home. He is optimistic about his future and is eager to improve himself. His behavior toward a ‘normal –self’ has drastically modified and is positively demonstrated in household activities including routine chores assigned to him. Khan Jan continues to struggle with his inner self-esteem but has remarkably worked to contain his anger. Knowingly, this is a daily battle for him and he is determined to win it. As the counseling team continues to groom his social skill-sets, he is empathetic toward his struggling peers and offers his unabashed support as a role model to those undergoing behavioral-related issues.

Future Roadmap

Undoubtedly, this is a success story for AAS altogether - an Afghan runaway who voluntarily took the first step toward recovery. Although Khan Jan still requires to put-in efforts to advance his social skills, nonetheless – he is more adept at making friends and maintaining relationships - a stark contrast to his initial enrollment at CPU. He has expressed his desire to revisit his family. Due to his past trauma, he had fear associated with the word ‘Ghar’ and his hostile relationship with his father. Consequent to the ongoing rehabilitation, a positive association is imagined with the word ‘Ghar’.

Specific Behavioral Therapy procedures applied on Khan Jan

- ✓ Anger management
- ✓ Ventilation of suppressed emotions
- ✓ Self-esteem
- ✓ Relationship skills
- ✓ Craving management

To conclude, Khan Jan has a deep connection with AAS Trust and views it as his own family. This perception is a bond that can't be broken as long as we have support – emotionally and financially from the community.

With your generous donation, we were able to change a street-child's life. This is symbolic of the AAS mission – ***‘SAVING LIVES’***.

Thank you again for your thoughtful gift to the Trust and to the many children in the community who rely on us for services and programs.

Your unwavering support makes us more determined to saving lives...

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