

1st Draft

Silent Sidhra speaks

By

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“She seems silent. She is never dump,” observed Ejaz an accompanying friend during a visit to Child Friendly Space (CFS) at Daria Deen Panah Tehsil Addu District Muzafgarh.

The CFS has been established by DOABA/ Indus Consortium with the help of local communities and Plan Pakistan.

Sidhra was born out of **cousin-marriage** between Elahi Baksh and Akhter BB. She lives with her parents and brothers.

The family had a shattered dream of serenity even before the recent floods devastated their homes August 2010. “My sister is very unfortunate. Waqas 7 and Sidhra 8 are dump and deaf. Faisal 10 can speak but not without a hearing aid,” a youth of 25 informed us.

“We took him to Nishter (Hospital). The doctors said he can hear and will speak too but first get him a hearing Aid. We never have had money to pay for this device,” he told us in a dimmed voice.

He then turned around to shout, “Tell me your name... tell us your name.” “Faisal” in came an abrupt reply that jolted us around.



Did you ever take Sidhra to a doctor? When asked he said, “...no...yes...no... but, she is



deaf and dumb.”

His stumble revealed, never the family took Sidhra or the younger Waqas to a doctor.

This marked gender and age based discrimination necessitates importance of **“Because I’m a girl”** campaign in Southern Punjab.

Sidhra, Wasqa and Faisal and perhaps dozen more differently able boys and girls in this

remote village of Koot Addu look desperately towards “outsiders” for help in every walk of their lives.

Natives pin high hopes on NGOs for relief and reconstruction but no NGO can substitute governments, Ajmal, the Caregiver at the CFS knows this. “All one can do is to sensitize government, the primary duty bearer, to fulfill its duties towards its citizen.”



Ajmal is recording the number of all differently able children in his village. He will annex the findings of this survey with next report to DOABA/ Indus Consortium.

We hope the stakeholders involved in the welfare and development of children, will address needs of Sidhra and other fear-clutched child survivors of floods 2010.

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