



SEEDS OF CHANGE

Stories of Empowerment and Collective Action

Social Cooperation Initiative (SCI) | 2025



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It's finally here!

It gives us great pleasure to share **Seeds of Change**, a Stories of Change booklet from Social Cooperation Initiative (SCI). This publication brings together powerful, first-hand stories collected by our frontline staff from the field as part of the project "**Transforming Lives through Reduced Cases of Early Child Marriages**" in Tharparkar, Sindh.

Over the course of project implementation, our teams have worked closely with girls, families, communities, teachers, and local institutions to reflect on progress, challenges, and lessons emerging from this journey. The stories captured in this booklet reflect lived experiences of change and resilience, showing how sustained community engagement can expand opportunities for girls aged 6–18 who are at risk of early child marriage. At the heart of this initiative is a shared goal: ensuring that girls in Tharparkar have improved access to education, greater protection, and a safer, more supportive environment to thrive.

Through this project, tangible outcomes have begun to take shape. More than 900 girls have been enrolled in schools, communities have demonstrated increased awareness and positive attitudinal shifts around girls' education and the prevention of early child marriage, 200 families have strengthened their incomes through livelihood and enterprise support, and protection mechanisms for girls in target communities have been improved. These changes have been driven by integrated activities including school enrolment, teacher training and strengthening of School Management Committees, awareness raising at village and taluka levels, livelihood skills development and start-up grants for families, social protection training, and sustained engagement with government officials.

We hope **Seeds of Change** offers you an authentic window into how community-led action, when supported by strong partnerships and committed frontline staff, can contribute to lasting social transformation. We extend our sincere appreciation to the girls, families, communities, their organizations, civil society and our government partners, whose courage and collaboration made these stories possible.

Social Cooperation Initiative (SCI)



STORY 1: THE STORY OF KHARSAR TARI, HOW A DREAM TURNED INTO A SCHOOL

The village of Kharsar Tari, a small cluster of mud homes surrounded by the endless dunes of Tharparkar, was once silent to the sound of children learning. Though only sixteen kilometers from the town of Mithi, it felt worlds away, cut off from opportunity, electricity, clean water, and hope. Here, life depends on the mercy of the clouds. When rain came, crops grew, and animals thrived. When it didn't, hunger and hardship followed.

For generations, no child in Kharsar Tari had ever gone to school. The literacy rate was barely one percent. Parents had never seen a book, and daughters were expected to help with chores or care for younger siblings. The nearest school was miles away, and families could not afford to send their children there.



Then, in 2024, a small team from the Social Cooperation Initiative (SCI) arrived in the village. They didn't come up with big promises, only with questions, listening ears, and patience.

They sat on the sandy ground under acacia trees, drinking tea with elders and mothers, and spoke about what education could mean for their children's future.

At first, there was hesitation. "Schooling is not for us," one villager said. "Our daughters will marry young; what use are books to them?" But as the team continued visiting, bringing stories of other villages where girls could read and write, minds slowly began to shift. A respected religious leader stood up during one meeting and said, "Education is also a light from God, and our daughters deserve that light too."

That moment changed everything.

Within weeks, the community came together to make the impossible possible. A family offered a piece of land. The men built a chonra, a traditional hut made of mud and straw and declared it the village's first classroom. Women cleaned and prepared the space, and children peeked through the door, giggling at the sight of slates and books.

SCI provided what they could: learning materials, teacher training, school bags, and stationery. Two local women were trained as teachers, and a School Management Committee (SMC) was formed to keep the school running. When the first class began, more than two dozen girls attended, many holding a pencil for the very first time.

"We never imagined our daughters would go to school," an elder said softly. "Now they carry books and speak with confidence."

The little non-formal school soon became the pride of Kharsar Tari. Parents began visiting regularly, mothers helped encourage attendance, and the SMC started meetings to track progress. Children who once roamed the fields now sang songs, learned alphabets, and dreamed of becoming teachers and nurses.

Seeing the remarkable transformation, SCI invited the District Education Officer (DEO) to visit the school. The DEO was impressed, not only by the children's enthusiasm but by the community's deep involvement. "This," he said, "is how education begins, not in buildings, but in hearts."



Motivated by the visit, the villagers, with SCI's help, wrote a formal request to the Government of Sindh. A few months later, the government approved the establishment of a formal school in Kharsar Tari, a first in the village's history. The school was now officially recognized, paving the way for permanent classrooms, trained teachers, and continued government support.

Today, Kharsar Tari stands as a symbol of transformation. Where there was once silence,

now you hear laughter, recitation, and the hum of lessons. The community that once doubted education now leads it. Parents proudly say, “This school is ours, built with our hands and our hope.”

The SCI team still visits often. Plans are underway for the construction of a proper school building and for more teacher training. But real success has already taken root, in the confidence of young girls who now walk to school each morning, their books tucked under their arms, their future no longer hidden behind the desert horizon.

“Kharsar Tari showed us,” an SCI field officer reflects, “that when people believe in change, even the most remote village can become a place of learning and light.”

STORY 2: A NEW BEGINNING FOR RAMCHAND’S FAMILY, FROM STRUGGLE TO SELF-RELIANCE IN PABI JO TAR

In the remote desert village of Pabi jo Tar, 65 kilometers from Mithi in Tharparkar, life for Ramchand and his family had always been a battle for survival. Ramchand, who lives with a physical disability caused by polio, earned a meager income repairing punctured tires and fixing old bicycles. His wife Alma managed the home and cared for their six children, four boys and two girls, while they all struggled to make ends meet.

Poverty had forced their children out of school. “Every rupee we earned went to food,” Ramchand recalled. “I wanted my daughter Kahto to study, but we could not afford even notebooks.” With no steady income, no infrastructure, and little hope, the family lived below the poverty line, emblematic of the broader challenges facing many families in this isolated corner of Sindh.

That began to change when the Social Cooperation Initiative (SCI) team reached Pabi jo Tar. During a routine needs assessment, SCI identified Ramchand’s household as one of the most vulnerable. Rather than offering short-term aid, the team listened carefully, learning about the family’s struggles and their dreams.

The first step was simple but life-changing, re-enrolling Kahto in the local Government Primary School. SCI provided her with notebooks, pencils, and a school bag. “When Kahto put on

her uniform and held her books,” Alma said, “it felt like the first light entering our home.”

But SCI knew education alone wouldn’t be sustainable without economic stability. They helped Ramchand establish a small pincher repair shop, providing a start-up grant, basic tools, and hands-on guidance to build his business. With SCI’s mentorship, he learned how to keep records, manage earnings, and attract customers. The shop soon began generating regular income, a first for the family.

SCI also extended training to the entire household and other villagers, covering livestock management, tailoring, bookkeeping, and small enterprise development. Alma joined a stitching workshop and started sewing clothes for neighbors, adding another modest but steady source of income. Through this, the family not only improved their earnings but gained confidence and dignity.

“Before SCI came, I felt helpless,” Ramchand shared. “They didn’t just give us tools, they gave us hope. Now I can provide for my family with pride. My daughter studies, and my wife works. We are building our own future.”

The ripple effects of this change spread quickly. Seeing Kahto return to school encouraged other parents to enroll their children too. Ramchand’s small shop became a local model for self-employment, showing what was possible when skills and support came together.

Today, the family stands stronger, educated, skilled, and hopeful. SCI continues to visit, offering follow-up mentorship and connecting the family to local markets for sustainability.



Plans are underway to support women like Alma with stitching machines, expand youth skill-building programs, and form a village development committee to sustain the progress achieved.

In a place once defined by scarcity, Ramchand's story now shines as one of transformation, proving that when opportunity meets determination, even the most remote village can write its own story of change.



STORY 3: A FATHER'S PROMISE: THE STORY OF HASINA AND GUDDI'S RETURN TO SCHOOL

In the heart of Tharparkar's village of Morkhiyar, lived Mr. Soomar, a father of seven daughters. His days were spent collecting and selling firewood, earning a meager 10,000 to 12,000 PKR per month—barely enough to feed his family. Despite the hardships, he held onto a dream: that his daughters would receive an education and have a future brighter than his own.

At first, he managed to enroll four of them in school, but financial constraints soon forced him to make a painful decision. Two of his daughters, Hasina and Guddi, had to drop out. Their days, once filled with learning, were replaced by household chores, their future slipping further away.

When the SCI team started to visit the village, they learned about the girls' situation and decided to speak with Mr. Soomar and his family along with other parents in the community. After the awareness and mobilization sessions in the community, sitting with Mr. Soomar in the shade of his modest home, they engaged him in deep conversation about the long-term benefits of girls' education, the financial obstacles and SCI's plan to support girls like Hasina and Guddi. They spoke of opportunities beyond survival, of futures where his daughters could break free from the cycle of poverty.

Moving by their words, Mr. Soomar found himself reflecting. *"I always wanted my daughters to study," he admitted. "But when survival is uncertain, education feels like a luxury."*

Yet, something shifted in him during this process. Encouraged by the SCI team's support, he decided, one that would change his family's future. With newfound determination, he re-enrolled Hasina and Guddi in school, ensuring that all four of his daughters could continue their education.

Today, their story is becoming an important one to support mobilization efforts by SCI to bring back girls in the schools. The girls wake up each morning with excitement and get ready for school with happiness. Their attendance is regular, their enthusiasm unmatched. Watching them, Mr. Soomar smiles, hope prevails in his heart.

"If organizations continue to support families like mine," he shares, "I promise that all my daughters will complete their education. I want them to have a future better than mine."

Hasina and Guddi's return to school have also inspired other families in the village to rethink their choices. Their story is no longer just about one father's promise, it is about a community beginning to believe that education is not a privilege but a right, a path toward a brighter future for all.

SCI will continue to engage with family, community and girls on ongoing basis to make sure that they remain in the school and complete their education. SCI will also consider



Hasina and Guddi for upcoming support package to be initiated during quarter two.

STORY 4: BREAKING BARRIERS TO EDUCATION: A STORY OF CHANGE IN SAJANI BHEEL

Sajani Bheel, located in Taluka Mithi, District Tharparker is a home to three orphan girls who live with their aging grandparents, who are struggling to make ends meet. With no formal identification and little awareness of their rights, these girls faced an uncertain future, education was simply not an option. Their grandparents, though caring, lacked the resources and understanding to support their granddaughters' schooling.

Recognizing this dire situation, the SCI team stepped in to create a pathway for these children's education. Through a community mobilization drive, the team engaged with the grandparents to highlight the importance of education as a fundamental right. Multiple visits and discussions were held to address their concerns, provide reassurance, and connect them with local resources.

The team also collaborated with school officials to ensure a welcoming and supportive environment for the girls, briefing teachers about the family's situation and securing their commitment to support the children's learning journey.

As a result of these collective efforts, the grandparents agreed to enroll the girls in

school. To facilitate the process, SCI assisted in obtaining their birth registration (B-Form) through NADRA, enabling them to receive official documentation. With all necessary paperwork in place, the girls were successfully enrolled, marking a significant step toward a brighter future.

This experience underscored key lessons about the importance of community engagement in addressing educational barriers.

Building trust through dialogue proved crucial in achieving meaningful change. Additionally, partnerships with local institutions, such as schools and government agencies, enhanced the sustainability of interventions. The case also highlighted the vital role of grassroots education advocacy in breaking barriers for marginalized children.

Moving forward, SCI will continue to monitor the progress of these girls, ensuring they receive ongoing support in their education. The team also plans to expand efforts to identify and assist more out-of-school children in vulnerable communities, further advocating for every child's right to education.



STORY 5: THE STORY OF BHEDNA'S JOURNEY TO EDUCATION

Mr. Bherji lives in a small, remote village of Morkhiyar, with his wife and four children, two sons and two daughters. Their survival depended on collecting and selling firewood, a grueling task that barely earned them 12,000 PKR per month. Despite his hardships, Bherji longed for a different future for his daughters, one that did not involve the same cycle of struggle.

"I want to educate my girls," he admitted, "but with no stable income, I have no choice but to involve them in woodcutting to support our survival." His words were heavy with regret, knowing that without support, his daughters' education remained an unattainable dream.

When the SCI team visited the village, they discovered that Bherji's daughters had never attended school due to financial constraints. Understanding the family's situation, they initiated a mobilization session, engaging him in conversations about the long-term benefits of education. They shared stories of transformation, of families who had broken the cycle of poverty through education, of girls who had grown into independent, empowered women. Some community members also support SCI in these conversations.

At first, Bherji hesitated. The burden of providing for his family loomed over him. But as



the team continued their discussions, something changed. He began to see education not as a cost, but as an investment in his daughters' futures.

With newfound conviction, Bherji made a courageous decision, he enrolled his daughters in school. Today, their names are on the school register, their presence in the classroom a testament to his determination.

Seeing his daughter in her school uniform for the first time, he smiled with pride. *"I never thought this day would come,"* he said. *"Now, I believe that if my daughters get an education, they will have choices that I never had."*

SCI will continue to engage with family, community and girls on ongoing basis to make sure that they remain in the school and complete their education. SCI will also consider Bhedna for upcoming support package to be initiated during quarter two.

STORY 6: FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION: LEEMON'S JOURNEY AS A COMMUNITY CHANGE AGENT

Access to education, livelihood opportunities, and social awareness has long been limited in the remote desert village of Purpuri, nestled in Union Council Mithrio Bhatti of Taluka Mithi, District Tharparkar. This community, like many others in Tharparkar, faces recurring droughts, high dropout rates among girls, early marriages, and alarmingly low literacy levels—particularly among women. Against this backdrop of chronic vulnerability and marginalization, the Social Cooperation Initiative (SCI) conducted a baseline survey and village profiling exercise that uncovered a glimmer of potential. Among the few individuals with some education and awareness was Leemon, son of Photo Bheel. A young man who could read, write, and communicate clearly, Leemon stood out not only for his abilities but for his deep sense of responsibility to his community.

Recognizing this potential, SCI selected Leemon as a Community Resource Person (CRP) through a transparent and participatory process. From that moment, both Leemon's personal growth and his village's transformation began to unfold. Trained by SCI on community mobilization, recordkeeping, beneficiary identification, and facilitating awareness sessions, Leemon began holding regular gatherings to discuss issues such as girls' education, child marriage, hygiene, and health. Over time, he became a trusted figure in the village, a voice of encouragement, knowledge, and advocacy. Through his efforts, over 15 girls who had previously dropped out of

school were identified and re-enrolled, while four vulnerable households were recommended for SCI's livelihood support. His weekly sessions fostered awareness and shifted community attitudes, gradually increasing women's participation in public discussions and promoting understanding of education and child protection as fundamental rights.

The impact of Leemon's work is visible not just in stories, but in records: attendance sheets from awareness sessions, re-enrolment



documentation from nearby schools, and lists of households submitted for support. SCI's ongoing mentorship has been vital in this journey. Regular visits by the field team, provision of materials, and feedback helped Leemon refine his approach and deepen his engagement. His long-standing presence in the community, coupled with his fairness and humility, helped him gain the trust of villagers, making implementation smoother and more meaningful.

Looking ahead, SCI is supporting Leemon in establishing connections with local government departments, particularly in health and education, to enable referrals and unlock state services for his community. Discussions are also



underway to involve him in monitoring and data collection efforts to support SCI's MEAL framework. To further strengthen his leadership, Leemon may receive advanced training in digital literacy, referral mechanisms, and documentation practices.

Leemon's journey from an aware youth to a respected and proactive CRP illustrates the



power of local leadership in addressing deeply rooted rural challenges. His story highlights key lessons for community-based development: that local champions, when trusted and supported, can create ripple effects far beyond their initial reach; that sustained mentorship enhances impact; and that participatory approaches generate lasting ownership. Inspired by this success, SCI plans to replicate the model in other villages by identifying and training similar community members. Leemon's transformation, and that of Village Purpuri, reminds us that real change often begins with one person, deeply rooted in their community, equipped with the right tools, and supported by a system that believes in them.

STORY 7: CHANDRA'S DREAM TO LEARN BECOMES A REALITY

Five-year-old girl named Chandra, daughter of Chando lives in the remote village of Sajhani Bheel, nestled in Union Council Posarko, Taluka Mithi, District Tharparkar, lives a courageous. Chanda is born with a physical disability affecting her left arm and right leg, Chandra has faced more than her fair share of challenges. Yet, despite these barriers, she held on to one powerful dream: to go to school and get an education.

Chandra lives in a modest *Chora*, a traditional Thari dwelling, with her parents, three brothers, and two sisters. Her father, a daily wage laborer earning approximately PKR 7,000 per month, struggled to meet the family's basic needs. For Chandra, school seemed like a distant hope, hindered by both poverty and her physical limitations.

That hope began to take shape when the Social Cooperation Initiative (SCI) team visited Sajhani Bheel. During their community outreach, the team met Chandra and was moved by her resilience and unwavering desire to learn. When asked what she wanted most in life, her response was simple and profound: **"I want education."**

Her words sparked immediate action. Recognizing the importance of inclusive and equitable access to education, SCI facilitated Chandra's enrollment in the local village school. Beyond admission, SCI ensured she had what she needed to begin her journey with dignity,

providing a school bag, notebooks, stationery, and hygiene items tailored to her needs.

Today, Chandra walks, sometimes limps, with pride to school, her face lit with joy as she sits among her peers, learning and growing. Her



family, once burdened by hopelessness, now speaks with gratitude and pride.

"We had lost hope," shared her father. "But now Chandra's dream is alive. Our hearts are full of thanks."

Chandra's story is more than just about accessing education; it's a powerful reminder of how inclusive interventions and timely support can change lives. Her journey is a ray of hope and a great motivational example for the girls in the area proving that every child, regardless of



ability or economic status, deserves the right to learn, grow, and thrive.

STORY 8: REKINDLING HOPE THROUGH EDUCATION, DEVKOR'S JOURNEY

Devkor, a 10-year-old girl from the remote village of Morkriyar in Union Council Bakhuo, Taluka Mithi, is the daughter of Soomar, a daily wage laborer struggling to support his family of nine. Despite their difficult economic conditions, Devkor is known for her sharp mind and keen interest in learning and stood out among her peers. Her teachers often described her as a "bright and promising student" who brought pride to her community.

However, the weight of poverty proved overwhelming. After completing her 5th grade, financial hardship forced her to leave school. For over three months, her absence was noted by her class teacher, who expressed concern over the loss of a promising student.

During a routine field visit focused on identifying out-of-school and dropout girls, the Social Cooperation Initiative (SCI) team came across Devkor's case. Further inquiry and a meeting with her parents revealed that financial hardship was the primary reason behind her discontinuation of education. Recognizing the urgency, the SCI team organized awareness sessions with Devkor's parents, stressing the transformative power of education and offering concrete support to ease their burden. To make the return to the school possible, SCI committed

to providing her with essential learning materials, including a school bag, books and notebooks and stationery supplies.

Inspired by the team's dedication and reassured by the support offered, Devkor's parents agreed to re-enroll her in school. In January 2025, with fresh enthusiasm, Devkor resumed her education and successfully completed her 5th-grade studies.



Her academic commitment did not go unnoticed. Recognizing her dedication and academic performance, Devkor has now been nominated for further studies through the project's next phase, which collaborates with Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) to facilitate girls' matriculation education.

Devkor's journey is a shining example of how timely intervention, community mobilization, and educational support can reignite the spark of learning in a child's life. Her family now holds new hope for her future and expresses their heartfelt gratitude to SCI:

"Without this support, our daughter would have remained out of school. Today, she is studying again and preparing for a brighter future."

This case reinforces the transformative power of inclusive education and the vital role organizations like SCI play in empowering communities through education.





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