Special care for special people

The Agape Home
For the vulnerable — with love

“You will be happy to hear that we have started our school.” So wrote Farzana on 22nd August. A year ago she approached us to share her personal vision to open a school for Christian children with special needs. Farzana already had some experience working with a project we supported earlier in Lahore. With our help, she spent six months with another home. Now at last Agape Home has opened. Farzana is helped by her husband, Imran, and two staff members.
What future is there for those with special needs?

Starfish Asia’s priority is the provision of education for Pakistan’s Christians. No less however has been our care for the needs of the downtrodden, the orphans, the blind and those with learning difficulties. We currently support seven Homes or Schools for children with special needs. Four of them are highlighted here. Agape Home is our newest project.

The Ananias Home

It was in February 2000 that we first met Khalida Nelson. A trained staff nurse, she was caring for 10 visually impaired Christian girls in Lahore. The Ananias Home was a project of Caritas Pakistan but it was about to close for lack of funds. I asked how much they needed to save the Home from closure. The answer? “£220 a month.” It was too small a sum for us to refuse. That was the beginning of a relationship and a friendship — and one of the reasons for the birth of Starfish Asia. Khalida Nelson still looks after the Ananias Home for Blind Girls. No longer are 10 girls living in cramped, rented quarters, but 26 girls, confident and cared for, occupy their own building. Starfish Asia remains their main supporter.

The CGA Home

Shortly after we began to provide support to the Ananias Home, we met Pastor Iqbal, sitting in one room amidst a group of disabled children. He wanted to give the security of a home to children with a variety of special needs and he pleaded with us to help him. We still support the CGA Home, which is now located right next to the Starfish Pakistan office in Lahore. One of those whom Iqbal welcomed to his home was Adnan, a victim of childhood polio. We have watched him grow up. He loves the Lord and wants to be a pastor. This year he took his Class 9 exams. He is now going, as a boarding student on a Starfish Asia scholarship, to the CTTC hostel for boys in Gujranwala – a move that we believe will change his life.

Is there a future for the disabled? Yes, of course there is — with care, love and help.

The Abba Home

The 30 girls of Abba Home are a privileged family. Many of them have been rescued from tragic home circumstances. All receive care and love from Ashraf and Wilma that is equipping them for the future. They are a unique family.

Testing eyes

In August a medical team from the Lytton Rehmat Ullah Benevolent Trust came to check the eyes of all the girls at Abba Home. Sixty girls, including some staff and other children, had their eyes tested. It was the first time for most of them and there was a lot of excitement. The results were rewarding. Eight Abba Home girls and four staff will require spectacles. Two need further tests.

Independence Day, 14 August 2014

The Abba Home family celebrated Pakistan’s Independence Day with enthusiasm. The girls made a tableau of rural and urban life in Pakistan’s four Provinces. They recited poems and sang patriotic songs that emphasized the importance of freedom and justice.
Scholarships 2014

a helping hand for those with ambition

We often remind students that the Class 10 Matric exam is just the first big hurdle — not a destination but a doorway to their future. At the same time, we congratulate every one who has successfully crossed that threshold.

This year more than 100 students passed their Matric exam from schools supported by Starfish Asia. The number increases each year. Anser has been busy reminding successful students that we are willing to help them if they need a helping hand to apply for further study.

Kanwal and Rabab

We have written before about 15 year-old Kanwal. She was born with only one arm, but she has studied hard and is a bright student. Kanwal has passed her Matric exam and been accepted to study at Kinnaird College, Lahore’s prestigious Christian College for Women. Also accepted is Rabab Asif, a young lady who has been supported by Starfish Asia funds for several years. Both girls will receive scholarships.

Working together: the amazing ministry of the

CTTC was founded in 1900 with the vision to provide a first-class Technical and Vocational training to young men and women from lower-income homes.

CTTC is located in Gujranwala, 40 miles north of Lahore. The Centre provides 25 courses in vocational skills from civil, electrical and mechanical engineering to electronics and IT. The professional standard is high and fees very reasonable. There is a residential hostel, with recreational facilities and a Bible study programme, for Christian young men and women from outside the area. For more information about CTTC, see their website at http://cttc-grw.edu.pk

Starfish Asia is now providing scholarships to 12 young people taking courses at CTTC. They will stay in the hostel and gain skills over the next two or three years that will equip them to get well-paid jobs and respect in society.

Alvis and Shazir from Karachi (top left and right) will study Computer Science, Sunny and Obed (bottom left and right) Mechanical Engineering.

Our Scholarship Fund is now empty. We have provided £3,379 (US$5,500 / S$7,000) to support 63 students – of whom 32 are new awards. More are still applying.

This month we welcome Ian and Fiona to Starfish Asia

Ian and Fiona Anderson officially joined the small staff of Starfish Asia in September. We believe that this is the start of a new era of development and growth for the Charity. We know they value your prayers and look forward to meeting many of you in person or by email. Ian writes:

“My upbringing in rural Pakistan made for a colourful childhood. Our family folklore contains stories of an exploding pet water-buffalo, a terrifying village mad-woman, and heavily armed Pathans offering help when we had a puncture at dusk in the North-West Frontier. But as well as the colour, I saw at first-hand the poverty and lack of opportunity facing Christian villagers. I left when I was 12, but when I returned 44 years later, last Easter, the sad fact was that their problems had not diminished.

Starfish Asia offers hope for change, and that’s why I jumped at this job opportunity. Like many, I’d read Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson and been touched by the inspiring reports of schoolgirl Malala. Both believe in the value of education to transform Pakistan. But Starfish Asia’s Christian dimension brings even more hope: Jesus promised good news for the poor and ... deliverance for those who are crushed.

The benefits could ripple far beyond. The current turmoil in Iraq and Syria sharply highlights the critical situation of minorities in the Islamic world and we in the West feel like helpless bystanders: the military option hasn’t worked; what can we do? The answer is to strengthen minority communities. Through education Christians will contribute more to Pakistani society, thereby gaining recognition and acceptance. In that way a more broad-minded, pluralistic culture will emerge. It is not easy for Christians in Pakistan, but it’s so important that they are there.

And that we are there for them. How vital is Starfish Asia’s work of strengthening a community under severe pressure as it seeks to demonstrate the character of Christ! In another 44 years, we pray things will be different.”
Inspiring our teachers

Geraldine from Singapore visited Lahore in August. She spent a lot of time with the staff of the six schools that are supported by Starfish Asia Singapore.

“Kashi and I have been working on curriculum development and teachers’ training. Sixteen teachers took part in a 3-day workshop exploring the Language Experience Approach (LEA) to teaching and learning. Pray that they will now be able to apply these principles in their classrooms.”

Restoring Hope

A new way to introduce ourselves and to make friends for Pakistan’s Christians — our new 12-page brochure.

Please help us to spread the word. Write for a copy for yourself — and request extra copies to give away.

We always welcome new friends!
kerstin@starfishasia.com

tell us you care!

☐ Yes, tell me more about schools and communities that need my help. Send me more information.

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Thank you!

to all who have been raising money for Pakistan’s children this summer.

July 13 was a great day, both for runners and spectators. 20,000 people ran 10K through London to raise money for charity, including the six who ran for Starfish Asia. It was a good day for all and raised more than £5,000 for Pakistan’s children. Cilla wrote:

“The whole experience will be one of the highlights of 2014 for me! I believe God laid it on my heart to do the run although I was uncertain as to whether it was something I could achieve. I am so glad I did it now, not least because through people’s amazing generosity I was able to raise double my target amount.”

The West Highland Way Race

Allan Grant is a fanatic for going the extra mile. The West Highland Way Race is a gruelling 95 miles from Milngavie to Fort William in Scotland, held each year in June.

“Yes! I did the West Highland Way Race in what was an immensely satisfying 28 hours, 2:50 mins — smashing my goal of 30 hours. 2hrs 36mins quicker than last year.”

Allan has now run six times for Starfish Asia, raising a total of more than £10,000.