



Sehrish in 2007

Sehrish in 2016

Congratulations Sehrish!

Abba Home transforming lives

Sehrish Shebaz was in the first group of five orphan girls who joined Abba Home in 2006. She came from a village in Mian Channu District in central Punjab. Her parents had died and she was left in the care of her aunt, who could not afford to keep her. Ashraf and Wilma agreed to take care of her in their home in Lahore.

Ashraf wrote: "Sehrish was a lost child with many anxieties and little sense of self-worth. She suffered from an inferiority complex, was timid and with little interest in studies."

Starfish Asia has supported Abba Home since 2007. Sehrish is the first of the Abba Home girls to pass her Matriculation exam — a model for all the other girls!

The Challenges of Success

We have often said that attendance at Primary School is the first hurdle. Every child should at least learn to read and write. Sadly millions of Pakistani children never even go to Primary School — and many (some statistics estimate 50%) drop out after Class 5.

Only 10% stay on, like Sehrish, and reach Class 10 and the Board of Secondary Education exams (Matric). This is what we are celebrating this month.

But even a Matric pass is only a beginning, a doorway to a career. They will now need help and guidance for the next stage of their lives. We await applications for scholarships from our successful students, which can open the door to their future.



**Abba Home
2016**

Abba Home: Learning to hope again

The 30 girls in Abba Home in Youhannabad live directly opposite the Catholic Church that was targeted by a suicide bomber in March 2015. It is a day they will never forget. Nor will they forget the love that has welcomed them into the Home, displayed by Ashraf and Wilma, who care for them.

They have been supported by Starfish Asia since 2007. They also enjoy great support from the local community. Ashraf opened his own school in the Home, named after his son: The Abraham School. Much credit goes to the teachers who have inspired the girls.

Pray for God's special blessing on Abba Home — and on Sehrish, who now faces a brighter future, thanks to the love of all at Abba Home.



Abba Home 2007

So little to achieve so much

"My study is everything to me..."

So wrote a Christian student who could not manage to pay the full fees for her second year studies in Journalism and Mass Communication. We were able to help with a scholarship.



"...You helped with such a huge amount ... for me it is not less than a miracle. I am really grateful to you and your team. My study is everything to me... I hope soon after completing my study I will pay back your kind award... Thank you so very much."

At this time of year many young men and women are looking to their future and trying to work out how they can continue their studies. After Matric, college fees become more expensive — but still amazing value for money. The average cost of a scholarship is less than US\$50 / £35 a month.

We support about 150 young Christians with scholarships.

Please help us increase our

Scholarship Fund

The excitement of success!

The announcement of annual exam results is a nerve-wracking moment for every student — perhaps even more so for those who have struggled against the odds to gain an education and to succeed.

Congratulations to every one of the 71 successful students from schools we support — and especially to those who have gained an A or a B in their results.



Gulfam The Gospel School

"My father was a daily wage earner with a very small income, which meant that I also had to work and could not go to school. When Pastor Shamshad came to know about our financial problems he offered us a better opportunity and a place to live. I started to take a keen interest in my studies — so that I have now got 797 marks (A grade) in my Matric Examinations. I am so grateful to Pastor Shamshad and my teachers at the Gospel School!"



Simran Kingdom of Heaven School

Simran joined the Kingdom of Heaven School in 2009 and now, with 793 marks, she has passed her Matric exam with an A grade. She comes from a family of six brothers and sisters — all studying at the Kingdom of Heaven School. Her father works as a cleaner with the para-military Rangers and her mother is a domestic maid. Simran's ambition now is to study further, her eyes set on becoming an air hostess.



Celebrating achievement

To highlight the successes of Pakistan's Christians in recent Matric exams, Anser and Kashi and the staff of Starfish Pakistan held a special event in Lahore to honour and reward the high achievers. You can read more on page 4.

Among the many who received recognition, Pastor Shamshad Luka of the Gospel School received a special award, as his school topped the result card of schools supported by Starfish Asia. "I feel proud to be part of Starfish Pakistan," he said. "Our aim is to achieve even better results next year. This is not my effort but the hard work of our teachers."



In his address at the event, Vice Rector Academics Dr. Joseph Jones of Forman Christian College and University, stated:

**"Today, I'm standing here with a hope.
I see young doctors, engineers, scientists,
teachers and public servants in them.
Christians have served Pakistan since its genesis.
One day, an educated Pakistan will become
a thriving Pakistan."**

600 schools & 85,000 children

Initial results from the Christian Schools Survey



In September we will publish the final report of the Christian Schools Survey, conducted by research teams in Karachi and certain districts of Pakistan's Punjab Province. No such survey has ever been conducted before and the results will provide a unique insight into the state of education for Pakistan's poorest Christians.

- ✗ Pakistan's Christians are a poor community. Few can afford to send their children to expensive private schools. We only surveyed schools that are free and accessible to the poor — or charge a minimal fee.
- ✗ Pakistan's Christians face constant discrimination. Many are afraid to send their children to Government schools. We only surveyed schools where Christians are welcome.

This is a foretaste of what the Survey reveals:

- ✓ Of the 85,000 children in these 604 schools, 75,000 are from nominally Christian homes.
- ✓ They are taught by 3,700 Christian teachers.
- ✓ 81% of the teachers have no teaching qualification.
- ✓ More than 90% of the schools teach the Bible.

The Survey reinforces the urgency of giving greater support to those Christians who are trying to give their community a future. It provides a wealth of vital and reliable data to challenge us and the Church to action. We would like to send you a copy as soon as it is published. Please send your request, with your name and address, to: mike@starfishasia.com

Teachers learning together

The month of June is very hot in the plains of Pakistani Punjab. Schools are closed and teachers have time to rest and prepare for the September term. Few can afford to escape to the cool of the hills.

In June Starfish Pakistan arranged training for teachers in the Murree hills in northern Pakistan. We hired a hostel and arranged transport for 75 teachers from 23 Christian schools. Some came from Karachi, others from Lahore or other cities. Teaching was given by Anser and Kashi, aided by Ian and Fiona from the UK.

Fiona wrote:

"Some had degrees, others barely had school-leaving certificates; some were very experienced, others just starting out; they were teachers of primary and secondary. The programme was designed to be helpful for all. New ideas and techniques were consciously modelled in the activity-filled sessions.

"For the Starfish staff it was a great opportunity to get to know our teachers and understand the situations they face.

"We have learnt new dynamic things. We never knew about those things and now we will go back and start teaching our children with different strategies," said one teacher at the end. "We are so grateful to Starfish for this training," added another."



"My eyes were filled with tears."

So wrote Kashi in her report of the training.

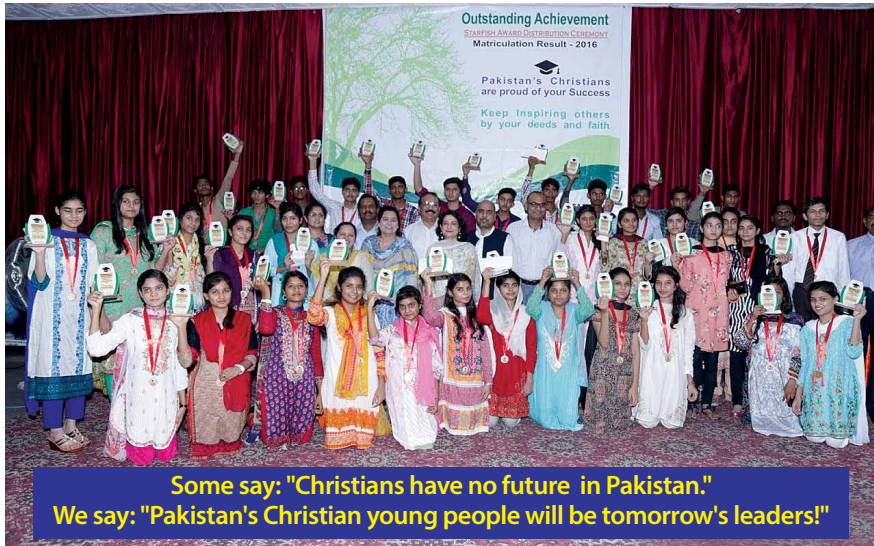
"This was a really inspiring and blessed time. All the teachers enjoyed learning and interacting with each other. They enjoyed their outing time too. My eyes were filled with tears when I heard some of them were visiting Murree for the first time in their lives.

"As I was sharing about the components of Subject-based Curriculum, one teacher stood up and said that, in her 19 years of teaching life, she had never heard about this. She was eager to go back and implement these things in her class. Alongside this they had a refreshing time spiritually."

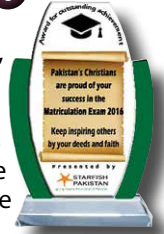


Anser with Kashi and Ian take a session outdoors in the cool mist of a June Murree morning

Outstanding Achievement Awards 2016



Some say: "Christians have no future in Pakistan."
We say: "Pakistan's Christian young people will be tomorrow's leaders!"



At a ceremony held on 27th August, Starfish Pakistan recognised the achievement of Christian students who had gained the highest marks in their Matric exams. They came from many schools, not only those supported by Starfish Asia.

Sixty students qualified for the award, and 45 attended the ceremony. All with more than 80% pass marks received medals and shields. Those with more than 90% were also given a cash prize.

Shehram Tabassum (on left, 98%) and Neha Samuel (right, 97%), the highest achievers, stand with Anser, Kashi and Rakhil, Chair of Starfish Pakistan.



STARFISH ASIA at the Scottish Parliament

To launch Starfish Asia (OSCR No. SC046364) in Scotland — and to raise our profile there — we are holding an event at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh on 25th October 2016. The location means that the meeting has to be by invitation only, but we warmly welcome supporters.

If you would like to come, please contact:

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Child kidnappings on the rise in Lahore

Anser Javed reports that in recent months child kidnapping has been a growing threat in Punjab. Many families are living in fear.

"Parents are not willing to send their children to school," said Babar from Shama School in the brick kiln community. Many other schools are complaining about lower attendance due to fear of kidnapping. Another school leader wrote: "Yes, we are facing a problem because of these kidnappings; many kids were absent from school and are afraid."

The Government of Punjab claims that more than 90% of children are recovered, but cases of kidnapping are reported daily in the news.

Please pray for this situation and for the protection of children coming to school.

www.facebook.com/starfishasia

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giving hope to the children of Pakistan

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