



## Launch of the Pakistan Association of Christian Teachers

In response to the Christian Schools Survey, Starfish Pakistan launched an association of Christian teachers in January. We now have records of more than 4,000 teachers, many of whom have little or no professional training or qualification. This is a call to action and the teachers' magazine, *Uraan*, is part of our response.



## The Right Way School

Anser went to visit a school to the west of Lahore that had been contacted through the Survey. He met Naseeb and gave her a copy of *Uraan*, the teachers' magazine (see above).

Naseeb is the first girl from her village to gain a BA degree. Following this success, she determined to open a school for Christian children in the village. She appointed a teacher and paid her a small salary from her own pocket money.

The school opened in 2015 with 25 children in a rented house. There are now 82 students and five teachers, including Naseeb. She has now completed her BEd and wants to do her MA in English and Urdu. She is one of those people we admire and love to support. **Read more on the next page ...**



## Surely, these are the people we *must* help!

Naseeb at the Right Way School is the sort of person we love to help. Capable and compassionate — not waiting for funds before stepping out in faith.

She charges a basic fee at her school, the sort of fee that most families can afford: about 40 pence a month (US 50 cents). This brings in £27 / \$35 to which she adds her pocket money. This is the monthly school income from which she pays the rent and the salaries of the teachers.

*Hard to believe — but sadly true in many Christian schools in Pakistan.*

Anser promised to provide Bible Curriculum books and school text books for the children. Starfish Pakistan will also provide a scholarship for Naseeb and one other teacher for further studies.

He added: "I would like to give them 50,000 rupees for furniture (£400 / \$500) and monthly support of £230 / \$300, so that the teachers can be paid a reasonable amount for their salaries."

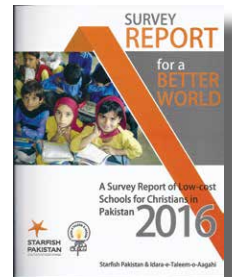


*This is why we conducted the Christian Schools Survey!  
We now have contact with many other schools like the Right Way School*

## "Making the most of every opportunity"

(Ephesians 5:16)

We now have contact details for more than 600 low-cost Christian schools. We clearly cannot meet all their needs, but are making plans to help in the best way we can. It is the opportunity of a lifetime to transform the lives of a generation of Pakistani Christians and give them hope for a better future.



### Inspiring and equipping teachers

**The Survey reveals:** We have contact with 4,000 Christian teachers. Of these 1,500 have a BA or MA degree but 900 have only passed their Matriculation exam (class 10 equivalent to GCSE). 3,000 have no teaching qualification.

**Our Response:** We have printed 4,000 copies of the first issue of *URAAN (Fly! or Inspire!)*, a quarterly magazine for Christian teachers. Articles aim to inspire and build confidence, give hints and tips for better teaching practice, and give a sense of the importance of Christian values in teaching.



We are also planning workshops for Christian teachers, especially those who respond to the invitation to join the Teachers Association.

### Text books for the new school year

**The Survey reveals:** It was a shock to find that one in 5 of the students in surveyed schools had no text books. How can children study or learn without a book? and in some cases even without a pen or paper?

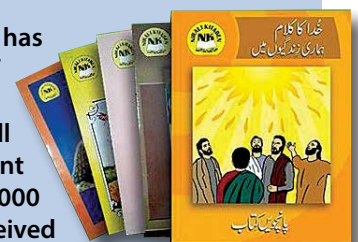
**Our Response:** Thanks to the generosity of supporters in the UK and Singapore, this year we have funds to give sets of books to 8,000 children. We still need funding for a further 2,000 sets to reach our goal of 10,000. Books are selected to ensure freedom from political or religious bias. The school year begins in March.



### The Bible Curriculum

**The Survey reveals:** 93% of the schools surveyed claimed that they have some form of Bible or religious instruction in school. It is the opportunity to equip a new generation of Christians with the Word of God.

**Our Response:** Starfish Asia has written and prepared a set of Bible Curriculum text books with teachers' guides for all Primary School classes. We want to provide the books free to 50,000 children. So far we have received funds to provide 11,000 books in the new school year.



*Jesus looked at them and said,  
"With man this is  
impossible, but with God  
all things are possible."*

— Matthew 19:26

## The School of Hope

When Anser first visited the school run by Imran Younis in a Lahore suburb in 2014, it was called the **Heavenly Kingdom School** and advertised: "Play-group to Middle. English Medium." In reality about 40 children, all from Christian homes, were crowded into two small rooms. With no furniture, they sat on the floor. The school director, Imran, was proud to be serving his community.



Starfish Asia helped them with school books and added them to the list of schools we would like to help one day.

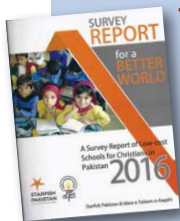
In May 2016 that day came, with the offer of help from a concerned donor. The school took a new name: **The School of Hope**. We were able to help Imran move to a larger building and increase his staff. At last the school, now with four teachers on reasonable salaries and four classes, has furniture, school books — and hope for their future.



The School of Hope is one among many that struggle to survive on inadequate income from school fees. Another school not far from Imran's has recently closed its doors because they could not meet their expenses. We do all we can to support those who are doing so much, for so many, with so little.

### *The Christian Schools Survey reveals:*

- 200 schools with no classroom furniture
- 60 schools with no blackboard
- 80 schools with no toilet
- 133 schools with no clean drinking water
- 520 schools with no electricity backup



*"A pessimist sees the difficulty  
in every opportunity;  
an optimist sees the opportunity  
in every difficulty."*

— Winston Churchill

## Exam season

March brings around once again the time of annual exams. The Class 10 Matriculation exam is the first big test for hundreds of students, the doorway to their future. Sadly many students never make it to this stage. The 80% drop-out rate is a national tragedy that we are working to address. At the same time, we pray for our students who, through hard work and high ambition, are about to sit for their exams.



## The Big Question

We asked a question to some of the schools in the Survey: *Why do so many students drop out of school?* This was not part of the formal Survey, but still revealing and helpful. Here are the main reasons given:

1. Lack of interest by parents: 72%
2. Lack of student motivation: 48%
3. Poor school facilities: 28%

Inspired teachers will result in inspired students — and parents willing to support and encourage their children to study. It is a hard battle in a minority community that has lost its ambition.

In December Anser visited Peshawar in KPK (Pakistan's north-western Province). He called together 25 Christian young people who had gained more than 80% in their marks for Matriculation in 2016. He presented awards in recognition of their exam successes. We are working to incentivize, celebrate and reward success in the Christian community.



## Terror returns

As this newsletter was being prepared, news came of a fresh round of suicide bombings. More than 100 have been killed in a week targeting public gatherings of civilians, police and Muslim worshippers.

These were the first major terrorist attacks since the bomb that killed 74 people, including 17 Christians, last Easter. It once again casts a cloud of fear and uncertainty over the country. Pray for the Christians as they approach Easter with the memory of last year's tragedy.



# Rising from the earth

The story of Shama School  
Bringing hope to the children from the  
brick kilns in Kot Radha Kishan

Kot Radha Kishan lies 30 miles south of Lahore on the main railway line that runs to the South. The town is surrounded by dusty countryside dotted with villages and brick kilns. Here live the people, many of them Christian, who labour under the hot sun to make bricks for the building industry.

In November 2014 one of those kilns became notorious when a mob dragged a Christian couple from their one-room home, accused them of blasphemy and threw their bodies into the furnace of a kiln. Shama and Shehzad left behind their three children and a community in fear.

In their memory Starfish Asia opened a school in a nearby village, aptly named the Shama School, under the leadership of Baber and Sunita. In 2016 we provided a small van that is bringing more children to the school, which now serves 83 students in four primary classes.



For the past two years the school has met in two tiny rented rooms and a small courtyard. But that is about to change. Funds arrived last year from a church in the USA, a plot was purchased and foundations laid. Now the new Shama School is being built. Bricks are plentiful in the area.



## Prayer answered

We have prayed for some time for a capable assistant to help with administration in London. This became more urgent after Ian and Fiona left us, and God knew.

Margaret (Mags) Robson is an old friend, born and raised in Pakistan and living nearby. She has begun to learn the database and other systems, providing instant relief. Thank you, Lord!



## Starfish Asia in Scotland

It is with regret that in December we accepted the resignations of Ian and Fiona Anderson. The Starfish Asia Trustees thank them for all they have contributed over the past two years.

"We have valued their enthusiasm, expertise, stimulus and commitment to the schools and children supported by Starfish in Pakistan."

At the same time our friends in Edinburgh have affirmed their continuing support and commitment to the work in Pakistan. This is part of their affirmation:

"The start of 2017 will see Starfish Asia continue to grow and develop our supporter base and external partnerships in Scotland. We made a strong start at the end of 2016, culminating in the high profile launch event at the Scottish Parliament in October. We are hopeful that Scotland will be something of a pioneering front for Starfish Asia in 2017. God truly has plans for us north of the Border."

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