



**STARFISH
ASIA**

Giving hope to the children of Pakistan

Grasping the opportunities facing Pakistan's Christians



A Pakistani Christian leader said to us twenty years ago:

***"If you really want to help our community,
help us educate our children..."***

This is our Case for your Support

The Starfish Story



The boy on the beach took pity on the starfish stranded and dying on the sand. He began to throw them back into the sea.

"There are thousands of starfish on the sand," said a man. "What difference does it make to save a few?" The boy picked up another starfish and threw it into the waves.

"It makes a big difference to this one," he said.

We know we can't rescue everyone, But we surely must rescue some. Together we can rescue many.

"I had no hope of going to school... but now I have an education that is a ray of hope in the darkness for me..."

A child in Class 6, Lahore



STARFISH ASIA

giving hope to the children of Pakistan

The story we want to tell...

The story we want to tell in these few pages is the story of a community in need. Many are lacking in material goods, but not lacking in the desire for change. They are the Christians of Pakistan whose faith and ambitions call for the compassion and support of the worldwide Church.

Pakistan's Christians have a vital role to play in the future of their country — not just as illiterate servants and poor labourers, however valuable those jobs may be — but as leaders of society, teachers, lawyers, politicians and doctors. Pakistan needs such people.

With your support we can work together to prepare that generation.

The Vision of Starfish Asia

Restoring dignity to the children of Pakistan since 2003

Starfish Asia is a Christian response to a world of suffering and poverty. Our focus is the Christian community in Pakistan, and our response is a partnership with those who are meeting their need through education. In 2000 we helped open a High School for 200 children in a poor community in Lahore. That was just the beginning. Our charity was born in 2003.

We do not start our own schools or institutions, but trust local partners who have a passion to help the poor. Our vision has always been to give hope to the poor, the vulnerable and the neglected, especially in the Christian community that is marginalised and often forgotten.

Pakistan's Christians

Pakistan's Constitution states clearly that **"Islam shall be the state religion of Pakistan,"** and yet guarantees full rights to all minority communities, who form about 4% of Pakistan's people, mostly Christians, Hindus and others.

**"All citizens are equal before law
and are entitled to equal protection of law."**

However, in practice minorities often face discrimination and prejudice — and strong social pressure from the majority religion, Islam. Christians are often treated as an under-class, deprived of basic dignity and justice, often called 'sweepers', an insulting and demeaning term. The result is a people oppressed by the sense that they are trapped in a system that offers no hope of escape or social acceptance.



Poverty, Prejudice and Persecution

Due mainly to their minority status, Pakistan's Christians are among the poorest in society, holding menial jobs as cleaners, sanitary workers and daily-wage labourers. Poverty has increased drastically during 2020 with the loss of work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus brought many Christians to the point of starvation. Relief efforts were launched to provide food to those worst affected. Many living in slum and rural communities are unable to afford medical care or even the small fee that many private schools charge for education.

Christians and other minorities are also subject to constant discrimination, whether in seeking employment, or through direct attacks on their people and property. International concern has frequently been expressed at the misuse and abuse of Pakistan's draconian Blasphemy Laws.

All of Pakistan's minorities feel that the state fails to protect them, and tolerates violence against them.

<https://uk.reuters.com> (2014)

Pakistan our focus



Pakistan fact file

- 96% of Pakistan's 225 million people are Muslim. *
- About 5 million are Christian, at least in name.
- 80 million Pakistanis live on less than £2 a day. **
- 90 million (or 40%) are under the age of 15.
- 22.8 million children aged 5-16 do not attend school. **
- 40% of households experience food insecurity. ***
- More than a million children live on the streets.

* Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

*** UNICEF 2021

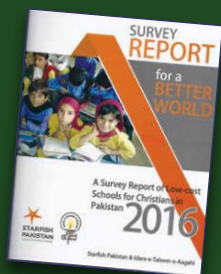
*** The World Bank 2020-21

"Pakistan adds approximately 4.4 million people to its population each year... The country's population has doubled in the last 29 years."

Sakib Sherani
Dawn.com 29th January, 2021

For a Better World

The Christian Schools Survey 2016

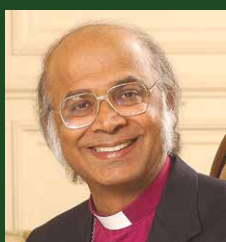


<https://starfishasia.com/resources/christian-schools-survey-2016/>

Five years ago we set out to discover how serious the situation was for Pakistan's Christians. We wanted to know what sort of schooling was available for poor Christians.

We collected statistics from 600 small private schools, mostly run by local men and women with initiative and vision who wanted to serve their own communities. This is what we discovered:

- ◆ 604 low-cost schools for Christians, serving 85,000 children.
- ◆ 4,000 mostly untrained teachers, some paid less than £20 a month.
- ◆ Hundreds of students with no text books. 200 schools with no desks.
- ◆ 80 schools with no toilet, 120 with no clean drinking water.
- ◆ 90% have some kind of Bible or religious teaching in the school.



"Provision of education for young people is an urgent priority and I am delighted that Starfish Asia is doing this, in Christ's name, for the poorest of the poor in Pakistan."

Rt. Rev. Dr. Michael Nazir Ali
Former Bishop of Rochester

The Starfish Asia dream

Starfish Asia and education Restoring hope



Starfish Asia was born as a response to the challenge from local Christian leaders to help provide education to the poor in their community. We soon began to grasp the extent of the crisis.

Many fine Church schools were providing excellent education, but few Christians were able to afford their high fees. Government schools were free, but many poor Christians did not feel welcome or were treated badly in a mixed community school.

We were told: "The future of our community depends on our children getting an education." The appeal was for schools where low-income Christian children would be treated well and not as second-class citizens, schools with Christian values that also teach the Bible and prepare them to live as followers of Christ.

We estimate that one million Christian children ought to be in school. Probably more than two thirds are on the street or earning a small wage as child labourers or sweepers. It is not right. It is not fair. But there is little justice for the poor.

Investing in people

We quickly discovered a small army of capable and dedicated men and women trying to do the impossible in Christian villages and slum communities — caring for the vulnerable, serving the downtrodden and equipping their own people for the future. They appealed to us to help them carry the load.

In 2021 Starfish Asia is supporting 45 Christian schools (and 7 homes for disabled and disadvantaged young people) run by local men and women with faith, who have often sacrificed to serve their community.

"Only education, education and education can save and secure the future of our community."

a prominent Pakistani
Christian educationalist



The keys to our success



People are more important than classrooms and buildings

Starfish Asia was founded in 2003 by Mike and Kerstin Wakely, based in Beckenham, Kent. We are registered in the UK as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (No.1181649). Rob Bavington from Bradford, Yorkshire, works closely with Mike in leadership of the work.

Assisted by a small local staff, we work in harmony with our sister organisation in Pakistan. We are a family and we take every major decision together. Starfish Pakistan is registered as a national Trust which is accountable to a local Board of Christian community leaders.



Danishmand Wasti became the Director of Starfish Pakistan in 2021, after 21 years' service in Scripture Union. His wife Jasmine holds the post of head teacher in a Christian school. They lead a small team in Lahore.



"It is my priority to maintain a high standard of teaching to poor students in these 52 projects."

Our front-line Teachers: Preparing today the leaders of tomorrow

Starfish Asia is providing basic salary support for approximately 500 teachers and staff. We believe that it is the teachers in the classroom who will equip and prepare the next generation — both by their skills and understanding, and also by their manner and example. Christian teachers work for an unacceptably low reward. Of all the things that schools request from us, the highest and most urgent priority is always help towards paying reasonable salaries to the teachers.



Our Project Leaders

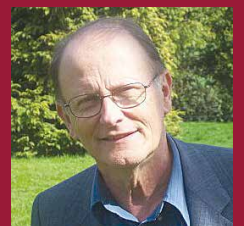
We regard our Project leaders as the most important people in our work. They carry the load locally for teachers, schools, parents and community. These faithful men and women are our closest partners, as they have responsibility to direct the 52 schools and homes that we support.

They are chosen for support because of their leadership qualities, experience and ability, spiritual commitment and their passion to serve the Christian community.

The Starfish Pakistan leadership maintains a close relationship of care and trust with each project leader, and each project has a written agreement that covers strict accountability requirements for all funds provided for their project.



School heads meeting at the Starfish Pakistan office to discuss the new syllabus for classes 1-5.



"I have followed the work of Starfish Asia from its birth, and have full confidence in what they are doing in Pakistan. It deserves our support."

George Verwer
Founder, Operation Mobilisation

Our policy

“We will not support a project that is obviously failing, unless we can clearly see that there is a realistic hope of improvement. Many projects are failing when we commence support, and our aim is to transform them into places that succeed in raising the hopes of the local community.”

Ghuri Wisdom High School, Lahore

When we first visited the Ghauri Wisdom High School in 2004, it was running in Mr Ghauri's home. A few students sat on bare benches, with poor lighting, some books and a black-board.



We offered to help, providing rent, some salary for the teachers and other facilities — school textbooks, fans for the classrooms and cold water for the students to drink. The school is now led by Mr Ghauri's son. It is a registered High School with 600 students and 18 teachers and a record of exam success, of which they are rightly proud. That is success!



What it takes to succeed



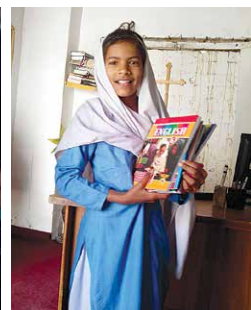
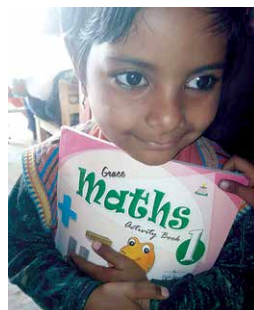
Surely this is success:
10,000 students with a future and a hope



Coming from homes where their parents are illiterate, with an uncertain future and little prospect of a good job, many of these children can now wake up with the hope that one day they could be teachers or lawyers, proud to be Christians with their heads held high.

When Starfish Asia began supporting the Holy Shepherd School in Karachi, it had 200 students in a building whose facilities were basic, foundations were poor and structure crumbling. Today it serves 600 students in a new and purpose-built building. Witness the pride of the welcome to their new school (above).

It takes the grace of God — and also takes constant improvement. Starfish Asia has provided new buildings, extra classrooms and painting, toilets and wash-rooms to many schools. In the summer heat, schools need good lighting, fans, electricity supply (sometimes solar panels), cool and clean water — and, perhaps most importantly, school textbooks for 10,000 children every year.





Equipping and inspiring teachers: Motivating, training and rewarding

The Starfish Asia Survey report, *For a Better World*, revealed that standards of teaching in many schools for Pakistani Christians are tragically low. Many of the teachers in surveyed schools had barely graduated from High School, and four out of five had no teaching qualification.

Inspiring and training Christian teachers is a vital key to the future of the church in Pakistan. Our ambitions stretch far beyond better skills and qualifications. Teachers are leaders and role models, and we aim to develop men and women with vision and passion, able to inspire a generation of young Pakistanis to higher endeavour. They need all the encouragement and help we can give to achieve excellence in the schools we support.

Starfish Pakistan has arranged many regular training courses for teachers in past years. Mrs Jasmine Wasti is a qualified teacher with a training degree. She is working with her staff on a schedule of training courses for teachers.



Caring for the vulnerable

Little consideration is given in Pakistan to the special needs of orphans, the disabled and the vulnerable. Compassion is at the heart of our mission, and we therefore support some of the Christian community's most needy young people. We provide support to seven homes, hostels or day-care centres, including one orphanage (Abba Home), a residential home for blind girls, and several centres for the disabled, disadvantaged and young people with learning difficulties.



Scholarships for those who dream big dreams

Starfish Asia supports High Schools which take the students up to Class 10, known as the Matriculation Exam. Beyond Class 10 education becomes too expensive for many students but, for those who cannot afford it, and who are ambitious and capable, Starfish Asia awards scholarships.

We currently give awards of varying sizes to about 200 students — many to enable pre-university studies, and some for vocational courses or higher degrees, up to masters and doctorates.

Scholarships are only given to Christian students from low-income families on the basis of need and ability. Awards are made by a Scholarship Committee of local Christian leaders.

Dr. Asher Akram: *Going for Gold*



"I did my MBBS from King Edward Medical University, Lahore, in April 2021 and passed with distinction in Medicine and Paediatrics. Starfish has played a pivotal role in my life. I belong to a middle class family, my father is a heart patient, and I could not afford higher studies. I owe a lot to Starfish for being so gracious. After completing my studies I will serve my community to the best of my ability."

This is our case for your support

Too many starfish on our beach. 'The Challenge' vs 'The Opportunity'.

When Starfish Asia was launched twenty years ago, Pakistan's population stood at about 142 million. Today (2021) it is 225 million.

Half the present population (110 million) is aged 20 and younger. That means that about a million Christians are of school-going age.

- ◆ One birth every 5 seconds
- ◆ One death every 21 seconds
- ◆ One net migrant every 2 minutes
- ◆ Net gain of one person every 7 seconds

This is an Appeal for your Support

Help us by partnership and prayer

- ◆ The 4-page Starfish Asia newsletter is sent every three months. It is available online and in print. Please sign up to receive it regularly.
- ◆ We would be glad to send multiple copies of the newsletter, or this brochure, that you can give to friends or put in your church. Just contact us.
- ◆ A monthly Prayer Bulletin is also available by email. Contact info@starfishasia.com



Help us with your gifts

- ◆ Our opportunities are ongoing and multiple. This brochure presents our case for your support. Please consider and help if you can:

Set of textbooks
for a student for
one year:
£5 / USD \$7

*Thank
You*

School furniture:
A chair with desk
for 2 students:
£15 / USD \$20

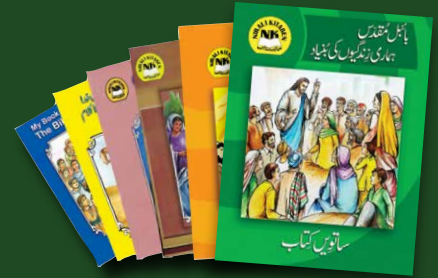
Average monthly
scholarship for an
undergraduate:
£22 / USD \$30

Monthly salary
for a graduate
teacher:
£50 / USD \$70

Average monthly
support for a
High School:
£600 / USD \$800

The sign of true success

*Lives transformed by
the Word of God*



10,000 children study in the schools supported by Starfish Asia. Most come from Christian families. We want them all to graduate better equipped to get good jobs and support their families. Still more, we want them to come to know Christ as their Saviour and to leave school with a living faith and a good knowledge of the Bible. Most schools have a daily Bible class and use our free Bible Curriculum books.

We also arrange Bible study for teachers in co-operation with the Lahore-based Open Theological Seminary.



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ASIA**

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<https://starfishasia.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/StarfishAsia/>



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Our Privacy Policy is available on our website: <https://starfishasia.com/privacy-and-cookies/>