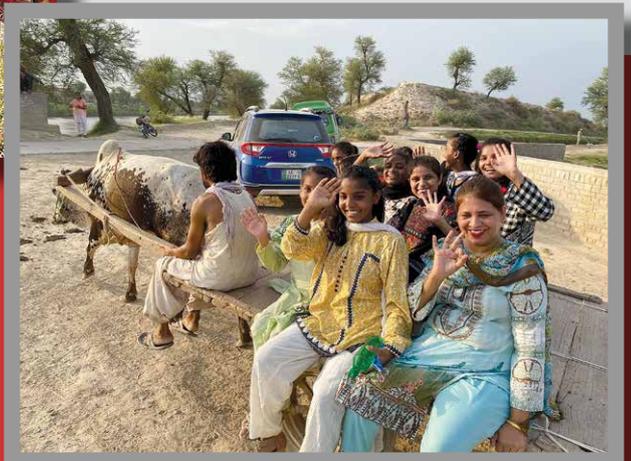


LIVING WITH THE LOCKDOWN



Abba Home on holiday

Tired of being locked away in their house in Lahore, Wilma and Ashraf took 10 of the orphan girls for a one week tour of the beauties of Southern Punjab. The girls were so excited to experience sights and smells they had never imagined before. Starfish Asia has supported the Home since 2006. It provides a safe place for 40 Christian girls from poor homes.



"Carpe diem" *

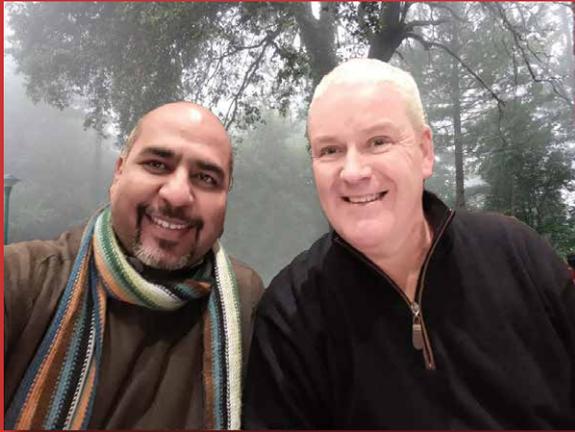
"...making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:16)

The months of lockdown, due to the virus, have been truly evil days and have brought much suffering, especially to the poor and the unemployed. Starfish Pakistan partners have provided food or financial help to many hundreds of those who have suffered. But it has not all been bad news. Every need, every evil day, is an opportunity for God's people. We have been amazed and impressed that so many have grasped the opportunity to go the extra mile to love and to serve.

The staff at Abba Home have seized the day ("*Carpe diem*") to take their deprived children out of the city to experience the beauty of their country. Read inside the stories of how others have seized the day to make a difference...

* "*Seize the day*", from the Roman poet Horace's work *Odes* (23 BC)

From our UK Board Chairman Devin Scobie



By the time you are reading this I had hoped to be in Pakistan, visiting Anser and Kashi and more of the incredible schools and students that we support. But with a global pandemic still raging, physical travel to the country remains impossible until (hopefully) next year.

Thankfully Zoom and Skype mean that we have been able to keep in touch throughout the difficult months since lockdown. I am proud we have continued to support Christian families with food aid while our schools have been closed.

Starfish Asia remains strong and as committed as ever to the care of Pakistan's under-privileged Christian communities. I wanted to say THANK YOU for your continued support, love and prayers whilst we have gone through a season of change as a charity.

Four board members have retired in the past year, most recently the Rev Geoff Larcombe, whose commitment to Starfish Asia has been hugely appreciated over many years. We are also very sorry to be saying goodbye to Duncan Stonehouse after a short spell as CEO for Starfish Asia (UK). A statement on that appears below.

But we are financially solvent, we have identified several potential new UK board members, and a new Administrator will soon be appointed to support Kerstin Wakely before we rush into another senior appointment. With God's help and your continued support, Starfish Asia approaches the end of a difficult year with renewed strength and optimism.

Devin Scobie

Thank you, Duncan!

It is with much regret that we have to announce that Duncan Stonehouse has resigned as CEO of Starfish Asia. After much heart-searching, he has concluded that he could not pursue his plans and hopes for the charity without the full and unanimous backing of the Board. We want to thank Duncan for his outstanding contribution to the charity over the past 11 months. He will be sadly missed, not least by the staff of Starfish Pakistan. Mike Wakely will resume his role as Executive Trustee of Starfish Asia (UK) until fresh leadership is identified.

LIVING WITH THE LOCKDOWN

We are proud to have played our part



The national newspaper, DAWN, in its issue of 17th August, published this summary of how the current COVID-19 crisis has affected every level of Pakistani society.

The coronavirus has had a ten-fold impact in most under developed countries and their large populations, paralysing already tottering health and welfare systems.

In Pakistan, the outbreak is believed to have caused an economic slowdown that amounts to a staggering loss of Rs.2.5 trillion (about £11 billion), with about three million jobs likely to be lost at the very beginning; worst affected out of the country's total population are the daily wage earners and those who inhabit the unforgiving urban slums.

We thank God that, due to the generosity of many, for four months, from April to July, Starfish Pakistan has provided food parcels or cash to 1,600 families, mostly through our 50 Project Partners. That amounts to around 6,000 sacks of wheat and other foodstuffs. Our focus must now return to education — but we remain sensitive to emergency needs, as the sufferings of the poor remain.



12,000 masks for Starfish Pakistan schools



The staff and students of the Ghauri Wisdom High School set to work to make face masks for Starfish Pakistan. At a cost of about 5 pence (US 6 cents) each, they made 12,000 masks, which were then provided to Starfish Pakistan projects.



"The Lord turned the pandemic into a blessing..."

Locked down but not locked out



The Eden School in Gujranwala is run by two close friends, Farah and Nazim. Their school closed with all other schools, but the ladies were still determined their children would not miss their classes. Teachers opened their homes as "tuition centres". Where there is a will, there is usually a way.

No Lockdown for Bible studies



Walter Waheed just sent his report of the Bible studies for teachers. In August 24 schools held regular classes, attended by a total of 230 teachers. Walter wrote:

"Covid-19 has not affected any of our tutors or students. Teachers expressed that the OTS class gave them an opportunity to share family matters and personal problems, and to discuss things that they often hesitated to ask their pastor."



STARFISH
PAKISTAN



"This learning journey had to continue..."

In the past year Starfish Pakistan has worked closely with a local "innovative learning platform", EDKASA, to provide on-line quality tutoring in Maths and Science subjects for High School students. 100 Class 9 students in 11 schools have benefitted from this impressive teaching programme — but COVID-19 brought a stop to all this in March. *Or did it?* This was the report received from Annum Sadiq of Edkasa in July:

"Edkasa and Starfish Pakistan were worried how the closure of schools would impact our students. Students reported that they felt anxiety about their future... It was obvious that this learning journey had to continue..."

The Edkasa team contacted every student enrolled in the Starfish Edkasa programme. We called all these students and asked if they had access to smartphones or internet — and then we onboarded them onto our online classes, where they could study from their homes. This was extremely successful. The students continued their learning...

For students who did not have access to smartphones, we prepared a revision cycle, where through text, calls and work sheets they could continue their studies. We will continue this learning programme until the schools re-open."

To see the whole script, go to <https://starfishasia.com> front page, under Latest News.

Operation Restoration of Lahore's UNITED CHRISTIAN HOSPITAL



Sajid Siraj and his wife Fauzia, lead the Talents Ministries in Lahore. Fauzia, Principal of the Talents School, had a dream. She saw the United Christian Hospital (UCH) being restored to its original glory.

UCH, located in the heart of the principle commercial area of Lahore, was opened as a teaching hospital with 250 beds in about 1965. Since then it has fallen into disrepair. Today only two doctors and 8 nurses serve very few patients. Sajid and Fauzia gathered more than 60 volunteers and began to work. Aiming to work for 52 days (after Nehemiah 6:15) it has now become a three-year project.

In 2018, Pakistan's Chief Justice said: "This hospital is an icon of Lahore. We want it to operate once again."



"The Lord gave us the chance to make history"

The restoration of UCH by Sajid, Fauzia and the "Friends of UCH" is not a Starfish Asia project — but they and their staff are Starfish partners going the extra mile during the lockdown. We take pride in their initiative and achievement.

Sajid wrote this about his amazing vision:

"Many times we have questioned God's ways. Why were all the educational institutes forced to close? But the Lord turned the pandemic into a blessing for us. While fully involved in our school, we had no time to visit the hospital. Now, with the closure of schools, not only did we have time to fully immerse ourselves in the restoration process, but people from all backgrounds came to play their part in the hospital's restoration. Principals, teachers, students and professors have volunteered to be involved with us. During this time of the pandemic, Christian people from many walks of life mobilized to restore this lost gem of a hospital."

For more insight (but mostly in Urdu) see: <https://www.facebook.com/sajid.masih.9>

LIVING WITH THE LOCKDOWN

Coming out of the Lockdown

As Pakistan emerges from the Lockdown, and schools plan to re-open, we must look to the future. Much has achieved in recent months in spite of the restrictions. Here is an insight from the perspective of Kashi and Anser in Pakistan. They spoke to us for this report.



Kashi: Working with the Lockdown

Many of our schools have been working hard, preparing their own work sheets, calling students and going to their homes. Carol from the Green Field School in Multan called students to come to her home every morning. They covered most of the syllabus.

We met regularly with our eight member coordinating team in Lahore, and I am in touch with other schools on WhatsApp. Nabila from the School of Hope in Faisalabad called her teachers and arranged two classes every day three days a week. Danish in Karachi organised classes online. He said they were getting good results. We have a WhatsApp group with several teachers to discuss how to re-open the schools. I am so happy that many are very responsive.



Anser: The Way Forward

Seher, one of the teachers from CASTT, which whom we worked on teacher training last year, arranged Zoom meetings for teachers, and invited Starfish teachers to attend. Kashi is now working on a one-year training programme together with CASTT to prepare senior teachers to take the NTS exam and gain the NTS Teachers' Licence. The Licence may soon be required by law in Punjab for teachers in private schools. For teachers with no qualifications, we will provide incentives and scholarships to take national exams.

We are also working on co-ordination meetings with our Project Leaders, starting in September. We will travel out of Lahore to meet our partners in their schools, and listen to their ideas and suggestions. We need the advice of our Partners on the appointment of Area Coordinators to provide better services and ensure essential accountability in all schools.

National Testing Service (NTS) is an organisation that ensures quality educational standards in Pakistan. It is recognised by the Government and provides an exam and a Licence to recognise teaching excellence.

The Race Against Time



The Government has set the date for schools to re-open on 15th September. Funds were sent in July to construct new classrooms at the New Life Public School in Bahawalpur. Sumeira, the Principal, writes:



"The construction work is continuing... the building of the school was not good, but now the school is establishing and improving... I am specially happy for all these things and proud to be a family member of Starfish Pakistan."

Rain in Karachi

Work on the building of the Holy Shepherd School has been progressing slowly. There have been delays. Here is the latest report from Zor Engineers:

"Unfortunately progress has not been as much as we would have liked. The bouts of heavy rain have disrupted work in several ways besides the main one of stopping work. The deep foundation in one corner had to be cleared out and reworked. The access road was a quagmire and is now deeply rutted and affected by an overflowing sewer."

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