



The sadness of the downtrodden

Zubeida lives in the village of Su-e-Asal to the south of Lahore. Her husband Manzoor works as a labourer—a hard job with no security and an inadequate salary. They are Christians. Three of their children were studying at the Primary School run by Kaleem Dean and the staff of CAP* Ministry. The school is supported by Starfish Asia.

On 3rd October Zubeida's 10 year-old daughter, Komal, stayed home to look after her 3 year-old brother Zeeshan while her parents went to work and the others went to school. The family had recently sold a buffalo and a Muslim neighbour knew that there might be money in the home. He broke in and cruelly murdered the two children. He dumped their bodies in a canal, wrapped in the seat cover of his taxi.



The killer was easily identified and arrested, but he was only held by the Police for a few days before being released. He is reported to have moved to a new area and is unlikely to be charged, as there is little justice in this harsh society for poor Christians.

Zubeida met us when we visited Su-e-Asal in November. Her sad face betrayed the pain she has experienced. In her hand she clutched a crumpled photo of the two dead children. Her other two children, a girl, Malaisha (aged 4½) and her brother, Gulfam (11), continue to attend the School and the family is receiving comfort and some help from the staff of the Christian school.



*CAP (Community Advance Programme) is directed by Kaleem Dean (pictured) and his wife Nagina in Lahore, Pakistan

Sadness & hope



What can one say to a woman whose two little children were brutally killed just one month before? How can one bring real comfort, knowing that there will be no justice because she is a Christian and she is poor?

We met Zubeida in the CAP school in November. The picture shows Kerstin and Nagina (Kaleem's wife) with Zubeida clutching her children's picture. We prayed with her and gave her a small token of our concern.

Real comfort comes from the support she is receiving from Kaleem and Nagina and the Su-e-Asal school staff. Kaleem has written: "We helped the family financially and would like to send a gift at Christmas. We will try to influence the police and court for justice."

The Community Advance Programme now educates 900 children in its five schools and one school for the disabled. Their work has grown rapidly and they face a serious shortfall in their budget.

We are fully committed to the work that Kaleem and his team are doing. They are a light for their community in a dark time. But they urgently need more help. Kaleem has appealed to us for an extra £1,000 each month to help meet his commitments to children and staff.

Please consider whether you could make an extra gift to meet these needs.



Persecution & Discrimination

by Kaleem Dean, Director of CAP Ministries

Over the past 60 years Pakistan has had a very poor track record in protecting the rights of religious minorities. The Christian minority has been a special target of persecution, discrimination and social harassment. The history of the Indian subcontinent demonstrates the hugely positive contribution of Christians and missionaries in both education and health care. Nevertheless since Pakistan's independence in 1947 much has been done to undermine those achievements, not least the tragic mistake of nationalizing Christian schools and colleges in 1971.

In spite of everything Christians continue to provide excellence in education. Many of Pakistan's leaders were educated in Christian institutions. The Pakistan Government has even returned some colleges to Christian control, but has done little to uplift the Christian community. A social apartheid has developed that marginalizes Christians from the mainstream of society.

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

Due to poverty, low literacy rate and social stigma Christians are often exploited and despised by many in the majority community. Peer pressure and bullying by Muslim students prevent most Christians from attending Government schools. Private schools charge fees that few Christians can afford. Christians face discrimination when applying for jobs and are often paid unacceptably low wages. They are often given menial jobs as cleaners and road sweepers. Our women are easy targets for the rich. We regularly hear heart-breaking stories of murder, gang rape, child labour, slavery and social injustices perpetrated against Christians.

This is the persecution our community is facing and the only solution is for us to renew our determination to provide education. Some Christians do indeed face blatant persecution, often due to corrupt police and an unjust legal system and sometimes due to the Blasphemy Laws. But the far greater issue that affects the majority in the Christian community is prejudice and discrimination.

Educated Christians enjoy a good status in Pakistani society. The poor suffer the most as, being illiterate, they are subject to terrible exploitation and injustice. The only way to empower the Christian community is to arm them against prejudice through education. Only education, education and education can save and secure the future of our community.



"Fulfilling my dreams"

Faheem Shahzad, a former student of CAP schools, recently passed his F.Sc exam and has now joined nursing training. He visited his old school and gave thanks for what he had received there.

"I am grateful to my school for giving me my foundations in life. After I passed my Matriculation Exams in 2007, I studied

for two years in Forman Christian College and got first division in F.Sc. I am happy to have secured my admission in Male Nursing at Hyderabad. It is a three year course and I dream to help my Christian community. This is the vision I got from CAP Schools. I am inspired by the way they are helping our Christian community. I believe CAP is a candle that is lighting other candles like me."

Who is my neighbour?

In early July in a village called Bamaniwala near Pakistan's border with India, a Christian boy had an argument with a Muslim. The quarrel escalated into a riot in which an angry mob ransacked the homes of the village Christians. "We could never imagine that they would wreak such devastation. They have not spared a single house here," said a villager.

About five miles from Bamaniwala is the village of Burj Klan at the heart of a bamboo plantation. There William and Ruth run a Primary School for the Christian children of the village that is supported by Starfish Asia. Ruth tells the story of what happened next:

"In Bamaniwala the Christian children found they were no longer welcome to attend the Muslim school. We visited the Christian homes and they told us that their teachers were treating them badly. They forced them to whitewash the school which burned their hands and they could not attend the class. We got worried for those children and we prayed many days for them.



"One morning 18 students came from Bamaniwala village on foot and asked if they could study in our school. Our hearts were filled with joy and we wept for those students. What a passion in their hearts to get education.

"After a few days these students got sick because they were coming to our school every day walking in the heat. We fixed our motorbike into an auto rickshaw and William brought 18 children on this auto every day from that village.

"Then many parents came to us and requested us that their girls should also come in our school. We took a loan and bought a pickup van. Now by the grace of God we are bringing 38 students every day from that village and from surrounding villages."

Fortunately the small school in Burj Klan built two new classrooms (with Starfish Asia help) during the summer, so there was room for the numbers to grow. They still have no glass in the windows, no desks or chairs for the children. But those are small details for William and Ruth. They have a school of children eager to learn.



Akhtarabad: The school run

The Life Transforming Centre school in Akhtarabad has a new school bus. We quoted Sajida Iqbal in our last newsletter: "You cannot imagine how difficult it is to bring 80 children to school every day in just one vehicle." Thanks to a generous response from our partners they now have a new minibus... and a lot of excited children.



Sajida with Shahzeb

A purpose for living

Shahzeb and Aurangzeb travel each day by school van to study at the LTC school. Nine years ago their father was murdered by their uncle. They live with their mother in one small room. Until last year they had no fans, no lights and no electricity. Their mother struggles to earn a tiny amount cleaning houses. "For three days we had no food," she once told Sajida. "What is the purpose of living if I cannot give my children food?" For Shahzeb and his brother attending the school is a light in their lives. It is a doorway of hope for their future.



"We cannot afford the fee"

Suleiman and his brother Vikram are excellent students at the LTC school. When their mother first brought them for admission Sajida asked her for their birth certificates. As they did not come back she enquired to know the reason. Their mother had not been able to afford the 100 rupees (75 pence) cost of the certificates. She works as a cleaner earning 400 rupees (£3) a month. Her husband is a labourer on a small salary. They often cannot afford food at their home. "Bring the children anyway," Sajida said. "We will charge no fees."



Living together in harmony

The Holy Shepherd School in Mianwali Colony, Karachi, is situated in a mixed community of Christians and Muslims living together in a sometimes uneasy peace. The Christians are mostly poor labourers on low wages and they look to their churches and the school for their security.

Anser Javed, who directs the school, took a courageous step to make a difference in his community. He organized an event at the school, inviting Muslims and Christians to come together for a meeting to break down the barriers that divided their communities. 150 people came—two-thirds Muslims, including two Maulanas (mosque leaders). Anser was exuberant:

"We read 1 Corinthians 13 about love. Then the Maulanas quoted Koranic verses affirming their responsibility to give shelter to the minorities. They said, 'To be a good Muslim is to be a good neighbour—even if you have your neighbour is a Christian..'

"A Baptist pastor spoke for the Christians and won the hearts of the Muslims. Many appreciated his speech. Finally we prayed for the peace and prosperity of Pakistan and to live in peace and harmony.

"After the programme and lunch I found Muslims and Christians sitting together and talking about the measures to be taken for peace. A Peace Committee was formed for our area that will deal with matters of tension and ensure continued good relations between our communities."



A NEW Gospel School

Elishba and her brother Shezadi sometimes come to school without breakfast. Their father is a sewage worker though he is able to read and wants his children to have an education. Their older brother died last year from food poisoning and an older sister is at home taking care of a baby sister. Elishba and Shezadi attend the Gospel School in Bilal Town (Lahore) and their class studies in the open air for lack of space.

But there is a promise of change at the Gospel School. Last year, with Starfish Asia help, they purchased a plot of ground where three classes now meet under canvas. But our dream is of a building where the children of Bilal Town can study.

We have just received a promise of the first major gift to fulfil that dream. Next year, by God's grace, they will have their own school building. Write to us for details.

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giving hope to the children of Pakistan

I was walking on the beach one morning and I saw a young man picking up starfish from the sand and flinging them back into the sea. I asked why he did it.

"If I don't, they will die in the midday sun," he said.

"But there are thousands of starfish," I replied.

"What difference does it make to save a few?"

He looked down at the starfish in his hand and flung it to safety in the waves.

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

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