STARFISH ASIA FUND News
No. 11 February 2007

Holy Shepherd

The Holy Shepherd Grammar School in Karachi is an oasis in the desert for the 300 children who study there. It is facing a shake-up to improve the quality of teaching and standard of education.

Anser Javed and his wife Kashi, both graduates, have served the school for several years in teaching and administration. Anser is now the Administrator and has been taking the school through the process of registration with the Board of Secondary Education. Inspectors from the Board visited the school in January.

Anser reported that "they were very impressed to see the services we are providing to under-priviledged children in such a remote area. But, according to the guidelines of the inspection process, the school is under-equipped. We are required to establish a science lab within a month before exams start in May."

Quality or quantity?

In a land where so few receive *any* education at all, it is not so easy to focus on high standards on a low budget. We feel that has to change, even at a price.

- The schools we support make their own policies, but we will examine and help raise the standards.
- This will mean increasing teachers' salaries and giving incentives to the teachers to improve their qualifications. We have enabled this in several schools that we support.
- It will mean helping to improve the facilities in schools we support. We are funding a science lab in the Holy Shepherd School and providing school furniture in several schools.
- Steve Curran, an authority on accelerated education in the UK, will be visiting Starfish Asia funded schools in April to advise on improving standards.

On 22nd April at 9:45 a.m. will begin one of the world's great mass marathon races through the streets of London. Last year 32,983 people completed the race over a distance of 26.2 miles. Among the participants this year will be Allan Grant from Glasgow—running to raise money for the STARFISH ASIA FUND.

Would you like to sponsor Allan for the race? Send a gift or go to a web page:

www.justgiving.com/agrant
or
www.starfishasia.com

Holy sheep

More than 300 children, mostly from poor Christian families in Mianwali Colony, attend the Holy Shepherd Grammar School. They are charged a small fee (50 pence / $1 a month) which is more than some families can afford (about a third are able to pay).

At Christmas the children put on an evening performance for parents and visitors, including quizzes, music and a singing competition—and a nativity play. You can view the slide-show at...

http://asia.pg.photos.yahoo.com/ph/anserjaved/my_photos

The Board members of the Holy Shepherd School (from left: Sabir, Arif, Anser & Kashi, Liaqat). Arif is pastor of the Baptist Church in Mianwali Colony. The Starfish Asia Fund has provided financial help to put a roof on the church which has been under construction for several years.

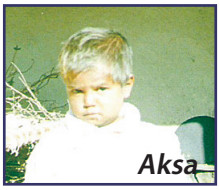
Orphan care

Ashraf and Wilma have opened their hearts and home in Lahore to give protection and care to vulnerable children, in the name of 'Orphan Care Organization'. As we are already over-stretched, the Starfish Asia Fund is not yet supporting them. Here is an insight into some of the children they are caring for.

"We have a new girl in our centre—**Rashida Ashraf**, 6 years old from Mian Channu. Her father died and Rashida was cared for by her aunt who could not afford food or clothing. I found this girl in a miserable situation and requested her guardians to allow me to care for her. She was glad to accept my offer. After a week Rashida started school.

Ashraf and Wilma with three of the children in their home. Jennifer (in blue) is their own daughter.

"**Aksa** and **Emmanuel** are from a village. Their father works hard but earns only 1,000 rupees (£8) a month. He cannot meet the needs of his family. He has TB and his eye is damaged. His wife died when Aksa was born. We decided to support him financially that he may live a better life."



Building for the future

This is the building that houses the Sadaye-Aman Primary School in the Noori Gate slum in Sargodha. It is not impressive. It is also far too small—even for the present 50 children who attend. And Tariq wants to increase the school to 100 or 150, as children are constantly appealing to him for admission. Tariq has been hunting for a larger building to rent in the area, but without success.

However, right next door to the present school, a plot of land with two or three rooms already built is available for sale. The price? About **£15,000** including some renovation costs. We want to go ahead, but our present funds are inadequate. *Nevertheless our faith says we must do something for the children of Noori Gate.*

The Dawn of Hope

The school in the Brick Kiln community in Youhannabad No.2, Lahore, opened its doors in January. Here is the report received from Angela of Miracle School ministries:

"The Brick Kiln school classes started from 15th January, but the admissions opened on 1st January. We first selected 100 children, but then so many needy and deserving people from the brick kiln came, so we added 50 more small children. Now admission is closed.

The staff at the Miracle school threw a party at Christmas for the Miracle School children in Lahore. Gifts of food were also distributed to the families of school children.

Edna (*left*), Rubina and Arthur with a local lady from the building now converted into a School.

"First we gave them a shower, nail cutting and hair cut. Nowadays we are busy with their medical check up and medicines. Sadly nowadays all children are very sick with colds, chest infection and weakness. We are very worried for them because they are very weak with inadequate diet. Also they don't have any warm clothes. We are going door to door to collect warm clothes for them. But we are very happy they are improving by the grace of GOD."

Among the bamboos

William is part of a small Christian community that works in a bamboo plantation in a remote area east of Lahore, close to the India border. He and his wife Ruth were concerned that there was no provision for education for any of the children on the plantation. They opened a primary school in their home. Like all schools it has grown.

Starfish Asia Fund is responding to their request for money to build class-rooms on the roof of their home, so that the school can grow and provide a Christian-based education to the children of all communities. the cost for three rooms? About £2,000.

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US$ gifts for Starfish Asia may be sent to Kevin Reilly at the following address:

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I was walking the beach one morning and saw a young man flinging starfish into the sea. I asked him why he did it. "Because if I don't, they will die in the noonday sun." "But there are thousands of starfish on this beach. What difference does it make?" "It makes a big difference to this one," was his reply.