



Abba Home

My Father's House



“ Arzoo Javed (age 9) is an orphan from a very poor family. In a moment of desperation her father sold his kidney to make some money. The operation damaged his other kidney, and he died within a year.

Little Arzoo's mother married again soon after, and Arzoo's new step-father had little time for her. He would beat her and throw her out of the house, even sometimes refusing to give her proper food or clothing. He refused to send her to school.

When we came to know about her we brought her in our centre. Now she is happily settled with her new family in Abba Home and attends a local Christian school.”

Ashraf Naheed and his wife Wilma live in a Christian colony on the edge of Lahore. Ashraf works as head of the boy's section of a Christian High School. They shared a growing concern for abused and orphaned children in their community and began to provide compassionate care within their limited means. They provided shelter for three girls in their own home.

In 2005 they registered the Orphan Care Organization and two years later Starfish Asia Fund began to provide some financial help that enabled them to rent a larger house and support more girls in need. They now have 17 girls in their extended family – all either orphans or from broken homes. Their goal is to prepare the girls for their place as Christians in society.



Some of the Abba Home children

**Rebecca, Seher, Sidra, Sares, Hina, Safeena
Neha, Singeeta, Rashida, Anita, Shazia**

Pakistan's democracy

News of the bomb that killed Benazir Bhutto shocked the world. Pakistan's attempt to return to democracy was threatened once again, and the world is convinced that democracy holds the key to stability and peace. We wonder.

Life at street level has been getting harder even as the politicians debate and try to grab for power. The reports we have received are of rising prices, constant power cuts, general unrest. And once again, as ever, who suffers? It is the poor and the marginalized who will take the brunt of the present scramble for power. Salaries never rise like the price of food

Mike and Kerstin will be in Pakistan again in March and April, under pressure again to make Starfish Asia resources stretch further, to adopt more children. Four new schools are appealing for help, and we are drawn to do what we can to provide.

We will be making a new DVD to give greater understanding of the needs and challenges. Steve Curran, our friend from West London, will be joining us again to advise our schools on improving their standards. Steve Tamburello is coming too, to gain a greater understanding of the work and to help raise our profile in the USA. We value your support and prayers.



Running to rescue starfish

A year ago, Allan Grant ran the **London Marathon** and through sponsorship raised more than £2,500 for the Starfish Asia Fund. This year – on 13th April – Andrew Raynes, vicar of Christ Church, Blackburn, will be running for the Starfish Asia Fund. Let's back him with our prayers and enthusiasm. **Please sponsor him if you can!** See his sponsorship page at:

<http://www.justgiving.com/andrewraynes>

Never short of new ideas

Anser Javed, Administrator of the Holy Shepherd School in Karachi, is bursting with fresh ideas how to improve his school, his staff and the local community. Both he and his wife have taken courses in school management from the Agha Khan University. We find it hard to keep up ...

- ▶ Last summer, for his post-Matric students, he ran vocational courses in computing, sewing, English and beauty treatment. This was funded by Starfish Asia and the British Women's Association in Karachi. He plans more courses for this summer.
- ▶ He has just launched a 3-month adult literacy project with 12 of his teachers, studying a 12-hour course from a local agency, and then teaching classes for 3 months in west Karachi to illiterate people. 270 adults should learn to read and write.

- ▶ He has launched a savings plan for his staff, is arranging medical health check-ups and offering incentives for further teacher training.
- ▶ He is raising local funds to ensure that all the children in his Christian colony have access to schoolbooks.
- ▶ He established a Scholarship Fund to enable 11 of his graduate students to go on to further studies.



Rita is 5 years old and comes from a village. Her father earns a little money by selling chicken pieces in his village. His wife, Rita's mother, is mentally disturbed and wanders around the village or disappears for months on end. Rita has never been to school and receives little love or care. When we came to know about her, her father was happy when we offered her a place in Abba Home. She has just joined our family and has begun to attend school.

Stories of hope from Abba Home

Noreen is 3 years old. Her father works on a brick-kiln and is in debt to the brick-kiln owner. There is not enough money for the family to eat properly and the children are often hungry. We cannot take her into our home, but we plan to provide the family with some help for food.



Rabia (age 6) is a beggar's daughter from a gypsy family. She has no father and her mother sends her out to beg. Her mother lies around, sleeps and does nothing. Rabia is a very beautiful girl. When we asked Rabia about begging, she told us she hates doing it but she cannot leave the job because her mother forces her. We are dreaming of sending her to school.

Ashraf and Wilma find it very difficult to turn away children in need. There are now 17 girls in Abba Home.



Aiming higher – deserving the best

Starfish Asia is now contributing to running fourteen Christian schools, affecting the lives and futures of more than 2,000 boys and girls. That is an exciting responsibility and it weighs on us. We need to do more for 'our' children.

Steve Curran, Director of a UK tuition centre, made a valuable survey of our schools a year ago, and is returning to Pakistan this April to follow up on his visit. Here are the areas we have asked him to advise on:

School books

Many children from poor homes are unable to afford school books. We want to ensure—school by school—that the children all have text books, notebooks and pencils. The same should apply to uniforms, school bags and shoes.

School buildings and facilities

We will look carefully at buildings and facilities to make sure that they are bright, welcoming and reasonably equipped to ensure a good learning environment.



Steve Curran with Shahid Ambrose, Director of Dar-ul-Hikmat, a college that trains Christian teachers in Lahore

Teaching standards and motivation

How can the teachers be better qualified, trained and motivated? The children will get poor results under the care of indifferent teachers.

Scripture teaching

We want to ensure that the Christian children are receiving a good foundation of biblical understanding—as well as a relationship with Jesus Christ—while they are at school. We will look carefully at what sort of spiritual teaching the children are receiving.

Beyond Matric

We are setting up a 'Scholarship Fund' for Matric graduate students to ensure that no one will be prevented through lack of funds from going on with their education. We want school Principals to take seriously the future of the children beyond their final school exams.

New toilets at the Lahore Christian High School

Providing better facilities for the 400 children, new toilets are under construction at the school, with help from the Starfish Asia Fund.



Morning Star School Zia Colony, Korangi 2½

The Morning Star Primary School opened in Korangi 2½, Karachi in January and now has 50 excited children. There is lots of room for improvement—but at least it is open!



The Miracle Ministries team celebrated Christmas with a dinner for all and a colourful, moving nativity play for the children and their parents.

And the wise men of the Brick Kiln village brought gifts...

Christianity, the leading Christian monthly magazine in the UK, will contain a feature article in the April issue on the life of brick kiln workers in Pakistan and the work of the Miracle School family that is supported by the Starfish Asia Fund.

Be sure to buy a copy—or write to us for a photocopy of the article.

News of great JOY at the brick kiln

"The hands that only knew how to mix mud with water to make bricks — now those same hands hold a pencil and paper — and join in praise to God."

The winter season has been extremely cold this year in Lahore and many of the children in the Brick Kiln community were sick with bronchitis, cold, fever and chest infections. The number attending the school has risen to 180 and their present small rented building is bursting at the seams. A new building is urgently required.



The fellowship of Christ Heart and Hand

The Fellowship of Christ, founded by Ashley Arshad and his wife Seema in 1997, fields a team of local ladies, who visit homes to bring a *heart of love* and a *hand of help* to people in need in the Christian locality where they live. The team is led by Seema and divides its time between practical help to the poor and spiritual uplift of the community.



“Neha (age 7), a student of the Lahore Christian High School, dropped out of school for several weeks. We heard she was sick and when we visited her home, we found that she had developed a serious fever, with infectious boils all over her body. The family was too poor to get proper medical advice. Neha’s father had died three years earlier and her mother earned very little as a cleaner. Neha has two younger brothers. Our prayer team visits the family regularly and is committed to provide financial help for medical care and rehabilitation.”

Riffat and Sheeba (left) visit homes to pray and distribute clothing and items collected for the needy. Rehana and Esther take Sunday School classes for local children. Nargis and Arif (praying for Neha in the picture above) visit the sick and arrange meetings in the community.



Sargodha

The cost of poverty

Tariq Iqbal is preparing to enlarge his school in the Noori Gate slum when admissions open in March. At present he has 72 students. He will make temporary use of the rooms on the plot purchased for the construction of a new building and has rented other rooms, to be used until he is able to build. He writes:

“The children are learning so many good things here in the school. But sometimes they cannot get the basic needs of life. It was very painful for us when two children collapsed in class. When I investigated, I found that they were hungry and did not have food to eat at home. Many of our children come to school without eating anything.”



bringing hope to Noori Gate

Tariq Iqbal borrowed a video camera and walked around the Noori Gate slum, capturing vivid insights into the life of the poor—sweeping the streets, cleaning the drains, injecting drugs—and finishing with a glimpse of the children in his Sadaye Aman school, learning their ABC and singing praise to God. It lasts for 12 minutes.

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As I walked on the beach one morning, I saw a young man picking up starfish from the sand and flinging them back into the sea. “If I don’t save them, they will die in the noonday sun,” he said.

“But there are thousands of starfish on this beach. What difference does it make to save just 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.”

www.starfishasia.com

32 Beck Lane, Beckenham,
Kent BR3 4RE (UK)

Tel/Fax: +44 (0)20 8402 1914

Email: mike@starfishasia.com

Registered UK Charity No. 1099672

US \$ gifts for Starfish Asia may be sent to:

Starfish Asia
P.O. Box 603, Westerville, OH. 43081 (USA)