

The shadow that hangs over Pakistan

By any standards the current worldwide rise in the price of food and oil is a crisis—but none of us will suffer like the poor in Pakistan.

In Pakistan petrol and diesel prices have risen by 60% in the past six months—resulting in huge increases in the cost of travel and transport. Where people paid 50 rupees a kilo for rice in January, they are now paying Rs.100. It is the same with wheat and other vital food stuffs—the cost of eating has doubled. The country also faces a huge power shortage—electricity is cut for several hours every day and oil and gas prices have risen steeply. There are already news reports of mass hunger and starvation.

What does this mean for us?

It means that we must look carefully at every budget. Our grants are paying salaries for teachers, scholarships for students, rents and electricity bills. In general salaries are rarely increased to counter the pain of inflation, but we believe that is neither right nor fair. Our grants will also have to increase to meet the rising costs of food and oil. We must ensure that every employee who is dependent on us is getting a fair deal. Whole families are supported by those salaries.

*Who is it that always suffers the most, when prices rise?
The poor, of course*



U.N. World Food Programme reported in June:

“Soaring food prices and shortages of staples mean about 77 million people of Pakistan’s 160 million population are food insecure, a 28 percent increase over the past year. The term ‘food insecure’ means people are unable to get sufficient nutritious food to meet dietary needs.”

A nation in crisis



The stories behind the pictures

Dar-ul-Hikmat High School, Rak Dera Chahal

Few would deny that Pakistan is in trouble. The days of relative stability under a self-appointed (but once widely appreciated) dictator are over. The new government is unstable and faces huge problems:

- Spiralling inflation
- Growing unrest
- Violent extremism

Add to that massive unemployment, 50% illiteracy, the highest population growth in South Asia (2.9% a year), a collapsing economy — and growing hunger.

And now for the good news.

In the midst of this chaos and uncertainty are people who love Jesus and are determined to help their brothers and sisters in need.



Rak Dera Chahal (RDC) is a village on the eastern edge of Lahore. It has a mosque, a Sikh Gurudwara and a ruined church building. There is a small Christian community of very poor labourers—and a magnificent Christian High School that serves the village community.

I met Tania (our cover girl) in RDC in April. She was wiping tears from her eyes because one of her friends had bullied her. I asked her why she was not in school. She replied: "We have no books." It was a poor excuse. "We will give you books," I said. "You need to be in school."

The RDC High School is run by *Dar-ul-Hikmat (House of Wisdom)*, a national educational institution, directed by **Shahid Ambrose** (below), that serves the Christian community through three High Schools and a Teacher Training College. **Ruth Mall** (next to Shahid) is the Principal and 360 students attend the school, of whom 120 are Christian children (like Tania).



Morning Star Primary School, Zia Colony, Karachi

If you ask us the question: "What is the best way we can help the most people in need?" our answer will be:

Regular giving by Standing Order (however big or small) is what most helps to guarantee teachers' salaries, rents, school uniforms and books—and to enable our national partners to provide for the increasing numbers of people in serious need. We want to be ready and able to meet the needs of people who are hurt by the rising costs of living.

Ask us for a Standing Order form—or download from:

www.starfishasia.com

We know we can't possibly help them all. But we know too that we cannot look away...

We have to help some!



Mike writes: When I first visited George Thomas in Korangi 2½ I knew we had to help him to do more for his community. He was pastor to about 20 Christian families and he needed support. Korangi 2½ was a bleak area of dust and dirt and plastic bags.

That was about two years ago. The area is still desperately poor, the Christians mostly working for low wages in the local tanneries. But God is using **George Thomas** and his wife **Fehmida** to offer new hope to 60 eager children who could not afford to go to school.

The *Morning Star Primary School*, furnished with brightly painted chairs and tables, is already too large for its rented premises. George has made a deal with the landlord and is about to build an extension to the school to provide classroom space for another 40 children.



“It pains me to see their lives..”



Arthur writes from Lahore about his work with the children in the Brick Kiln community:

It is the rainy season in these days. As you know work at the brick kiln stops in the rain. The village streets are mud-soaked. The flies and mosquitoes are increasing day by day. This is bound to have a very bad effect on the health of the children. It pains me to see their lives.

We are providing them some things like bread, milk, flour, etc. but the prices are increasing very fast.



Starfish Asia rep in Northern Ireland

Trevor Alexander lived and worked in Karachi in 1981-83 and has been a regular visitor to Pakistan for the past ten years, as a Bible teacher and increasingly involved in compassionate ministries with the Pakistani Christian community.

Trevor is an Elder in his local church and works part-time as a Commercial Insurance Account Executive, having sold his insurance business in 2007. He is based in North Down, Northern Ireland.

Trevor will be promoting the work of *Starfish Asia* in Northern Ireland, and is willing to take meetings and to share his experiences of the needs of Pakistan's Christian minority.

To contact Trevor, phone:

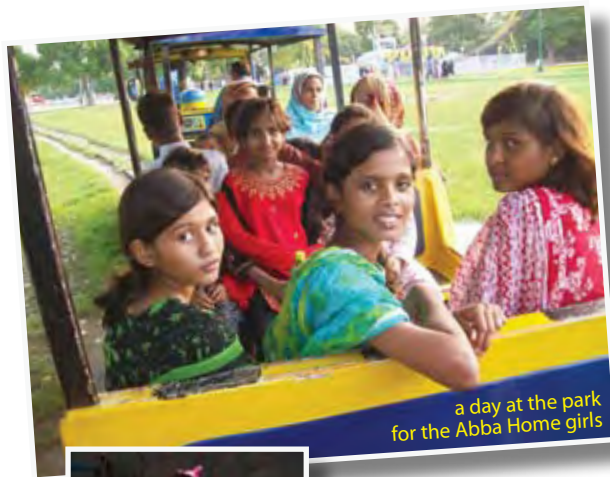
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We feel compelled to do more for the health of the children in Starfish Asia schools. At present we provide funds for some children to get a sandwich or fruit each day. We have to do more but can do no more than our resources allow. Can you help our 'food fund'?



a day at the park for the Abba Home girls



Samreen was one year old and her mother became a cleaner in a wealthy landowner's house. Samreen would accompany her and watch as the rich man's daughter went off to school, smartly dressed in her school uniform and carrying her school bag and books. She would ask her mother if she could also go to school, but there was no hope that she could afford the luxury. One day Samreen's mother heard about the *Abba Home*. Samreen jumped for joy at the prospect of going to school. She has now joined the *Abba Home* family and goes off to school with the other girls every day.

Samreen's story

Samreen is the newest addition to the growing family at Abba Home, the family home in Lahore run by Ashraf and Wilma where girls from broken and troubled homes find hope for their future.

Samreen, aged 7, was born into a family of poor labourers. Her father was epileptic and suffered a fit as he was working in the fields. No help was nearby and he fell into water and drowned.

"Sometimes the children come to school hungry"



Sajida Iqbal sends her van around the villages every day to bring children to the school she built in the small town of Akhtarabad. Sixty children crowd the small building, but more are on the way. Over the summer break three more classrooms have been built and the numbers will soon rise over 100.



Sajida's children are all from Christian families and they are among the poorest of the poor. Most come from villages, where economic hardship is a way of life.

"It breaks my heart, but sometimes the children only get rice and a little ground chilli to eat at home. Some children have not eaten anything when they come to school."



To live again

Nomaan and his brother **Imran** lived—and worked—with their parents at the Youhannabad 2 brick kiln. That is, until they were rescued by the family that runs the Miracle Schools.

Imran, his brother, is still recovering from TB, and Nomaan has just gone through a major operation to remove a tumour from his head. Both brothers have been cared for by the Miracle Ministries family in Lahore. They owe their lives to the care they have received in Jesus' name.



Scholarship fund

Annual Matric exam results were announced in August and students prepared to move on to the next stage in their lives. It is a time for decision—for some their dreams fulfilled, for others dreams shattered. We are interested in the future of the children in our Starfish-Asia schools and want to help those who wish to continue their studies. For this reason we have offered 'scholarships' to deserving students in need of a helping hand to pursue their dreams.



Hurma Azeem

passed her Matric exam in first division from the Miracle School. Her family migrated to the city from a village and her father has no steady job. Hurma's ambition is to study further and with a scholarship from Starfish Asia she will begin study at Kinnaird College, Lahore's premier Christian college.



Yousaf Saffat

age 19, is a student 'who never gives up in spite of all the problems facing his family'. That is the report of the Miracle School where he has been studying. He has been doing a part-time low-wage job for a long time to support his family because he has 6 sisters and 2 brothers. His father is now too old to work, and Youssef continues to help his family while dreaming of further studies. He passed his Matric in science and we will provide him a small scholarship to enable him to study I.COM from a private Academy.



Noreen Saleem

Anser in Karachi sent us this report of one of his best students:

Noreen Saleem got the highest marks in the matriculation exams and I was amazed when she decided not to go for further studies. I asked her why.

"Sir," she said, "you know that my father is a rickshaw driver and doesn't earn much. And my mother works too and we hardly manage to survive. I am thankful to you for helping me to complete my matriculation.

"Now, even with a scholarship I will not be able to continue my studies and I don't want to waste your money too. If I go to college, then my other brothers and sister will not be able to go to school. I know I could get a good result in my studies but I do not want my family to suffer."

She was very happy when I told her our plan to start coaching classes in the school for post-Matric students.

Scholarship Fund

Holy Shepherd School in Karachi:

- ◆ 1 teacher training
- ◆ 1 mechanics course
- ◆ 2 medical studies
- ◆ 14 college fees for Intermediate study

The Miracle School in Lahore:

- ◆ 1 nursing training
- ◆ 7 college fees for Intermediate study

Lahore Christian High School

- ◆ 4 nursing training

Contributions towards our 'Scholarship Fund' will be very welcome



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Request a free copy

We will send it as soon as it is ready



Starfish Asia Fund is a member of the Fundraising Standards Board

We know we cannot help everyone, but we have got to help some!

A little goes a long way to turn despair into hope. Will you help us to make that difference?

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The Starfish Asia Fund, 32 Beck Lane, Beckenham, Kent BR3 4RE (UK)

or email: mike@starfishasia.com



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."

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