



**STARFISH  
ASIA**

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**News**

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## Is there a future for Christians in Pakistan?

We should not be asking such a question. Of course there is a future—God has not abandoned His people.

The question we should be asking is: 'What kind of a future will Christians have as a minority in a state beset with such economic and social complexities as Pakistan?'

Will Christians remain a marginalized community, destined to be poor, uneducated and illiterate, doing low-paid manual jobs and working as servants of the wealthy? Or will they be a community of faith, confident in their future role in society and able to stand tall as followers of Christ?

Starfish Asia is committed to helping the Christians of Pakistan to rise above the complexities of their society, to live with hope against all the odds. Free, accessible and soundly Christian-based education—provided by caring and capable national believers—is the key that is making this dream a reality for thousands of Pakistani children.

# Why aren't the children in school?

There are many reasons why children stay away from school, but not the reasons we sometimes expect.

- ◆ Some stay away because their parents want them to go to work to bring in extra family income.
- ◆ Some cannot go to school because their families are too poor to pay the fees, buy the uniforms, provide the school books.
- ◆ Many parents are themselves illiterate and see no reason why their children need to learn to read.
- ◆ Many Pakistani Christians stay away because they are afraid to mix with Muslim children who will mock them and pressure them to convert to Islam.
- ◆ Some stay away (especially girls) because there is no school close enough to their home for them to attend.
- ◆ Some never go to school because they think that education is only for the wealthy and the privileged, not for ordinary children.



Shahzad in Bilal Town stayed away from school because he had no way to get there. With severe physical disabilities, he could not walk and no one would carry him. Shamshad Luka, with help from Starfish Asia, bought him a wheelchair and he is now a proud student at the Gospel School.



The children in the Christian slum at Rak Dera Chahal told us they could not go to school because they could not afford to buy the books. Furthermore the fees were too high. Starfish Asia now subsidizes the fees for Christian children, and gives them free books, so that they can all afford to attend the school.

### These children never went to school. Why?

In the rural community where they live close to Sheikhpura (west of Lahore), there was no school.

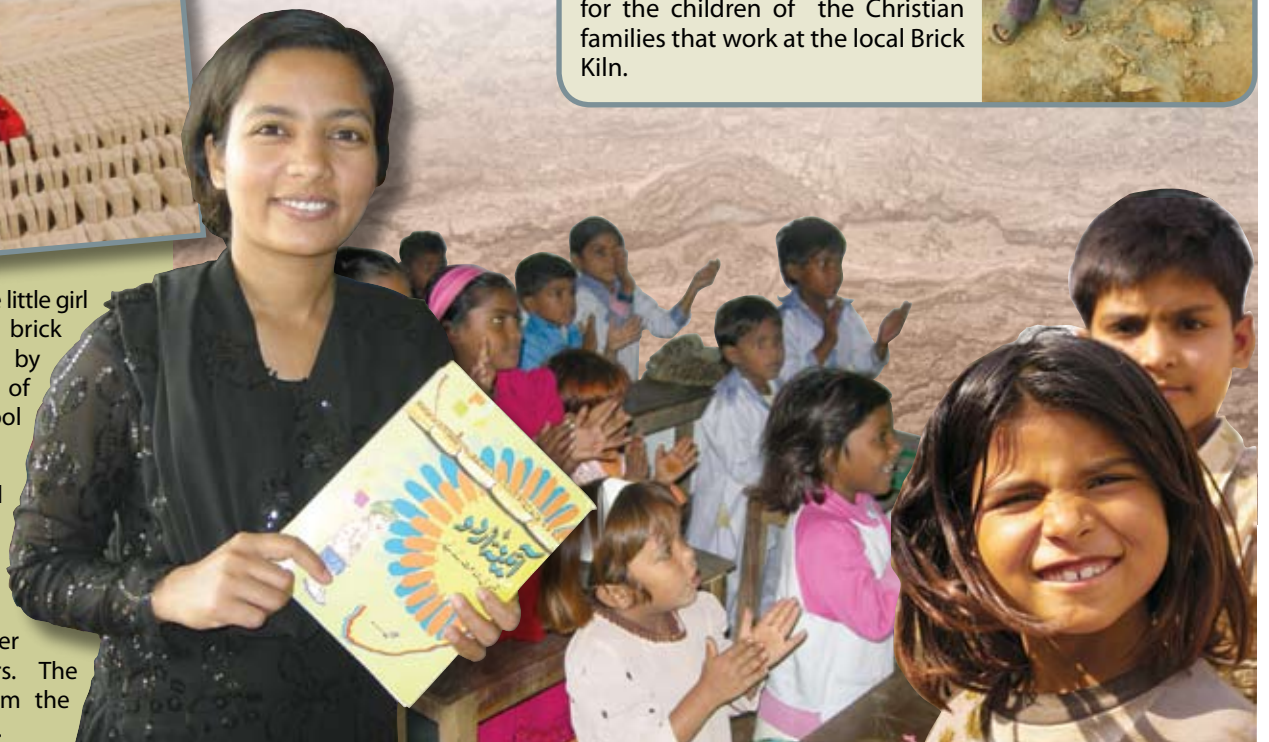


James Qadir and his wife, with help from Starfish Asia, are opening a Primary School for the children of the Christian families that work at the local Brick Kiln.



The picture of the little girl working at the brick kiln was taken by Arthur Joseph of the Miracle School Ministries.

Angela Michael (pictured here) directs the two Miracle Schools, together with her aunt and other family members. The children are from the Brick Kiln School.





# Starfish Karachi

## Dreams come true

Anser Javed and his wife Kashi oversee the Holy Shepherd Grammar School in the bleak and dusty Mianwali Colony in North Karachi. They have turned the school into an outstanding centre of enthusiasm, initiative and hope for a poor community of Christians who had few dreams for their future.

Anser and Kashi also lead Starfish Karachi, a registered Trust that works for the benefit of the Mianwali Colony Christian community. They have both studied at Karachi's Agha Khan University in order to be better equipped to provide a first-class education for the 480 children at the Holy Shepherd School. Here is a brief insight into some of their initiatives.

*“We arranged a pastors' get-together at the school. 'It's a Miracle,' said Evangelist Labin Daniel. 'I have lived in this town for 30 years and have not seen the pastors get together. Thank you Mr. Anser for taking this great initiative.' Ten pastors attended.*

*We observed Global Hand Washing Day in the school. I was surprised to learn that most of our 480 children never wash their hands with soap. We arranged soap, water and towels for all the children in the school to learn to wash their hands properly.*

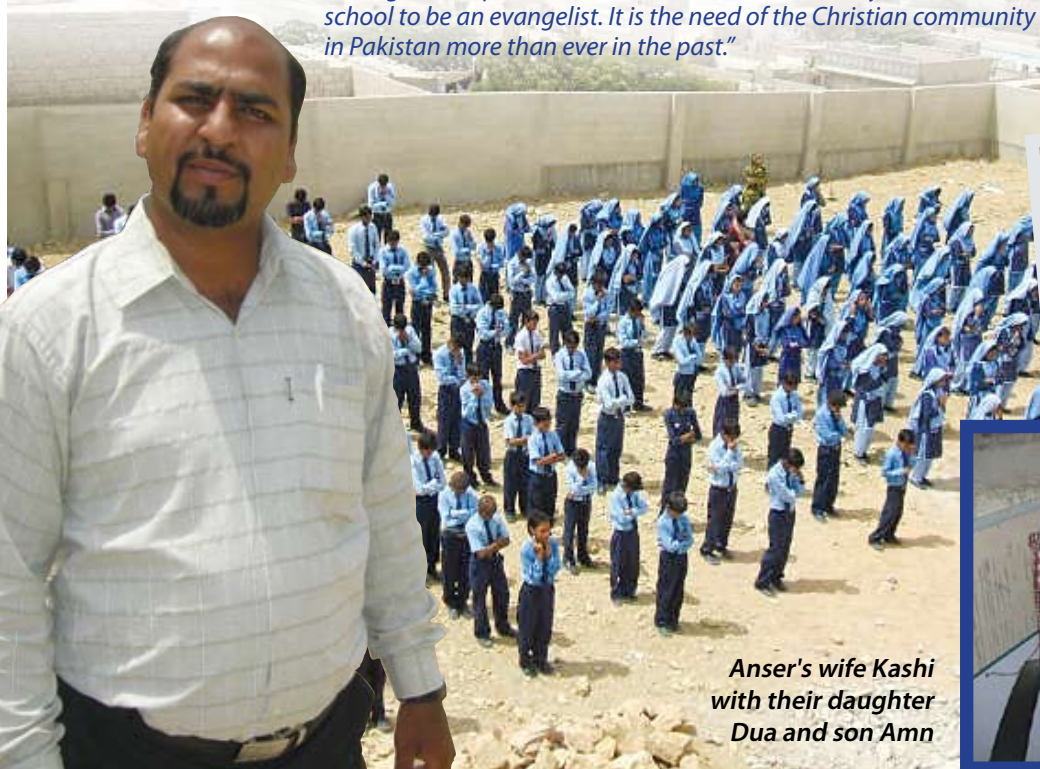
*Friends of Starfish Karachi provided a special donation at Christmas, so I was able to distribute sweaters to the 274 children in the morning session and uniforms, shirts and shoes to the 210 children who come for the second session. We also gave food parcels to 240 families.*

*The world celebrated World Children's Day in November. It was a dream come true for our children. We gave them the opportunity to take charge of the school. You can imagine how happy they were. One boy got the chance to sit in my chair. He said: 'I have never been treated like you dealt with us today. It is the most beautiful day of my life!' ”*

With funds from Starfish Asia donors, in September the Holy Shepherd School awarded scholarships to 18 successful students in the Matriculation exam to enable them to go on to further studies. At the same time Anser started coaching classes in the school to help them succeed in their studies. “After hearing this news I could see tears in their eyes.”

In 2008 Starfish Karachi purchased a plot of land (pictured below) with gifts from Starfish Asia donors. It lies next to the Holy Shepherd School and is now used for daily assemblies and as a recreation ground for the school. Anser's dream is to construct classrooms for Vocational Training and a Bible School for the Mianwali community.

*“We are planning to start a 3-year Bible graduation programme. Through this diploma course I wish to motivate every child in our school to be an evangelist. It is the need of the Christian community in Pakistan more than ever in the past.”*



Anser's wife Kashi with their daughter Dua and son Amn





## No slow-down

The world-wide economy may have slowed down but there has been no slow-down in world population growth nor in the urgency that presses us to do more for the poor.



In March a new school year begins in Pakistan. For us this means several things.

- ▶ Schools open their admission to new students. Inevitably hundreds more children will be joining the schools that are supported by Starfish Asia.
- ▶ All the 4,000 children in our schools will need new school books. We cannot provide them free for every child, but we are committed to ensure that every child has books.
- ▶ We face several urgent requests for equipment for schools and the challenge of a need for several school buildings.
- ▶ We are over-stretched to support our present partners, but continue to receive urgent calls from others in need of help. We cannot afford to slow down.



### just imagine

The new Starfish Asia DVD is available, with insights into the work and stories of changed lives

**Request a free copy**



Starfish Asia is a member of the Fundraising Standards Board

## Okara

*"I feel my graph going up..."*

This was the top-floor meeting room for the Living Stones church in Okara last November.



Here it is again three months later — a carpeted meeting hall with space for up to 800 worshippers.



Small wonder that Waqas and Selina are filled with praise: *"We are so grateful to God that His kingdom is growing here as He blesses the work of His hands and our ministry bears much fruit. God brings people into the church to hear the message of hope and love. I feel my graph going up and feel myself growing deeper in His love."*



The Living Stones School is also growing as this is the time of year for admissions. The school has recently been painted and is bursting with life and hope.



*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?*

### PLEASE CONTACT US!

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- Please send me a **Standing Order / Gift Aid** form
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DATA PROTECTION ACT, 1998. Starfish Asia will only use your personal data in connection with its charitable purposes. It will not make your details available to other organisations.



*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](http://www.starfishasia.com)**

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

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

Email: [mike@starfishasia.com](mailto:mike@starfishasia.com)

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**Starfish Asia  
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