

Pakistan in crisis

We recently received this report from Kaleem Dean who directs the ministries of CAP in Lahore that are supported by Starfish Asia. It is a realistic insight into some of the stresses that our national partners are facing in Pakistan's present turmoil. This is a slightly edited extract from Kaleem's email.

The country is in turmoil, lives are not safe, terror is prevailing everywhere. Lahore was safe for a while, but now it is the clear target of the Taliban and the terrorists.

Today's news stated that the Taliban leader sent 300 suicide bombers into major cities of Pakistan including Islamabad and Lahore. In Karachi, the Taliban attacked a Christian town. In Sheikhpura a poor Christian was compelled to accept Islam and when he refused they tried to cut his throat. Fortunately the man survived. All the Christian schools in Lahore have received threats.

We received threats from unknown motorcyclists as one of our schools is on the main road and we have no security guard there. In the last week our driver, Sohail, was beaten by an unknown motorcyclist who just stopped the school van and started beating him.

Life is becoming very difficult here. On the other hand our CAP work is flourishing day by day. Please keep all this in your prayers.

Thank you for giving the children in Noori Gate a reason to celebrate!



Sadaye Aman School, Sargodha

Cause for celebration

April 15 was a day for celebration at the Sadaye Aman School in the Noori Gate colony, Sargodha. The children were all dressed in their smart green and white uniforms for the official dedication of their new school building.

It was Mike's privilege, together with Tariq's father, to cut the ribbon and pray for God's blessing on the school and community. Drugs, alcohol and despair have darkened the alleys of Noori Gate. The light of a Christ-centred education is giving this community a cause to celebrate.



Will you help us support Tariq's work?

Now more than 100 children are proud to be receiving an education and hope for their future at the Sadaye Aman School. The school needs painting and furniture—and we long to provide space for a playground that will entail buying the plot next door.

Painting the whole school: £1,500 — Furniture: £1,000
Monthly running costs including all salaries and utilities: £850
Plot of land needed to provide a playground: £22,000

Starfish Asia at the cross-roads

We have known for some time that we were coming to a cross-roads. It is a sign of progress that we can no longer run our work as a 'kitchen-table' operation. Mike and Kerstin remain at the heart of the work but no longer quite as much in charge as before. Here are the signs of change:

On 7th June Trevor Alexander from Northern Ireland was commissioned by his local church to join Starfish Asia as Co-Director. We are dividing our responsibilities. You will see in this report that Trevor is launching a Starfish Asia volunteer programme. We hope you will join, as we realize what an important contribution you can make to this work.



Listening to advice from our Trustees, in March we launched into a professional consultation process with McConkey Johnston UK that has examined us from top to bottom and given us a thorough review of who we are and what we are doing. We are working through the consequences of their recommendations.

We have also been working on our budget—amazed at how many thousands have benefitted from Starfish Asia over the past six years, and astonished at how much still needs to be done. We aim at doubling the number of children we are helping by 2012, bringing that number to at least 10,000.

We are aware that we face many challenges, growth beyond our present capacity—and maybe there will also be some painful lessons we need to learn. In all of this we depend on your partnership, friendship and support. We are sure that *together* we can do much more for the sake of our Christian brothers and sisters in Pakistan.

Mike & Kerstin Wakely

Sargodha

Amir's story:

Restored and Reconciled

Tariq Iqbal who directs the Sadaye Aman School in Noori Gate (Sargodha) told this moving story about one of his students.

“Amir's family lives in the Noori Gate slum in the heart of Sargodha. His father, a labourer, was often without work. I met Amir wandering in the street and I asked him if he would like to go to school. He said: "I have no money to pay fees or to buy books. Sometimes we have no money even for food." I invited him to join our school. "You pray—and come to school. We will buy the books for you."

Amir became a regular student, but then one day he stopped coming. I went to find out what was wrong. His tiny one-room house was made of mud, its roof leaking and its walls broken. When Amir saw me his eyes filled with tears. He was holding his baby sister.

"Sir," he said, "my mother left us, and my sister is hungry." His father had quarrelled with his mother and she had walked out of the home. Amir's father told me she had left because there was no money and they had not eaten for two days. We started to pray. I bought some milk for the baby and food for the family. The family's situation was quite desperate.



Amir's stands with his mother as he receives books from Saleem, Tariq's brother, who also works in the Sadaye Aman School.

Amir's father finally agreed to try to bring her back. "Please pray for me that when I go to her father's house everything may be resolved with the blessings of Jesus." The same evening Amir visited me with a wide smile on his face. He hugged me and said, "Sir, my mother has come home and now we are together again."

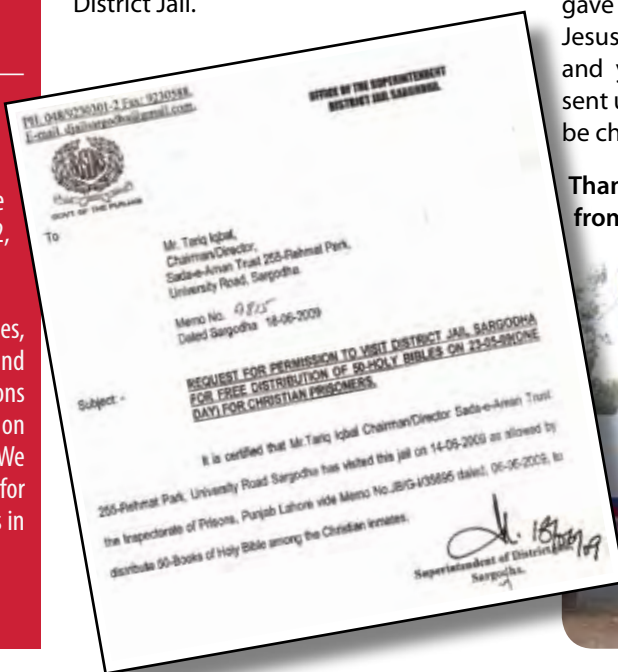
In his recent exams Amir took 3rd position in the class. When he came on stage there were tears in his eyes as he said to everyone: "I am grateful to the school that not only gives me free education but also brought our family together again. Now I am able to study and wish to serve the Lord Jesus."

Bibles for prisoners

With permission from the Inspector General of Prisons Tariq distributed 50 Bibles among the Christian inmates after his regular Sunday service in the Sargodha District Jail.

One of the prisoners commented: "Every Sunday you visit us and during the prayer service we feel that the Holy Spirit is with us. He has changed our lives. Today you gave us the Word of God and we felt that Jesus is with us all the time. God bless you and your ministry and the people who sent us this holy gift. I hope many lives will be changed."

Thank God for the gift of these Bibles from a Starfish Asia supporter.



The Road to Kasur

by Stephen Curran

It was another stifling hot day and we were on our way to visit the school in Kasur for 160 children of Christian brick kiln workers. Our driver, Kaleem Dean, was unperturbed by the hazards and frustrations of travel in rural Pakistan. It amazes me that Pakistanis can stay calm in the most difficult of circumstances.

Kaleem took it all in his stride. He holds a job as Professor of Urdu in a degree college and in his spare time has managed to create, with the help of his wife and a capable team, four schools for the Christian poor of Lahore and its surrounding districts.

We left the road at Kasur and took the final twisting track past open fields and simple dwellings until we could go no further. We were escorted along a narrow path and eventually arrived outside the school, painted in CAP's distinctive blue and white. Beyond were the ominous chimneys of the brick kilns, where most of this poor Christian community worked.

The small courtyard was a buzz of activity. Over a hundred children were braving the blistering heat to greet us. They were overcome with excitement. They had waited all afternoon for us to arrive. We had come for a special presentation. Many of these children had never been given something as valuable as a book and now we were going to hand them a whole pack of textbooks and exercise books for their studies. As I handed books to each proud and smiling child, I reflected how this simple gift represented their hope for a brighter future.

The school is a poorly constructed single-storey building with four small classrooms. There was no furniture, only mats for the children to sit on. Even water is scarce. The electric water pump had recently been stolen, so the only source of fresh water was the hand pump. Nevertheless the children enthusiastically sit before their teachers and are eager to learn all they can.

Our brief intervention in these children's lives was over and we took the long road back from Kasur, but I could not help reflecting that something wonderful is happening here. As with all CAP schools, it will not be long before we see a fully functioning school with proper facilities and a full educational programme for some of the world's most needy—and most deserving—children.



Steve Curran, pictured together with Professor Kaleem Dean of CAP Ministries in Lahore, is the founder and education Director of AETuition (strapline: Excellence in Education) based in Slough (UK). View his website:

www.aetuition.co.uk

Steve is a great supporter of Starfish Asia This was his third visit to Pakistan to give advice to our schools. We asked for his impressions of a visit to Kasur in April.

The only way out

Education is the only way out of a life of grinding poverty and subsistence living for these children. It is a sacrifice for parents to allow their children to spend precious hours at school rather than work on the brick kiln. But they are inspired by the belief that their children can have something better. After a few brief hours at school the children will once again return to help their parents make bricks.

This is back-breaking and dangerous work—and desperately poorly paid. In the rainy season, when families cannot make bricks, they have to borrow money to survive, and so are trapped in a 'cycle of debt' for life, known as 'bonded labour', a euphemism for modern-day slavery.

It costs just £300 a month to cover the running costs of the Kasur school — plus some extra funds for school books, uniforms and furniture. Can you help meet this need?

Together we can do it



Shan

by Stephen Curran



I first visited the Brick Kiln School run by Rubina Ramzan two years ago. I saw with my own eyes how difficult the lives of these children really were. I told Rubina and Angela that I wanted to make a special connection with one child, to see how Starfish Asia was really making a difference to individual children. With no hesitation Angela told me to meet Shan.

Shan was 10 years old. He came from a very difficult home. He was beaten by his mother and his father was a drug addict. The home was a mud hut but they were now living in the courtyard of another family. Shan did domestic work every day for two hours, and then went to the kiln to help make bricks for ten or more hours each day. Every evening he returned exhausted to face the unhappiness at home.

Shan was shy and could not believe he would ever be able to go to school. When the Miracle School opened, he stayed away until he was overcome by the welcome and love he received from Angela and her team of helpers. Shan's life was changed forever.

Shan had bright, intelligent eyes with a searching expression. I could see in his careworn face a boy who was already much older than his years. After school Angela took me to see where he slept—a broken bed in the open air. Food was cooked on a stove using cow dung and Shan had no possessions. In those precious moments I was to discover a connection with this child by simply taking an interest in him. This special connection has remained to the present time.

This year I was glad to see Shan again and to discover how much his life has changed. He is now twelve years old and has been partially adopted by the Ramzan family, who have paid off the family debts. They have been able to leave the brick kiln. Shan's father now works in a local factory and the family is much happier. Shan's life is now far more balanced because of the love given by the Miracle school family.

Much has changed for Shan. He now has a future. Things will be different for him and it is all because the family that runs the school have dedicated their lives to sharing the love of God with children like Shan. This little boy is one of thousands of children that Starfish Asia has helped and I have been immensely privileged to watch it happen.

To give them a future



Sajid is pastor of a church in Lahore and he and his wife Fowzia have a passion to help the poor in his community. They run the Talents School that receives financial help through Starfish Asia. He tells this story of a family in need.



Aslam is nominally Christian, addicted to heroin and unable to take care of his wife, Humara, and their three children. Humara struggles to feed

and clothe her children and she is also pregnant. It was her burning desire to send the children to school but she could not possibly afford the books, uniforms, shoes, stationery and school fees. She did not give up and came to me for help. Mahnoor and Sahil are now coming to our school. Humara came to me with tears of gratitude in her eyes to say a few words of thanks to me and to those who extended their generous hand for her family. I feel proud that I have been able to give these children a chance in life.



Dedicated

On March 30 the new CAP High School building in Youhannabad, Lahore, was officially opened at a ceremony attended by community leaders. The 400 children who now study at this purpose-built school have for years been crowded into inadequate and cramped rented rooms. They are naturally thrilled

to have their own school building, a statement of the faith and commitment of the school's founder, Professor Kaleem Dean and his wife Nagina. The school was built with a gift given to CAP by one generous donor, who went to be with the Lord shortly after the building was completed.



**STARFISH
ASIA**

giving hope to the children of Pakistan



Starfish Asia is a member of the
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