



## Abba Home

A family with hope



Monica Isaac 2007



When Monica Isaac was a few days old her father died from tuberculosis. Her mother abandoned the new-born baby and married another man. Monica was left in the care of her older brother and grew up without the love of a mother. Small surprise that Monica was depressed and physically weak!

Her situation grew worse when her brother got married and his new wife wanted to get rid of Monica. This was when Ashraf and Wilma met them. Monica clearly needed help and it took little persuading for them to agree that she should join the Abba Home family.

Monica is now 9 years old. She has lived happily with her large family since 2007 and shows few signs of the trauma she has been through or the depression that scarred her early years.

### Toys for Abba Home

When Mike and Kerstin visited Pakistan before Christmas, their luggage was full of toys, many destined for the girls in Abba Home. "We scoured the charity shops for Barbie dolls, toy cars, teddy bears. What a joy to see the faces of the girls as they unpacked their gifts!"



# Abba Home

## abused girls with a future



### What no little girl should see

Beenish Robert's father is in prison. He was a violent man, unfaithful to his wife and involved with other women. In a fit of rage he set fire to Beenish's mother and she died. Beenish is only eight years old and has never known love at home. She was always lonely and unloved and the loss of her mother shattered her trust in people.

She moved into her 70 year-old grandmother's home, but she never received the love and care she needed. Finally someone suggested that Abba Home might accept her and she joined the family of Ashraf and Wilma. She is fitting in well with the other 25 girls, has started to attend school and to trust those around her. It will be a long journey for a wounded little girl.



### Learning the meaning of love

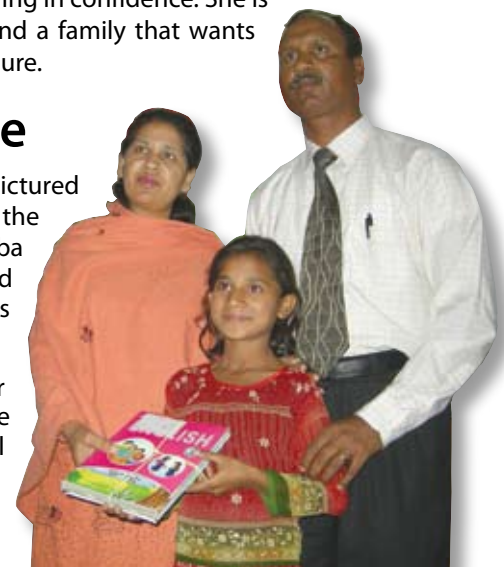
Mehwish, from a village near Sahiwal, is the newest member to join the Abba Home family. Her father died of a heart attack when she was two. Her mother married again and her new husband did not want Mehwish in his home so she was passed on to other relatives. Her aunt was an angry woman and she beat her at the slightest whim. Mehwish was helpless. Her aunt finally totally lost her mind, stripped her and threw her naked out of the house. Mehwish was eight years old. A total stranger found her in the street and brought her to Abba Home.

One month later she is still insecure and clearly struggles with many fears. The family at Abba Home accept and respect her and slowly she is growing in confidence. She is surrounded by love and a family that wants her. Mehwish has a future.

### Abba Home

Ashraf and Wilma—pictured with Sangeeta, one of the 27 girls in their 'Abba Home'—are dedicated to the rescue of girls from troubled homes.

They opened their own home to rescue children in special need and founded Abba Home in 2007 when Starfish Asia offered them support.



Shazia's step-father, mother and four sisters – two married and two still at home



## The tragic life and death of Shazia Bashir

The tragic death of 12 year-old Shazia Bashir Masih in Lahore on 21<sup>st</sup> January has given an ugly insight into some of the abuses suffered by poor Christians in Pakistan.

Shazia was born on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1997 and would have celebrated her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday this year. As any child of that age, she should have been in class 6, but her family could not afford to send her to school. She was not allowed to have a childhood.

Shazia's mother Nasreen and her step-father Bashir were deceived into believing she could earn money for the family by working for a wealthy and influential lawyer. Shazia started work for Chaudhary Muhammad Naeem on the promise of a salary of Rs.1,000 rupees a month (about £8).

She never received the salary and her family was not allowed to see her. On 21<sup>st</sup> January her dead body was delivered back to her home with a message from her employer: "By the will of God your daughter fell down the stairs and now she is dead." It is alleged that he threatened the family, warning them that they would all be imprisoned if they went to the Police.

Amazingly the family refused to be intimidated. The Press picked up the story. Naeem was arrested and is now awaiting trial. As former Chairman of the Lahore Bar Council, he is at home on bail. He is backed by the legal profession and it is very unlikely that the trial will provide any real justice.

We have seen a copy of the post mortem examination that concludes that Shazia's body had multiple wounds caused by blunt and sharp instruments. She clearly suffered a horrific and painful death. Shazia's funeral, taken by the Church of Pakistan Bishop in the Catholic Cathedral in Lahore, was attended by many Christian leaders and politicians.

**The message to them and to us is clear. The poor need our help: to save their children from the pressures of poverty, and to provide the means for them to have a future of dignity and hope. No child of Shazia's age should be forced to work or to suffer as she suffered.**

Shazia's family was not known to Starfish Asia until now. We are however in close contact with a local Christian leader who is trying to help the family, and will be looking into practical ways that we can support them and their community.

More information can be found at [www.compassdirect.org](http://www.compassdirect.org) or [www.claas.org.uk](http://www.claas.org.uk)

# Leaps of faith

At Christmas we reported a 'serious shortfall' in the budget of Kaleem Dean's CAP ministries. Kaleem has a big heart and does not know how to turn down the requests that come from the poor in his community. He is still working to meet his budgeted needs. But Kaleem is restless. In February he sent us this email.

“ In December 2008 a group of Christians from Khara in District Kasur visited us and asked us to start a school for their community. They kept on visiting us and pleading with us. In 2009, we were in a serious crisis financially and we could not help them. But in January again 15 people came to plead. Our team then visited the area. There are many brick kilns and about three hundred poor Christian families engaged in brick making. We were committed. Though we had no promise of funding, still in faith we have taken this step. We have acquired a rented building for 2,000 rupees (£16 a month) and appointed five teachers.

If for Rs.15,000 (£120) a month CAP is able to give hope to 200 children from the brick workers' community, I believe by any standards this is not bad. We would love to start more schools, maybe in Sheikhpura and Okara districts, from where we already have applications. ”

*If for £120 a month we can give hope to 200 children from the brick workers' community, by any standards this is not bad.*

## And then this:

“ It is a matter of great joy and thanksgiving that on 27<sup>th</sup> February Nagina and her team went to Khara to start the school for brick workers' children. The community is enthusiastic and concerned for the education of their children. Today it was the first day and there were 130 children

present. Muslims are also coming for admission to the school, as it is CAP's policy to promote God's love among people of all races and religions. Please keep praying for this school. ”



Some of the children at the Khara school



## The Gospel School, Bilal Town

# Building at last

The end is in sight for classes in the open air, in hot weather and cold, for the students at the Gospel School. For too long Shamshad and Rubina, who lead the school and pastor the church in Bilal Town, have crowded their students into an inadequate rented building and a plot that was waiting for a building.

Construction of a 2-storey school building has at last begun. Funding received so far will be sufficient for the ground floor with a multi-purpose hall, toilets and four classrooms. Naturally we hope to be able to continue construction of the first floor with more classrooms and facilities. About £15,000 is needed to complete the project.

## Justice delayed is justice denied

In our December newsletter we reported the murder of two innocent children in Su-e-Asal. Komal and Zeeshan were killed on 3<sup>rd</sup> October by a thief while their brother and sister were at school. Suspicion pointed to a Muslim neighbour, but no one has been charged. The grieving family is helpless.



Since this tragedy, Manzoor and his elder son have been dismissed from their job by the landlord for whom they were working as labourers. Zubeida, mother of the children, is losing her mind. She wanders around aimlessly, calling out for her dead children. The family needs all sorts of help. They have no jobs, no security and no safety. Manzoor and Zubeida allow their children to go nowhere except to the CAP school where they believe they are safe. Kaleem and his staff are concerned to help them. Any gifts sent to help them will gladly be forwarded.

## Changing lives

Anser Javed, Director of Starfish Karachi and the Holy Shepherd School, sent us this moving story about one family whose lives have been transformed.



Farzana took poison to take her life. "Why you did it?" I asked when I visited her. She said: "I realized it was impossible for our children to go to school so I decided to take my life. I can't bear my children to grow up without an education."

Farzana Shafiq is the mother of Richer and Renishta. Renishta was hurt by a stray bullet fired during a wedding, and Shafiq (her father) lost his job when he took leave to take her to the hospital. They lived in a rented house and the landlord threw them out because they could not pay the rent. They had no job and nothing to eat or wear. Richer and Renishta were overjoyed to be admitted to school on a full scholarship with free books, uniform and shoes. I got Farzana a job as a housemaid.

See the Holy Shepherd blogsite: <http://holyshepherd.wordpress.com/>

## Learning the value of schools

Phil Whittal, leader of North Shrewsbury Community Church, visited Karachi in January. This is from his blogsite.



January 28, 2010

I wish I went to a school with a name like Holy Shepherd Grammar School – or for that matter to one with its values and attitudes – only I didn't. I'm now very grateful for the education I've received and the more I visit schools in developing countries the more grateful I become. My friend Dave took me out to visit this school on the outskirts of Karachi, which is supported by Starfish Asia. It's a bit of a trek into a dusty, dirty, poor edge of the city, but oh my goodness was it worth it! I don't think it is exaggerating to say that the education offered here is changing lives.

Read the full article on Phil's blogsite: [www.thesimplepastor.co.uk/2010/01/](http://www.thesimplepastor.co.uk/2010/01/)

# A new school year opportunity & challenge

April is the start of a new school year in Pakistani schools. This means many changes in our Starfish Asia schools.

- Class 10 students are taking their Matriculation exams. More than 50 students in SA schools will be taking these exams.
- Schools open for new admissions. Inevitably there will be a rush for places and most of our schools will grow in numbers. That sometimes means adding a new class, a new teacher, another salary. Sometimes it even means finding another classroom as schools outgrow their premises. Above all however, it means more children with a future.
- April is the month for new school books. Many families find it hard to pay for books, uniforms and new shoes. We help where we can and are committed to every child having the books they need.
- In April our friend and educational consultant from AE Tuition in Slough (UK), Steve Curran, will be visiting Pakistan to advise on raising the standards for all our schools. We value his advice and your prayers.



## PLEASE CONTACT US!

### We look forward to hear from you

- Please send me the quarterly newsletter
- Please send me a **Standing Order / Gift Aid form**
- I enclose a gift of \_\_\_\_\_ for Starfish Asia
- I would like to be a Starfish Asia volunteer. Send more information
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**STARFISH  
ASIA**

giving hope to the children of Pakistan

I was walking on the beach one morning and I saw a young man picking up starfish from the sand and flinging them back into the sea. I asked why he did it.

"If I don't, they will die in the midday sun," he said.

"But there are thousands of starfish," I replied.

"What difference does it make to save 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!" he said.

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

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