



# A people in crisis

**Pakistan is a country with deep problems, its economy in collapse, prices soaring, constant power shortage, increasing poverty and daily threats from suicide bombers and street violence**

**But a catastrophe is overtaking the next generation.**

**Pakistan's population has doubled in the past 30 years to 165 million half of whom cannot read or write. Millions have no access to a school.**

**For the minorities (more than 5 million Christians and Hindus) it is even worse.**

**Government schools provide no accessible education for the poor and especially for minorities. Poor Christians must make their own arrangements.**

**Private schools are too expensive for most – and that includes the Church schools which almost all charge high fees that few Christians can afford.**

**Starfish Asia targets this crisis**



Three students at the CAP school for the children of brick kiln workers in Rasoolpura near Kasur

# Pakistan in April

Pakistan in April is delightful, the weather warm and pleasant, before the real heat of summer begins. I (Mike) spent a month visiting Starfish Asia schools, accompanied for two weeks by Steve Curran of AE Tuition, who advises us on education.

We were deeply moved once again by the commitment of our Pakistani partners who go the extra mile to help the poor. But we were equally disturbed by the injustice and violence that threatens their daily lives. I paid a distressing visit to a small town west of Lahore to meet the parents of Kiran George, an 18 year-old girl murdered in March because she converted to Islam and then dared to revert to her Christian roots.

Anser Javed, who leads the Holy Shepherd School in Karachi, sent this email in April:

"Last month at 3:30 in the night robbers came to loot the shop of a man who is my tenant and five Christian boys came out to investigate. The thieves opened fire. One boy was killed on the spot, three others were injured. I rushed them to hospital but one more was dead when we arrived ..."

## But April was also a month of GOOD NEWS

- ♦ A new school opened for Christian children at the brick kiln in Khara.
- ♦ About sixty children from Starfish Asia schools took their final Matriculation exams.
- ♦ The Miracle School purchased a new building for their school. God's grace and provision!

# The scourge of polio

**Mariam** is a student at the school for the children of brick kiln workers run by CAP in Rasoolpura near Kasur. She is 7 years old, one of the fortunate ones able to go to school.



Sadly, as a baby Mariam contracted polio and she now walks with a severe limp. UNICEF reports that polio cases in Pakistan "dropped in 2008. Regular vaccination campaigns reach 95 per cent of targeted children" but Mariam and her village were sadly among those that were missed.



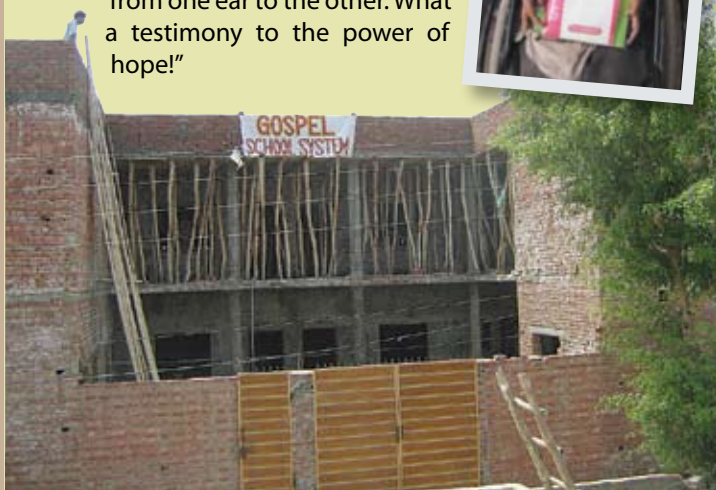
**Adnan**, who lives at the CGA Home for Special Children, was also missed out and uses a crutch to walk. Thanks to the care of Pastor Iqbal and the CGA family (supported by Starfish Asia), Adnan now studies in class 7. We have promised him a special reward when he passes his Matric exam. Adnan has a future.

Starfish Asia now supports 23 schools, giving hope to more than 5,000 children

# No more open air classes

The 300 children at the Gospel School have a home at last. As this is written there is still work to be done, but the completion of the new building is in sight, a symbol of dignity and hope for the Christian community in Bilal Town. No more need for students to study in the open air during winter cold and summer heat.

"**Shabaz**, the young boy in a wheelchair, the proudest student in his class, is excited to have a new school. He sang a solo to greet us, his smile radiating from one ear to the other. What a testimony to the power of hope!"



What does the Lord require of you?

# Do justice... love mercy

**Kanwal** is married to Tariq, Director of the Sada-e-Aman School in Sargodha that serves a Christian slum community in Noori Gate. She is the Principal of the school and often visits families with her husband. She writes:

"We met a girl in Noori Gate just 9 or 10 years old. Her mother died in an accident and her father is poor and also a drug addict. He works in the home of a wealthy landlord and is forced to send his daughter to work as a servant for only Rs.1,000 (£8 or \$12) a month. He is unable to afford either food or education for her. When we meet these kinds of families we have many questions. We dream of a way to provide more support and protection to those who are so vulnerable.

Our school is serving many needy children from poor homes. Most of them have parents who work on a low wage as sweepers. Many of them have parents who are drug addicts. Our Sada-e-Aman School gives some hope to these children that they can follow the Lord and be good citizens also."



Kanwal with her son Daniel



## Earthquake survivors

Mrs Joseph (left in the photo) works as an evangelist at the school in Hasanabdal opened by Robinson Asghar (on the right) for victims of the 2005 earthquake. On a visit in April with our educational adviser, Steve Curran, we met Mrs Joseph and she told us her story.

"I went through a very difficult time two years ago," she told us, "when my husband, who was a pastor, was killed in a terrorist attack at the Wah Ordnance factory where he also worked. But I am thankful that my Jesus is alive."

The school serves children from Hindu and Sikh families, who lost their homes in the earthquake, as well as 50 local Christians, and is supported through Starfish Asia by Global Care (Coventry UK). We were there to attend Results Day at the school, with presentations of shoe box gifts for all. The school recently moved into better and more spacious premises.



## The Jesus touch

Sajida Iqbal and her dedicated staff go the extra mile to care for their children—not only bringing them from their villages to attend school, but also visiting their homes to pray and help in practical ways. She writes:

“Most parents care little if their children fall ill. We try to provide free checkups and treatment. We took Adil, a student in grade 3, to a local hospital and he was diagnosed with TB. He has almost fully recovered and is doing very well in school. He was very excited when he was promoted to Grade 4.

Samina and Razia are two sisters from a village near Akhtarabad. Their mother passed away last year and about the same time their father had an accident while at work in the field. He is now unable to walk. Razia, the younger girl, was emotionally disturbed due to demons. Samina felt alone and very upset. We visited them to bring some comfort to the family. We shared the word of God and prayed with them. Both sisters came to Christ and are now walking with God. Samina is very active in the church. She has learned to read and write and can now read her Bible.”

Today's children, equipped with education and godly values, are tomorrow's hope

## Overcrowded

The Kingdom of Heaven School continues to thrive. Its 360 children overflow the available rented space with six rooms for 13 classes! Junior classes sit outside on the ground with little protection from the burning summer sun.

Baber Samuel, completing his MA studies, and Pastor Ernest now lead the school. We began helping to fund the school to prevent it closing in January when previous support was lost. The closure of this school would have been a tragedy for the whole community. We are still looking for supporters to help provide better facilities for the school.



The school needs £1,000 / \$1,500 a month to meet its expenses adequately.

## Improving standards

In March the Punjab Government published an order that all private schools must apply for registration or face a penalty or closure. Many private schools are not registered, as the procedure can be complicated and expensive and bureaucratic requirements are threatening.

Nevertheless it is vital that private schools endeavour to upgrade their standards to those set by local government, and we are committed to help. That commitment will be costly. We now face many legitimate requests for new equipment and furniture.

- Science lab equipment (essential for registration)
- Libraries (a requirement for High Schools)
- More and better desks, chairs and blackboards
- Increased teacher salaries for better qualified teachers
- Registration fees (a small cost)
- Water coolers (the summer heat has arrived)
- Generators (to counter the constant power cuts)

A further complication is the recent Government insistence that co-education is not acceptable after class 6. That means that schools are required to teach boys and girls separately at High School level.

*Can you help us raise the standards?*

Any extra gift towards the costs of furniture and essential equipment will be greatly appreciated at this time. Many schools manage with the most basic facilities.

# “Please come and help...”

Starfish Asia is becoming well known among Christians in Pakistan who are concerned for the future of their community. We receive appeals almost daily, such as this from a school that we know and have visited:

“You have visited our school and have seen our condition. We have no proper place for an office; we are managing in the garage. Please come and help a school which has served many, but is now threatened by new Government requirements. Our school is on the verge of destruction. Lots of the students will lose the opportunity to get an education and many teachers will become unemployed.”



The school is managed by a capable Christian who has run it without outside help for eight years. Now, due to new Government requirements, he is no longer able to make ends meet.

**My impression?** This is potentially a fine school, but with an urgent need for investment in better classroom equipment, new furniture, fans, books, higher salaries for better-qualified teachers... The list is endless. It is true of many Christian schools.

**My instinct?** If only we could help.

The children at the Sada-e-Aman School in Sargodha get excited about their new school bags and books



## Starfish Asia Volunteers

# A BIG Thank You!

Three runners are literally going the extra mile for Starfish Asia this summer

- ♦ Allan Grant completed the 53 miles of the Highland Fling on 24 April.
- ♦ Andrew Raynes completed the Edinburgh Marathon on 23 May in 4 hours 5 minutes
- ♦ Jenny Brown is doing the Great Midland Fun Run on 6 June.

All are raising funds for Starfish Asia. You can still support them at [www.justgiving.co.uk](http://www.justgiving.co.uk)



### Spring Harvest

Dave Wright (one of our Trustees) and his family were at Spring Harvest in Minehead with a Starfish Asia stand. *Did you meet them? This is Dave with his daughter Lottie.*

**Other volunteers are manning stands at Church conferences and arranging Coffee Mornings**



Could you be a Church rep to distribute Starfish Asia newsletters in your church or to members of home or prayer groups? We will gladly send you extra copies. Please also send us the addresses of friends who might like to know about the needs of Pakistan's children.

For more details, contact: [trevor@starfishasia.com](mailto:trevor@starfishasia.com)

## PLEASE CONTACT US!

### We look forward to hear from you

- I'm interested. Please tell me more about Starfish Asia
- Please send me the quarterly newsletter
- I enclose a gift of \_\_\_\_\_ for Starfish Asia

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode / Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

In UK, return the coupon to: **Freepost RRAY-KKCU-SGZC**  
Starfish Asia, 32 Beck Lane, Beckenham, Kent BR3 4RE (UK)  
or email: [mike@starfishasia.com](mailto:mike@starfishasia.com)

In USA, return to: **Starfish Asia, P.O. Box 603, Westerville, OH. 43081 (USA)**

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.

Starfish Asia is a member of the Fundraising Standards Board



## 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)**

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

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

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

Registered UK Charity No. 1099672

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