



FOC ladies and students packing relief supplies

A time to go the extra mile

“Most of the villages in that area were washed away. When we walked into the camp we saw that they had nothing left, not even blankets, bed sheets or any thing.

The ladies who gathered around Seema were weeping as they told her how the water came in the night when they were fast asleep.

‘We all ran for safety with our young children to higher places. We watched as everything was washed away by the fast running water.’ ”

Ashley Arshad and Seema, FOC Lahore

The floods that have devastated huge areas of Pakistan since August have not caused major damage to any of the schools supported by Starfish Asia, for which we thank God. However, several of our co-workers have been helping those who were affected.

The Fellowship of Christ team led by Ashley and Seema, took a truck load of urgently needed supplies to Sagirabad on the bank of river Chenab. Their son Abraham was so moved by the flood pictures on TV that he formed a group of University friends and worked with the team to distribute relief goods.



The expectant crowd gathers by the truck



Beds, bedding, flour and other foodstuff distributed

“Pakistan faces an unbelievable combination of problems. I know no other country that faces more challenges.”

US special envoy Richard Holbrooke





CAP responds to the floods

The Community Advance Programme appealed to their local community to raise funds and material to help flood victims. They established a Collection Point on the main road to collect money from passers-by.

Pictured above are Kaleem and Nagina speaking to a TV reporter in the street. Others in his team are holding collecting boxes. Kaleem has written:

"In the road campaign we raised Rs.92,000 (£700), which is very encouraging for our team. The whole day we remained on the road. After this our teams will go to factories and pharmaceutical companies to collect funds, material and medicine. Any gift will be valuable."



CAP appeal

Professor Kaleem and his team now oversee six schools and a centre for disabled children. They are providing education to 1,500 children. Starfish Asia is fully committed to this remarkable ministry.

A major donor has recently had to withdraw support from the CAP schools and Starfish Asia has launched an appeal for up to £2,000 (US\$3,000) a month to keep all their schools open. It still costs less than £5 (\$8) a month to educate a child.

We have produced a special CAP newsletter (above). You can read it on our website or contact us for a copy.

Flood and mud

Though none of the schools supported by Starfish Asia has been seriously damaged by the devastating floods, many have been affected by the heavy rains and its results.

Shamshad at the Gospel School in Bilal Town sent this news:

“ Bilal town streets are filled with mud and water. Yesterday one of our school students slipped in the mud when she was coming to school and her left arm was broken. Her name is Sumara. She is an orphan and very poor. We brought her to the hospital and will take full responsibility for her treatment. ”



Arthur wrote from the Miracle Brick Kiln School.

“ People are camping in the school. We are providing them food, medicines and clothes. The water is receding day by day, but the roofs and walls of many houses have been damaged by the rains. The people now need to build them again. Many children and people got sick. Please do pray for them. ” We sent £1,000 to provide some help.

James Qadir has written from the Light School (for brick kiln workers' children) in Sheikhpura:

“ At Easa Nagri there is much water around two sides of our school. Water entered the classrooms and the floor has been broken. Due to this there is a danger of the walls of class rooms falling down. We are looking for another building. ”

No water to drink

Tariq Iqbal and Kanwal, who run the Sada-e-Aman school in Sargodha, live about 20 miles from the Jhelum River. They drove the short distance to survey the needs, especially looking for poor Christian communities. Here is part of their report.



“ We helped the people of Districts Khushab and Shahpur. Many of them have lost their homes because of the heavy rains and flood and have no shelter or food.

We distributed food items to 50 families there. About 30 families have lost their homes and everything. They are very poor and will not be able to rebuild without help.

We wanted to help 150 families in Mianwali city. We found a child crying for drinking water and his mother was giving her spittle into his mouth. We had only three water bottles and some food, and we gave it all to her. It was very painful for us to see them. ”

What you can do to help

The floods have devastated the lives of millions of Pakistanis. The real disaster is unfolding as people return to their ruined homes.

We still believe that the poverty crisis is as serious as the flood disaster. Education for the poor is a vital way out of poverty and must remain our primary focus. We cannot divert funds from our schools for the poor. We value every gift for the 5000 children in the schools supported by Starfish Asia.

At the same time we must do more, especially for the neglected Christian families suffering from the flood. Our partner Shamshad Luka from the Gospel School visited towns to the west of Lahore. He sent many heart-rending photos that you can see on our website:

<http://www.starfishasia.com/SAFnews.htm>

Faced with so many needs, any gift for flood relief will be sent *in full* to our Starfish Asia partners to provide immediate help to needy Christian families. Larger gifts will enable them to rebuild the homes that have collapsed in the flood. Winter is coming and their situation is desperate.



A generation transformed

Anser Javed is the Director of the Holy Shepherd Grammar School, Mianwali Colony, Karachi. His wife is the Principal and they have worked in the school for nine years. This article was written by Anser.

The Police held me in the lock-up for four hours. I had been in my school office when my driver's wife came to tell me: "My husband had an accident. He needs someone to rescue him."

I left immediately to go to his help, first searching the roads and then going to the police. I was amazed to see my car outside the police station. I went straight to the officer to find out what was going on. As soon as I told him I was the owner of the car, I was grabbed and pushed into the lock-up. Whatever was going on? What did they think I had done?

Then I came to know that my car had been used in a local robbery by some Christian boys from the area. They had offered my driver 15,000 rupees to pick and drop them. They were caught red-handed in my car!

Thank God, a crowd from my area gathered and protested my innocence, and I was released. I got my car back several months later. My driver no longer works for me.



Anser and Kashi

The route out of poverty

More than 5,000 Christians live in Mianwali Colony in North Karachi. There are 16 churches just in my area. Last Christmas I was invited for programmes in several churches, and in every church I went, I was moved to see how many of the children taking part were present or past students of our School.

In the last nine years our school has served hundreds of Christian children from poor families. To date more than 70 children have completed their Matric (Secondary School) exam. We have provided small college scholarships to 50 children and helped 10 to go to technical college to gain skills as electricians, mechanics or in computing.

Many of our graduates are now working in good jobs and bringing home reasonable salaries to support their families and pay back the loans that so often trap the poor in a lifetime of debt.

Asif Yaqoob

Asif Yaqoob passed his Matric exam with a B grade. He lives with his father, who is too sick to work, two sisters and three brothers. We made it possible for Asif to stay at the school to complete his studies. Now, I look back and wonder. If Asif had dropped out of school, could he have been one of the gang that used my car to rob? All of those boys were Asif's neighbours.

Hope for their future

Sitara Boota is a former student and teacher at our school. She had no hope of getting an education, but with a scholarship for books, uniforms and exam fees she passed her exams at Holy Shepherd School. She was the most active member of the ladies' group in her church and now she is the wife of a pastor.

Robin Bisharat, who passed his Matric two years ago, received a scholarship for a 3-year Mechanic's course. He told me: "My street is considered to be the hub of local crime, where drugs are being used even by children. I was one of them. But in grade 8 you helped us understand the Bible and the importance of a good character and church and I realized that I was going wrong. I believe if the Holy Shepherd School was not here I would have become a gang leader."

Robin is now an active member of his Church youth group. He has a passion to solve the problems of Christians. I told him it could only be done by the grace of God and through enabling Christian children to study for their future.

Many such stories can be told as witness to the transforming power of the Gospel and the value of education for a lost generation. I thank the Lord for all who support the Holy Shepherd Grammar School. The seeds they have planted are transforming a Generation.



Mianwali Colony



An open door to the future

Scholarships for the deserving

August is the month for the annual Matric Exam results. The news has been excellent from the schools supported by Starfish Asia.

Lahore Christian High School: "Eleven out of 13 students have passed this year. Four students have obtained between 600 and 700 marks."

Ghuri Wisdom High School: "Our 10th class consisted of ten students. Five were girls and five were boys. Total six students, three boys and three girls have passed."

The Miracle School: "With the Grace of God we got great Matric result. From 20 children only 1 failed in 1 subject. Others are excellent."

Holy Shepherd, Karachi: "We got 100% result this year!"

We will be granting 15 scholarships to deserving students to go on to College for further studies. In addition several of these graduates plan to go into nursing. They have passed the first big hurdle towards getting a good job and taking their place in society.

Exam results

Mehwish Younis passed her Matric exams from the Lahore Christian High School with A-grade, opening the door for her future. She was one of 11 students who passed from the school.

Mehwish joined the school in 2003 in class 2. Her father is a labourer. As father of seven children he could not afford to send all his children to school. Mehwish told us that her mother is sick and unable to work. Mehwish is keen to become a nurse. If she is selected as a trainee she will receive a stipend which will help with her family expenses. She has a strong desire to enable her younger brothers and sisters also to go to school.



My lost childhood

This story of a lost childhood was written by a journalist friend of Arthur from the Miracle School. Sunaina is one of the 200 children who attend their school in the brick kiln community of Youhannabad 2.

Sunaina began life in the womb of her mother as she laboured to make bricks by hand under the hot sun. Sunaina was born into the poverty stricken life shared by her parents, her brother and her sister. Her one-room home is about the size of a jail cell. But this is not a jail cell — rooms like this are the homes of families working on the brick kilns.

"How do you feel about living here?" I ask. Sunaina is sitting on one of the woven rope beds that are jammed up against the room's mud walls.

"I think you know," she replies.

"I guess I can imagine!" I say. "But I want to hear it in your own words."

"It is worse than you could imagine."

"If you could have anything you liked," I ask, "what would it be?"

Without any hesitation she blurts out, "I would like to live in a normal house like other children and people do."

Wintry air blows through cracks in the door and through holes in the room's solitary window. Even with fresh air sweeping through, the tiny space is dank and reeks of bodies and sweat.



"Each day my whole family struggles to complete making 1,000 bricks. For 1,000 bricks we are paid 300 rupees (£2.20/\$3.50). But the owner of the brick kiln cuts 150 rupees every day because my grandfather borrowed money which my father now has to pay back."

All the time we are talking her mood seesaws from happiness to profound sadness. She loves having someone's attention, but sadly, my questions keep bringing her back to reality.



Rescuing lost children

The Miracle Schools have rescued many children from the curse of the brick kilns and the streets. It is the special passion that God has put into the hearts of Angela, Edna, Rubina and their staff — and cousin Arthur who does so much to oversee the ordered running of the schools. Sunaina is but one of the many children who might spend their lives at the kiln, labouring to make bricks by hand for a meagre living. Through the care and love of the Miracle School Ministry she has received the possibility of a future.

Sunaina looks down with tears in her eyes, but holds herself together.

**"I would just like to live!"
she says.**

**This speaks volumes.
She's just 9 years old.**

Her dark eyes are like glossy black olives. She looks up at me full of hope, yet almost indignant that I should ask such questions.

I can't see any future for her. Her life will just sink further into poverty day by day. The only protection and hope for children like Sunaina is in education.

Those who run the Miracle Schools really want to support her and are looking for people who can help them. Without help this lovely young girl will lose any potential the future could hold. She'll just drop out.

Sunaina's story is not unique. It is as common as the rocks that break free from the mountain edges here, then roll aimlessly down the steep hills — and eventually fall over the edge.

PLEASE CONTACT US!

We look forward to hear from you

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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.

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