



**STARFISH  
ASIA**

giving hope to the children of Pakistan

30 • December 2011

**News**



**The light shines in the darkness  
and the darkness has not overcome it.**



# The ugly face of absolute poverty

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.



Sanwal Masih is the eleven year-old son of a poor family near Faisalabad. With his two brothers and three sisters he lives and works at a brick kiln. In early August Sanwal was trapped by two men who assaulted and attempted to abuse him. Sanwal resisted and, as a result, he was doused in methylated spirits and set alight. He suffered 30% burns.

The poor have few defences against this kind of exploitation. A friend of Starfish Asia, Khalid, met the family and through him we were able to provide some financial help for his hospital expenses. Valuable as this is, it is small defence against further suffering. Sanwal and his siblings should not be working at a brick kiln — they should be in school, preparing for a life of dignity and respect.

## Waseem

Waseem, aged 19, is disabled but determined. His mother is a domestic cleaner and could not afford his school fees. Nevertheless he passed his exams from a Technical Training Institute and got a job as a mobile phone mechanic in a repair shop. Tragically his boss took advantage of him and his wages were very low, so Waseem threatened to leave.

Waseem is a Christian, physically disabled but a hard worker, and his boss did not wish to lose his cheap labour. He accused Waseem of stealing 20,000 rupees, hoping to threaten him to keep working for him. Waseem left but lost all his equipment and means of support. His wheel chair is broken and he cannot afford the cost of repair. Khalid is working to help this young man open his own mobile shop so he can support himself.



## Light of the world

The front cover photo was taken by Arthur Joseph on 1<sup>st</sup> December at the Advent service for the children of the Miracle School in Lahore

# The scourge of Dengue fever



In September Pakistan's Punjab Province was in the grip of a terrible mosquito-borne disease, Dengue fever. Over a period of about two months, many hundreds fell sick and more than 300 people died — no one knows the exact figure. Schools were closed for two weeks due to the disease.

Many of the staff and children of schools supported by Starfish Asia were affected by Dengue fever. Ashley and Seema from the Fellowship of Christ were both very ill for two weeks.

On 16<sup>th</sup> September Shamshad Luka, who runs the Gospel School in Bilal Town, wrote:

*"Yesterday one of our school students died from dengue fever. He was in Grade 5 and lots of children are on the bed because of this fever. People cannot afford medicine. Please pray for my poor nation."*

Angela from the Miracle School wrote in mid-October:

*"The main treatment is apple juice with lemon and high protein food, milk, apples and fruits full of iron and protein. We are providing them all of these food supplements every day. Five children from the brick kiln school were sick; they recovered but they are still very weak. Other sick children are in their homes. We are also giving spray and lotion to protect people against mosquitoes."*



With the onset of colder weather the mosquitoes have died and the fever has subsided.

# Azra Bibi and the Gospel Care Centre

Shamshad Luka and Rubina opened their home to a group of severely disabled children from very poor homes. Rubina cooks and cares for the children. Shamshad has a small car and takes the boys to and from the school each day. The Home is supported through Starfish Asia. Shamshad recently sent this story:

*"Azra Bibi is very poor. Her husband died two months ago from kidney problems. She fought hard and spent all her money to get good treatment for him but in vain. He died and left four children, who now wander all day from home to home to find food."*

*"One day she visited our Gospel Care Centre and asked us to take her two younger sons to provide shelter, food and education. We also visited her family and felt her need. We brought her two orphaned sons into our Home and gave her some relief in this difficult time. Now is the time to help these children and build their lives again. Their names are Suneel and Nabeel Botta. We are now caring for ten children in the Gospel Care Centre."*



# November 2011

## Trevor's report

In November Trevor spent three weeks visiting most of the Starfish Asia projects in Pakistan. We only have space for a few of his comments.

### Ghuri Wisdom High School

Mr Ghauri is a retired principal of a Government School—enterprising, independently minded and full of surprises. He delighted to put on a colourful welcome in spite of my protests. I was greeted by a band, flowers and graceful dancing girls.



A few years ago the school had few children. Today there are two Government registered High Schools, for boys and for girls, with 450 registered students, and the Girls High School has affiliation which is a step beyond registration. Mr Ghauri proudly showed me all three certificates. 18 out of 22 students passed Matric this year and we currently support 18 of his former pupils with scholarships.

### Kingdom of Heaven School, Lahore

Baber and Pastor Ernest lead this school on the edge of Lahore. They are doing a fine job along with the staff. With 450 students, it is now registered as a Boys High School and 9 out of 9 passed their Matric exam this year. Last year Baber rented the building next door to deal with overcrowded classroom space, but already the rooms are full and two classes sit outdoors. He is checking with the landlord regarding options in relation to building more rooms with a view to a rent reduction.



### Life Transforming Centre, Akhtarabad

Sajida Iqbal, a single woman with compassion and ability and enterprise, runs this school that serves 100 children from several villages. The expense to run and maintain the pick-and-drop vehicles is considerable. Sajida raised funds to buy a Minibus, which can comfortably seat 30, but is now thinking that it would be better stewardship to open another school in Renala Khurd, from which 50 children are transported the 11 kilometers each day by school vehicle.

There are hundreds of Christian families in Renala Khurd and the school would likely quickly grow. Sajida owns land in Renala Khurd and the money saved from the Minibus could cover the launch of a new school.



## Holy Shepherd School Commended

In November, the Holy Shepherd School in Karachi received a visit from a group of teachers from the Aga Khan University. Ms Fatima Obaid wrote this letter to Anser after the visit:



Mr. Anser, what I am writing here is what I wanted to share today in school but time did not permit.

A school is recognized by the way the school community behaves and interacts with each other and with other people. On entering the school premises we were greeted very warmly first by a group of girls who were sitting under the shade next to the gate. They all got up and came forward to greet us. As we moved towards the school building a group of smartly dressed boys greeted us. For me this welcoming gesture did it all. It also conveyed the kind of values that are imparted in the students.

It was the teachers' group that we were working with. And yes, the teachers too, reflected the same composure and attitude of compassion as yourself. What was more important for our group was that they were all eager to learn something new. They were confident as they were sharing their teaching experiences with us and involved in the workshop.

It was a pleasure to be in your school and the two hours and 15 minutes that we were in your school seemed like two minutes. This happens when people are having fun or are totally engaged in an activity. Hearing you speak about your challenges and success stories was an experience in itself. The work you are doing is commendable and only people with great strength can carry on the way you are continuing to bring about a positive difference in the society.

I want to thank you on behalf of my colleagues on giving us this opportunity to work with your teachers.



**NEW PROJECT** ★

## Mother Nest Lahore

Tina Mateen and her family have been running a day centre for children with special needs for several years. We have provided occasional gifts but were not in a position to give regular support.

Tina gained valuable experience working at another Christian institution for 14 years before opening her own School in Lahore.

With her compassion and ability, Tina relates well to these special children. She runs daily classes and activities, ably assisted by her daughter, Wafa (who is also a student) her husband (with another job) and three teachers. They care for 35 children with a variety of physical and mental disabilities. Starfish Asia has agreed to provide a regular sum to cover the costs of the building rent and to improve the staff salaries.



Mateen, Tina and their daughter Wafa

## The launch of Starfish Asia (Singapore) Ltd.



Geraldine Lee, Representative of Starfish Asia (Singapore) together with Board member Keok Ee and his wife Winnie.

*Below:* Angela Michael of the Miracle School speaks at the launch meeting.

Starfish Asia was officially registered and launched in Singapore in September. We are thankful to Geraldine Lee who will run the Company to "promote and provide relief of poverty, sickness and distress and the advancement of education and welfare amongst the deprived and neglected and, in particular, children from poor families."



If you are in Singapore, please contact Geraldine at [geraldine@starfishasia.com](mailto:geraldine@starfishasia.com)

## Thank you, Singapore!

Kaleem Dean oversees five schools supported by Starfish Asia. He has been deeply troubled by the difficulty his teachers were facing to get to a school in a semi-rural area outside Lahore. They sometimes travelled with the milk van and one day only three teachers managed to get to the school — the whole project was under threat. Thank God, through generous supporters from Singapore (and from a UK charity Bringing Good News), Kaleem now has the money and is purchasing a Suzuki Bolan van. The teachers will get their transport. The school is safe.



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### We look forward to hear from you

- I'm interested. Please tell me more about Starfish Asia
- Please send me the regular Newsletter
- I enclose a gift of £ / US\$ / S\$ \_\_\_\_\_ for Starfish Asia

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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*In UK, return the coupon to:* **Freeport 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)

*In Singapore, return to:* Starfish Asia, Blk. 3, #07-280, Ghim Moh Road, Singapore 270003

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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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