



**STARFISH  
ASIA**

giving hope to the children of Pakistan

40 ♦ June 2014

**News**



**"The World Bank tells us that the education of women is one of the most important investments a society can make, yet we know from UNESCO that in Pakistan three-quarters of girls are not in school. Two thirds of the out-of-school children in our country are female."**

<http://www.alifailaan.pk>

**The face of hope**

## Hope fulfilled

This month we have made a commitment to two new projects in Pakistan. We felt in both cases that we could not continue to refuse their urgent appeals for help.

### The Agape Home

Farzana was a member of staff at the Mercy Mission, which provided for the care of about 25 disabled children through a day school in Youhannabad, Lahore. Sadly the school closed in 2011. We have helped Farzana to gain extra training in the care of young people with special needs. She and her husband are now looking for a house to rent and will open the Agape Home soon — a refuge for some of the most vulnerable and needy members of their community.



### New Life Christian School

Mehtab and his whole family live in a village close to Sahiwal. Eight years ago they turned their own home into a school. Unable to develop, expand or pay reasonable salaries, they have pleaded with us for some time to help them, especially to enable more Christian children to attend. We have begun to provide a small monthly grant to help them.



## Consider this

Based in Islamabad, Alif Ailaan works to highlight critical issues in education. They report that half the population of Pakistan is under the age of 22. And yet:

- ❖ Fewer than half of Pakistani children ever complete a basic, primary school education, so over half enter adult, working life unable to read and write properly.
- ❖ Three out of every four Pakistani children lack basic mathematics skills.
- ❖ Pakistan ranks in the bottom eight countries in the world for its education spend. India spends over 4% of national income on education. Pakistan spends less than 2%.

### What is Alif Ailaan?



Alif Ailaan was founded to bring together and empower all those Pakistanis who want to respond to the country's education emergency. Starfish Pakistan is in contact with them and endorses their programme.

See their website:  
<http://www.alifailaan.pk>

## Committed to the future

The education of girls in Pakistan is in crisis. Religious extremists are dedicated to preventing women from being educated.

In 26 months (2011-2012) the Pakistan Taliban blew up 198 schools, mainly for girls. "We target schools because they are an infidel system of education," said a spokesman.\*

Starfish Asia is committed to giving hope and a future to girls from poor families. Apart from any other consideration, it is often the girls who show the greatest promise and gain the best results in exams.

\* <http://jinnah-institute.org/>



**In Pakistan only 54% of girls are enrolled in primary school, which drops to 30% for secondary school.**

European Parliamentary Research Service  
<http://epthinktank.eu>

**"Our girls cry all the time because they want to continue their education, but there is no secondary school in the area, and it is not safe to travel long distances."**

Research report from Oxford University  
<http://www.eldis.org>

## This too is the face of hope

In 2013 Starfish Asia provided more than £12,000 (US\$19,000 / S\$25,000) for scholarships for young men and women for higher studies. That is about £1,000 a month (US\$1,600 / S\$2,000).

We are barely scratching the surface of opportunity and need. We believe that the Matriculation exam in Class 10 is a doorway and not a destination. Young Christians with ability and ambition need to go further — and it becomes costly, especially for Christian families with minimal incomes.

Yet we believe that Christians must be given all possible help to take their place in Pakistan's future.



Shania Asher has now completed her MPhil from the prestigious National Defence University in Islamabad, helped by a grant from Starfish Pakistan. She is currently teaching but dreaming of beginning her PhD studies. Her brother Shervon qualified with a degree in Business Administration, also helped by a grant. He has a good marketing job with Happilac paints.



Mehek Mushtaq lost her father due to a brain hemorrhage. His death awoke in her the desire to become a doctor. Her mother earns a small wage as a domestic maid. Mehek gained a coveted place on merit in a Government Medical College. The Starfish Asia scholarship will cover her fees until she qualifies.

## To enable Pakistan's young Christians to fulfil their dreams

In August the results of this year's Matric exams will be announced. 150 young men and women from schools supported by Starfish Asia will graduate. Many will ask us to help them pursue higher studies. Some will study for Intermediate exams. Others will take skills training.

**Please help us to give Scholarships to these young people**





## Introducing Ian and Fiona

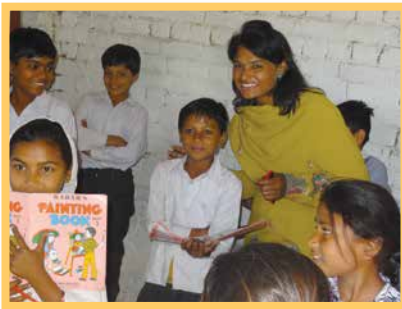
We have looked and prayed for a long time for co-workers to work with us. We have looked forward to being joined by someone who could help carry the increasing load, with a view to taking Starfish Asia on into the future.

Ian and Fiona Anderson both have many years of experience in teaching in South America, South Africa and in England. Ian was born in Pakistan and spent the first 12 years of his life in Punjab. They will join Starfish Asia (UK) in September.

### Vision and Commitment ... a common thread

**Ian and Fiona spent six days in Pakistan during their Easter holiday. It was time enough for them to meet Anser and Kashi and visit 15 schools. The first, we trust, of many visits to come. Here are Fiona's impressions.**

“ Our stay in Pakistan was six intense days brimming with impressions. For Ian it was a return after more than 40 years. For me it was a first. We visited many of the projects that Starfish supports in and around Lahore, some of which will already be familiar to readers of this newsletter. To pick out individual schools or homes seems unfair when we were greeted with such warmth everywhere we went. Nonetheless let me mention a few whose pictures remain vividly in my mind.



#### United School, Mangoki Virkan

Tucked down a dusty alley hides Samreen's school, with simple classrooms of whitewashed brick and family rooms fringing a small courtyard. Samreen has a smile and a sharp mind which would no doubt earn her a prestigious job in the city. But her heart is for the children of the brick kiln community which her school serves.

She and her whole family are caught up in this work, dedicated to improving prospects and bringing hope to the children who cluster on mats with books poised, ready to learn. Her commitment is inspirational, and the enthusiasm of her team of teachers infectious.



#### Dar-ul-Hikmat, Rak Dera Chahal

Vision and commitment to service was a common thread linking people in all the projects we saw, even if each school had a distinctive character. RDC School has the benefit of furnished airy classrooms enclosing an attractive quad. Ruth, the Principal, has a stack of books of lesson plans to greet us together with chai and biscuits. There is a lively

buzz of activity coming from the nearby classrooms, as she talks through the school's present situation with warmth and efficiency.

#### The HERF Girls Home, Lahore

There are thirteen girls to greet us at the HERF home. Recently displaced from their former home, they are currently crammed in temporary accommodation of just three rooms. Yet their spirits seem undiminished. They greet us with songs and flower petals. They giggle together, and excitedly compare the contents of shoeboxes of gifts which have just arrived.

Thanks to the caring hearts of Mr and Mrs Javid Akhtar, this feels more like an extended family home than an orphanage.



#### In conclusion...

To be effective charities must be professional in their dealings with donors, resources and projects. Yet there is a risk that professionalism can squeeze out the personal.

In Starfish's small team there is a blend of skills and personalities which maintains a balance between those two.

There is commitment to sustained support of visionary project leaders; a determination to ensure that resources are used wisely; a desire to pursue high standards in terms of educational achievement and financial management; and, above all, a compassionate concern to show God's love for the children whom ultimately the charity exists to serve. We very much look forward to being part of that team. ”





# Raising the standards

Starfish Pakistan is working in partnership with Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA), a national initiative for the promotion of education. See <http://www.itacec.org/>



In November teams from ITA visited five schools supported by Starfish Asia to make a professional and objective assessment of their standards and facilities. The reports provided by ITA have been a valuable tool both for us and the school administration. ITA teams are now doing further assessments of 14 more schools. Ten more will be done later in the year.

## Palwisha's story

Palwisha lives in a village near Gujranwala. Two years ago her father died from a heart attack. After just one month her mother married again and no longer wanted Palwisha to stay with her. She and her brother had to move in with their old grandmother.

Life was hard for the family, but Palwisha has one hope. She attends the Shine School, a Christian primary school run by a young man with a vision and a love for his community.

We are not yet able to help the Shine School regularly but Starfish Pakistan had some extra funds for books and was able to provide free books to the children.



Pictures taken at the Friends Public School in Rasoolpura near Kasur. The ITA team give a written test to the children to gauge the level of comprehension — and also to the teachers to assess their abilities.

## Power for the powerless

Pakistan's shortage of gas and electricity once again becomes critical with the approach of the summer heat. Pakistan still faces a critical power shortage and the electricity goes off for about half the day — longer in rural areas.

Thanks to a significant gift from Singapore, the orphan girls of Abba Home will have fans and lights throughout the summer, due to new solar panels now installed on their roof.

There is no likelihood of any improvement in the power crisis in the near future. We have also recently provided two generators, two Uninterrupted Power Supply systems and solar panels for one more school.



Palwisha's grandmother was very touched. She said:

**"Our God is so loving and He doesn't want to see us alone."**

## Banana Day

The Shine School recently held a 'Banana Day' at the school. Even the staff dressed up as bananas. It is clearly a happy place to study.



## Tell us you care!

- Yes, tell me more about schools and communities that need my help. Send me more information.
- I enclose a gift of £ / \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for Starfish Asia

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal code / Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

In USA, return to: Starfish Asia, 3230 Seagraves Mill Road, Hull, GA. 30646

In Singapore, contact: Starfish Asia (Singapore) Ltd.  
887C Woodlands Dr. 50, #12-611, Singapore 733887

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### UK donors only, Please Note:

While we guarantee that donations to specific projects will go in full to the nominated project, any tax recovered under the Gift Aid scheme will be used at the Trustees' discretion.

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

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