



What difference does it make?

I was walking on the beach one morning and I saw a young man picking up starfish and flinging them back into the sea. I asked him 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 he was holding in his hand and flung it to safety in the waves. "It makes a big difference to this one!" he said.



The boy on the beach throwing starfish back into the sea was challenged by the implication "You're not making a difference". There have been many times in my life that I too have questioned whether my prayers and actions are having any impact. These children (above) from **The Shine Education School** recently joined together with other schools, leaders and teachers in a special day of prayer for Starfish Asia. They may wonder if it makes a difference, but they demonstrate that prayer is the necessary first step to true and helpful action.

In this issue we wanted to share with you some snapshots of the tangible difference your prayer and support is making. Even small acts of kindness and provision can create monumental change for children, families and communities in Pakistan. Thank you for your continued support, which allows us to keep going, rescuing one "starfish" at a time. - **Rob Bavington, CEO**

A Special Mention

by Devin Scobie, UK Chairman

Starfish Asia was founded by the inspirational vision of Mike and Kerstin Wakely 2003. Together, they have worked tirelessly to build up a charity which supports a network of schools across Pakistan, providing daily education for 10,000 Christian children.

"After more than 20 years as a Trustee, Mike's term ended in February. Although his contagious love and passion for poor Christian communities continues, he will no longer bear the responsibility that comes with being a charity trustee. He has more than earned a breather.

As Chair for the past five years, I have been enormously proud and privileged to have worked with Mike. He has opened my heart and mind to a part of the world I barely knew, and helped me grow in faith, knowledge and tolerance in many ways.

There will be an opportunity for proper thanks in due course but personally, and on behalf of the UK Trustees, we thank him, and Kerstin, for their service. We are privileged to carry on the work they started."



"So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless." - 1 Corinthians 15:58

A heartfelt Thank You

I've been very touched by the amazing and generous response to our recent update, and subsequent day of prayer and fasting. As a board, we were challenged to pray for £60,000 to come in February, and we've received £66,000! Thanks to your support, the immediate crisis has receded (although we still face financial challenges) and we look to the future with hope.



Transforming the Individual

Aziqa's Story – New Life School, Bahawalpur

Aziqa moved to Mustafa Town with her parents and 4 siblings, and joined New Life School at 9yrs old. It is a mixed area where Muslims and Christians live side by side. Her father is a labourer, and mother a housewife.

She says: *"The area has many social problems and a number of fathers waste their earnings on drink or drugs"* This exasperates the already high levels of poverty so many children either don't bother with school, or have to drop out early to work or care for younger siblings.

Aziqa chose New Life school as it was close to home and run by Christians. The only alternatives were either too expensive, or government schools where Christians can often be treated badly.

Principal Sumera agreed to waive even the small fees for Aziqa so she was able to keep studying until year 10 (matric). After this she continued her studies, and then took a vocational course to become a beautician. She returned to the school as a teacher for the younger year groups.

Today (age 20) Aziqa still teaches but has also started her own beauty salon, which

she runs from the family home. With this income she more than doubles her teacher's salary.

"My dream is to open a larger salon, however the costs are prohibitive"



What difference does it make?

Aziqa's education has transformed her life, making her financially independent and able to contribute to the family. Sumera is certain that, without the free education, Aziqa would have ended up as another one of thousands of illiterate young ladies. *"She learned a skill and now she is an independent young woman"*

Transforming the Classroom

Training... equipping... advising... encouraging...



Training is essential for all our teachers, including the Heads and Principals. Following on from some highly successful English courses last March, a need was spotted for follow-ups focused on dealing with difficult conversations, especially in English. Working with Zimran Wasti (Planning and Development Coordinator) our UK Chairman Devin Scobie developed a

new course, which was delivered in late November. New board member Nigel Paterson was supporting. Through theory, practice and a number of tailored 'role play' exercises, the three groups grew quickly in confidence and ability. Urdu was banned in the training room, even over lunch, so the English-only rule helped the days flow remarkably smoothly.

The overall result was three packed days, a lot of laughs and over 40 senior Christian school staff - and five from the Starfish Pakistan office - empowered to face their daily challenges with increased confidence and knowledge.

Activity-based Learning

As part of his time at the **Tahir Model School**, Mr. Karamat (Academic Advisor for Starfish Pakistan) demonstrated that you don't always need expensive equipment to be able to teach effectively. Teachers were encouraged to be creative and use simple materials such as chalk (above) and clay (below) to help make learning more fun.



What difference does it make?

Helping to inspire teachers and pupils is key to raising standards. Training builds skills, encouragement builds confidence and quality materials help give the best chance of an education that will break the cycle of poverty.

Quality Materials: Appeal for Schoolbooks



Textbooks are a vital resource for pupils. But after a year of use, in dusty conditions and without proper bags, they can't be used again. As most families cannot afford them, Starfish is committed to providing a fresh set of books for EVERY student when the new academic year begins in April.

A set of five books: £4 / \$5
Books for 10,000 children:
£40,000 / \$50,000



<https://donorbox.org/schoolbooks>



Transforming the Community

Waheedabad Christian Middle School, Khanewal

In the heart of the village officially named Chak 174, but known as Waheedabad, lies the Christian Middle School, opened by Walter Waheed in 2008 to serve the children of the village, both Christian and Muslim, who were deprived of education. Walter's brother and family moved into a single room and opened the rest of his property to make space for the students. Over time, this building has deteriorated, with crumbling walls and an unsafe roof, resulting in Children being taught outside with just the shelter of the trees from the blistering heat. Conditions were so poor that the building certificate required to complete the annual registration as a school was not granted. Thanks to some generous donors and grants, Starfish have been able to start work on the construction of a completely new building, with work progressing at pace and due to be completed in August 2025. We spoke to the Principal, Anees (above left), and some local parents (below) and asked them about the new building and their hopes and dreams for the future.



Waheedabad School as it was (above) and an impression of how it will look (below)



Local parents with school principal Anees (centre)

What is life like in Waheedabad?

Most of the adults are illiterate, or with only basic reading and writing skills. They have not attended school for more than a few years. As a result, the only work they can do involves hard, physical labour in the surrounding fields or in the nearby town. Once the daily necessities are paid for, there is little or no money for school fees, uniforms and equipment.

What difference does the school make to the community?

One parent said "without the school it is unlikely that any of my children would have progressed as far as they have" He has four children, all of whom are now in Karachi with good jobs, including nursing. Another said "Without a school, my children would be forced to live the same kind of hard life that I had growing up, and none of us want that for our children." They also appreciated that this school, although it has children from both communities, was able to teach the bible and help foster religious tolerance.

The school currently has 137 children with a further 20 who could be at the school completing matriculation.

"We don't want them to live the life we have lived. We want them to go further..."



How will the new school building make a difference?

The parents are amazed at the standard of the building work so far. "We have never seen such a building in our village! A purpose-built school will be a much more comfortable learning environment, and more suited to the needs of the children"

Many hope it will be expanded to include matric (high school) classes so children can continue their education locally. The nearest school is 10km away, and with no public transport the journey would have to be made on foot or in expensive hired vehicles. This makes further education much less accessible, especially for girls. The current school only goes up to class 8, and so after that most children stop learning and go back home to help their parents at home or in their work.



Zor Engineers are working hard to construct the new building.

What difference does it make?

Those students who have gone on to get jobs send money back to their families, enabling them to improve their living standards, often by making improvements to housing.

The new school building is expected to provide stability, quality learning, and better opportunities, particularly for girls and underprivileged children.

Transforming a Generation

“Studies from the world bank show that just one year of primary school can result in an income boost of 10-20% for women later in life...” ‘Stones To Schools’ by Greg Mortenson

We’ve shared with you a few snapshots of the work, but in reality these stories could be multiplied thousands of times across Pakistan.

Our commitment is to keep on supporting our current projects, some of which are listed below, yet the vision is to help even more.



Right Way School, Kalokey, Sheikhpura

After getting her degree Naseeb felt called to open a school for Christian children in her rural village. She appointed a teacher and paid her a small salary from her own pocket money. With Starfish Asia support the school has grown from 25 to 110 pupils and now has a nice new building.

Monthly cost: **£350**



Agape Home, Youhannabad, Lahore

Farzana has worked with children with learning and physical difficulties for over 15 years. When the school she worked at had to close, she felt a calling to set up her own provision for these children. This day centre provides developmental opportunities for 25 children where each one is encouraged to develop to their full potential.

Monthly cost: **£610**



Adam School, Narang Mandi

Daud and Sosan, having teaching experience and a passion to help their community, opened a small school for 50 children in a semi-rural location outside Lahore. Starfish Asia began supporting this High school in 2011, which operates from a rented building and provides education from Kindergarten all the way up to Matriculation.

Monthly cost: **£675**



St. Paul's School, Stuntzabad, Mian Channu

Founded by a baptist worker, St. Pauls compound and buildings had fallen in to disrepair. In 2018 Starfish started working with leader Shamaun to restore the classrooms. Today the school provides quality education for 225 Christian students, a beacon in a challenging community.

Monthly cost: **£900**

All our schools and projects rely on regular income to cover the ongoing running costs and teachers' salaries. Could you help?



The
Great Starfish Trail
24th May - 7th June 2025

Save
the
date!

“Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God.” - Proverbs 14:31

Starfish supporter Ruth Coleman suggested the theme for this year's challenge: **14:31**

This is roughly the time it takes to drive from Lahore to Karachi. Ruth has already committed to walking for **14hrs** and **31mins** as part of a sponsored London to Brighton Walk.

Would you like to join us over the fortnight?

Ideas for getting involved

- Run / Jog / Walk for 14mins 31secs each day
- Walk/Run a total of 14hrs 31mins in 2 weeks
- Host a fundraising event

More details to follow - please get in touch if you'd like to take part - liz@starfishasia.com

Changing Destinies

Changing Destinies is our latest **Case for Support**. It outlines the urgent issues we are concerned with and our ambitious targets for the coming years. If you'd like a copy or a few to share, please email: liz@starfishasia.com



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- ☐ I enclose a gift of £ / \$ _____ for Starfish Asia.

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www.starfishasia.com



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.

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