



## Equipping People for Meaningful Change

*“If you always do what you’ve always done,  
you’ll always get what you’ve always got.” - Henry Ford*

In the dusty brick kilns of Sheikhpura stands Evangeline (*far left*). She is a young school leader serving impoverished children of bonded labourers from her community. She is one of hundreds of educators at work each day in Starfish supported schools. Each is doing their part to enable Christian children to break the cycle of poverty and grow in their faith - through education in a Christian environment.

We are blessed to be working alongside such project leaders. They have a clear calling and vision, determination and passion. These are people with strong faith and genuine compassion, seeing first-hand the pain of illiteracy and minimal education. Many set out with miniscule resources to offer **something** - often starting in their own home. Your support enables the development of leaders who hold responsibility to educate the next generation.

This edition of Starfish News looks at both the necessity and impact of regular professional and spiritual development. From child protection to theology, from better classroom teaching to budgeting, from school management to curriculum standards and from leadership development to community engagement - this ongoing work enables schools to grow in the impact they make, within the toughest of local situations.

Proverbs 4:7 says: *“Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.”* Scripture consistently shows that God not only calls people (often of lowly beginnings) but equips them. Moses learned to delegate, Timothy learned the scriptures as a child, Jesus taught his disciples. Leaders are developed, not born fully formed. When passion is guided by understanding, and vision strengthened by capacity, transformation is no longer temporary—it becomes generational, and this is what we long to see for marginalised families.

### *Inside you’ll find...*

- ★ The first externally accredited online leadership training successfully passed by over 30 school leaders.
- ★ Greater access to regular theological and spiritual training for teachers.
- ★ A message from the retiring Chair of the UK Board on overcoming challenges and deepening impact.
- ★ The Big Give boosts scholarships enabling more Christians to reach their potential.



## What is 'Capacity Building' in Education?

Capacity building is a simple recognition that the quality of school facilities, leadership and teaching significantly influences the release of a child's potential. Through Starfish Pakistan and our network of 44 Christian Schools, we focus on six key areas:



Your support is strengthening local schools, building capacity and helping change the destinies of Pakistan's Christian children. **Thank you.**



## The Gift of BOOKS

Each year, Starfish Asia commits to providing brand-new schoolbooks for over 10,000 Christian students — and the need is real. For many children from poor families, books don't survive beyond a full school year when there may be no desk, no school bag, and sometimes not even a secure roof overhead. New textbooks are a necessity, but they are also about **equality**: in an environment where Christians face discrimination, these books give students the same chance as their Muslim peers to learn, progress, and succeed. Each set is a direct investment in their future and includes the essential subjects, along with a Bible-based curriculum to encourage them in their faith.

**Donate now to transform a child's education.**

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

Scan to Donate!



<https://donorbox.org/schoolbook>

## Growing Stronger School Leaders

In January, during the school break, 32 school leaders completed an intensive leadership course delivered online by **The Citizens Foundation (TCF)**, a highly respected charity running over 2,000 schools across Pakistan. Over three weekends, participants undertook six courses and 12 two-hour sessions, alongside quizzes, classroom observations, assignments and data collection.

Caroline White, Head of Training at Starfish Pakistan, describes the course as relevant, rich and practical. *"Participants overcame significant barriers — online assignment submission, freezing 6°C temperatures without heating, and even an 18-hour power cut that left Evangeline's battery at just 2%. Yet every leader completed the course and submitted assignments on time — many paying their own fees."* This is capacity building in action: resilient, committed leaders transforming their schools from within.



### A Young Leader Finding Her Voice

**Evangeline**, aged 21, is studying for a BSc in Applied Linguistics while serving as both teacher and Vice Principal of the Light School (Sheikhupura), which educates children of bonded labourers in a Christian brick kiln community. *"Self-awareness was one area we studied,"* she explains. *"I realised I can be emotionally unavailable and need to be more encouraging and appreciative."* She is now applying a simple framework — Praise, Prompt, Plan — and using a focused 90-day plan to implement realistic, manageable change. *"The key is keeping it simple and achievable, so it's not overwhelming."* Her growth is especially significant as a young female leader. Many girls in her school now see her as a role model — and parents express their desire for their daughters to become like her.



### Using Data to Target Teaching



**Mehtab**, who founded the New Life Christian Middle School 18 years ago, is a School Principal, pastor and B.Ed. student supported by a Starfish Scholarship. *"After the course, I began collecting and analysing student data more systematically. When many pupils had not completed holiday assignments ahead of annual exams, I introduced internal tests to identify learning gaps and target teaching where it was most needed."*



While he admits he is "still in progress," he is also intentionally practicing assertive leadership in conversations with staff, parents, and students. He believes this approach helps leaders truly understand challenges and guide others toward solutions.

*"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ..."* Ephesians 4:11-12 (ESV)

# Rooted in Faith

Capacity building is not only about skills and systems — it is also about the heart. At Starfish Pakistan, strengthening spiritual capacity is central to nurturing confident, resilient Christian communities.

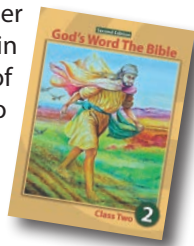


Rafaqat is passionate about his new role leading spiritual development across our 44 schools. Two key foundations shape this work: the Bible Curriculum for students and the Open Theological Seminary (OTS) for teachers. Reflecting on his own childhood at the Kingdom of Heaven School, which was fully Christian, Rafaqat shares:

*"Each morning we had devotions, songs and a short sermon.*

*On Saturdays we learned Bible stories and songs. My teachers' relationship with the Lord shone out through their character."*

There is no substitute for learning in the environment of your own faith — free to express it without fear. Yet such grounding must also prepare young people to face discrimination, tough questions, and opposition in the wider world with courage and grace. The Bible Curriculum, included in the textbooks we provide, ensures children learn the essentials of their faith within school. But spiritual growth must also extend to teachers. That is where the Open Theological Seminary makes a lasting difference. With four levels — Discipleship, Certificate, Diploma and Degree — OTS is delivered weekly, in person, after school, creating space for discussion, questions and deeper understanding.



*"OTS overcomes barriers of time and cost,"* Rafaqat explains. *"It strengthens teachers' personal faith, enriches their delivery of the Bible Curriculum and equips them for wider ministry within their local churches."*

As both a Starfish leader and a church pastor, Rafaqat's vision is clear: **A secure Christian teacher, grounded in Scripture and alive in faith, creates a thriving environment where children can grow, spiritually and academically.**



**Christians need both knowledge and a Christ-like character.**

## A Word of Thanks and Hope

Devin Scobie, Chair of the UK Board



Devin (right) with Hina, Chair of the Pakistan Board.

Each year I write to thank you for your faithful support and to remind you that every gift - large or small - matters deeply to Starfish Asia. After nine years on the board, the last six as Chair, I will be stepping down as Chair around Easter. Serving has been a profound privilege.

Pakistan is a country of striking contrasts - concentrated wealth alongside widespread deep poverty. Most Starfish network schools serve communities where clean running water and good sanitation are not guaranteed. Life as a Christian in a strongly Muslim country is tough. And yet, I have more often been moved to happy tears than sad ones.

As a charity we have weathered a global pandemic, financial uncertainty, leadership changes, and the sad passing of some dear supporters. Through it all, your generosity has remained a constant. Technology is gradually improving finance, administration and learning at Starfish Pakistan - making school support more effective and secure.

The greatest inspiration of my time as Chair has been seeing young Christians 4,000 miles away given an opportunity millions only dream of - a safe and grounded Christian education. The potential to change lives is real. 10,000 children in 44 Christian communities now have the chance to learn - a chance denied to millions more. My prayer is that this opens the door to better work and brighter futures for every child that really changes the destinies of both the Christians of Pakistan - and the nation. Thank you for walking this journey together with us - your support through gifts and prayer makes it possible. God bless.

## Together as a Team

Starfish Pakistan is entering a new season as they reorganise existing staff and team structure to strengthen impact. As needs increase, we have prayerfully reviewed how we operate to ensure we can respond more effectively. This reorganisation is not about expansion, but effectiveness. Working with Danishmand and Jasmine to clarify roles and improve accountability, we are equipping our team to serve with greater focus and efficiency. Do pray for those (right) who are taking on new responsibilities.



Majid  
Office Manager



Zimran will now be overseeing the Scholarships Programme



Rafaqat has taken over from Walter to oversee Spiritual Development



Caroline  
Head of Training





## Let the Children Rejoice

Praise God that schools were able to celebrate peacefully over Christmas with a number of special events taking place. Students at the Talents School (right) performed drama, dance and a nativity tableau for their parents.



## A BIG Thank You!

Back in December 2025 we took a leap of faith by doubling the target for the Big Give Appeal, with all funds going towards the Starfish Asia Scholarship Fund. In just one week, you raised over **£8,940** online, with £6000 of this being matched by a generous Big Give 'Champion'. Combined with additional offline gifts and Gift Aid, the total raised was £20,970!

Your support will give the gift of hope to over 100 talented students in 2026 who might otherwise see their potential go to waste in low-waged, low-skilled jobs. You have given them the chance of a better life, through securing a stable job to support themselves and their families. This is the transformation that Starfish seeks for EVERY child in our schools. Thank You.



Thanks to your many generous donations, students from the Adams School (left) were gifted brand new school bags in December. This provision will help them keep their school books and equipment safe, and reminds them that they matter.

On 17th February students from the Grammar School (right) enjoyed an outing to the local park for fun, games and a picnic. This small change to the routine, a chance to get out of the classroom, helps to encourage team building and promote physical activity.



## Social Media Launch

Do you follow Starfish Asia on Facebook? Do your children or grandchildren use social media? While technology has its challenges, it's also a powerful way to engage younger audiences and inspire them to support those in need in Pakistan. We're launching a new Instagram account soon, along with refreshed branding on Facebook and our website. Please keep an eye out!



## The Great Starfish Trail

Following three years of the Great Starfish Trail, we're considering new ways to encourage supporters to fundraise. Ruth Coleman will be taking on the North Yorkshire Ultra Challenge on 20-21st June, walking 25km. We hope this can coincide with another fortnight of targeted fundraising so don't miss this chance to take part.



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

## 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.



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