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Outreach Report for July: UMEED Partnership



Pakistan has not had a good press recently, what with the death of civilians from US drone attacks on the Taliban, car bombs in Karachi and an election marred by the death of campaigners and others. However, as Dr John Perkins, Chairman of Umeed puts it:

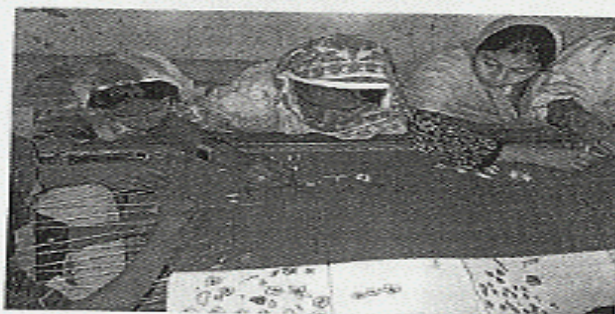
'Despite negative media reports, life for most Pakistan citizens remains unaffected by recent high profile events, and this is certainly true for the activities of the Umeed Partnership.'

Many of you will remember the case of 15 year old, Malala Yousufzai, who was shot by the Taliban for campaigning for girls to be allowed to be educated. She has made a good recovery after surgery in the UK and is now continuing her own education in Birmingham. As John says; *'Malala's campaign is exactly what Umeed is all about'*. As a church, we should be proud of supporting an organisation which allows girls - as well as boys - to get a good education and promotes the cause of equality for woman, not only in Pakistan but, by example, across the world. Umeed provides its services for Muslims, Christians and Hindus without discrimination.

Yousuf Gill, the Umeed Project co-ordinator was in the UK last year but for various reasons was not able to visit Bedford, although we have been supporting Umeed for several years. He has recently reported on the developments of Umeed Middle School at Minority Community DB52 Yazman in the Cholistan Desert in southern Punjab. These include two new classrooms and the renovation of an old classroom, a

stage for students' assembly and for community functions; a toilet with a septic tank for staff and students and a hand pump for drinkable water. These improvements will undoubtedly enhance the facilities for the students but we would be horrified to think of a secondary school here without such things as toilets and a decent water supply.

As well as providing education for school aged children, Umeed has a number of other projects, such as Umeed embroidery and sewing centres and wood workshops set up in Lahore City Slums, Loralai and in Yazman which recruit young women and children, equipping them with practical skills and opportunities for bettering themselves, their families and communities. Over the past 10 years Umeed has trained about 2,000 women and street children in vocational skills.



Embroidery Class for skills training

Umeed also has a street theatre in Lahore which is a new activity to raise awareness of political and social issues within communities which have limited access to education and the arts.

Umeed Legal Aid Forum works with women mainly in Cholistan in marginalised communities. It provides free legal aid in cases of abduction, rape and forced change of religion. Also in the cases where women are the victims of domestic violence, political torture, sexual abuse and murder.

Another interesting project is capacity building for women. Once a year women trainees are brought together for three day regional seminars or workshops where they are empowered with ideas and skills to become leaders. Through the seminars and workshops the women participants are made aware of their strengths and how to become skilful mothers to bring up their children as responsible people and promoting peace, harmony and equality in their society.

The story on one woman may help to illustrate why Umeed's help is necessary:

Surya is mother of two children who, at the age of 16, started working as a housemaid. *'While working in the house his son, age 24 got attracted to me and began misusing me with the promise that he would marry me. Soon I became pregnant and when his parents came to know about it they threw me out of their house and the boy refused to marry me. Thank God he gave me some money to have my abortion done. My parents came to know and they stopped me*

going out and within a few months married me with my relative. My husband suspected that I already had relationship with another man so he did not allow me to go out and also ill-treats me in the house. Thanks to Umeed who provided me with a skills training through which my husband got confidence in me and now allows me to go around looking for work or selling my products.'

It certainly feels as if our contribution is used effectively to help marginalised people in Pakistan – particularly women and girls. It may be a drop in the ocean, barely touching the problems of poverty and lack of education, but for the individuals who are helped; it is a life line to a better life.



A street boy learning carpentry

Fiona McLeod
Chairman, Outreach Committee

Readings for August

4 August	Trinity 10	Hosea 11.1-11	Colossians 3.1-11	Luke 12.13-21
11 August	Trinity 11	Isaiah 1.1, 10-20	Hebrews 11.1-3, 8-16	Luke 12.32-40
18 August	Trinity 12	Isaiah 5.1-7	Hebrews 11.29-12.2	Luke 12.49-56
25 August	Trinity 13	Jeremiah 1.4-10	Hebrews 12.18-end	Luke 13.10-17