

# NEXUS

Am Ddim Free

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# About UMEED partnership

by Dr John Perkins

*"Giving employment or an opportunity to earn in Pakistan is just like giving life. Let us continue to give life to these people."  
Umeed Partnership founder and Co-Ordinator, Yousuf Gill*

The Umeed Partnership is a charity registered in both Pakistan and the United Kingdom to support a project which offers opportunities for empowerment of women in the tribal communities of western Baluchistan, one of the remotest and poorest areas of Pakistan adjacent to the border with Afghanistan. The project has recently been extended to slum districts of Lahore and to marginalised Hindu dalit communities in the Cholistan desert, where provision of education and vocational training in the form of woodturning and carpentry is also made to boys.



This is a grass-roots project supported by local groups in the UK. In response to community needs, partners in Pakistan have established education and skills training centres for women and children of all cultures and faiths (Christian, Hindu and Muslim). The centres are based in homesteads centred on the city of Loralai, in the heart of the Pash-tun tribal area of Baluchistan, in Lahore city slums and in the Cholistan desert. The literacy rate for women is one of the lowest in the world. The men in these communities have permitted their daughters, sisters and wives to attend the centres on a daily basis and to receive a grounding in Urdu, arithmetic and English. The centres not only educate and

train, but provide opportunities for women's empowerment by enabling them to socialise with others from their own and different faiths.

More recently, vocational skills have been introduced with the aim of enabling the women to achieve a small measure of independence through earnings from selling their products. A programme of embroidery and sewing training has been completed (with financial support from an Irish aid agency) and the women now produce embroidered items of clothing such as shalwar kameez, shirts, bridal wear, nightwear, and shawls which are available for purchase in Pakistan and the UK. A further programme of life-skills training is planned, to include diet and nutrition, family health promotion, disease prevention, and fashion & beauty.

A primary school was opened in Yazman in southern Punjab in April 2007 offering basic literacy and arithmetic to Hindu and Muslim boys and girls. Some 92 children enrolled at the opening with a staff of three teachers. A small classroom extension was added in September 2007 allowing a further 47 children to be enrolled. In 2010 a further classroom and computer room were added, together with flushing latrines, a security wall, uniforms for the pupils, potable pumped water supply, computers and teaching aids and equipment. These developments have been paid for largely with grants from Bangor (UK) Rotary Club and Rotary International.





*by Dr John Perkins*

In February 2009 a second multi-faith middle school was opened in Minority Community 58, near Yazman catering for children from the age of 6 – 17. The school building is given for an unspecified period by a local landlord, and the hope is that a new building will be erected in the fullness of time closer to the hub of the community.

Following demand for training provision for street children (almost always boys) in slum districts in Lahore and Bahawalpur four woodworking and carpentry training centres have recently been established. Using grant-funding from Rotary International these Centres have been equipped with power tools and quality hand tools. Following a period of training, the young men are able to turn their hands to producing beds, chairs, and tables for the home, and also cattle feed mangers.

### **A success story**

A most encouraging progress report has come from the Umeed Middle School in Bahawalpur District. Admissions have increased by 20% in this academic year, and it's regarded as a model school in the region, drawing pu-

pils from government schools in Yazman City. Unlike any other school in the District, the Umeed School is now well equipped with IT and the pupils are rapidly becoming computer literate – unheard of only 12 months ago in this region. Yousuf reports that:

*with the construction of the boundary wall, both teachers and children feel secure.*

*Thanks to a recently-installed water supply the sand-blown school grounds are blooming – trees, grass and flowers - and the whole community now shows great pride in their school.*

*All four students entered for their Primary Board Certificate in the Bahawalpur District have passed with distinction.*

The School campus is being used by the District Health Department for child vaccination programmes. It is also the focus for community events.

For more information:

***<http://www.umeedpartnership.org.uk/>***