

Bukhtiar, Pakistan

Bukhtiar, 11, is from Peshawar in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan close to Afghanistan. Peshawar derives its name from the Sanskrit word "Pushpapura," meaning the city of flowers. Peshawar was once the center of the Buddhist Gandhara civilization and was an important place of pilgrimage. Peshawari hospitality is known the world over.



Bukhtiar, 11, Children's World Congress on Child Labor and Education, New Delhi, India, September 4-8, 2005

Bukhtiar's father is a blacksmith. He works very hard every day to earn bread for the large family of six children. He has completed only one year of school. Bukhtiar's mother is illiterate. She helps her husband with his work and tends the cows to sell milk. Her daily chores include going out every morning and evening to cut six bags of grass for the cows. She also collects firewood and carries water home for daily needs. Bukhtiar helps his mother as much as possible.

Bukhtiar has one brother and four sisters, none of whom have been able to complete school. His older brother attended school through tenth grade, when he dropped out to support the family by working as an apprentice in a furniture shop. Bukhtiar's sisters are 17-, 10-, 6-, and 1-year(s) old. Despite completing only first grade, his oldest sister has learned to read and write Urdu (the national language of Pakistan) at home. His other sisters have never been to school.

Bukhtiar is in the seventh grade. He attends school every day from 7:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Then he goes straight to help his father manufacture iron rod shutters for houses under construction, especially for roofs.

School is expensive for Bukhtiar. He has to pay 85 Pakistan rupees (\$1.43 US dollars) for admission and another 500 Pakistan rupees (\$8.40 US Dollars) for books and other related costs. Educating his sisters would be even more expensive as his father would have to employ a monthly rickshaw driver to transport them to and from school. This would cost an additional 800 Pakistan Rupees (\$13.40 US dollars) for each girl. "Why are a lot of children unable to attend even government (public) schools?," Bukhtiar questions. The notion is that costs associated with public schools are less. However, small costs add up for families with many children like Bukhtiar's family. Therefore, it is beyond the ability of many parents to provide education for all their children.

Bukhtiar fears falling behind in his studies and he does not want to work. Working takes away all his strength. It is important for him to pass each grade in order to continue in school. If he fails, he will be forced to leave school. Bukhtiar does not have enough time

to study at home, however hard he wishes. He thinks that some day if he could only study then he would not feel so tired.