

## Zahida, Pakistan

Zahida, 13, is from Kasur, Pakistan. Zahida's grandparents never went to school. Her paternal grandfather was a woodcutter. Zahida's father completed eight years of school and became an Imam (a teacher/leader of prayers in Islam). However, now he has typhoid. Zahida's mother never went to school. She earns money by doing embroidery. Zahida is the second oldest of seven children in her family. Her sister, Tahira, is 16-years-old. Her five brothers range in ages from one to ten years.



Zahida (turquoise scarf), 13, Children's World Congress on Child Labor and Education, New Delhi, India, September 4-8, 2005

The five oldest children all attend school, but only the girls also work. Zahida started school at age eight. A year later, she started embroidering at home with her mother after school. For four years, she has sewn beads on shirts six-seven hours a day, after school until 9:30 or 10 p.m., every day except for Fridays. Her sister, Tahira, sews clothes. Even though she doesn't like it, Zahida works, because "If I am not earning money, the condition of the home is not as good," she said. Zahida makes only 5-10 Pakistan rupees (8-16 US cents) per day for sewing beads on shirts. Her wages contributes to food for the family and to her education.

Trading has matured between families in Kasur and neighboring villages. The trade is a small-scale cottage industry. The girls and their mother do not work in large-scale production. They work on an individual basis, as orders are placed by the villagers or neighboring villagers. Zahida sews beads on many kinds of traditional dress. No one sells Zahida's goods at the Kasur bazaar, or exports them. A shirt full of beads costs 100-150 Pakistan rupees (\$1.67-\$2.51 US dollars).

Zahida is now in fifth grade at a public school. She attends school six and one half hours a day (from 7:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.), five days a week. Friday is a half-day. There is no school on Sunday. While she is able to complete her homework and do her embroidery work, it is very difficult. Even when she gets a fever, Zahida has to work. If possible, she would like to be a doctor when she grows up.