

## **Zuhaib, Pakistan**

Zuhaib, 17, comes from the city of Faisalabad, formerly known as Lyallpur, a city in the Rechna Doab region of the Punjab province in northeastern Pakistan. The city lies in an area where cotton, wheat, vegetables, and fruits are grown and watered by the Lower Chenab Canal. Faisalabad has a small industrial center, railroad-repair shops, engineering works, and plants that mill cotton, sugar, flour, and oilseeds, can fruit, and pack tea. Today, it also has an Agricultural University.

Zuhaib has a younger sister and a younger brother. His sister is 15-years-old and his brother is 13-years-old. Their father died when Zuhaib was just ten years old. He was a booking manager for the Transportation Department. The abrupt stop of his father's monthly income crippled the family. Zuhaib's mother had difficulty running the house and meeting the survival needs of the family. His father and mother were both illiterate and had never attended school. To support the household, his mother began running a tea and snack-bar at a local school. However, she was unable to bear the expenses involved in retaining her children in school: school enrollment fees, learning supplies (such as books), and school maintenance (e.g., for paint, etc.).

After their father's death, all three children had to drop out of school to help their mother run the snack-bar. They all helped her deliver tea to the teachers, wash utensils, clean up the snack-bar, and run errands. Zuhaib returned to school one year later, because a friend of his mother provided them with the money to support his education. Zuhaib then began to help his mother in the snack-bar *after* school. He is now in the eleventh grade.

Subsequently, Zuhaib found his current job in a government clothing shop as a daily wage earner. In this job, he serves tea, runs errands, and helps the customers. He expects to eventually be hired permanently in this job, which will authorize him to receive all the inherent benefits and privileges of working in Government service. Zuhaib considers the biggest benefit of having a government job is the inherent stability; persons working in government service are rarely fired. Zuhaib will also have the opportunity to slowly move up the ladder.

Zuhaib now attends school from 6:30-11:30 a.m., goes straight to work at the government shop, and returns home by 9:30 p.m. He works nine hours every day for 200 Pakistan rupees (\$3.35 US dollars) a day. Zuhaib earns enough money to pay for his brother's school fees as well. His brother returned to school three years after he dropped out. He is now in ninth grade and still helps his mother at the snack-bar after school.

Their younger sister has stayed home since she stopped studying after completing fourth grade. She does the home-based work of stitching and tailoring. While she wants to study, she cannot go to school. In their community, it is expected that girls of her age will remain indoors for security, safety and izzat (respect) until marriage. Her school attendance would require 800 Pakistan rupees (\$13.90 US dollars) a month towards a rickshaw. The additional transportation cost for security reasons is too expensive not only for Zuhaib's family, but for most of the local people to bear. Her brother teaches her at home.

Zuhaib is unhappy for his sister, who desires so much to attend school. He also feels sad that he has to work and does not have more time to study in order to get into a really good career. Even so, Zuhaib feels that some day he will be able to support his sister's school attendance. He hopes that some day *all* children will be able to go to school without fear of the small monetary demands constantly being placed on them by school authorities, which now prevent many children from attending classes.

Zuhaib feels that governments should make an effort to ensure that these small contributions demanded of families by the school authorities do not hinder youth like him and his sister from receiving education. He believes that governments will find ways to ensure that many girls like his sister feel safe attending school (e.g. by enabling school systems to provide the much desired free and secure transportation for needy girls in communities and societies where security and/or cultural attitudes and practices are problematic).

Zuhaib thinks that the education of both boys and girls has a lot to do with the perception of families. Some families perceive education outside the home for boys and girls differently. Zuhaib feels that governments are aware of these perceptions and are responsible for creating the opportunities and necessary pre-conditions in order for communities to feel safe sending girls to school. In the long-run this will make the difference in the perception of the communities.