

BLYTHSWOOD NEWS



P2

Teaching motivated children in Pakistan



P3

Learning helps child move on from troubled background



P3

Blythswood taught me to read and write



P5

Hungry children long for school to start



At Elpis kindergarten, Sarah is developing her own personality

DEVELOPING LEADERS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Nine months at an early-education project supported by Blythswood Care has transformed a shy and fearful child into a cheerful, active and assertive leader among her own age-group.

Four-year-old Sarah wasn't used to mixing with other children when she joined the Elpis kindergarten in Dej, Romania, last September. Like many other young Romanians, her parents had moved to Italy to try to make a better life for themselves and their children.

But her mother's illness had forced the family to return home, where they are now trying to make a living by running a small sheep farm.

Its remote forest location meant that Sarah had no-one to play with other than her baby sister. Now with all the stimulation of Elpis's pre-school programme, Sarah is developing her own personality.

"She has a fantastic memory and is a quick learner," says Sorina Pop, director of the kindergarten. "With four-year-olds, we concentrate on

developing their language and music skills. Next term they will be introduced to numbers and basic arithmetic."

With just 12 to 15 children in a class, the low pupil-teacher ratio at Elpis is also a factor in the project's success. Sorina says: "Our aim is to develop leaders for the next generation."



Give a child an education is one of many ideas in Blythswood's Gift Catalogue which let you share the joy of helping someone in need. Go to blythswood.org/gifts or call 01349 830777

Teaching motivated children in Pakistan



Before gaining entrance to a school supported by Blythswood Care, Shahzad learned the importance of learning to read

Motivation.

It's the key to a good education and ten-year-old Shahzad has it in abundance. As far back as he can remember, he wanted to go to school. But the hand-to-mouth existence of his family made it seem impossible. His father's low wage from

working in a shoe factory near Gujranwala, Pakistan, was insufficient to allow the family to send any of their five children to school.

Two years ago, something terrible happened. The young man next door, from a family who were also illiterate, died after taking unsuitable medicine. No-one could read the label on the bottle.

About that time, Shahzad heard of a school in his area that gives free education to children from low-income households. Knowing what had happened to their neighbours, his parents came to see the importance of learning to read and applied to get their boy into school.

Over the past 18 months Shahzad has made rapid progress at the school run by Blythswood's partner organisation in Pakistan. His main interest is English – medicine labels are usually in English in Pakistan – and already he can read and write

LEARNING HELPS CHILD MOVE ON FROM TROUBLED BACKGROUND

Prashanth was just six years old when he and his sister were admitted to Siloam Youth and Children's Aid Mission (SYCAM) in Chennai, India. He was a sad little boy, traumatised by the domestic violence he had witnessed in a home wrecked by alcoholism.

"He needed a lot of love and care," remembers SYCAM director Pastor Emmanuel Milton. "By God's grace he was slowly encouraged and gained confidence that his

life could improve.

"Then he forgot his past hurts and began to concentrate on his studies. He discovered he had hidden talents, especially in music and in handicrafts."

Having progressed through SYCAM's own school, Prashanth, now 15, has completed grades six to nine in a nearby high school and this June starts in grade ten. "He has a great desire to study aeronautical engineering," Pastor Milton says. "He dreams of becoming a pilot."



Prashanth (right) and some of the boys at SYCAM with a torch they made for their school sports day

basic sentences. He finds maths difficult but works hard on that, too. And when he goes home, he shares what he has learnt with his brothers and sisters.

Shahzad's ambition is to

become an English teacher and to be able to support his family. And already he is on a mission to make his own community aware of just how important it is to get an education.

COOKED SCHOOL DINNERS MAKE STRONG, HAPPY CHILDREN



Bright and happy – but without the school dinner sponsored by Blythswood, Vincent's life would be a very different story

Food and football. That's what school means to seven-year-old Vincent who lives in Nyanza Province, Kenya. That he is also learning to read and write may not seem so important to him now but should stand him in good stead as he grows up to understand the opportunities that an education can bring.

Vincent lives with his grandfather. His mother is just a vague memory – he has not

seen her in two years. And he does not have a father.

His grandfather works as a night watchman, earning just £30 per month. So the cooked meal provided to the children at Meir Pamoja School and sponsored by Blythswood Care is vitally important to the health and welfare of the growing lad – and to his ability to learn.

Over 200 children from low-income homes benefit from the nutritionally balanced meal

each school day. "I have seen children join us who looked as if they would die the next day," says school manager Millicent Ojuki. "But thanks to the dinner that you provide they have changed into happy and strong children."

Vincent likes listening to stories and is good at telling them too. When he grows up he is going to be a banker so that he can buy his grandfather a car.



Albertus at a TK camp twelve years ago: a quiet boy afraid to show his feelings



Albertus reckons that without the support of Blythswood's Talita Kum project he would never have learned to read and write

ROMANIAN JOB APPLICANT RECOGNISES VALUE OF BLYTHSWOOD'S AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMME

Albertus, now 22, works in other parts of Europe for two or three months at a time but always likes to return to his native Romania.

There in the Banat region he has own dance band which is frequently invited to events promoting the culture of the Roma people.

Recently he completed job applications to two local companies. And he attributes his ability to do this to the help he received as a youngster at Talita Kum, Blythswood's after-school programme for disadvantaged children.

"Albertus says he would have been illiterate to this day without Blythswood," says Talita Kum director Adrian Popa who spoke with him

recently. "It was in TK that he learned how to hold a pencil and to write, how to use a knife and fork, and even how to take a shower.

"But he says what he liked best was the food – and Titi [the cook]."

It's significant that the children know Talita Kum simply as the 'cantina'. For children from the poorest homes, a square meal is their first requirement to enable them to concentrate on their lessons.

Today Talita Kum provides more children than ever with the nutrition and mentoring they need to persevere at school and to grow into young adults able to participate in wider society.

The book that changes lives



Paidi Ramesh with his bible: having travelled all over India, he found peace at home when he started to read the Bible and believed in Jesus Christ

Blythwood Care has provided native-language bibles to Christian workers in India for distribution. This is the testimony of a man in Andhra Pradesh who received a Telugu bible last year.

I am Paidi Ramesh, 58 years old. I was born in a traditional Hindu family and used to worship all the Hindu gods. I visited temples all over India but did not find real peace in my heart. I used alcohol, tobacco and drugs. Because of these bad habits I lost my health, wealth and fame in my community.

One day a pastor came to my house and told me about Jesus Christ. He gave me a Holy Bible. When I started to read it, slowly I recognised that I am a sinner. That was why I did not have peace. I confessed my sins and received Jesus as my saviour and was baptised. Now I have found real peace and joy. I am sharing my testimony with many people. Some are willing to come to Christ.



Florin has gained self-confidence at Blythwood's Daniel Centre and is making progress towards independent living

Training received at Blythwood's Daniel Centre has helped Florin, aged 22, to get a job – and to hold on to it.

When he joined the residential training centre four years ago, he came as a teenager with huge emotional needs. His upbringing in Romania's child care institutions had been

CONFIDENCE IS KEY TO LIFE-SKILLS TRAINING AT DANIEL CENTRE

brightened by just one successful foster-family placement where, for a time, he had felt secure and wanted.

But that arrangement broke down and he arrived at the Daniel Centre, near Cluj, as a very introverted young man, unable to connect with others.

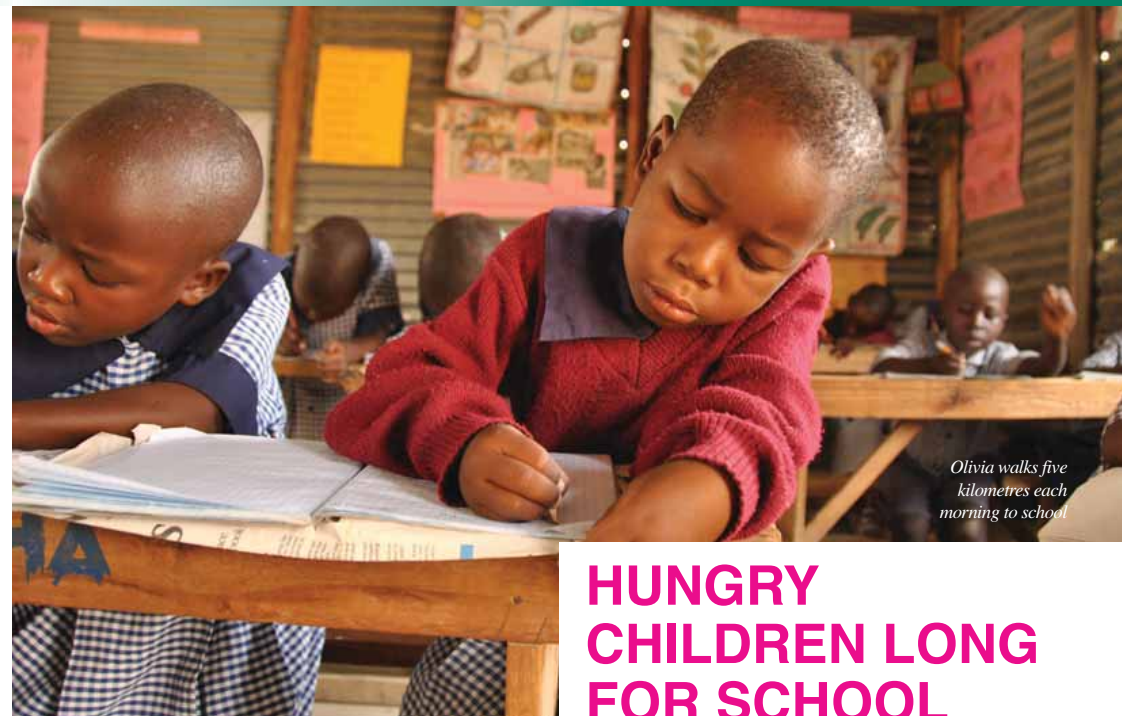
At the Daniel Centre he regained his self-confidence and learned invaluable skills – how to take responsibility, how to manage money, how to cook and keep his own area clean, and how to look after his clothes and make himself presentable. He also completed a vocational course in the care of the elderly.

But overcoming his lack of confidence was Florin's key to finding a job, reckons Daniel Centre project director Elvira

Szász-Jakab. "His previous negative social experiences made it hard for him to get a job but he has been in a furniture factory now for nine months and his employer is very satisfied with his performance," Elvira says. "He is well-organised, works hard and pays attention to detail."

Now ready to move on to semi-independent living in the Daniel Centre's Tranzit 1, Florin is focused on improving his communication skills and would like to find work with more scope for professional development.

"Sometimes the boys here need to be more realistic in how they evaluate themselves," Elvira says. "But Florin is ready to take the next step towards independent living."



Olivia walks five kilometres each morning to school

HUNGRY CHILDREN LONG FOR SCHOOL TO START



Olivia is shy. Even when she knows the answer, she will not speak up unless the teacher asks her directly. Aged just six, she is learning in both English and Kiswahili at Sargy Education Centre on Rusinga Island, Kenya.

Olivia is one of more than 250 children from low-income homes who benefit from the award-winning project which is supported by Blythwood

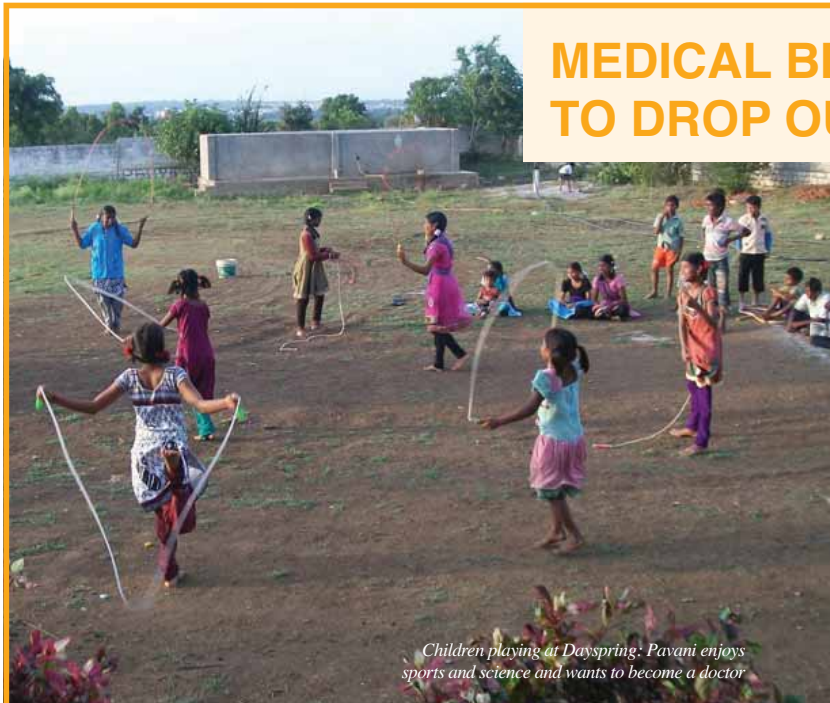
kilometres to school. It's a journey that takes them an hour and a half, morning and night.

At home they help their mother to gather firewood which is the family's only source of income. They do well if they make £7 per month. To these children, the two meals which they receive each day at Sargy are vitally important. Since Olivia started school her health has visibly improved.

Sometimes Olivia is sick with malaria. The government provides free mosquito nets for children but as they sleep on the floor on mats, the risk of being bitten is high.

At school she is a quick learner and is making good progress. Teacher Samuel Okomo observes: "In Europe children wait eagerly for the holidays to come while in Rusinga they wish they would pass more quickly."

MEDICAL BILLS CAUSED CHILD TO DROP OUT OF SCHOOL



Children playing at Dayspring. Pavani enjoys sports and science and wants to become a doctor

Pavani has good memories of her early childhood in Andhra Pradesh, India. She and her older sister went to the village school while their parents worked in the fields. They were a happy family.

But when her father took ill, the life they knew soon fell apart. Although they were children, the girls worked in the fields instead of going to school. And when their father died, debt as well as grief overwhelmed their family. There was no prospect of the girls resuming their education.

In 2010 Pavani's mother sought admission for her younger daughter to Dayspring House, a home and school for orphaned and abandoned

children supported by Blythwood Care. Since then the growing girl has thrived on the opportunities for education and development which your support gives to the children there.

Her health has improved thanks to the regular balanced diet. She loves sports – especially kabaddi – and science is her favourite subject at school. The 12-year-old's ambition is to become a doctor.

"Pavani's teacher says she is a brilliant student," says Dayspring director Pastor Samuel Babu, who asks us to pray for her and for her mother and sister. The older girl never returned to school and is working in the fields.



The literacy programme equipped Kujtesa to help her children with their lessons

Adult literacy programme helps women from traditional backgrounds in Albania

Kujtesa was a married woman with two children when she signed on for the literacy programme run by Blythwood's partner organisation, Mission Possible Albania.

Traditional views of a girl's place in society had hindered her education as a child. At three, she had fallen from an upstairs window and sustained permanent injuries that would prevent her from walking to school with the other children. Eventually, at the age of nine, she was allowed to go but was withdrawn from school by her parents as she moved into adolescence. "Now you are a grown-up girl, you do not need more education," her parents said. "Now you can learn from your mother because it is time that we find you a husband."

Even as an adult, she experienced cultural pressure not to be educated. When her signature was required, her husband would sign on her behalf. When she joined the

literacy programme she felt compelled to pretend she was taking her friend's daughter rather than admit that she herself was learning to read and write. But, since deciding to seize the opportunity offered by Mission Possible, Kujtesa has not looked back.

Although she had forgotten the little she had learned at school, she made rapid progress and was soon able to read children's books and magazines. "I even learned how to help my kids with their lessons," she says. "I feel proud that I can now explain to my little girl the meaning of a word or sentence."

"Now I read newspapers, magazines and even the Bible and can follow the subtitles of films on television."

Kujtesa has also attended community development courses at Mission Possible's Hope Centre in her town and has benefited from health awareness meetings which address medical issues relevant to women of her age and background.



*Preparing a salad:
Alin likes working with his hands*

SPECIALISED HELP FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Mainstream schooling is not always the best option for children with learning difficulties. That's the view of Lidia Micula who teaches in a special education unit in Marghita, Romania, supported by Blythwood Care.

At 13 years of age, Alin* was far behind his school peers and showing severe behavioural problems. So when he joined the special school run by Fundatia Crestina Elim, the staff focussed first on his emotional needs.

"We gave him a lot of positive attention, praising him when he behaved well," says Lidia. "The reaction of the other children helped too, because they didn't appreciate his bad behaviour but encouraged him when he succeeded."

"Once he started to feel emotionally comfortable, he was more eager to work and participate in learning activities. As a result, his reading and writing has improved a lot, his social skills are better and he has discovered that he enjoys working with his hands."

"Recently he prepared a healthy spring salad at school. He was interested in it, did a great job and was so proud to serve it to his fellow students."

Looking to the future for Alin, who has just turned 16, Lidia would like to see work places where people with special needs can have supervision and support. "Otherwise it is hard for them to compete," she says.

*not his real name



Unity bought her first sewing machine when she completed the course supported by Blythwood Care

SEWING COURSE HELPED UNITY ESTABLISH HER OWN BUSINESS

SUPPORT FOR A TEENAGED GIRL DETERMINED TO SUCCEED



With her fees sponsored by Blythwood, Yeukai is determined to succeed at school

Yeukai is a star pupil at her local high school in a suburb to the west of Harare, Zimbabwe. Recently the 15-year-old was awarded first prize for behaviour and commitment and is achieving good results in history and geography.

But the diligent student, who is now a prefect, would not be in school at all were it not for assistance from Blythwood Care. She was still a baby when her father died in 2000. Her mother, who worked as a street vendor, could not afford school fees for her three children.

"Yeukai's ambition is to complete A levels and to go on to study banking and finance," says Stephen Damuputirai, director of Harare Shelter for Destitutes. "Her hardworking mother does not keep well but is confident that her daughter will succeed."

Through its partnership with Harare Shelter, Blythwood Care is assisting 52 children in and around Harare to continue their education in the current academic year.

Unity is running her own successful business after completing an eight month training programme in sewing skills, supported by Blythwood Care.

Working from a rented room in downtown Harare, Zimbabwe, the young woman makes clothing to order and takes home more than £300 per month after meeting her business overheads.

She was able to buy her first sewing machine when she sold all the garments she had made during the course run by Harare Shelter for Destitutes.

Now she also has a heavy-duty machine and will work into the evenings when necessary to complete a big order on time.

Unity is married and has a young child. The income from her business has enabled her to enrol the little one in a preschool class while she herself still has ambitions to further her education by taking four O level courses.

