

From Begging Bowl to School Bag

A Rare Journey to School

Allah Rakha | 11 Year Boy

Location: Haripur, KPK, Pakistan

Allah Rakha was born to desperately poor parents. As he grew up in a make-shift bamboo hut, the only life he saw consisted of his parents and siblings begging on the streets

11-year-old Allah Rakha has seen his life transformed in the past few months. The son of poor nomads, whose entire life has existed of begging on the streets, he has benefited from a collaboration between ALIGHT Pakistan and the Pakistani government which is focused on ensuring that about one million out-of-school children are able to go to school through the Educate a Child program.

Non-formal STAR schools are part of a countrywide program, run jointly by ALIGHT Pakistan and the Pakistani government in collaboration with the Educate A Child (EAC) program, a global program of the Education Above All Foundation (EAA) to enroll one million Out-of-School Children (OOSC) in Pakistan. ALIGHT Pakistan also collaborates with the public and private sectors to provide teacher's training and supplies to these schools, including stationery, bags, uniforms, notebooks, etc.

Allah Rakha is enrolled in one such school, set up with ALIGHT Pakistan's assistance in a building owned by a housewife in the Haripur district in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province. Just a couple of months into his enrolment, the 11-year-old has learned the importance of personal hygiene and is able to extol its virtues to his parents and siblings, for whom life, thus far, has consisted only of begging and calling a makeshift bamboo hut home.

In March 2019, an ALIGHT Pakistan literacy mobilizers team identified the Cotton Mills Colony, where Allah Rakha lives and now goes to school, as being a suitable location for a STAR school once they found that about 100 children in the area were not attending school. More than half of these children were from the same nomadic community of poverty-stricken families for whom the only source of income came from begging on the streets.

Once the ALIGHT Pakistan team established the school in a portion of the house offered by the housewife – who also teaches at the school – Allah Rakha was the first to be enrolled, leading to another 30 children from his community to follow suit. For all of them, the chance to receive a proper education offers the opportunity to escape the only life they have known and hope to eventually find proper jobs and live respectable lives.

