

The Young Bread Winner

Taking Big Decision at a Small Age

Shafi Ullah | 12 Year Refugee Boy
Quetta District, Balochistan, Pakistan

Shafi Ullah, the son of Afghan immigrants, who like millions of their compatriots had to flee war-ravaged Afghanistan in the 1980s, was forced to leave the seminary where he was receiving a free education to try and support his parents by scavenging on the streets.

His family lives in a poor settlement called Ghausabad in the southwestern city of Quetta. Still only about 12, Shafi Ullah's daily routine over the past few years has consisted of leaving the house every morning to scavenge for anything worth selling from dumpsters and trash heaps only to return home after sunset with only a few rupees to show for his efforts.

In 2019, the ALIGHT Pakistan literacy mobilizers team identified Ghausabad as a target area to set up a non-formal STAR school for local out-of-school children in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, which seeks "to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all."

The 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, run globally by the Education Above All Foundation (EAA), which seeks 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.

Now, Shafi Ullah is one of 37 children enrolled in the school, 80 percent of whom are Afghan refugees with the majority of students being female, with all getting a free education, along with supplies like books, stationery, etc. He wants to become a doctor and believes that the STAR school has provided him with the first step towards achieving his dream.

Former Madrassa student Shafi Ullah, the eldest of seven children, decided to forego his education and became a scavenger in order to support his parents financially. Now, thanks to ALIGHT Pakistan, he has enrolled in a STAR school

