

Kalamazoo College  
Komal Khan '14  
*Umeed Ki Kiran*  
Pakistan

### **Statement of Purpose**

Umeed ki Kiran means a ray of hope in Urdu. Through the *Umeed ki Kiran* project, we will give hope to approximately 30 impoverished children living in Karachi, Pakistan about a bright future despite their family and financial backgrounds. The students targeted will be from the lowest income strata of Karachi and will be aged from 5 to 12 years of age. Most of the children will be sons and daughters of the domestic workers, chauffeurs, laborers and gate guards in the North Karachi area who survive on less than \$60 a month. The project hopes to use innovative methods of education and a strong support system to educate, motivate and inspire these children to continue their education.

### **Background & Importance**

Due to the corruption, political instability and terrorism in Pakistan, many philanthropists and women rights activists shy away from doing social work in the country. Therefore, Pakistan often remains deprived of the various international funds that countries like Bangladesh, India and Nepal enjoy because of its unsafe image. The project is inspired by the cause of Malala Yousafzai from Swat, Pakistan who was shot in the face by Taliban for going to school. One of her famous quotes is "I want to say to the world, you must try to get an education because it is important. If the new generation is not given pens, they will be given guns by the terrorists"

In the metropolitan city of Pakistan, Karachi there are a plethora of local NGOs and government schools providing free education. However, the drop out rate of the students from the lower income community is extremely high. The lack of support system at home because of illiterate parents and the teaching methods employed at their schools are to be blamed. Government schools in Pakistan provide sub-standard education and engage in beating the children as a form of corporal punishment.<sup>1</sup> The rote-learning methods of education combined with the dry course content fails to capture the student's attention, making them drop out of school. For these little children, playing in the sand and begging for money on the streets is more fun than going to school, only to be yelled at, beaten and ridiculed. Many of these children are mistreated at school for their impoverished backgrounds and their parent's professions. As a result, they stop attending school and get trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty. Illiteracy and poverty then become the breeding grounds for crime and terrorism. Education at grass roots level for the lower income strata of the society is the only way Pakistan can break away from the shackles of crime, terrorism and patriarchy. Similarly, counselling the entire family and not just the student about the importance of education will help reduce the school drop out rate significantly.

I grew up in a lower middle class town called North Karachi in Karachi, Pakistan. However, through merit based scholarships and support of relatives, I was able to attend the elite British schools of Pakistan where I excelled in academics. I eventually received a full scholarship to Kalamazoo College and was able to convince my conservative Muslim family to allow me to go to the USA for higher education instead of getting me married. At Kalamazoo College, I was involved with the service learning program KDO (Keeping the Doors Open) as a tutor freshman year and as the leader of the program sophomore year. The program aimed to teach under-privileged minority students in the Kalamazoo area math and science. During my time at KDO, I created fun and interactive math lessons for the students and took them to field trips to the arboretum and the college's science labs. KDO hoped to keep the doors of college open for these minority students by improving the middle school student's math and science skills. The KDO team educated them on their college options and encouraged them to take advantage of the Kalamazoo Promise scholarship, which promises all Kalamazoo city high school graduates free college education. In Australia during my study abroad, I was involved with CHATs, where I volunteered to speak in English with the immigrant population of my university to improve their spoken English. In Pakistan, I taught SAT and ACT Math and English to high school students at the prestigious Anees Hussain institution. I have also tutored my neighborhood's children extensively and taught them how to read and write before moving to America.

I have always felt like an outsider at the elite schools I attended because of my economic background and financial struggles of my family. However, I was able to overcome these differences because of my academic success and outstanding performances in drama and debating teams of my school. With my extensive experience working with children in Pakistan, Australia and the USA, I hope to similarly empower the underprivileged children in the program through excellent academic, art and sports education. Due to my background, I realize the immense need for a support system for these children who are at a high risk of discontinuing their fight to achieve education.

### **Project Details and goals**

The proposal is to start an eight-week intensive summer program at my home located in North Karachi, Pakistan. The project is based at my home and not associated with a local school to avoid red-tapism and corruption rampant at most institutions in Pakistan. Past reports of projects done in Pakistan through the Davis Award cite such difficulties and hindrances. In the event of strikes or political upheaval in Karachi, the program can continue running as it will be based out of my home. The low income neighborhood has a number of children who go to sub-standard government schools who can benefit from the summer program. Since, I grew up in the neighborhood; I know the area well and am respected by the area's residents for my academic achievements. I will be helped by my 22 year old sister who is a medical student and my mom who is a retired teacher as well.

The summer camp will enlist a few more volunteers from my alma mater Beaconhouse School, North Nazimabad Campus, Karachi where I volunteered as a high school drama teacher during my last visit to Pakistan in

<sup>1</sup> "PAKISTAN: Corporal Punishment Key Reason for School Dropouts." *IRINnews*. Humanitarian News and Analysis, n.d. Web. 10 Jan. 2014.

2013. The high school students enjoy a close bond with me and will be happy to utilize their summer vacations to assist me in the summer camp and gain valuable experience. The \$10,000 award will be used to arrange cartoon movie screenings to improve the student's English comprehension skills and educate them about various topics. Trips to local parks and the zoo will be used to get students interested in animal behavior and botany. Arts and crafts supplies will be used to encourage children to color, draw and express their creativity. Similarly, students will learn math through interactive games and trivia.

It is to be noted that most of these students do not own television in their houses or have ever taken a trip to a zoo or museum. They will be very motivated to continue the summer camp as opposed to playing on the streets because of these excursions. My mother in Pakistan is already conducting a similar tutoring program which comprises of four children due to lack of financial resources. The results have been phenomenal. Through tutoring and mentoring, the children have developed a passion for learning and a drive to succeed despite adverse circumstances. One of her students was 1<sup>st</sup> in his class, while the other three were ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> in their class last academic year.

**Timeline**

Time Frame	Activity
Pre-arrival	Volunteers based in Pakistan will start recruiting up-to 30 participants aged (5-12) * belonging to the lower income class families in my neighborhood. The recruitment will be invitation based to the neighborhood children for safety reasons. Families will be counseled to reduce dropout rates of the summer program. The reading and writing skills of the participants will be evaluated to plan appropriate lesson plans and to divide students into 3 groups. Food vendors will be contacted.
Week 1- 2	The program will officially start on July 1 <sup>st</sup> 2014. There will be an orientation for Volunteers and students. There will be ice breakers and trust building exercises for the first two days and some art activities. Volunteers will have separate meetings to go over lesson plans and come up with teaching schedules. Light breakfast will be provided upon arrival and there will be a half an hour lunch break. From the third day onwards, students will go over a refresher course for basic Math and English. This will ensure students are somewhat at the same academic level. Students will be divided in three groups according to their Math and English skills. Each group will be taught and mentored by two volunteers. Extra attention will be given to the gifted as well as the struggling students.
Week 3- 7	Following the crash courses in reading, writing and math skills, students will indulge in science, history, geography classes in their respective groups. The classes will build upon their math and english skills. Art and sport activities will be organized and trips to the Planetarium museum, Agha Khan Park and National Zoo will be made. Weekly tests will be administered to reinforce and measure learning. These tests will measure the students' progress during the program and will be used to improve methods of teachings.
Week 8	Students and volunteers will continue with their academics but also start preparing for the final talent show. Students will perform some theatrical pieces, dances and showcase their art work. Parents of the students as well as the local community will be invited. Some potential donors/philanthropists will be invited who will hopefully sponsor the children's future educational needs. Students and volunteers will go through a de-briefing session on 31st August 2014.

**Sustainability**

Although Pakistan lacks the welfare system provided by the government, the Islamic system of Zakat replaces it. Each year during the month of Ramadan, every Muslim is required to give charity (Zakat) equal to approximately 10% of their wealth., I hope to continue to keep this tutoring and mentoring program running since I plan to move back to my home country, Pakistan after graduating in June, 2014. Through Zakat contributions of relatives, friends and acquaintances, I will make sure this program keeps running on weekends, while the kids go to their regular school during weekdays.

\* In the lower income community of Pakistan, there is a varied age of students studying in the same grade level.