



Aga Khan Foundation Activities in Badakhshan

The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) is one of nine specialist agencies and institutions of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). The Foundation works in rural development in some 30 countries, especially in Asia and Africa. In Afghanistan, it works in seven provinces of northern and central Afghanistan, implementing long-term programmes aimed at reducing poverty and enabling people to improve their quality of life. AKF implements programmes in civil society, agriculture, infrastructure, small enterprise development and education.

Badakhshan was one of the first provinces in Afghanistan where the Aga Khan Foundation began long-term interventions, following an extensive programme of emergency relief in the province by Focus Humanitarian Assistance, an AKDN affiliate, which began in 1995. In 2002, the Aga Khan Foundation's rural development programme responded to food shortages by distributing quality seeds and fertilisers aimed at improving agricultural yields and productivity. Shortly after, the Foundation began working with local communities to build infrastructure projects, including water supply schemes, latrines,

irrigation channels, bridges, schools, clinics and other infrastructure.

In Badakhshan, AKF now implements programmes in 17 districts and sub-districts -- Faizabad, Baharak, Jurm, Khash, Yumgan, Kuran-o-Munjan, Ishkashim, Zebak, Wakhan, Shughnan, Shikai, Maimai, Nusai, Kufab, Shewa, Shuhada and Warduj. These programmes benefit a population of 409,000 people. Interventions in Badakhshan focus on educational improvements, strengthening local governance institutions and developing income-generating opportunities through natural resource management, enterprise and building of infrastructure. All programmes support the objectives of the Afghan government's National Development Strategy and are implemented in close collaboration with the provincial government.

AKF is working to improve the quality of life in Badakhshan through a set of integrated interventions, described below by sector.

Rural Development Human and Institutional Development

National Solidarity Programme: Under the government's flagship rural development initiative, the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), Community Development Councils (CDCs) have been established across Afghanistan to lead local development. AKF is one of a number of partners helping to implement NSP. In Badakhshan AKF has established more than 540 democratically elected councils in 13 districts. Councils are assisted to carry out development projects, which in Badakhshan have included installing micro-hydropower and solar power units; building roads, bridges and community centres; laying clean water pipelines and irrigation systems; and vocational training courses.

A new phase of NSP began in 2010 with the aim of establishing community development councils in 90 communities in Yumgan, Ishkashim and Shughnan districts and in remote districts of northern Badakhshan, including Shikai, Nusai, Maimai and Kufab.

Students in the library of a teacher training college built and supported by AKF in Shughnan, Badakhshan. AKF works with the Afghan Ministry of Education to improve the pre-service and in-service training of teachers.



Capacity Building of Local Institutions:

AKF assists community development councils by providing additional training to help them become key institutions of development and local governance, an aim shared by the provincial government and the Ministry of Reconstruction and Rural Development. AKF has also supported the establishment of larger groupings of councils – Cluster-Level Development Councils (CLDCs) – which are able to address wider issues such as the provision of schools and health centres, enterprise development and rangeland and watershed management. Individual councils and cluster-level councils are given training in gender sensitisation, conflict resolution, common property management, leadership and poverty analysis. The Foundation provides similar capacity building for District Development Assemblies in Badakhshan.

AKF assists all councils to organise annual local campaigns to promote primary school enrolment, children's vaccination, road repair and tree-planting. In addition, the Foundation encourages councils to undertake *social audits* to promote transparency and local accountability. Social audits are community meetings in which residents are able to ask questions and comment on local development initiatives, as well as examining the council's accounts to ensure that funds have been used properly.

Savings Groups: Community-based savings groups are an important means of increasing access for poor rural people to basic financial services. Groups of women and men pool their

savings to create a fund from which members can borrow for small social or financial investments. Mature groups often hold substantial savings, enabling members to start up small business ventures. Savings groups, which have been established across AKF programme areas, also assist women and their children in an environment where women's access to economic opportunities is extremely limited.

Badakhshan Development Forum: The Badakhshan Development Forum was established by AKF and other international agencies to assist the development of local non-government and civil society organisations. Local organisations are assisted through fellowships, training and small grants. Local journalists have been helped to establish the Badakhshan Journalists' Union. The Forum works to build productive relationships between civil society organisations and with provincial and district government offices. It has initiated the Good Governance Series of workshops for district governors and district coordination committees in 18 districts to aid the coordination of planning at district level. The Forum also provides technical support to provincial departments in Badakhshan.

Natural Resource Management

In Badakhshan, the rural economy is largely based on agriculture and livestock husbandry. Many families however are unable to produce enough food for their needs by traditional farming techniques, hampered by the difficult mountain environment and the lack of basic infrastructure and agricultural services. To address these issues AKF works with community development councils, the Afghan government and the private sector to implement a participatory programme of natural resources management. This

includes improving cereal crops, horticulture, rangelands, livestock and fodder production, and capacity building of local farmers. In farmer field schools and Participatory Technology Development (PTD) groups, farmers experiment with new varieties of crops and vegetables; new cultivation practices; integrated crop management techniques; orchard management practices such as weeding, pruning and grafting; vegetable seed production; fodder cultivation; and processing and preserving of vegetables.

Livestock: The Foundation is helping to develop a system that delivers veterinary services through a network of five livestock development centres and 34 livestock field units. These centres and field units offer comprehensive veterinary services ranging from disease prevention to vaccinations. Mobile teams deliver livestock services to remote areas such as Kuran-wa-Munjan, Shewa and the Wakhan Corridor. AKF is working to privatise these services to create sustainable local service providers. Farmer field schools teach farmers, both men and women, how to improve fodder, prepare mineral blocks and other management techniques.

Integrated Crop Management: AKF is working with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock in two government research stations which carry out trials and screening of improved wheat varieties to promote cereal crop development. The Foundation supplies improved seed varieties, propagates them, demonstrates them to farmers and encourages their wider use. Other activities include the improvement of vegetables, vegetable seed production, basic potato seed production through true potato seed technology, fodder improvement and trials of organic methods of pest control.

Cover photo: Tajik customers barter with an Afghan salesman in a cross-border bazaar at the international bridge linking Shughnan, Afghanistan and Khorog, Tajikistan. Weekly cross-border bazaars take place at three border bridges built or renovated by AKF which link communities in Afghanistan and Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan.

The Foundation promotes horticulture wherever the environment is suitable. True-to-type apple, pear, peach, plum, cherry and almond fruit saplings, as well as root stocks are grown in its three mother stock nurseries and more than 20 associated nurseries in the province. Improved varieties are introduced to farmers through demonstration orchards.

Forestry/Rangeland/Watersheds:

Activities emphasise planting trees, involving communities who require fuel wood, timber and fodder. Efforts are made to increase tree and vegetation cover on marginal lands to prevent soil erosion and to produce natural fodder. Local communities are involved through the creation of pasture management committees. Watershed management sites have been established on a pilot basis to demonstrate water harvesting and soil conservation techniques. The use of renewable energy technology is also promoted, such as solar cookers and heaters and hydro-powered water pumps.

Market Development

The Foundation seeks to encourage inclusive economic development in rural communities through the promotion of effective market systems supported by capable local institutions and cooperative networks of local people. AKF's emphasis has shifted from a livelihoods-based approach to one which considers interventions in the context of a broader value chain approach. In Badakhshan, AKF is designing and implementing interventions to develop the honey, poultry, apple, potato, cashmere and tourism sub-sectors. The Foundation aims to develop the capacity of local institutions, including private business development service providers, vocational training institutes and business membership organisations, to support economic development. AKF

has helped to organise vocational training in high-demand areas such as mobile phone repair, welding, carpentry, car mechanics, plumbing and electrical systems.

Tourism: Badakhshan's Wakhan district benefits from abundant natural beauty and a rich cultural and historical heritage of interest to Afghan and foreign tourists. Since 2006, AKF has been working with local people and the government to promote sustainable tourism as an additional source of income for the primarily agricultural population, while helping to preserve the local cultural and natural heritage. Activities have included establishing private family guesthouses and campsites, and publicising the potential for trekking, mountaineering and cultural tourism.

Infrastructure

Badakhshan's development is hampered by poor infrastructure. There are no paved all-weather roads in northeastern Badakhshan and many communities are isolated during the long winter months. Darwaz, the most inaccessible district of Badakhshan, has no road links to the provincial capital, Faizabad. It can take up to twelve days to reach Faizabad on foot from the remotest villages. AKF helps communities to build basic infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, canals, water supply systems, schools and clinics to improve communications and the provision of social services. The Foundation works with larger donors to build major infrastructure projects in response to regional needs, such as bridges and road links to neighbouring Tajikistan.

Education

AKF's education programme seeks to improve teaching and learning outcomes in government schools in Badakhshan through teacher training, improved "low-cost/no-cost" teaching

materials, strengthening school management and forming parent-teacher associations. Under its Government Schools Support Programme, AKF provides this support to government primary schools in Badakhshan. Assistance is aimed at "whole school improvement" - improving all aspects of a school, from its physical structure and furnishings to the quality of its teachers and the effectiveness of the school management. As a member agency of the Partnership for Advancing Community Education (PACE), the Foundation also works in areas where no government schools exist by establishing community-based primary classes to increase access to education, especially for girls.

Through its Girls' Education Support Programme, AKF works with the Ministry of Education to remove obstacles which prevent or limit education for girls in Afghanistan, increasing the enrolment and retention of girls in school and helping to improve their educational performance. In addition, the Foundation has introduced Early Childhood Education, recognising the importance of providing physical, mental and social training for children at an early age through stimulating play and learning. In Badakhshan, community pre-schools have been established to provide early childhood education for children aged from four to six years.

Informal literacy classes for adults, particularly mothers, also help to address the widespread illiteracy of rural Afghanistan. This training, which lasts nine months, allows parents to assist their children's learning and to play a more active role in the community.

Health

AKF collaborates with the Aga Khan Health Services (see below) to improve

A women's community savings group in Fitur, in Badakhshan's Wakhan district, meets to give out loans and collect repayments from its members. Community savings groups established by AKF enable people with no access to formal banking services to save money and to obtain loans for domestic or business purposes.



Farmers at a weekly farmers' field school in Baharak, Badakhshan, learn about horticultural techniques to increase the health and yield of their fruit trees. Farmers in such field schools also learn about livestock husbandry, food storage and processing, fodder production and other topics to enable them to farm more profitably.



International Development Partners of AKF in Afghanistan

Asian Development Bank
 Chaine de l'Espoir
 European Commission
 Food and Agriculture Organisation
 Government of Afghanistan
 Government of Canada
 Government of Germany
 Government of France
 Government of Japan
 Government of New Zealand
 Government of the Kingdom of Norway
 Government of Switzerland
 Government of the United Kingdom
 Government of the United States of America
 International Finance Corporation
 Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)
 UN Development Programme
 UN Officer for Drugs and Crime
 World Bank
 World Food Programme
 World Health Organisation

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healthcare provision in its programme areas, paying special attention to the needs of women and children. It is taking the lead in an extensive programme to upgrade Faizabad Provincial Hospital for the Ministry of Public Health. The Foundation has installed clean water supply systems and public latrines, and builds or upgrades buildings for health centres.

Other Activities of the Aga Khan Development Network

The Aga Khan Foundation is one constituent agency of the wider Aga Khan Development Network. Apart from the Foundation, five other international AKDN agencies work in Badakhshan.

Aga Khan Health Services: The Aga Khan Health Services (AKHS) took over the management of Faizabad Provincial Hospital for the Ministry of Public Health in 2009 and has begun an extensive programme of upgrading to improve and expand its services. AKHS runs a school in Faizabad to train community midwives, who then return to work in their remote villages. The agency staffs and operates a network of rural health centres, simple village health posts and mobile health units across the province to help provide the government's Basic Package of Health Services.

Aga Khan Education Services: The Aga Khan Education Services (AKES) manages an English-language and computer centre in Ishkashim to help provide students and job-seekers with employment skills. Also in Ishkashim, coaching classes are provided for Grade 12 pupils to help

them prepare for their final school examination and the national university entrance examination.

Aga Khan Agency for Microfinance:

The Aga Khan Agency for Microfinance (AKAM) has opened nine branches of the First MicroFinanceBank (FMFB) in Badakhshan to provide banking services for small and medium enterprises. Established in Afghanistan by AKAM in 2004, FMFB is now the country's largest provider of microfinance services. Services for farmers provided by AKAM's Afghanistan Rural Microcredit Programme (ARMP) until 2009 are now provided by FMFB.

Aga Khan Fund for Economic

Development: The Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED) is an international agency which makes strategic investments in key sectors to help strengthen the national economy in countries where it works. In Afghanistan, including Badakhshan, mobile telephone services are provided by Roshan, Afghanistan's leading telecommunications provider, established by AKFED in 2003.

Focus Humanitarian Assistance: Focus Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS) is an agency affiliated to AKDN which specialises in providing emergency humanitarian assistance. The agency implements a disaster preparedness programme in remote mountain villages of Badakhshan, providing training to enable communities to respond rapidly to emergencies and natural disasters such as landslides, floods and earthquakes.

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is a group of private development agencies working to empower communities and individuals, often in disadvantaged circumstances, to improve living conditions and opportunities, especially in Africa and Asia. Its agencies work in over 30 countries for the common good of all citizens, regardless of their gender, origin or religion. Its underlying impulse is the ethic of compassion for the vulnerable in society.

