



**AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE**  
**HISTORIC CITIES PROGRAMME**

**ONGOING ACTIVITIES**

**UPGRADING AND CONSERVATION  
IN CHINDAWOL, KABUL**

Initiated in 2005, a third stage of upgrading works in the Chindawol neighbourhood in the western end of the old city has now begun, with support from the **Royal Norwegian Embassy** in Kabul. Originally a walled garrison for the Qizilbash force formed by Nader Shah Afshar in the mid-18th century, Chindawol retains many traditional homes within its dense fabric. Many of these homes are in poor state of repair and have been subdivided and let to a number of families. Two-thirds of the residents of the neighbourhood are tenants, many of whom rely on casual work in the nearby commercial areas of Mandawi and Shor Bazaar, whose growth continues to put pressure on this fragile residential area, with homes being converted into workshops or depots.



A typical alleyway before upgrading

Detailed surveys by AKTC of the infrastructure and living conditions in Chindawol during 2004, which led to the formulation of a Neighbourhood Action Plan, highlighted serious drainage and access problems. Encouraged by the outcome of AKTC-implemented infrastructure upgrading works in Asheqan wa Arefan, the Chindawol community contributed to the repair and construction – also with Norwegian co-funding – of more than 650 metres of underground and surface drains and stone paving of almost 3,500 m<sup>2</sup> of streets and alleyways during 2005 and 2006. A labour-intensive approach was adopted, generating more than 1,000 work/days of employment for skilled labour and 6,500 work/days for labourers, most of whom are residents of Chindawol.

Under the current phase, upgrading measures will be extended to the **Khafia neighbourhood**, where some 1,200 people will benefit from levelling and paving of alleyways and laying of surface drains linking into the existing underground system, which will be repaired. In addition, the ruined **Sayyed Akbar Shah takiakhana** or prayer-hall, which retains traces of decorated plaster and timber screens, will be documented and restored, and the mature mulberry trees in its courtyard protected.

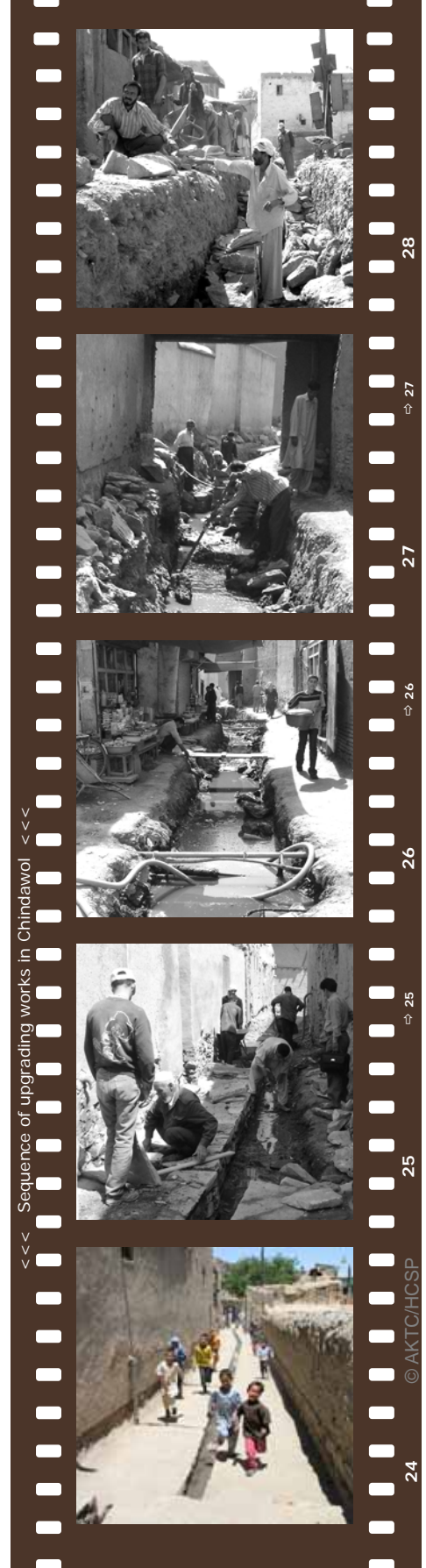
Between 2003 and 2007, almost half of AKTC's expenditure in the old city has been on environmental upgrading, in response to survey findings that indicate that living conditions for the majority remain poor, due both to the fragile and overcrowded housing stock and a legacy of under-investment in basic services and infrastructure.



On-site consultations with one of the *wakils* during construction of a new drain in Chindawol in 2005

For more information about AKTC's programme in Afghanistan, contact us in Qala Moeen Afzal Khan, Gozargah Street, District 3, Kabul or Qala Ikhtyaruddin, Herat [information@aktc.akdn-afg.org](mailto:information@aktc.akdn-afg.org)

The sequence of work undertaken during the course of drainage improvements implemented close to the Qurta mosque in Chindawol during 2005.



Sequence of upgrading works in Chindawol

28  
27  
26  
25  
24  
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## ISSUES



Eastern view of the Bala Hissar fortification, with the Lahore gate in the centre; by Bengal Sappers & Miners 1879, courtesy of the British Library

### ■ BALA HISSAR

Some 30 Afghan and international professionals and academics have added their names to an 'open letter' to President Karzai urging him to intervene to halt the use of heavy machinery for construction-related excavation that began in mid-May in the lower section of Kabul's historic citadel, the Bala Hissar. This letter draws attention to the historic significance of this site which, the signatories suggest, should be professionally surveyed and excavated.



Heavy machinery at work in May 2007 - the extent of damage to archaeological remains is still to be determined



### ■ EMERGENCY STABILIZATION IN THE OLD CITY OF HERAT

The safeguarding of historic public buildings is a key element in AKTC's strategy in the old city of Herat where, in the absence of effective controls, traditional buildings continue to be 'redeveloped' by their owners. Building on the experience gained on conservation of several mosques in the old city, resources made available by the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development in the Netherlands will enable repairs to take place on the **Hafezji mosque** in Abdullah Mesri quarter (below). As with other traditional buildings in the old city, poor drainage has affected the stability of this small community mosque, whose foundations will be strengthened and brick domes and vaults re-built where needed. Measures will also be taken to improve drainage in the narrow alleyways of this low-lying neighbourhood.



### ■ REVIVING TRADITIONS

In order to replace damaged sections of the characteristic decorated brickwork found on historic houses and public buildings, AKTC has established a small **workshop** in Herat for their production in the heart of the old city. Using gypsum moulds cast from surviving decoration, bricks are formed by hand and fired in a purpose-built kiln. As well as enabling restoration of damaged sections of brickwork, the revival of this age-old technique could encourage their use in contemporary buildings. Trials are under way in another kiln for production of incised tiles (large photo above) and glazed bricks.



## EVENTS



### ■ MIDSUMMER MUSIC

A public recital was held on 23rd June 2007 by musicians from the Aga Khan Music Initiative for Central Asia (AKMICA) in the courtyard of the newly-completed **caravanserai** at the base of Baghe Babur, Kabul. This is the first of a series of summer performances planned in the garden, which has witnessed unprecedented numbers of visitors so far this year.