



Aga Khan Foundation Activities in Baghlan and Samangan

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 thirty 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.

AKDN interventions in Baghlan and four neighbouring provinces began in 1996 with a relief programme implemented by Focus Humanitarian Assistance, an AKDN affiliate, under which fertiliser and improved seed were supplied to address food insecurity. From 2002, the Aga Khan Foundation began introducing long-term development programmes to meet the critical need for better infrastructure and improvements in education and healthcare.

The Foundation now implements programmes in nine districts of Baghlan province (Doshi, Khenjan, Tala-wa-

Barfak, Pul-i-Khumri, Dahna-e-Ghori, Baghlan-e-Jadid, Desalah, Pul-e-Hesar, Banu) and in four districts of Samangan province (Khuram-wa-Sarbagh, Aibak, Hazrat-e-Sultan, Pirnakhchir). These districts, located on the northern slopes of the Hindu Kush mountain range, are predominantly mountainous. The total population of AKF programme areas is 651,000 people.

The Foundation works to enhance livelihoods and strengthen governance institutions at the local, district and provincial levels. Interventions in the Baghlan and Samangan region focus on educational improvements, community mobilisation, strengthening local institutions and developing income-generating opportunities through natural resource management, enterprise and infrastructure improvements. All programmes conform to the economic and social aims of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and are undertaken in collaboration with the provincial governments.

AKF is working to improve the quality of life in Baghlan and Samangan 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 carry out local development projects. The Foundation is an NSP facilitating partner in seven districts of Baghlan where it has helped to establish 319 community development councils. Under this programme some 740 local development projects have been completed by the councils with support from AKF. These projects include installation of micro-hydropower and solar power units, road and irrigation improvements, construction of protection walls along roads and riverbanks, installation of clean water supply systems and building of community centres. AKF involves the NSP councils in all its programme interventions, giving them a leadership role wherever practicable.

A rice farmer in Baghlan demonstrates System of Rice Intensification (SRI) planting techniques, which have been introduced by AKF. The SRI method produces much greater rice yields while using less water.



Capacity Building of Local Institutions:

AKF provides additional training in leadership and governance to all community development councils in its programme areas to help them become key institutions of development and local governance, an aim shared by the provincial governments and the Ministry of Reconstruction and Rural Development. AKF has also assisted the establishment and strengthening of larger groupings of councils – Cluster-Level Development Councils (CLDCs) – which are able to address wider issues such as the regional management of schools, health centres, rangeland and watersheds and market development. AKF has provided additional capacity-building to about 60 of these cluster-level councils, as well as to district governors and to District Development Assemblies. Capacity-building activities include training in common property resource management, conflict resolution, leadership, gender sensitisation, poverty analysis and linkage building; health conferences; provision of micro-grants; and training in good governance for district governors.

AKF has assisted councils to undertake *social audits* – community meetings in which local residents are able to ask questions and comment on local development initiatives, as well as examining the council's accounts to satisfy themselves that development funds have been used wisely. AKF has introduced social audits across its programme areas to promote transparency and the local accountability of NSP councils.

Cover photo: Pupils carry out a science experiment in Khenjan Girls' Model School, in Baghlan province. The Aga Khan Foundation supports model schools to serve as an example of best educational practices and as a local teachers' resource centre for schools in the surrounding area.

Savings Groups: 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. Members can then borrow loans for small social or business investments, with the possibility of obtaining larger loans from formal microfinance institutions. To date, 150 savings groups have been established in two districts of Baghlan. Sixty per cent of these groups are women's savings groups, assisting women and their children in an environment where women's access to economic opportunities is extremely limited. AKF provides training in leadership and accountancy, particularly targeting women to encourage their active participation.

Natural Resource Management

Natural resource management activities focus on interventions and innovations in livestock husbandry, agriculture, horticulture, watershed, rangeland and forestry and social water management. These activities consolidate efforts to improve food security and contribute to the overall goal of enhanced livelihoods through sustainable economic and ecological development. The Foundation works in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock in fulfilling the aims of the ministry's master plan.

Livestock: Rural Afghans depend heavily on livestock for their livelihoods. The Foundation is helping to develop a system that delivers veterinary services through a network of nine livestock development centres and 35 smaller livestock field units. These centres and field units offer comprehensive market-based veterinary services, including vaccinations, treatment of acute

chronic diseases, artificial insemination, nutrition improvement practices and education on proper housing and hygiene of livestock. AKF is working to privatise these services to create sustainable local service providers. AKF also works to improve local animal husbandry through farmer field schools for both men and women, and Participatory Technology Development (PTD) groups, which show farmers how to improve fodder, prepare mineral blocks and other livestock management techniques. These activities focus on increasing productivity, animal welfare and value addition practices.

Integrated Crop Management: The majority of Afghans are subsistence farmers, who provide for their own basic needs, but cannot produce a surplus for marketing. AKF provides training and assistance to increase the farmers' productivity in cereal and vegetable crops and in horticulture. Agricultural programmes encourage diversification and sustainability of both traditional and innovative cropping techniques. The Foundation has established demonstration field plots and orchards and commercial mother stock tree nurseries in Baghlan and Samangan to introduce local farmers to new and improved varieties of crops and trees appropriate to local conditions.

Forestry/Watershed/Rangeland: The preservation and sustainable exploitation of Afghanistan's natural resources is a key policy in all AKF Natural Resource Management programmes. The Foundation works with communities on soil and water conservation demonstration sites to develop area management plans for common property resources such as pastures, rangelands and common

lands. AKF has rehabilitated more than 240 hectares of deforested and barren land in Baghlan and Samangan.

Sustainable Water Management: In parts of Baghlan where farmers depend on canal systems for irrigation, "tail-end" farmers at the end of degraded canal systems often receive little or no water for their fields. AKF is one partner in the European Union-funded Participatory Management of Irrigation Systems (PMIS) programme, which promotes the equitable distribution of water by improving community management of canal systems. Water users' associations of local farmers have been established and now manage the canals and oversee sharing of the water. In addition, the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) has been introduced to local farmers, a technique which increases rice production while using less water.

Market Development

AKF promotes the development of local markets, enterprise activity, skilled employment and local institutions which can improve economic development in rural communities. In Baghlan and Samangan, the Foundation facilitates value chain interventions in promising sectors, such as carpet-weaving, dried fruit production, poultry, dairy and milk cooperatives and processing of animal skins.

The Foundation helps to build the capacities of local agricultural business service providers through its programme of farmer field schools and network of livestock development centres. AKF also strengthens associations of local businesses, supports and develops private value chain businesses, and arranges

vocational training to increase local skill levels. In Baghlan, the Foundation promotes small businesses owned and managed by groups of poor women, such as food processing, garment-making and handicraft enterprises.

Infrastructure

AKF assists in the construction and rehabilitation of infrastructure, such as schools, clinics, public latrines, roads, bridges, canals and clean water supply systems to increase access to transport, communications and health services and to assist the development of income generating opportunities. Whenever possible, infrastructure projects employ local people in order to build local private sector capacity.

Education

AKF's education programme seeks to improve teaching and learning outcomes in government schools in Baghlan through teacher training, improved "low-cost/no-cost" teaching materials, strengthening school management and the establishment of parent-teacher associations. Under its Government Schools Support Programme, AKF provides this support to government primary schools in the province. 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 Baghlan, 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 next page) to improve health in its programme areas, paying special attention to the needs of women and children. AKF has installed clean water supply systems and public latrines, builds or upgrades buildings for health centres and organises community classes in basic health and hygiene.

Local men learn basic health and hygiene at classes organised in Baghlan province with the assistance of the Aga Khan Foundation and the Aga Khan Health Services.



A women's bakery in Pul-i-Khumri, Baghlan, was established with assistance from AKF but now works independently as a private business, producing cakes and biscuits which are sold in local shops.



International Development Partners in Afghanistan

Asian Development Bank
 Chaîne 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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Other Activities of the Aga Khan Development Network

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

Aga Khan Health Services: The Aga Khan Health Services (AKHS) works to improve healthcare provision in AKDN programme areas. AKHS manages two comprehensive health centres, five basic health centres and four health sub-centres in Doshi and Dahna-e-Ghori districts. A mobile health unit provides outreach services to remote districts. In Pul-i-Khumri, AKHS manages a midwifery school which trains midwives to work in remote villages where professional midwifery services otherwise do not exist.

Aga Khan Education Services: The Aga Khan Education Services (AKES) manages an English-language and computer centre in Pul-i-Khumri to help provide students and job-seekers with employment skills. Also in Pul-i-Khumri, 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 branches of the First MicroFinanceBank (FMFB) in

Baghlan 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 Baghlan and Samangan provinces, 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. In Baghlan, FOCUS has managed resettlement programmes for displaced families and provided emergency relief to needy communities. The agency also implements a disaster preparedness programme in remote mountain villages of Baghlan, providing training to enable them 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.

