



## Aga Khan Foundation Activities in Bamyan and Parwan

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.

AKDN activities in Bamyan and Parwan began in 1996 with a relief programme implemented by Focus Humanitarian Assistance, an AKDN affiliate. Improved seed and fertiliser were supplied to the area to address food insecurity and the effects of a prolonged drought in the high-altitude, marginal agricultural lands of the Central Highlands. From 2002, these relief activities were expanded to introduce long-term development programmes implemented by the Aga Khan Foundation and the Aga Khan Health Services to meet a critical need for improved infrastructure, education and healthcare.

In Afghanistan's Central Highlands area, AKF now undertakes programmes in five districts of Bamyan province (Shibar, Waras, Panjab, Bamyan Centre and Kahmard) and in two districts of Parwan province (Sheikh Ali and Surkh-e-Parsa). These programmes benefit a total population of 311,000 people. Interventions in the Central Highlands focus on educational improvements, community mobilisation, strengthening local institutions and developing income-generating opportunities through natural resource management, enterprise and infrastructure development. All programmes conform to the economic and social objectives of the Afghan government's National Development Strategy and are implemented in close collaboration with the provincial governments in Bamyan and Parwan provinces.

AKF is working to improve the quality of life in Bamyan and Parwan 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. AKF is an NSP facilitating partner in five districts of Bamyan and Parwan provinces, where it has helped to establish over 480 councils. Under the National Solidarity Programme more than 600 local development projects have been completed in Bamyan. These have included: installing micro-hydropower and solar power units; building roads, bridges and community centres; digging wells, *karezes* and irrigation canals; laying clean water pipelines and irrigation systems; and organising courses in literacy, tailoring, embroidery and carpet-weaving.

*Capacity Building of Local Institutions:* AKF assists community development councils by providing additional training to help them become key institutions

Farmers near Bamyan town load their harvest of potatoes for transport to market. Potatoes are the main cash crop for many farmers in Bamyan and elsewhere in the Central Highlands. AKF supports farmers in production, storage and marketing of crops.



of development and local governance, an aim shared by the Bamyan provincial government and the Ministry of Reconstruction and Rural Development. The Foundation 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 have taken part in leadership and conflict management workshops and in common property resource management training.

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 business 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.

*Programme for Professional Development (PPD):* The Programme for Professional Development is an AKF-supported training centre which seeks to strengthen the human resource base of the Central Highlands. The centre draws on expertise developed in AKF's rural development field programmes. It offers tailor-made courses and workshops on development issues and skills, reflecting the needs of government departments, local and international development agencies, the emerging private sector and local communities in the Central Highlands region. In 2009, the Programme for Professional Development began providing training for several provincial government departments and non-government organisations through its Intensive Support Programme. The centre also runs an eight-month Rural Development Management course for recent graduates which includes a three-month work placement with international or Afghan development organisations.

### **Natural Resource Management**

*Livestock:* The Foundation is helping to develop a system that delivers market-based veterinary services through a network of livestock development centres and field units. These centres and field units offer comprehensive veterinary services ranging from disease prevention to vaccinations. The centres also offer artificial insemination, a recent innovation in Afghanistan. AKF is working to privatise these services to create sustainable local service providers. AKF also assists the establishment of farmer field schools on livestock development, a nine-

month participatory course for men and women in which they learn about animal welfare, husbandry and feeding and the diagnosis of simple diseases.

*Integrated Crop Management:* In collaboration with Bamyan's government agricultural research centre and Bamyan University, AKF has experimented with new varieties of wheat, potatoes and other vegetables and new cropping techniques to improve overall crop yields. Such new techniques are introduced through farmer field schools and training-of-trainers schemes. Innovations based on Integrated Crop Management approaches are tested to determine cropping techniques suitable for conditions in Bamyan. Improved vegetable seeds and saplings, greenhouses and new methods of pest and disease management have also been introduced. A network of commercial and community tree nurseries and demonstration orchards has been established to help revitalise fruit production in Bamyan. The nurseries, run on a commercial basis, provide high-quality, virus-free saplings and cuttings to farmers across the region. Through integrated crop management programmes and a horticulture development centre in Sheikh Ali (Parwan), AKF provides technical support and services to farming communities. The Foundation has trained marginalised farmers with little land of their own to provide horticultural services such as pruning, budding and orchard management for a fee to other farmers.

*Forestry/Rangeland/Watersheds:* Pastures, rangelands and common lands are the most important sources for fodder and fuel wood in the Central Highlands. These critical sites act as catchments for water for agriculture, which means that interventions are

required to restore them and to promote their sustainable management. AKF has established forest nurseries and a number of rangeland and watershed management sites across Bamyan province to improve soil and water conservation and biomass regeneration. Watershed management sites are used to demonstrate new techniques for soil and water conservation, to cultivate local seeds and to involve local communities in developing resource management and site protection plans.

*Sustainable Land Management:* In collaboration with Bamyan University, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock and partner development organisations (CRS, JRS, Helvetas and Solidarites), AKF is establishing a Sustainable Land Management Institute in Bamyan to serve as a training centre for staff of Afghan and international organisations, farmers, government employees and other interested groups and individuals. The institute will draw participants from across the country but is based in Bamyan because of its central location, security and ecological diversity. It will focus on soil and water conservation, rangeland management, alternative technologies, irrigation and social mobilisation.

### 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. Currently, emphasis is placed

on skill development, introduction of new techniques and practices, and provision of business development services in selected value chains, such as apple, potato, honey and wool production. The Foundation promotes linkages between producers and the market, a critical element of business development which provides particular challenges in remote areas such as Bamyan and Parwan.

*Tourism:* Bamyan benefits from abundant natural beauty and a rich history and cultural heritage which have the potential to attract Afghan and foreign tourists, as they did in the 1960s and 1970s. Since 2008, AKF has been working with the government and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive strategy to restore the tourism industry as an important source of income for the local population, while preserving the province's cultural and natural heritage. This strategy includes developing tourism infrastructure such as campsites and privately run guesthouses, publicising tourist attractions and organising cultural festivals, such as the now annual Nowruz Festival held in spring in Bamyan town and the Silk Road Festival, held in midsummer in Band-e-Amir and Bamyan town.

### Infrastructure

AKF supports the construction or rehabilitation of infrastructure – roads, bridges, schools and health centres – to improve transport and increase access to education, healthcare and new income-generating opportunities. Wherever possible, infrastructure projects are used to build local private sector capacity.

## Education

AKF's education programme seeks to improve teaching and learning outcomes in government schools in Bamyan through teacher training, improved "low-cost/no-cost" teaching materials, by strengthening school management and forming parent-teacher associations. Under its Government Schools Support Programme, AKF provides this support to government primary schools in Bamyan. 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 Bamyan, 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

Locally hired workers dig a bund, or pit, near the Shibar Pass in Bamyan province. Such earthen "water harvesting" structures slow water runoff from steep, bare hillsides, helping to reduce erosion and increase plant cover.



Learning to write in a community primary class in Iraq village, Bamyan province. AKF and partner agencies assist the establishment and staffing of primary classes, managed by the local community, in remote villages where no schools would otherwise exist.



## International Development Partners 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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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 healthcare provision in its programme areas, paying special attention to the needs of women and children.

## 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 the Foundation, three other international AKDN agencies work in Bamyan and the Central Highlands region.*

**Aga Khan Health Services:** The Aga Khan Health Services (AKHS) manage Bamyan Provincial Hospital for the Ministry of Public Health. The hospital is currently undergoing extensive upgrading to expand its services and reach. AKHS runs a school in Bamyan town to train community midwives. The agency also operates three Basic Health Centres, one sub-clinic and a community health programme in Shibar district to help provide the government's Basic Package of Health

Services. Healthcare programmes are designed to reach vulnerable groups, with a particular focus on maternal and child health.

### **Aga Khan Agency for Microfinance:**

The Aga Khan Agency for Microfinance (AKAM) opened a branch of the First MicroFinanceBank (FMFB) in Bamyan town in 2009 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 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 Bamyan and Parwan provinces, mobile telephone services are provided by Roshan, Afghanistan's leading telecommunications provider, established by AKFED in 2003. Roshan also provides a telemedicine link between Bamyan Provincial Hospital and the French Medical Institute for Children in Kabul, enabling rapid communication with medical specialists in Kabul and the Aga Khan University Hospital in Karachi.

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.

