



Aga Khan Foundation Activities in Takhar and Kunduz

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. The Foundation implements programmes in civil society, agriculture, infrastructure, small enterprise development and education.

The Foundation began working in Takhar and Kunduz provinces in 2003, directing programmes from its regional office in Pul-i-Khumri, Baghlan. Early programmes focused on improving food security with assistance such as providing improved seed and livestock extension services. As programme activities grew more extensive, a new regional office was opened in Taloqan in 2009 to direct activities in these two provinces, providing greater continuity in programme coverage between central and northeastern Afghanistan.

AKF now implements programmes in 11 districts of Takhar province (Taloqan,

Bangi, Khwajaghar, Kalafgan, Baharak, Farkhar, Warsaj, Rustaq, Chah Ab, Yangi Qala, Dashti Qala) and three districts of Kunduz province (Kunduz, Aliabad, Khanabad) as well as in Kishm district in Badakhshan province. These programmes benefit a total population of 956,000 people.

Interventions in Takhar and Kunduz focus on community mobilisation, strengthening local institutions and developing local markets and livelihoods through natural resource management, enterprise and infrastructure improvements. All programmes support the objectives of the Afghan government's National Development Strategy and are implemented in close collaboration with the provincial governments in Takhar and Kunduz.

AKF is working to improve the quality of life in Takhar and Kunduz 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 and to provide a formal structure for democratic local governance. The Foundation assists in the implementation of NSP in Takhar, helping to establish community development councils and women's committees or women's CDCs. AKF now works with 149 councils in Takhar to carry out a range of local development projects. More than 160 projects completed in the province so far 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.

Capacity Building of Local Institutions: AKF provides additional training to community development councils aimed at helping them to become competent, inclusive, democratic and accountable village-based institutions, a goal shared by the national government. In their work with councils, AKF social organisers emphasise the importance of volunteer community projects such as road repair and canal cleaning, and public participation in annual

In Warsaj, the owner of a commercial apple orchard examines his trees. AKF has assisted the development of horticulture by providing training in horticultural techniques and establishing private, commercial mother stock nurseries which supply new and improved varieties of fruit and nut trees.



campaigns to promote school enrolment, vaccinations, road-building and tree planting in public spaces.

AKF also assists councils to undertake *social audits* – community meetings in which all 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.

The Foundation has supported the organisation of community development councils into 16 groups known as Cluster-Level Development Councils (CLDCs). These cluster-level councils are able to address wider issues such as the provision of schools and health centres, rangeland and watershed management and enterprise development. With funding from the German development bank, *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)*, AKF has begun more intensive work with the government's district development assemblies in Takhar and Kunduz, assisting them in district-level planning and training. AKF organises training, conferences and other activities for all these institutions on project management, advocacy, disaster preparedness, gender sensitisation, health and education.

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.

Since 2009, AKF has established more than 200 savings groups in Warsaj and Kalafgan districts of Takhar province. About 60 per cent of these are women's groups. In less than two years, savings groups in Takhar have saved a total of Af1.3 million (US \$26,000). Of this sum, Af 800,000 (\$16,000) has been reused as loans.

Takhar Development Forum: In 2009, AKF and four other international development agencies created the Takhar Development Forum, which works to strengthen civil society and to improve collaboration in development activities with key government offices. The Forum has developed capacity-building programmes, including the Good Governance Series of workshops which bring together all of Takhar's district governors twice a year to discuss topics such as conflict resolution and poverty analysis. The Forum also assists provincial departments to increase their effectiveness and to meet the needs of rural communities beyond the provincial capital, Taloqan. Through another programme, the Forum provides financial and technical support to three local NGOs to enable them to take leadership in meeting community development needs.

Natural Resource Management
The Natural Resource Management programme focuses on interventions in

livestock, horticulture, watershed, rangeland, forestry and social water management to improve food security and to help improve rural livelihoods. This work is carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, the Ministry of Energy and Water, community development councils and the private sector.

Livestock: In Takhar, the Foundation is helping to develop a system that delivers veterinary services through a network of eight livestock development centres staffed by certified veterinary doctors. These centres provide market-based animal health, nutrition and breed improvement services. They also offer artificial insemination for cattle, a recent innovation in Afghanistan, in order to improve the quantity and quality of dairy and meat products. To extend the centres' reach to remoter areas, 31 para-veterinarians have been trained in neighbouring Baghlan province to offer basic on-farm services. In Takhar and Kunduz, livestock farmer field schools teach animal welfare, husbandry, nutrition and diagnosis of livestock and poultry diseases in courses lasting from seven to twelve months.

Integrated Crop Management: In collaboration with the Takhar government's agricultural research centre, AKF has experimented with new wheat and sunflower varieties and vegetable cropping techniques to improve overall crop yields. Simple plastic greenhouses have been introduced so that farmers can produce vegetables during the off-season, when market prices are higher. In two districts of Kunduz, nearly 400 farmer field school participants have been enrolled in courses of six to eight months, which focus on rice, wheat, onion and tomato production. AKF also provides training for women to upgrade their skills in kitchen vegetable gardening and improve their families' nutritional intake.

Cover photo: A veterinary doctor examines a cow in Farkhar, Takhar province. The Aga Khan Foundation has established a network of livestock centres which provide veterinary and other services in Takhar and other provinces.

A network of more than 20 commercial tree nurseries and some 220 community nurseries and demonstration orchards has been established to help revitalise fruit and nut production in Takhar. Run on a commercial basis, these nurseries provide high-quality and exotic varieties of virus-free saplings and rootstock to local farmers. Innovations based on Integrated Crop Management methods are used to test horticultural and pest management techniques suitable for local conditions. Farmer field schools teach horticultural topics to 240 farmers a year in an eight-month participatory course where orchard design, irrigation, pruning, fertilising, pest and disease control can be demonstrated and practiced. Under the Participatory Technology Development programme, 350 farmers a year develop their knowledge of organic fertilisers and biological pest and disease control through participatory sessions over nine months

In addition, support has been provided to the Takhar Nursery Growers' Association, to university agricultural faculty staff and students, and to government staff to expand support to fruit growers across the province. Grafting and pruning campaigns are promoted annually, as well as training for private service providers, to enhance the productivity of fruit and nut trees.

Forestry/Rangeland/Watersheds: Pastures, rangelands and common lands are important sources of fodder and fuel wood in Takhar, as well as serving as catchments for agricultural water. Many have been overgrazed and mismanaged due to conflict and instability, so AKF promotes interventions to restore them and promote their sustainable management. The Foundation has established

protected pistachio and general reforestation sites and a number of rangeland and watershed management sites across Takhar to improve soil and water conservation. Watershed management sites are used to demonstrate new techniques for soil and water conservation and to help community committees to develop resource management plans. AKF has also initiated annual tree planting campaigns to increase the number of trees in public spaces.

Social Water Management: In parts of Takhar where farmers depend on irrigation canal systems, "tail-end" farmers at the end of degraded canal systems often receive little or no water to irrigate their fields. Since 2005, AKF has been 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 which now manage the canals and oversee the sharing of water in an area covering over 7,000 hectares of land along 10 main canals. In addition, the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) has been introduced, a technique which increases rice production while using less water.

Market Development

AKF's market development activities focus on providing technical support to develop markets in strategic areas of potential economic growth. After assessing local markets in Takhar, construction, textiles, beekeeping, dairy/meat production and agricultural food processing were identified as the key value chains where the Foundation would concentrate its efforts. AKF seeks to increase profit generation and employment opportunities by supporting local enterprises and

"We would like to reiterate our long-term commitment to this region, of which Afghanistan and we are an integral part of its peoples. The Development Network is already scaling up its efforts, in collaboration and with the support of the international community, to enable Afghans to transform their existence from extreme poverty to choice and opportunity within a context that safeguards, for each of them, their right to their own identities, and to preserve and practise their faiths and traditions."

- His Highness the Aga Khan, in a statement delivered on his behalf, at the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, Tokyo, Japan, 20 January 2002.

District governors from Takhar province discuss poverty analysis at a workshop. AKF organises regular workshops for district governors and other government officials to focus on key issues and ways to improve local governance.



Garmsir Bridge, built by AKF with funding from the German agency, GTZ, provides a transport link across the Kokcha River in Takhar province. It enables pedestrians and small vehicles from villages north of the river to reach the main east-west highway south of the river, avoiding a much longer alternative route.



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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business development service providers, strengthening vocational skills and building the capacity of business associations in these value chains. AKF also works with public institutions, such as the Takhar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to create an enabling environment for economic growth.

Infrastructure

AKF assists the construction or rehabilitation of infrastructure in Takhar and Kunduz - roads, bridges, schools, health centres - to improve transport and increase access to services such as education and healthcare, as well as to promote new income-generating opportunities. Wherever possible, infrastructure projects are used to build local private sector capacity.

Health

The Aga Khan Foundation works to improve public healthcare in its programme areas, paying particular attention to the needs of women and children. AKF has installed clean drinking water supply systems and public latrines, builds or upgrades buildings for health centres and organises community classes promoting positive health and hygiene practices.

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, two other international AKDN agencies work in Takhar and Kunduz.

Aga Khan Agency for Microfinance:

The Aga Khan Agency for Microfinance (AKAM) opened branches of the First MicroFinanceBank (FMFB) in Kunduz town in 2006 and in Taloqan in 2008 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) makes strategic investments in key sectors to help strengthen the national economy in the countries where it works. In Afghanistan, including Takhar and Kunduz provinces, mobile telephone services are provided by Roshan, Afghanistan's leading telecommunications provider, established by AKFED in 2003.

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.

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Aga Khan Agency for Microfinance

Aga Khan Education Services

AGA KHAN FOUNDATION

Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development

Aga Khan Health Services

Aga Khan Planning and Building Services

AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

University of Central Asia