



AKDN

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK



Spring 2024 Newsletter
Pakistan Edition

Convocation Caps a Historic Year for the Aga Khan University



17 February 2024: Convocation Caps a Historic Year for the Aga Khan University

More than 730 students across four countries graduated from Aga Khan University on February 17, with ceremonies graced by Princess Zahra Aga Khan and dignitaries such as Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Education, Ezekiel Machogu, who delivered a speech on behalf of Kenyan President William Ruto. Princess Zahra encouraged graduates to embrace the challenges and opportunities ahead, echoing the university's commitment to service and pluralism. The graduates, predominantly women, received degrees in various fields including nursing, medicine, education, and journalism across ceremonies in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Pakistan. AKU celebrated its 40th anniversary on March 16, 2023. Princess Zahra detailed some of the many achievements that have made the University's 40th anniversary year one of the most consequential in its history. Four new academic programmes welcomed their first students, increasing total enrollment to more than 3,600 for the first time in the University's history. Construction began on the University's new 60-acre campus in Uganda, which will feature an academic centre, student housing and a new Aga Khan University Hospital. In Nairobi, the Aga Khan University Hospital implemented East Africa's first integrated electronic health records system. In Tanzania, the University launched the Arusha Climate and Environmental Research Centre. President Sulaiman Shahabuddin attributed the university's success to the vision of its founder, His Highness the Aga Khan. Looking ahead, AKU plans to expand its academic offerings, research capabilities, and healthcare services, aiming to deepen partnerships and attain further international accreditation.

Princess Zahra Aga Khan, Ezekiel Machogu, Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kenya, Dr Sulaiman Shahabuddin, President AKU along with other senior dignitaries attended the ceremony.

Braving the Elements: A Lady Health Visitor's Perilous Journey to Deliver a Baby in Chitral



Nafas during her work hours on a winter day.

23 November 2022: It was past midnight when Lady Health Visitor, Nafas Bibi, was approached by relatives of a woman in prolonged labour. The village where she was needed, Inchipun is one of the remotest villages in its catchment and was 10 hours walk away from her health facility in Shuist. It was -20 degrees Celsius outside, and the roads were covered in snow. Halfway to the village, their car got stuck in the extreme snow conditions. Determined to save her patient, Nafas Bibi set out on foot, leaving the vehicle behind. After walking for five gruelling hours, she managed to reach the patient's home. When they arrived, the baby had been born in a healthy condition, however, the mother was bleeding. Nafas examined her and found that the placenta was retained. She tried to manually remove the placenta but was unsuccessful. She knew that the mother needed to be in a facility if her life was to be saved. Nafas referred the family to AKMC, B, a facility with a gynecologist and comprehensive emergency obstetric new-born care services. As the road was blocked, the family and relatives took a stretcher and carried it on their shoulders for around four hours till they reached the car. The journey took all day and they reached AKMC, B in the evening. The gynecologist conducted an assessment with ultrasound and completed basic lab investigations. The patient's hemoglobin was low, so a blood transfusion was arranged. Another unsuccessful attempt was made for removal of the placenta under general anesthesia. The doctors were therefore left with no option but to perform a surgical procedure. The procedure was successful, and after recovery and observation the mother and her new-born were discharged.

HBL Zarai Services Pioneering Sustainable Agriculture for National Development



On 26 February 2024, HBL launched its new subsidiary HBL Zarai Services, a significant step forward in the realm of agricultural development in Pakistan, in alignment with the strategic goals of the country and the vision of Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). As the first agriculture-specialized extension services company in Pakistan, HBL Zarai Services, is dedicated to empowering farmers by providing critical resources and expertise to improve productivity, efficiency, and profitability across the entire agricultural value chain. The company emphasizes sustainable and environmentally responsible farming practices to safeguard the long-term health of farming communities and natural resources. The launch event was graced by Dr. Inayat Hussain, Deputy Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, Sultan Ali Allana, Chairman of HBL, Muhammad Aurangzeb, President & CEO of HBL, and Amer Aziz, CEO of HBL Zarai Services. HBL Zarai solidifies the bank's commitment to the agricultural sector since its privatization in 2004, aiming to significantly impact farmers' lives and enhance food security. Muhammad Aurangzeb, President & CEO of HBL, and Amer Aziz, CEO of HBL Zarai Services, both emphasized the critical role of this venture in promoting sustainable agricultural practices, improving value chains, with a focus on increasing farmer income levels and farm yields for uplifting the economy. On the launch ceremony HBL Zarai, Sultan Ali Allana, Chairman - HBL said, "We have been actively pursuing programmes and introducing solutions for the growth and progress of the Agricultural Sector since the privatization of the bank in 2004. Al'Humdullilah HBL Group today is the single largest institutional provider of financial services for this segment of the economy directly impacting over 350,000 farmers. With the formation and launch of HBL Zarai, Insha'Allah, we will be able to host advisory and input services along with offtake and warehousing right at the farmers doorstep through Deras - dedicated distribution and service centers etched among the heart of the farmlands thus ensuring food security and income enhancement for the farming communities throughout the country."



Chairman HBL, Mr. Sultan Ali Allana during his speech at the launching ceremony.

The GB Women Empowerment Policy Strategy and Action Plan (2024-2029)



*Haji Gulbar Khan Honourable
Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan,
Fida Hussain, Secretary Social
Welfare, Population welfare, Youth
Affairs, Women Development,
Human and Child Rights,
Gilgit-Baltistan, and other
Government and AKRSP
representatives during the
launching ceremony.*

8 March 2024: The GB Women Empowerment Policy Strategy and Action Plan (2024-2029) is a pivotal step towards addressing gender disparities in Gilgit Baltistan (GB), Pakistan. Launched on International Women's Day, 8th March 2024, the policy signifies a commitment to advancing women's rights and empowerment. The choice of this significant date underscores the global recognition of women's struggles and achievements, aligning with the policy's aim to promote gender equality. The launch took place in Gilgit, the administrative capital of GB, symbolising a grassroots approach to empower women across diverse districts of the region. Notably, the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) played a crucial role in collaborating with the government to realise this initiative through leveraging its technical expertise and financial support to develop a policy document.

This collaboration underscores the importance of partnerships between governmental and non-governmental entities in driving sustainable development efforts. Working hand-in-hand, AKRSP and the government demonstrate a shared commitment to uplifting women and creating an inclusive society. The policy encompasses a comprehensive framework, addressing key thematic areas such as education, economic empowerment, health, civic participation, environmental resilience, and human rights. It recognises the multifaceted challenges faced by women in GB, including patriarchal norms, limited access to education, early marriages, and under-representation in decision-making processes. Through strategic pillars and targeted interventions, the policy aims to foster tangible improvements in women's lives, ensuring their voices are heard and their rights are protected. By launching this policy on International Women's Day and engaging diverse stakeholders, GB takes a significant stride towards building a more equitable and inclusive society.

Serena Hotels continues to champion the cause of women's empowerment and Inclusion



3 March 2024: A heartwarming story of empowerment and inclusion unfolded when Serena Hotels collaborated with the Australian High Commission and the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC), embarking on a remarkable journey to transform the lives of visually impaired women and girls through the power of cricket. From March 3rd to 8th, 2024, Serena Hotels proudly sponsored a six-day cricket training programme, inviting visually impaired women and girls from across Pakistan to participate. This initiative was more than just a sporting event; it was a testament to the transformative impact of sports diplomacy in fostering social change and breaking down barriers. Under the expert guidance of coaches and mentors, these brave and determined individuals got an opportunity to hone their cricketing skills, defying the odds and showcasing their remarkable talents on the field. Serena Hotels recognized the importance of providing opportunities for women and girls with disabilities to excel in sports, promoting their inclusion and fostering a culture of equality and respect. As the echoes of camaraderie filled the air, Serena Hotels reaffirmed its commitment towards creating a more inclusive society, where every individual, regardless of ability, has the opportunity to thrive and succeed. Through initiatives like the cricket training programmes, Serena Hotels continues to champion the cause of women's empowerment and social impact, leaving a legacy of hope and inspiration for the generations to come.

Visually impaired women and girls playing cricket.

Transforming Education through Project Based Learning



Recognising the challenges faced by the education system in Pakistan, from deeply rooted rote learning and memorisation to dependence on traditional teaching methodologies, the AKU Examination Board has emerged strong in addressing some of these challenges not only through its examinations design but also innovative programmes for learning beyond classroom. In recent years, the board has emerged as a pioneer in successful, contextually relevant implementation of Project-based Learning (PBL) through its Primary School Programme (PSP) for grades IV and V, and Middle School Programme (MSP) for grades VI through VIII. While MSP helps towards a smooth transition to secondary school studies by encouraging students to approach learning differently, recognise linkages across disciplines and move from knowledge to conceptual understanding and application, the PSP provides a holistic education that addresses cognitive, social, emotional and physical needs of children preparing them for school and life. Rooted in the principles of innovation and inspiration, these initiatives champion the integration of authentic, interdisciplinary Project-Based Learning, heralding a new era of student-centered education. At the core of AKU-EB PBL lies a steadfast commitment to nurturing essential transversal competencies, often referred to as 21st-century skills. These competencies encompass a spectrum of abilities, including information gathering,

communication, problem-solving, and resilience. Through a student-centric approach, AKU-EB PBL projects immerse young learners in real-world experiences, fostering active engagement with their local context and nurturing a spirit of inquiry and discovery. AKU-EB PBL projects are aligned with Pakistan's National Curriculum and the UN Sustainable development Goal #4.

In the UNESCO Education Monitoring Report, AKU-EB's Middle School Programme has been highlighted to promote 21st Century Skills. These projects encourage students to become independent learners equipping them with skills necessary for lifelong learning. In addition, AKU-EB provides continuous support to teachers helping them to move away from traditional approaches and adopt best practices in teaching, learning and assessment. Moreover, the teachers enhance their skills for assessment of competencies based on direct observation, rather than focusing only on assessment of knowledge. These programmes are seen as a practical approach to changing the very foundation of education system in Pakistan where rote memorisation and traditional teaching methodologies are deeply rooted. Driven to foster deeper understanding of concepts and higher order cognitive skills, AKU-EB PBL programme will continue to bring an innovative approach to learning at par with international standards.

Aga Khan School students practice the power of diplomacy



Students participating in Model United Nations in Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, Karachi.

The Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, Karachi hosted its annual AKES,P Model United Nations (MUN), a chance for students to experience how diplomacy works, and how it can be put to use to resolve global challenges. MUN simulations are great learning opportunities, with students increasing their knowledge of global issues as well as becoming familiar about the role and functions of the United Nations. Thousands of students across the globe each year participate in MUN simulations and as a result get to engage with challenges facing countries and communities across the world, and applying their skills and knowledge to finding resolutions. The AKES,P MUN is organized each year to provide students such invaluable peer learning opportunities outside the classroom. Students from Aga Khan Schools in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral, along with more than 600 students from 70 other schools and colleges from across Pakistan participated in a weekend of diplomacy, debate, and reflection on world issues. Student delegates passionately represented different countries, educating themselves on current affairs and delivering compelling speeches as they debated global issues and resolution of conflicts. AKES,P MUN is a student-led initiative, with the school's student leadership responsible for planning and managing the entire event. Along with a culture of academic rigour that is reflected in the school's exemplary achievements each year in board examinations, the Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, Karachi encourages students to take on leadership positions and responsibility, and to explore their talents in the fields of sports, music, art, debate and diplomacy.

The Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan, and the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Pakistan join hands to promote entrepreneurship across Pakistan.



Islamabad, 3 April 2024: The Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan (AKF, P) and the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Pakistan (ICMAP) signed an MoU to collaborate towards the promotion of entrepreneurship across Pakistan by way of providing pre-financing technical assistance, co-working spaces, incubation programmes and patient financing to aspiring entrepreneurs and small-scale businesses. Mr Shehzad Ahmed Malik, President of ICMAP, during the ceremony, said, “The incubation center is the flagship project of ICMAP, and we are glad to have AKF on board. As we know, the youth of Pakistan with its immense talent is contributing as 4th largest freelancing workforce globally. In this prevalent landscape, ICMAP Incubation Center aims to serve as catalyst for economic growth by cultivating a fertile environment for aspiring entrepreneurs. We are keenly looking forward to great times ahead on this new venture with AKF and provide a platform to entrepreneurs to develop their ideas into successful businesses through mentorship, networking, and access to essential resources.” Mr. Amin Feerasta, Chairman of National Committee AKF, Pakistan, noted, “On behalf of Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), we thank ICMAP for the collaboration with Accelerate Prosperity. The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) works in

over 30 countries and uses an integrated development approach to improve the quality of life of those in need. Accelerate Prosperity (AP) is a global initiative of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) through which it offers creative financial solutions as well as pre and post investment technical assistance to help grow early-stage businesses, startups, small and growing businesses and innovative ideas. In Pakistan, AP has been providing services nationally with a special focus on Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi, Hyderabad and recently Gwadar. The collaboration with ICMAP aligns with AP’s commitment to promote entrepreneurship across the country.”

Mr. Akhtar Iqbal in his concluding remarks thanked ICMAP and shared, “This partnership will open significant opportunities for AKF/AP and ICMA to collaborate in various programmes especially in sharing co-working spaces and accessing expertise in financial analysis and management. The Virtual Accelerate initiative of AP will provide a good virtual platform for ICMAP for offering entrepreneurship courses to all its students. Both entities will be benefitting while contributing to promoting small businesses across the country.”

AFD Mission visits AKCSP Lahore Fort Sites: Preserving Heritage in Pakistan



AFD team with AKTC GM Mr. Luis Monreal at the Summer Palace, Lahore fort.

19 August 2022: The French Agency for Development (AFD) conducted a mission in Pakistan from February 19th to 23rd, 2024, to assess the Heritage and Urban Regeneration of Lahore Fort and its Buffer Zone (HURL) project. Led by Ms. Juliette le Paner, Task Team Leader in the Urban Development and Housing Division at AFD HQ, alongside Mr. Herve Dubriel, Deputy Head, and Mr. Ahsan Paracha, Project Manager, the mission aimed to evaluate the progress of the project one year since its signing on July 7th, 2022. The project, financed by AFD, aims to preserve the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Lahore Fort while improving quality of life, generating revenue, and promoting tourism in the area. In collaboration with the Punjab Walled Cities Authority (PWCA) and Aga Khan Cultural Service Pakistan (AKCS-P), the initiative includes restoration and conservation efforts, establishment of a world-class visitor interpretation centre, tourism management enhancements, and energy efficiency measures. Additionally, the development of the buffer zone seeks to connect the fort with the surrounding walled

city through infrastructure upgrades. During the mission, AFD officials, accompanied by Mr. Luis Monreal, General Manager of AKTC, CEO AKCS-P Mr. Tausif Ahmad, and Director General of PWCA Mr. Kamran Lashari, visited Lahore Fort sites, facilitated by the AKCS-P project team. The mission successfully reviewed and commended the ongoing work on key project components, which include the renovation and adaptive reuse of the Akbari Gate aimed at connecting the fort to the eastern walled city, and the ongoing restoration of the Khilwat Khana site as part of the new tourism circuit. The team also explored sites where several new archaeological discoveries were made in the Summer Palace and the Akbari Gate, further enhancing the historical significance of the project. The mission concluded with a dinner at Shalimar Gardens, also a UNESCO World Heritage Site, graciously hosted by PWCA. The event provided a unique opportunity for cultural exchange and appreciation as dignitaries and artists enjoyed enchanting dance and music performances in the timeless ambiance of the historical gardens.

Broghil Valley road opens up new opportunities



Road in Broghil valley.

AKRSP undertook construction of 21 km road, along with the installation of two jeepable bridges, to ensure all-weather access to the remote and isolated Broghil Valley in Upper Chitral. According to the local community members, the local people had to travel with their luggage on their backs or use horses for more than 10 hours just to buy items for their households. Sometimes it took up to 14 hours to access medical facilities. There was extremely limited economic activity in the area due to the accessibility issues. Agricultural land was underutilised due to lack of awareness and farming technologies. The construction of this road has been a game changer for the residents of the Broghil Valley who were deprived of basic facilities till recently. This road has not only improved the farming livelihoods but has reduced the long distances between the communities and the health facilities. Improved road conditions are expected to enhance cross-border socio-economic exchanges, provide better access to services and economic opportunities, and increase tourist inflow during events like the Broghil festival. Completion of the road is directly impacting more than 6000 members of local communities in Broghil Valley, up to Lashkargaz, the last settlement near the Afghan border. AKRSP also implemented flood protection measures covering a 60-meter length, improved a 9 km existing road from Kishmanja to Garamchasma, and constructed 7 km of link roads to connect sub-villages with the main Broghil Valley, facilitating easier vehicular access for local communities. This project was supported by the Pakistan Afghanistan Tajikistan Regional Integration Programme (PATRIP) Foundation and Central Asia Poverty Programme.

Empowering Women in Mathematics: Bridging the Gender Gap



Girls participating in educational activities to spark their interest in mathematics.

The Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) successfully concluded its weeklong celebration of the International Day of Mathematics (IDM) 2024 with a Grand Showcase inspired by this year's theme: "Playing with Math," on March 8, 2024. The IDM is a global celebration aimed at promoting the joy of learning mathematics. AKU-IED organized a series of events throughout the week, including workshops and activities for educators and students alike.

In her opening remarks, Dr Munira Amirali, Assistant Professor and IDM Event Chair at AKU-IED, emphasized that "Play-based learning facilitates children's cognitive development, promotes logical reasoning, and helps them link different mathematical concepts, reframing mathematics as an interesting subject in their minds." The Grand Showcase featured creative math games designed for over 150 out-of-school children, mostly girls, who participated in educational activities to spark their interest in mathematics. Ms. Shireen Hussain, CEO and Co-Founder of Sindh Singhaar Initiative, graced the

occasion as the Chief Guest, underscoring the importance of learning mathematics in our daily lives. As the event also marked International Women's Day, it showcased engaging math games created by female educators from across Karachi, supervised by an all-woman workshop planning team from AKU-IED.

"The dedication of AKU-IED and its partners in promoting the joy of learning mathematics is commendable. By working together to create engaging educational experiences, we are nurturing a generation of students who will excel in mathematics," said AKU President Dr Sulaiman Shahabuddin. The event was organized in partnership with Right to Play, Directorate of Non-formal Education, Sindh Singhaar Initiative, The Dawood Foundation's Magnificience Centre, Durbeen, and others. In his concluding remarks, Dr Farid Panjwani, Professor and Dean of AKU-IED, reflected that "This celebration underscores our commitment to innovative and effective teaching practices. By engaging educators and students in playful math activities, we aim to cultivate a love for mathematics and inspire lifelong learning."

Sculpted Whispers: Echoes of the Melting World



*The sculpture showing the bond of
“Mother and Child” prepared under
the theme of Nature’s bond*

The Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH) Pakistan, in partnership with the Government of Gilgit Baltistan’s (GoGB) Tourism, Sports, Culture, Archaeology & Museums Department and local artists organised a transcending art and advocacy exhibition titled ‘Sculpted Whispers: Echoes of a Melting World’. ‘Sculpted Whispers’ aimed to draw attention to the urgent and existential issue of rapidly melting glaciers, and the need for climate actions for a deeper understanding of the environmental challenges faced by the region.

A team of five artists (02 women and 03 men), crafted eye-catching sculptures and calligraphy from the ice, sand, river sediments and frozen stream, to illustrate the impact of human actions on Climate Change. AKAH’s Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers remained engaged in mobilizing community, raising awareness and ensuring personal safety of visitors at the event. Each sculpture went beyond artistic creation, embodying the frozen wonders of our Earth, serving as poignant reminders of disappearing beauty due to global warming. Delegates including Secretary Finance-Gilgit Baltistan, Assistant Commissioner and District Commissioner for Hunza region also visited the art exhibition and appreciated the unique idea for raising awareness on such an important global issue.

The exhibition proved to be a powerful tool for communication, environmental education, advocacy, and transformation, and to spark conversations, inspire change and leave an indelible mark on the hearts and minds. The event was attended by people from all walks of life including community members, government officials, social activists, students and tourists. ‘Sculpted Whispers - Echoes of a Melting World’ is more than an exhibition; it’s a movement. A movement where art, nature, and community unite to forge a sustainable and resilient future.



Dear Readers,

We are happy to bring the latest updates and stories from the field for the first quarter of 2024. The impact has been achieved due to the hard work of AKDN agencies working on the ground and the communities who have become the owners of the development process. We will keep our readers updated of the good work that is being done in the country by AKDN. We want to thank the Government of Pakistan for the strong support as well as all our partners who have been supporting our development work in the country for many decades. Thank you for your encouragement and the messages we have received about our work.

If you have any questions about the articles, please contact the editor Laila Naz Taj, Director, AKDN Pakistan Communications, at laila.taj@akdn.org.

We want to extend our gratitude to Karim Sayani and Carol Oyola (AKU), Mashall Shaukat (AKCS-P), Janelle Dias (AKU-IED), Shanoz Aqnazabekova (AKU- EB), Imran Hassan and Sidra Zaheer (Serena Hotels Pakistan), Maya Ismail and Mashal Mabood (HBL), Ponum Hamza (AKRSP), Seema Samad and Mehar Aftab (AKAH,P), Rubab Karar and Rafiq Bharwani (AKES,P), Younus Khan (AKHS,P), Irshad Khan Abbasi, Naveed Ahmed (AKF,P), Géraldine Ausino, Graphic Designer (AKDN), Afzal Shahabuddin and Karim Hassan, Department of Communications, The Ismaili Council for Pakistan for their contributions.

The next volume of AKDN Newsletter will be available in Summer 2024. For more information, visit our website the.akdn/Pakistan and AKDN Pakistan Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/akdnpakistan>.

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