



Supporting the Education System

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is working with the Ministry of Education (MoE) at both local and national levels to support the education system.

In 2002, AKDN agencies began providing computer laboratories and training for use in 12 schools across Syria. The network worked with Government and other civil society organisations to advance early childhood education programmes and English language instruction. AKDN also engaged in policy discussions with the Government to establish private notfor-profit schools and is in the planning stages of creating Aga Khan schools and Academies in Syria.

Professional Development of Teachers

In 2003, the Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) began working with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to improve English language instruction in Syria.

AKU-IED and the Aga Khan Education Services (AKES) have developed a proposal for enhancing the capacity of MoE staff through a Masters of Education and certificate programmes.

AKU-IED has also been working with the MoE to enhance curriculum development and learning skills of teachers and English language inspectors. As of December 2005, 39 instructors and inspectors have completed an eight-week Certificate programme in Karachi, Pakistan. This Certificate programme will enable English language inspectors

and instructors to apply a variety of pedagogical approaches to meet students' learning needs. Teachers are also sharing their knowledge and experience with colleagues and students to teach more effectively.

Although the Ministry of Education employs approximately 15,000 English teachers, 8,000-10,000 new teachers are needed to meet the growing demands of students. The Ministry will work with AKU-IED to train new teachers with the aim of creating "catalysts" within schools to improve the quality of education and English language instruction in Syria.

Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Numerous studies have shown that a child's formative years, from birth to eight years old, are critical for cognitive, physical, social, emotional and language development. Investing in the

The Aga Khan University's institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) based in Karachi, Pakistan, is working with the Ministry of Education to develop and train Syrian teachers.



first years of life is key to developing children who are confident and creative learners, active problem-solvers and socially responsible members of society.

In 2003, the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) started an Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme based upon these principles. AKF plans to build upon local strengths and identify critical gaps related to the care, development, and education of young children.

The Foundation's long-term goal is to enhance and promote the well-being and opportunities of children and their caregivers. AKF plans to achieve this by facilitating the piloting and replication of different ECD approaches, raising awareness about ECD core concepts and encouraging the development of ECD networks, providing and supporting capacity building for local ECD stakeholders, and assisting in the review and development of ECD policies and legislation.

At the national level, AKF has played a facilitating role in the establishment of a national ECD Networking Group. As of 2005, 20 members from Government Ministries, international and national

public and private organisations and donor agencies have become members of this networking group.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, the ECD Programme has provided input towards developing the first draft of a National ECD Strategy. In addition, the ECD Programme is providing technical assistance to the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs.

Another focus for the ECD programme is the professional development of selected ECD supervisors, trainers and managers. Through a series of related training sessions and continuous follow-up, AKF has facilitated building skills and competency in the areas of management and supervision in early childhood programmes. Thirty kindergarten managers and supervisors working for the Women's Federation and Ministry of Education have benefited from the training programme.

At the community level, AKF's ECD Programme has conducted a needs assessment in a cluster of villages in the Salamieh District. The ECD Programme has selected the village of Taltout to initiate a pilot ECD community centre in collaboration

with the Women's Federation and the local community. The community centre, managed by an elected local committee, will provide services such as early child care and education, summer activities for children, parenting education and workshops for youth to ensure national reach and impact.

All ECD programmes and activities will be monitored and evaluated regularly. Lessons learned and successful approaches will be shared and reviewed with the Ministry of Education and relevant stakeholders.

Programme Development Partners

Ministry of Health
Ministry of Higher Education
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Syrian Commission for Family Affairs
UNICEF
Women General Federation

For further information

Aga Khan Development Network-Syria
Abou Rumaneh, Rawda Square,
Abdul Kader Al Jazairi St., Building No.
15 Damascus, Syria
Tel: +963 11 3343610/11
Fax: +963 11 3343613
E-mail: syriainfo@akdn.org
Website: www.akdn.org

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.

© AKDN, December 2005. Information contained in this brief can be reproduced with acknowledgement to AKDN.

Photo credits: AKDN / Naoura Al-Azmeh, Jean-Luc Ray



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