



Improving the Quality of Health Care

The Syrian Ministry of Health has made considerable progress in expanding health services to a growing number of users. The emphasis, however, has been on curative care rather than prevention and public resources are struggling to cope with rapidly increasing demand.

To improve the health status of women of reproductive age and children under the age of five, AKDN's Health Programme focuses its efforts on health promotion and prevention. AKDN integrates health messages for children under five into the early childhood education curriculum to achieve additional health gains and educational performance. As nearly 60 percent of the Syrian population is under the age of 26, the Health Programme will also involve itself with community health, environmental health and disease prevention programmes to improve the long term wellness of the population. Nationally, through the Aga Khan

University (AKU) School of Nursing, Faculty of Health Sciences and Department of Community Health, the Network will provide technical assistance in nursing education, health administration, epidemiology, biostatistics and clinical pharmacy to address strategic needs in the country's healthcare system.

Changing Health Practices

AKDN programmes strive to improve the health status of communities in various communities throughout Syria. While some activities have begun in the Salamieh district, often programmes are national in orientation and designed to impact the quality of health care throughout Syria.

The Health Programme works in collaboration with other AKDN programmes, Village Development Committees, local Health Committees

and staff of the Ministry of Health's (MoH) Healthy Village Programme to design and implement behaviour change campaigns aimed at improving health status.

To build the capacity of MoH staff in areas of health promotion and disease prevention, the Health Programme trains Community Health Workers and Volunteers (CHWs and CHVs) and Health Centre staff in behaviour change communication, client counseling, communication skills and monitoring and evaluation.

Linking Health Centres to the Community

The Health Programme is working closely with local health centres and the Salamieh District Hospital to improve access and quality of care. Primary care services continue to be provided by local health centres and the Salamieh District

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.



Hospital will act as a referral centre for more serious cases.

Working at all levels of the healthcare delivery system, the Health Programme is implementing capacity-building initiatives as well as providing technical assistance, clinical and management training to staff and volunteers to ensure that improvements in health care delivery are sustainable.

Nursing

Since 2003, the Aga Khan University-School of Nursing (AKU-SON) has been working with the Ministries of Health and Higher Education to improve nursing education and services. The first stage of this five-year initiative was implementing a Quality Assurance Programme at Hilal Al-Ahmar and Al-Assad hospitals. In the second phase, the Quality Assurance Programme has grown to include other government hospitals across Syria. In addition, the Ministry for Higher Education has requested assistance from Aga Khan University in improving curriculum for its nursing and medical faculties.

AKU-SON is also working directly with physicians and healthcare staff to promote awareness about the role of nurses. By completing AKU-SON-

designed continuing education and professional development courses, nurses will be able to participate in the management and administration of health centres and hospitals. These developments will have a direct impact on improving hospital conditions and health care delivery.

Health Policy

A Health Advisory Committee, composed of representatives from the Ministry of Health (MoH) and AKDN has been formed to share information on programming issues of mutual interest. This Committee provides a forum for the MoH and AKDN to review programmes, discuss health policy and advocate for reform, especially in the area of community health.

Discussions with the MoH include priority setting in areas such as increasing the autonomy of hospitals, accreditation reform and further collaboration with AKDN institutions in policy making and joint training programmes with the Aga Khan University.

Improving Public Services

The Aga Khan Health Service (AKHS) is working in partnership with the Ministry

of Health to develop an integrated healthcare delivery system in Salamieh District. This will improve the quality and effectiveness of health services at Salamieh District Hospital and other government facilities in Salamieh District. AKHS supports the objectives of the AKDN Health Programme by focusing on improving clinical and management functions in MoH facilities.

In the medium term, lessons learned in separate geographic areas will be shared to include other parts of the country in close coordination with the Syrian government.

Programme Development Partners

Ministry of Health
Ministry of Higher Education

For further information

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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.

