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.

The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) has been implementing innovative development solutions in Tajikistan since 1993. Central to its efforts have been inclusive, community-based development approaches in which local organisations identify, prioritise and implement projects with the Foundation’s assistance.

Other cross-border collaborations include an irrigation project launched in 2010, which enables the Tajik village of Rogak to obtain water from Afghanistan, while the Zingiryo village on the Afghan side obtains water from Tajikistan. In the power supply area, the PamirEnergy company, in 2008, opened a cross-border transmission line between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, enabling it to share its surplus power during the summer months with the Shughnan district of Afghanistan. In 2010, the line was extended to serve an additional 500 households, bringing the total to more than 1,000 households.

Overview of Activities

One hallmark of AKF’s approach in Tajikistan is its long-term commitment. It has been the Foundation’s experience that quick fixes rarely take root; rather, sustainable development requires careful, culturally appropriate and disciplined application of best practices over periods that may be longer than typical funding cycles.

Since 2002, the Foundation has built four bridges over the Pyanj River at Tem, Darwaz, Ishkoshim and Vanj, which now connect remote regions of Tajikistan and Afghanistan. A fifth bridge in Shorobod is currently under construction. Rehabilitation efforts have significantly increased the capacity and safety of the bridges. These construction efforts have been accompanied by the building of border posts and cross-border markets to facilitate the flow of trade.

In 2010, the Certification Committee included government officials, members of parliament, representatives from international agencies and leaders of local CSOs. The National Association of NGOs in Tajikistan, established under the programme, played a central role in lobbying legislative changes and consolidation of CSOs in Tajikistan. A total of five legislative changes have been introduced; changes include legislation aimed at regulating government support to CSOs and allowing VOs and SUDVOs to officially register with the government.

Partners
Asian Development Bank/Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (ADB/JPPR)
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
Department for International Development (DFID)
Estonian Agency for International Development Cooperation (EMAF)
Embassy of Japan European Commission (EC)
Government of Austria Government of Germany (BMZ, GTZ)
Government of Norway Government of the Republic of Tajikistan
Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission (ECHO)
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
Master Card Foundation (MCF)
Netherlands Organization for International Development Co-operation (Novib)
Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)
Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)
Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC)
The Christensen Fund (TCF)
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
World Bank (WB)

The AKDN bridges at Tem, Darwaz and Ishkoshim facilitate over 15,000 border crossings per year, as well as over US$ 3 million in traded goods, including food, construction materials and electronic appliances.

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AKF provides scholarships each year to outstanding students in Tajikistan for undergraduate and graduate studies. The AKF International Scholarship Programme has enabled over 50 Tajik students to pursue graduate studies at institutions of high calibre in Central Asia, Europe and North America.

The Foundation is also focusing on early childhood development (ECD), bringing together various AKDN agencies and partners to collaboratively enhance ECD programming. AKF, AKHS and IPD, in particular, are jointly developing modules for training caregivers on child rearing practices to ensure the healthy development of young children.

and employment by fostering development of micro and small-enterprises, facilitating their access to capital and business development services and promoting cross-border trade. Through its Centres for Business Development Services, MSDSP supports entrepreneurs with a wide range of integrated offerings, from technical training on production to advice on marketing, business regulations and financial services.

Innovative approaches to natural resource management are also encouraged by promoting community-based resource management systems, facilitating access to appropriate technologies and inputs, and improving the conditions for market-based agriculture and processing. MSDSP has also developed and demonstrated a wide range of habitat improvement and energy efficient technologies including thermal insulation and fuel-efficient stoves. To protect investments in the built environment, MSDSP is an implementing partner of the Disaster Risk Management Initiative (DRMI) whereby it is the leading agency for structural safety and engineering.

MSDSP supports the construction and rehabilitation of economic and social infrastructure projects, which are now largely implemented and maintained by the communities themselves under consideration of environmental aspects and energy efficiency. Over 2,500 small and medium sized infrastructure projects have been finalized for a total investment of nearly US$ 16 million.

**Education**

AKF’s activities in the education sector seek to improve the skills and knowledge of teachers and students, and support national educational reforms. Activities include strengthening local educational institutions, engaging in dialogues with the Government to influence education policy, and enhancing the quality of children’s learning opportunities.

AKF has recognised the need for a strong partner that can offer continuous assistance and development opportunities to teachers. In this vein, it works closely with the Institute of Professional Development (IPD), an agency of the Government of Tajikistan. Tajikistan’s Ministry of Education has chosen to incorporate into its national teacher training programmes many methodologies developed by IPD in partnership with AKF.

IPD is implementing the Whole School Improvement Programme in GBAO to improve the region’s primary and secondary educational systems. Activities include mentoring initiatives, trainings to introduce teachers and school administrators to innovative methods, establishment of over 110 Learning Resource Centres and community engagement through building capacities of over 300 Parent Committees. To date, 312 schools have benefited from these initiatives, including over 5,400 teachers, 500 school administrators, 30 district education officials, 46,000 students and an additional 600 Afghan teachers as part of the cross-border programme. To improve access to reading materials, 42 mini-libraries were established in remote areas enabling parents to borrow books to read to their children at home.

The Foundation, through IPD, also contributes to the development of textbooks for primary schools and supports a decentralised curriculum development process at the national level. In addition, AKF has piloted a community-based Early Childhood Development (ECD) model, which it plans to expand across Tajikistan. The model has been approved by the Ministry of Education as an alternative to the current ECD model. With the support of UNICEF, IPD is scaling up activities in Raent, Khafaj and Sughd regions. Over the last two years, 65 community-based ECD centres have been established, which provide access for 1,450 children to ECD services.

**Health**

In health care, AKF supports the work of Aga Khan Health Services (AKHS) by mobilizing resources and providing technical assistance. The Foundation aims to improve the health status of communities in GBAO, select districts of Khatlon and bordering areas of the Badakhshan region of Afghanistan.

In this vein, AKF seeks to improve primary healthcare services with a particular focus on Family Medicine. It promotes clinical excellence through trainings and establishment of Clinical Excellence Centres, which ensure regular access to updated medical literature. Clinical audits are also being piloted as a method of measuring changes in clinical practices.

In 2009, AKF initiated a Community-Based Health Financing Scheme in pilot VOAs as a mechanism to increase financial access to health care. By mid-2011, almost US$ 10,000 had been collected, and 91 patients had benefited from the scheme. Moreover, a revolving pharmaceutical fund was developed in GBAO in 1997 to ensure the availability of high quality, low-cost, essential pharmaceuticals. Funds generated from sales of medicines are used for procurement, delivery and distribution of additional medicines. The fund will likely be self-sustaining in the near future.

AKF started the Cross-Border Health Project in 2009 to leverage regional resources to create greater access to healthcare services for rural Afghan communities bordering Tajikistan. The initiative has enabled treatment of over 2,800 Afghan patients by Tajik health professionals, including over 500 surgeries during routine and emergency visits.

Moving forward, AKF will work closely with other AKDN agencies to address continued and burgeoning health problems including under-nutrition, substance abuse and migrant health issues. Furthermore, regional solutions to increase access to quality healthcare services are currently being explored, including e-Health, creation of a regional diagnostic and imaging centre, and improvement of nursing education.

**Civil Society**

Launched in 2006, AKF’s Civil Society Programme aims to strengthen the civil society organisations (CSOs) by facilitating their establishment and building their capacity to improve the quality of life of communities. The programme also seeks to increase the knowledge and appreciation of good governance in society. Since 2008, over 160 CSOs have completed the process of self-assessment and fund was likely to be self-sustaining in the near future.

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Links and meeting places created by the bridges do more than simply facilitate commerce. We exchange questions and answers. We trade in products, but we can also trade in ideas. Communities on each side of the border will know one another better and be better able to help one another grow, prosper and share the lessons of life.”

— Remarks by His Highness the Aga Khan at the Inauguration of the Ishkashim Bridge, Ishkashim, Tajikistan, 31 October 2006

In collaboration with the Institute for Professional Development, the Foundation has designed national Curriculum Enrichment Frameworks that have been endorsed by Tajikistan’s Ministry of Education for use in schools nationwide.