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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Outreach Programmes
AKES administers several outreach programmes, such as the Youth Leadership Forum and the AKES Summer Camp.

The Youth Leadership Forum brings together students from each of the 13 higher secondary schools in Khorog, including the Aga Khan Lycée. It seeks to develop the participants’ leadership skills and encourages the application of these skills in school action projects that address social issues affecting the community.

The AKES Summer Camp, launched in 2005, is a residential programme held in the Bartang Valley in GBAO. The Camp aims to help students develop their teamwork and leadership skills, while increasing their understanding of the notions of pluralism and civil society. Each year, some 100 students from the Aga Khan Lycée and government schools are selected to participate in the camp sessions.

Early Childhood Development
AKES is working with the Aga Khan Foundation to develop an Early Childhood Development (ECD) strategy for GBAO. The programme aims to provide children six years of age and younger enriching experiences before they reach primary school in order to maximise their learning potential thereafter. Activities are expected to include the production of low-cost curricular materials that promote inquiry-based learning, mobilisation of educators focused on early childhood development, establishment of ECD Centres, and the introduction of relevant activities at the kindergarten level at other schools in the district.

Looking Forward
AKES will continue to expand and enhance its existing programmes. It aims to establish two ECD centres: one at the Aga Khan Lycée, and a second ECD and professional development centre near Khorog Park. AKES is also working to establish additional Aga Khan Schools across the various regions in Tajikistan.

Aga Khan Education Services

During the past decade, Tajikistan’s education system has confronted significant challenges, including an exodus of teaching talent and a decline in government funding following the break-up of the Soviet Union.

An important part of the country’s development going forward is the establishment of an education system that can help its future leaders develop critical thinking skills, understand the intricacies of the global economy and communicate effectively with the rest of the world. Education will also play an important role in fostering an appreciation for cultural diversity amongst the Tajik people.

Established in 1998, the Aga Khan Lycée is the first privately operated school in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO). Each year, the Lycée educates over 950 students from grades 1 to 11 with a graduation rate above 90 percent. It aims to provide students with high quality of education and prepare them for further studies at first-rate universities. It also tests and develops new teaching and learning approaches which can serve as models of best practice for other educational institutions in Tajikistan and throughout the region.

The curriculum at the Lycée is offered in three language streams — English, Tajik and Russian — in order to encourage students to develop fluency in more than one language.

The curriculum focuses on interactive approaches that foster critical thinking skills while also developing creativity and problem-solving abilities. Special attention is paid to teaching the Tajik language and cultivating a knowledge and appreciation of the country’s rich history, literature and heritage.

The 60 teachers currently employed at the Lycée are provided with frequent pedagogical and English language trainings, to continue their professional development. With support from AKES, 11 Aga Khan Lycée educators have obtained Master’s Degrees in Education from American University of Central Asia.

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AKES has developed learning resource centres and computer labs at both the Aga Khan Lycée and government schools in GBAO, which are used by students, teachers and community members for research and other learning purposes.

AKES offers support to teachers in Tajikistan who wish to attend international development trainings. Eleven teachers from the Aga Khan Lycée have received a Master’s Degree in Education and 20 others have received a Certificate in Education from the Aga Khan University’s Institute for Educational Development. Additionally, AKES has sent more than 100 other teachers for training in language content, English proficiency, critical thinking, creative writing and leadership at institutions ranging from the Osh Institute of Western Education in Kyrgyzstan to Phillips Academy in the USA.

The Aga Khan University’s Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) in Pakistan, while another 20 have participated in AKU-IED’s Certificate in Education programme.

Outside the classroom, clubs and camps at the Lycée help students develop extra-curricular skills in areas such as theatre, dance, sports, business, English language, mathematics, media and student government. Students also benefit from a highly developed Learning Resource Centre (LRC) that includes 105 Internet-connected computers which are used to help students develop study skills, understand how to conduct academic research electronically and pursue independent learning projects.

Annually, the Aga Khan Lycée hosts a Science Fair, in which more than 250 students from grades 2 to 10 participate and present over 50 projects spanning physics, chemistry, ecology and biology. The students share their scientific findings before a jury comprising the Aga Khan Development Network agencies, international organisations, as well as representatives from Government and educational institutions. Those students with the most notable and inspiring projects are recognised and awarded science-related prizes.

In January 2011, a collaboration programme was initiated between the Aga Khan Academy in Mombasa and the Aga Khan Lycée in Tajikistan. This pilot project identified eight 6th grade students from the Aga Khan Lycée to attend the Aga Khan Academy in Mombasa and complete the final six months of their primary education followed by six years of secondary schooling. Offering high-quality educational opportunities and accommodation, this programme will allow the Lycée’s brightest students to bring with them new experiences, knowledge and leadership skills back to their home communities. Moreover, the exchange programme frees space at the Aga Khan Lycée for additional students while providing an excellent opportunity to several highly deserving students from Khorgo.

Allied Schools Project

In collaboration with the Aga Khan Foundation, AKES established the Allied Schools Project (ASP) in 2002 to share the lessons learned and progress achieved at the Aga Khan Lycée with six Government schools in the districts of GBAO, and raise the standards of education across the region. This goal was primarily pursued through the professional development of ASP school teachers and management staff. Establishment of LRCs, a video viewing classroom and computer labs, as well as improvement of school buildings and facilities. Currently, the project is also establishing ECD centres at all of the allied schools; the centres are expected to be completed by 2014.

AKES conducts in-school trainings to teach educators at ASP schools new approaches to teaching. The sessions are followed up with teacher shadowing sessions at the Aga Khan Lycée, where these methods are already in place. Further workshops on educational leadership are being conducted to introduce more effective styles of management into these schools. To date, these programmes have benefited over 400 teachers and 30 administrators and, in turn, their 3500 students. Outcomes have included improved student attendance and improved matriculation results.

To complement the introduction of these more interactive approaches to learning, AKES has developed LRCs in ASP schools which are used for seminars, video viewing and as libraries, to the benefit of students, teachers and local community members. These centres also provide a way for schools to generate non-budgetary funds, enabling them to expand the resources offered.

AKES has supported extensive rehabilitation efforts at ASP schools, including repairing roofs, replacing heaters and purchasing new desks, chairs and chalkboards. These efforts have sought to enhance the learning environment and enable classes to continue during the cold winter months, while also generating community support for the schools by employing local residents in the improvement projects.

Scholarships

Each year, AKES offers scholarships for both undergraduate and postgraduate study in Tajikistan and abroad. Since 1998, the Tajik Scholarship Programme, funded by the Aga Khan Foundation and managed by AKES, has allowed over 200 meritorious students from Tajikistan the chance to access quality undergraduate education in Russia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. More than 65 scholarship recipients have gone on for further education.

A summer internship programme was started by AKES in 2003 to help scholarship recipients explore different career fields and gain work experience upon completing their degree. Placements are made within AKDN affiliates in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and have included PaminEnergy, the University of Central Asia and First MicroFinance Bank.

Through the District Scholarship Programme, over 80 students from the districts of GBAO have been able to study at Khorgo State University. The Aga Khan Lycée has awarded more than 130 scholarships since 2001 to enable students from the districts of GBAO to attend the school.

"We live in a time of rapid change — change that is often unpredictable and not always positive. My experience with development, as an observer and a practitioner, has led me to the conclusion that the best way to manage change, whether positive or negative, is to prepare for it and that there is no greater form of preparation for change than investments in education.

"But education comes in many forms and has been used for many purposes: An education for success in the modern world must be enabling and it must be outward looking. It must not only teach the time tested skills of reading, writing and mathematics, which remain important and must not only build on Central Asia’s fine tradition of encouraging students to master more than one language. Today’s students need to learn to use computers. The ability to use communication and information technology is now a critical part of the learning.”

— Speech By His Highness the Aga Khan at the Opening Ceremony of the Aga Khan School, Osh, Kyrgyz Republic, 30th October 2002

A physics teacher at the Aga Khan Lycée in Khorgo uses various student-centred teaching methods to convey physics concepts.