Investing in the Institutions of Civil Society

The AKDN has been building the institutions of civil societies for over 100 years – including schools, clinics and hospitals, companies offering essential goods and services, early childhood programmes that give poor children a head start, tree-planting programmes that plant millions of trees, public parks and museums, hotels that set standards for environmental stewardship, farmers’ associations that allow farmers to speak with one voice, an architectural award that has influenced architectural discourse for nearly four decades, universities and nursing schools that provide essential human resources for developing nations, and savings groups that help the poorest of the poor weather financial hardship and build a better future. Some of these institutions have been setting or raising standards in their fields for decades. The examples below are amongst the 1,000 or so institutions or programmes that the AKDN currently operates in 30 countries.

Rural Support Programmes

Have employed grassroots democracy, civil society and pluralism as the springboard for a dramatic improvement in living conditions for people in remote mountain ranges, coastal regions and other poor areas. Central to this transformation has been the careful development of citizen-led village organisations whose inclusive processes allow diverse communities to seek joint solutions to common problems. These organisations are helping over 8 million people to attain greater food security, higher household incomes and increased opportunities.

Aga Khan University (AKU)

Has provided quality healthcare services, training and research in the developing world for over 30 years. Originally chartered in Pakistan to help improve health care in the region, today campuses have expanded to East Africa and teaching sites stretch across three continents. Over 12,000 alumni including doctors, nurses, teachers and school managers are raising standards and playing leading roles in their respective fields. New faculties of arts and science in Karachi, Pakistan and Arusha, Tanzania are underway. Graduates of these schools will tackle issues crucial to the wellbeing of society: Architecture & Human Settlement; Economic Growth & Development; Government, Public Policy & Civil Society; Law; Media & Communications.

The Nation Media Group (NMG)

Has provided a strong independent voice – critical to the wellbeing of any society – in East and Central Africa for more than 50 years. It was founded in 1959 by His Highness the Aga Khan during the years just preceding Kenya’s independence. Today, NMG is the largest independent media house in the region with a growing number of national newspapers, a regional weekly, and radio and television stations.

Support the AKDN

Partnerships

Typically, when the AKDN refines its development approach in a given area, it looks to partners to help expand the scale. A significant portion of the funding for AKDN activities therefore comes from national governments, multilateral institutions and private sector partners. For more information, visit: akdn.org/partners

Individuals

Individuals can support the AKDN. For more information, visit: akdn.org/support

Join the conversation

Private voluntary energies for public good

For further information: Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), 1-3 Avenue de la Paix, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 909 7200; E-mail: info@akdn.org

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AKDN Civil Society
A vibrant and competent civil society is the cornerstone of a healthy and prosperous nation. It is essential to improving the quality of human life because people themselves know best how to drive progress. Yet, in many parts of the world, civil society suffers from a dearth of technical knowledge, human resources and financial means. To address these gaps, for over 50 years the agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) have been carefully building robust institutions that experiment, adapt and accommodate diversity. Founded on the ethics and values that drive progress and positive change, these civil society institutions – of education, health, science and research, and culture, to name a few – harness the private energies of citizens committed to the public good.

Business in Society
The AKDN believes in connecting social progress with company success. Since 2003, in West Africa AKDN project companies have operated a solidarity fund for efforts that improve the wellbeing of employees, families and communities.

"Increasingly, I believe, the voices of Civil Society are voices for change, where change has been overdue. They have been voices of hope for people living in fear. They are voices that can help transform countries of crisis into countries of opportunity... An active Civil Society... [is] one of the most powerful forces in our time, one that will become an increasingly universal influence."

- His Highness the Aga Khan addressing both Houses of the Parliament of Canada, Ottawa, 27 February 2014

Professional Standards
The AKDN creates and enhances professional associations (of teachers, nurses, architects and journalists, for example) to support the status of these vocations and raise standards of quality, ethics and impact on the public good.

Regional Learning Hubs
The University of Central Asia provides space for research, dialogue, collaboration, education and professional development to help better understand and serve civil society. Since 2006, 74,000 students have taken vocational training courses at UCA.

Global Tech-Solutions
The AKDN is using mobile devices to connect remote and marginalized communities to e-learning courses and to disseminate more quickly and cost effectively innovative agricultural techniques to poor farmers whose crops and incomes increase as a result.

AKDN civil society programmes and institutions operate in multiple countries.
BUILDING THE INSTITUTIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

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