An Overview of Rural Support Programmes

Afghanistan
Assisting 3 million people across 7 central and north-eastern provinces since 2001. Activities focus on human and institutional development, civil society, market development, natural resource management and infrastructure.

India
Activities since 1985. Programmes focused in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, reaching nearly 1.5 million people with natural resource and water management, alternative crops and sprinkler irrigation.

Kenya
In Coast Province since 1997. Assisting a target population of 130,000 to increase agricultural production and income.

Kyrgyz Republic
Active since 2003. Reaching 310,000 people living in the mountainous areas of Osh and Naryn oblasts by introducing technologies to increase agricultural and livestock productivity, and establishing community organisations to initiate and manage village projects.

Madagascar
In Sofia Region since 2005. Working with 47,000 farmers to reduce poverty by improving rice yields, which have increased up to three-fold.

Mali
Since 2007 working with local communities in the Mopti Region to improve agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods, which in turn leads to better overall health and higher levels of literacy.

Mozambique
Assisting marginalised populations in Cabo Delgado since 2002. Agricultural projects now reach over 25,000 people in 6 districts.

Pakistan
The first country programme, operating in Gilgit-Baltistan since 1982. Interventions have helped double farm incomes, plant tens of millions of trees, construct hundreds of bridges and support thousands of infrastructure projects that benefit over 1.2 million people.

Syria
In Salamieh District since 2003. Before the crisis, worked with rural communities on the persistent issue of water shortages, introduced modernised irrigation technology and agricultural diversification.

Tajikistan
Active in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) since 1993, initially providing humanitarian relief. Interventions now also cover the Rasht Valley, Sughd and Khatlon, benefiting 1.4 million people.

Tanzania
Since 2009 operates in two of Tanzania’s poorest provinces: Mtwara and Lindi. Works to improve the quality of life for targeted rural communities by training 60,000 farmers on new techniques and technologies to increase rice and sesame crop production.

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
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The AKDN in Rural Areas
For over 30 years, the Aga Khan Development Network’s (AKDN) model of rural development – aimed at effectively reducing poverty and improving the local economies of targeted geographies – has been adapted and replicated widely. Its main pillars are: participatory governance, which allows people to direct their own development; agricultural assistance, which works with farmers to improve yields; non-farm enterprise and employment, which supplements villagers’ farm-based incomes; natural resource management, which includes equitable water use and restoration of degraded land; access to finance, which helps smooth erratic incomes; and the creation of infrastructure that improves the quality of life, such as bridges, drinking water systems and irrigation canals. As the rural development programmes move into their fourth decade, they are also addressing the emerging challenges of rapidly changing demography, climate change and unpredictable geo-political circumstances.

Agriculture
In the remote and fragile geographies where the AKDN operates, sustainable management of land, water, soil, plants and animals is critical to millions of small-scale farmers, whose livelihoods depend on the productivity of their crops.

Local Governance
Creating village organisations through which rural communities elect their own leaders and shape their own development – in partnership with local government – has been at the core of the AKDN’s work in rural areas for over 30 years.

Non-farm Enterprise
The focus on farming is complemented by activities aimed at increasing incomes from non-farm enterprise and employment. These activities currently reach just over half a million people; and there are plans to extend coverage to over a million by 2017.

Access to Finance
Community-based Savings Groups help meet the needs of those too poor or remote to access services from banks or microfinance institutions. They provide an opportunity to save in frequent, small and varying amounts without costly or time-consuming travel.

Infrastructure
Investments include school and clinic construction and the installation of drinking water supply systems. Irrigation canals, micro-hydro power, roads and bridges also help unlock the economic potential of isolated regions where the AKDN works.

In collaboration with their partners the Aga Khan Rural Support Programmes have:

- Improved the livelihood of more than 8 million people living in poor, rural areas
- Helped 400,000 villagers accumulate more than $100 million in community savings

The AKDN rural support programmes operate in multiple countries.
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Cover page: Rice farming yields have tripled in Sofia, Madagascar. Photo credits: AKDN / Alain Lits, Jean-Luc Ray, Lucas Cuervo Moura, Christopher Wilton-Steer.