



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

First class of nurses graduates in Faizabad, Afghanistan



Faizabad, Badakhshan, Afghanistan, 23 September 2015 - Sixty-one students were awarded the General Nursing Diploma at a graduation ceremony in Faizabad, Badakhshan.

The ceremony marked a milestone: the graduation of the first class of nurses from a programme run in Faizabad and managed by the Badakhshan Provincial Public Health Directorate and Badakhshan Institute of Health Sciences, with technical support and advice from the Aga Khan University's Programmes in Afghanistan.

The 61 graduates, 47 of whom are women, will contribute significantly to strengthening nursing services, particularly for mothers and children. The three-year course was conducted in an academically stimulating environment with well-equipped teaching and learning facilities including classrooms, clinical skills and computer laboratories, a library and hostel facilities. Eight nursing teachers, five women and three men, trained in effective teaching and learning methods, taught the programme. It is expected that in late 2015, another 50 students will be enrolled in the diploma programme.

In his congratulatory remarks, Dr. Abdul Basir Sarwar, Deputy Minister of Public Health emphasised the importance of training women as nurses to address the current national shortage. Dr. Sarwar recognised the strong partnership between the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) on improving maternal and child health services in Badakhshan. He also thanked Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and other donors for their support.

AFD has committed almost €6 million (AFN 432 million) over the last three years to improve maternal, newborn and child health in Badakhshan, in partnership with MoPH and AKDN. Ms. Sophie Tran, AFD Chargée de Mission said, "Capacity building of health human resources is one of the main components of this project in order to increase access to high quality healthcare. Indeed, a growing pool of qualified healthcare professionals is needed all over the country, and in particular in Badakhshan which has one of the highest maternal and child mortality rates in the world." AFD also took the opportunity to renew France's commitment towards maternal, newborn and child health in Afghanistan.

Dr. Shah Waliullah Adeb, Acting Governor of Badakhshan appreciated the diploma programme, the first programme of its kind in Badakhshan, recognising that nurses are the backbone of a health care system.

In her address, Mrs. Nurjehan Mawani, AKDN Diplomatic Representative, encouraged the graduates to see themselves as "change agents" passing along their skills and standards to build stronger and healthier communities.

Dr Habiba Surabi, Advisor to the CEO to Youth and Women Affairs acknowledged the efforts of AKDN for providing tangible services across Afghanistan in health, education, and culture.

Mr. Muhammad Sardar Sarwari, member of the Badakhshan Provincial Council noted the different issues of Badakhshan including the challenging environment, limited access to health services, and instability.

The ceremony was also attended by Dr. Farida Momand, Minister of Higher Education; Mr. Sardar Sarwari, member of the Badakhshan Provincial Council; representatives from line ministries, AKDN agencies, civil society, and media.

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NOTE

The *Aga Khan University*, with academic programmes in three continents, is an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). AKDN works in over 30 countries, mainly in Asia and Africa, in rural development, education, health, culture, microfinance and private sector development. The Network, led by its founder, His Highness the Aga Khan, is dedicated to improving living conditions and opportunities for the poor, without regard to their faith, origin or gender.

Read online at: <http://www.akdn.org/press-release/first-class-nurses-graduates-faizabad-afghanistan>