AKF launches COVID-19 project to address food security in Tajikistan

Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 4 August 2020 – An emergency project aimed at reducing Tajikistan's vulnerability to COVID-19-related food insecurity will benefit an estimated 11,985 people (5,865 women and girls) directly and about 80,395 indirectly.

The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), with the support of the Government of Switzerland, has successfully launched the project in 12 districts of Khatlon region, Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, Sughd region and Rasht Valley of Tajikistan.

The project aims to address limited access to agricultural products, low water and land productivity, lack of high quality seeds and fertilisers – all of which can exacerbate food insecurity, malnutrition and vulnerability to the virus. The project focuses on increasing agriculture production and improving agriculture output through the provision of critical irrigation infrastructure and improved access to quality agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilisers. Improved irrigation systems and water access will not only increase agriculture production but also create new arable land leading to enhanced agriculture productivity and efficient use of natural resources.

“The project is in line with, and contributes towards, the plans of the Government of Tajikistan aimed at reducing the national economy's exposure to potential risks of COVID-19,” says Kishwar Abdulalishoev, AKF’s CEO in Tajikistan. “It is of utmost importance to invest in and protect food security today rather than rebuild it tomorrow.”

Food “stability” in the most vulnerable communities will be addressed by unconditional cash/food transfer for the poor and food-insecure households. Hadi Husani, the CEO of the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH) in Tajikistan, states that “during this difficult time, when families have seen their ability to purchase food diminished, this project will work to address the needs of the most vulnerable. In our continued partnership with the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense (COESCD) and the Government of Switzerland, this support will support addressing a critical need identified by the COESCD Humanitarian Emergency Response Strategy for Tajikistan.”

The Project is funded by the Government of Switzerland through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC Humanitarian Aid) and implemented by Mountain Societies Development Support Program (MSDSP) and the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH). Within this project, collaboration is envisaged with UN WFP, Ministry of Agriculture, Regional, District and Sub-District government authorities, Water User Associations and Village Organisations in the project target areas.
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The *Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation* (SDC) is the technical authority of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation. SDC is responsible for the overall coordination of activities in developing countries. Within its Cooperation Strategy for 2017-2021 for Central Asia, Switzerland focuses on four sectors in Tajikistan, such as a) Water, Infrastructure and Climate Change; b) Health; c) Governance, Institutions and Decentralisation; d) Employment and Economic Development. The overall goal of the Swiss Cooperation in Tajikistan is peace and social cohesion as well as responsive and inclusive institutions and sustainable development to improve the population’s well-being. www.eda.admin.ch/dushanbe

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 community-based organisations identify, prioritise and implement projects with the Foundation’s assistance.

The AKFs programmes in Tajikistan focus on six areas: agriculture and food security, economic inclusion, health and nutrition, education, early childhood development and civil society. Its initiatives address cross-cutting themes including gender equality, pluralism, human resource development and public awareness of development issues. Through its activities in all four regions of Tajikistan, AKF is reaching to approximately 1.9 million people.

The *Aga Khan Agency for Habitat* (AKAH), which merges the capabilities of Focus Humanitarian Assistance, the Aga Khan Planning and Building Services, and the Aga Khan Development Network’s Disaster Risk Management Initiative, focuses on preparing for both sudden and slow-onset disasters. AKAH works to ensure that poor people live in physical settings that are as safe as possible from the effects of natural disasters; that residents who do live in high-risk areas are able to cope with disasters in terms of preparedness and response; and that these settings provide access to social and financial services that lead to greater opportunity and a better quality of life. Initially, priority areas of AKAH will include Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and India. Read more about the agency at http://www.akdn.org/our-agencies/aga-khan-agency-habitat.