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# AKDN

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

Autumn Newsletter: *Pakistan edition*



## AP launches HealthTech and EdTech initiatives in Pakistan

**23 October 2020:** Accelerate Prosperity Pakistan (AP) launched two new initiatives, HealthVenture and EdVenture to promote production and adoption of health and educational technologies and innovation in Pakistan, in collaboration with the Aga Khan University (AKU) with a focus on COVID response, recovery and resilience. These are the first enterprise growth acceleration initiatives of its kind in Pakistan in terms of its sector focus, strategic partnerships and providing turnkey solution to entrepreneurs looking for business support services to launch and grow their

health and educational technology and innovation businesses. AP also signed an MoU with Ignite-National Technology Fund of Pakistan, Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT) to promote HealthVenture and EdVenture across Pakistan and jointly undertake the programmes. The ceremony was attended by Mr. Syed Amin Ul Haque, Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications, AKDN leadership and other stakeholders. Entrepreneurs

qualifying for these programs get access to a myriad of services from AP and its partners including patient financing, tailored trainings, advisory services from successful entrepreneurs and impact investors, access to consumer insights and R&D from one of the largest private healthcare and educational service provider in Pakistan, and commercial linkages.



27 companies selected from across Pakistan qualified for business acceleration services in 2020 and constitute a diverse portfolio of businesses. These companies are undergoing a 2.5 month-long accelerated program where they are receiving distance learning and virtual advisory on business modelling, market analysis, marketing and sales, financial analysis and forecasting, pitch making and investor relations. In addition, subject matter experts from AKU are receiving technical advisory services on various aspects of their businesses. These companies also receive business mentorship and investors advice through online sessions with successful entrepreneurs and impact investors in the sector. Towards the end of HealthVenture and EdVenture in 2020, select companies will get an opportunity to present their business pitches at a national level Pakistan Business Forum in Q1 of 2021 which will be organized by Ignite.

## AKF(Pak) facilitates Planning Commission to conduct a workshop for the 5 year development plan of GB

**4 October 2020:** A delegation from the Planning Commission, Government of Pakistan, comprising of senior officials including Deputy Chairman, Secretary, Senior Joint Chief Economist and heads of various sectors, visited Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) from 4 -7 October 2020. The delegation was accompanied by Mr. Irshad Khan Abbasi, Director Rural Development, Civil Society and Habitat from Aga Khan Foundation Pakistan (AKF(Pak)).

The purpose of the visit was to attend a multi-stakeholder workshop facilitated by AKF(Pak) in partnership with the Planning Commission. The basic objective of the workshop was to review sectoral papers, highlighting the investment potential, needs and challenges of various sectors

in GB, prepared by the members of six technical groups set up by the Planning Commission for the development of the 5 year Socio-Economic Development Plan for Gilgit-Baltistan (2021-2026). The workshop was attended by various stakeholders including key representatives from the federal and provincial government, private sector, AKDN agencies and various Local Support Organisations (LSO). The findings of the workshop will be included in the 5-year plan. In addition to the workshop, AKF(Pak) arranged a



*Members of delegation from Planning Commission and AKF representative during the workshop on the 5 year Socio-Economic Development Plan*

visit for the delegation to key AKDN project sites including an AKAH,P Water and Sanitation Scheme, an Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, a solid waste management site managed by AKRSP, and the Altit fort.

The Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission appreciated and acknowledged AKDN's role in the sectors of rural development, health, education, water and sanitation, and disaster risk reduction and emphasized its replication in other remote areas of Pakistan through a public-private partnership model. He also praised AKF(Pak)'s role in facilitating the planning of the 5-year plan and directed Planning Commission to focus on channelizing a portion of yearly federal grants to GB through community based organizations as well as ensuring that community based organizations are involved in the operations and maintenance of public sector projects.

## AKAH,P and Government of GB partner to combat climate change

**6 October 2020:** The Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, Pakistan (AKAH,P) and the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan announced a \$4.2 million project to plant 50 million trees across Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) to reduce the impacts of climate change and protect against natural disasters given Pakistan's acute vulnerability to climate-induced disasters. The tree plantations will absorb carbon emissions and stabilize soil and slopes in hazard prone areas, mitigating climate change and disaster risk. The trees will be planted by the Forest, Wildlife and Environment Department Government of Gilgit-Baltistan with technical support from AKAH,P which will use its hazard, vulnerability, risk assessment methodology to identify hazard-prone and steep-slope sites, which could benefit from plantation for stabilization, particularly along roads and critical infrastructure. AKAH,P will also provide technical support to build or expand the water supply infrastructure and solar-powered pumps to provide water for the plantations.

Speaking of the partnership, Mr. Shahid Zaman, Secretary Forest and Wildlife, remarked "We are grateful to AKAH, who have joined us to provide technical support for the implementation of this

very important project which has a global significance around climate change mitigation. The Government of GB admires the work that the AKDN has done for development in the area. AKAH Pakistan's initiatives to provide safe water, build resilient infrastructure, and increase communities' disaster risk preparedness and response in the face of climate change has brought about much change already. Through this partnership we expect a big impact in future." Mr. Nawab Ali Khan, CEO AKAH,P expressed excitement "to partner with the Forest Department on this project particularly as it directly contributes to the AKDN's climate change strategy and to Government's vision of a green and clean Pakistan".



*Partnership signing ceremony between AKAH,P and Forest Wildlife and Environment Department Government of GB*

## AKRSP mitigating impacts of COVID-19 through psychosocial support

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, AKRSP has been providing mental health and psychosocial support services to affected communities in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) as part of a UNICEF funded project. The project also endeavors to capacitate communities with psychological coping techniques. The design and implementation of the project was necessitated by the impact of COVID-19 and its resultant socio-



*'Psycho-social support and mental health exercises practice in Nagar*

economic effects on the mental health and well-being of communities in GB and the lack of services available to respond to the counselling needs of communities.

As part of the project, AKRSP engaged a team of clinical psychologists who provided psychosocial support and counselling services to affected families, especially children, not just at the household level but also in schools and hospitals. The psychologists capacitated communities on exercises to aid mental well-being including deep breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation techniques, and meditation. Additional interventions included awareness sessions through mass media on mental health and strategies to improve mental well-being.

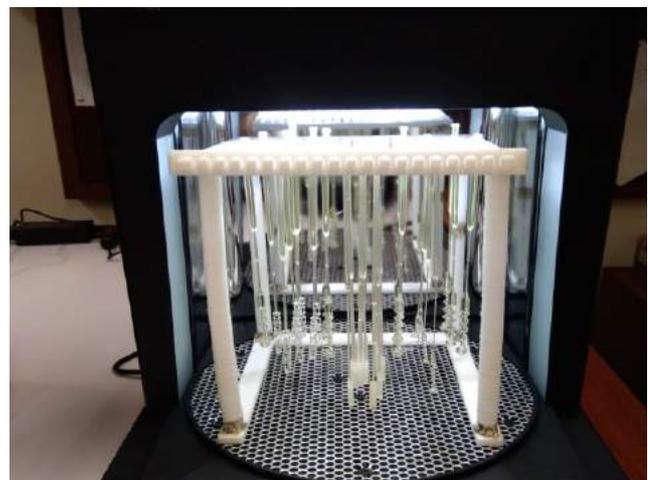
Community members who have participated in these sessions have professed to developing a better understanding and appreciation of issues related to mental health, abuse and harassment. Participants have also learnt how to approach and speak about instances of such occurrences in their communities. Over 2100 people have directly benefited from psychosocial support services through sessions with clinical psychologists and over 400,000 people have been reached through radio and cable programmes with awareness messages. Of note is the fact that over 60% of the beneficiaries under the project have been women and children. In addition, AKRSP has also provided support to LSO staff to conduct regular sessions on child protection and stigma prevention with communities.



*Students at an Aga Khan Higher Secondary School practicing relaxation exercises*

## AKU develops 3D printed, low-cost nasal swab for COVID-19 testing in Pakistan

Pakistan now has the ability to locally produce nasal swabs, the essential tool that collects samples for COVID-19 tests, after Aga Khan University (AKU) successfully completed clinical trials on a 3D printed swab. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a global surge in demand for diagnostic test kits and components, including the cotton bud-shaped nasal swabs, as countries around the world ramped up testing facilities. Pakistan was no different and has had to import all nasal swabs to date. Supply constraints at the peak of the pandemic in April to May 2020 led to AKU's Innovation Lab searching for a solution by designing and developing a local alternative.



*3D printed nasal swabs developed by AKU*

A team of researchers, clinical laboratory experts and biomedical engineers used a specialised 3D printer to develop a prototype. Clinical trials on the prototype have now found the 3D printed nasal swab to be as safe, effective and user-friendly as imported swabs. "Our printer can produce over 1,000 swabs per day at a significantly lower cost than those we import," said Mr. Saleem Sayani, Director of AKU's Technology Innovation Support Centre and Digital Health Resource Centre. AKU Medical College Dean Dr. Adil Haider stated that the 3D printed swab demonstrated how local innovation can solve local problems even in the midst of a

pandemic. “The 3D printed swab will reduce the need to import swabs for respiratory sampling,” said Professor Zahra Hasan from AKU’s department of pathology and laboratory medicine, the co-principal investigator on the project. “This can help increase COVID-19 diagnostic capacity across Pakistan.”

## AKES,P increases educational footprint

The Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan (AKES,P) is continuously looking for ways to expand the provision of quality education. Towards that goal, it assumed the management of two community-run primary schools, one in the village of Vur in Sindh, and the other in the town of Chitral, in October this year. Both these schools have been attached with well-established Aga Khan Schools in the vicinity. This affiliation ensures mentorship and access to resources for the new schools, as well as provide the next destinations for their students.



*Students inside a classroom in Aga Khan School Vur*

The community-based school in Dolomuch, Chitral, has been transformed into a junior campus of the Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, Chitral, the foremost higher secondary school in the region. After the completion of primary and middle school, students from the Dolomuch campus will be able to transfer to the higher secondary school in Chitral, thus enjoying seamless transition from pre-primary all the way to intermediate studies. The same access will be enjoyed by the students at the Vur campus who will be able to transfer to the larger Aga Khan School, Mirpur Sakro after studying up to grade three at the satellite campus in Vur. This will ensure that pre-primary and primary students from Vur are able to get a high-quality early years education without needing to travel far from home.

Prior to the start of classes at both the schools, AKES,P undertook a comprehensive school improvement plan including renovation and improvements to the infrastructure, the hiring and training of qualified teachers, and remodeling the pre-primary programme on international best practices.

## Inside AKHS,P's intensive care units for COVID-19 patients

Three-bed Intensive Care Units (ICUs) for COVID-19 patients have been set up in separate wings of Aga Khan Medical Centres in Gilgit and Booni, with tele-ICU consultation facility with the Aga Khan University Hospital (AKUH). Patients undergoing treatment in the ICUs are

monitored in real time, and tele consultations are offered by doctors at AKUH in Karachi through live video conferencing. Through the video link, doctors treating the patients at AKHS,P's medical centres and doctors at AKUH discuss individual patients' progress and collaborate to provide them the best care possible. These real time consultations are key to timely decisions, given the critical nature of the patients.



*A patient being treated in an intensive care unit set up by AKHS,P for COVID-19 patients*

Besides adding beds for COVID-19 patients at existing facilities, a 55-bed facility has been established at the Aga Khan Medical Centre, Gilgit, using shelters obtained from Better Shelter. A six-bed facility has also been set up at Aliabad, Hunza. In Chitral, a 20-bed care facility has been set up at Garamchashma and Mastuj, and a 32-bed facility has been set up at Booni. Altogether, AKHS,P has established 140 beds dedicated for COVID-19 patients in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral.

## AKAH,P and Government of GB partner to design a major water supply project for central Hunza

**8 October 2020:** The Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, Pakistan (AKAH,P) signed a partnership agreement with the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan to conduct a study for a sustainable solution to the drinking water supply for central Hunza, sourced from Attabad lake. The feasibility study will include Hazard, Vulnerability and Risk Assessments of the supply line and eight settlements. The event was attended by H.E Wendy Gilmour, Canadian High Commissioner to Pakistan, H.E Dr.Christian Turner, British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Mr. Syed Abrar Hussain Shah, Additional Chief



*Partnership Agreement signing and exchange of documents between key stakeholders*

Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan, Mr. Fayaz Ahmed, District Commissioner Hunza, AKDN leadership and other stakeholders.

Central Hunza faces an acute water shortage as most settlements depend on two glacial melt streams (Hassanabad Nallah and Ultar Nallah) as their primary source of water. The recent glacial lake outburst floods from both glaciers have severely impacted water supply and other community infrastructure. Growth in tourism in the region, critical for economic development, adds further pressure on the region's water resources. This joint partnership will enable both AKAH,P and Government of GB to provide sustainable access to clean drinking water to 5,500 households, commercial entities, health and education facilities and select settlements of central Hunza. This feasibility study will not only identify solutions for the current needs of the community but also help boost tourism potential of the region in the years to come.

In his remarks, Mr. Nawab Ali Khan, CEO AKAH,P shared that "AKAH has the mandate of creating resilient human habitats and we will support any initiative that is aligned with our mandate." He further said "AKAH is thankful to the government for all its support that has enabled us to serve communities in need." Over the last two decades, the AKAH,P has provided 500,000 people with water and sanitation facilities across Pakistan mainly in mountain communities.

## Serena Hotels host awareness event on Breast Cancer

**12 October 2020:** "A consolidated advocacy effort involving health care officials, the Government, the media and civil society can bring about the synergy that can reverse the breast cancer crisis in Pakistan." These remarks were

expressed by the First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi during her keynote address at a panel discussion on Breast Cancer Awareness hosted by Serena Hotels under the banner of Raabta, a Public Diplomacy Initiative.



*Panelists, including First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi, at the event*

Raabta is curated by broadcast journalist Sidra Iqbal and uses the convening power of Serena to bring together thought leaders, policy-makers, experts and the civil society together to advance debate and curate knowledge about important socio-economic topics. The other experts on the panel included Dr. Ayesha Isani Majeed, Head of Radiology Department and Incharge Federal Breast Cancer Screening Center at Pakistan Institute for Medical Sciences (PIMS), and Dr. Abida K. Sattar, Head of Breast Surgery at Aga Khan University. During the

event, Senator Aizaz Chaudary, Director of Institute of Strategic Studies also shared his experience as a male survivor of breast cancer. With 1.3 million cases daily, breast cancer is the most common cancer in women and the second most common cause of cancer-related deaths in women worldwide. Pakistan has the highest prevalence of breast cancer in Asia, with one out of nine women expected to be diagnosed with the disease at some point.

## AKCS-P completes very first restoration of a colonial building: the APA House, Babusar

At the request of and with funding by the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Aga Khan Cultural Service-Pakistan (AKCS-P) undertook the restoration of the Assistant Political Agent House, Babusar. Located around a thousand meters below the Pass, Babusar used to be the summer camp of the APA of the Chilas sub-division. Before the construction of the Karakoram Highway, Babusar operated as a gateway between Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and other parts of Pakistan – the only land route open in the summers over the Babusar Pass (4173 meters) leading in from Naran/Kaghan to Gilgit. During British rule, several buildings in the colonial style were built to accommodate British officials and their retinue. Over time, the APA house was left in a state of despair due to abandonment and neglect.



*APA House Babusar: before and after restoration by AKCS-P*

This restoration is the first ever physical restoration project in District Diamer and the first such project of an abandoned colonial era building in GB. The restoration focused on mending structural defects, strengthening the foundation, stabilizing, and repairing existing walls, replacing some roofs, treating wood decay, and importantly removing the layers of paint inside and externally besides providing appropriate lighting and also re-routing the vehicular entry. The washrooms were fitted out for comfort. The restored APA House was handed over by AKCS-P to Commissioner Diamer on 17 October 2020. Besides showcasing the colonial era construction style, the building is intended to be used as a residential site for dignitaries and as summer camp office by the Commissioner of the Division.

*Dear Readers,*

*Thank you for taking the time to learn about AKDN's work in Pakistan. If you have any questions about the articles, please contact Maria Hayat Khan, Programme Officer Partnerships, AKF Pakistan, at [maria.khan@akdn.org](mailto:maria.khan@akdn.org).*

*Special thanks are due to Salman Beg (AKCS-P), Muhammad Altamash (AKU), Safina Kousar (AKU-IED), Hussain Odhwani (Serena Hotels Pakistan), Aziz Ali Dad (AKRSP), Anila Shaheen and Imran Shams (AP), Mehar Aftab (AKAH,P), Rubab Karrar (AKES,P), Younus Khan (AKHS,P), Irshad Khan Abbasi, (AKF(Pak)), Dr. Sughra Choudhry Khan (AKF(Pak)), Dr. Qayyum Noorani (AKF (Pak)), Athar Tanveer, Faheem Tareen, Sakhawat Ali, Muhammad Karim, and Sultan Ishaq (AKF (Pak)) for their contributions.*

*Please look for the next volume of the AKDN Newsletter in Winter 2021. For more information, visit our website: [www.akdn.org/Pakistan](http://www.akdn.org/Pakistan)*