AKDN and ECHO partner for disaster and health
Preparedness in Gilgit-Baltistan

Islamabad, 19 August 2021; The Aga Khan Foundation and Aga Khan Agency for Habitat launched a partnership with the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) that will reach 74,000 people in four districts of Gilgit-Baltistan: Diamer, Astore, Karmang and Shigar.

The project will enable communities and health authorities to anticipate and respond to natural hazards and emergencies including COVID-19. To be implemented by the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, Pakistan, the 18-month project will address the immediate needs of at-risk communities by building knowledge, systems, and capacity at the institutional and community levels.

The project targets 30 villages through a community driven approach. To enhance community disaster preparedness, AKAH will form and train Village Disaster Risk Management Committees and first responder teams; develop Village Disaster Risk Management Plans to enable communities to take pre-emptive measures to protect themselves and their assets; and preposition stockpiles of emergency supplies in the most vulnerable and remote locations.

At the institutional level, AKF and AKAH, P will strengthen the physical and personnel asset base at seven Tehsil Headquarter hospitals by building capacities of health staff and first responders using integrated training modules on emergency preparedness, response, and management; conducting mass casualty management planning; providing medical first responder kits; and rehabilitating water and sanitation facilities to ensure adequate functionality in the case of mass casualty incidents. The project will directly benefit 74,000 people (48% female), including local communities, vulnerable groups, and health workers.

In his remarks, Akhtar Iqbal, Chief Executive Officer, Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan, remarked that “this project will build on a long-standing partnership between the Aga Khan Foundation and ECHO to address humanitarian needs in vulnerable and remote communities in Pakistan”. He went on to say that the partnership will allow AKF and AKAH “to strengthen disaster resilience at the grassroots by developing local understanding of disaster preparedness and ownership of community-anchored coping strategies. This, in turn, will be complemented with a targeted effort to strengthen the ability of our institutions, particularly the health system, to respond to disasters. We hope that this project will contribute positively towards furthering the Government of Pakistan’s development agenda on climate action”.

Talking about the joint partnership, Nawab Ali Khan, Chief Executive Officer, Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, Pakistan, said that “this partnership will help save lives through well-planned early adaptation actions thereby enhancing the resilience of at-risk communities and relevant authorities in four highly vulnerable districts of Gilgit-Baltistan. Risk mapping and village
disaster risk management planning activities will help reduce disaster risk and advance broader habitat planning in the years to come”.

The project will complement an existing partnership between agencies of AKDN and ECHO that was designed to respond to COVID-19 in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral.

For more details:

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About the AKDN: Founded and guided by His Highness the Aga Khan, the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) brings together a number of development agencies, institutions, and programmes that work primarily in the poorest parts of Asia and Africa. A central feature of the AKDN’s approach to development is to design and implement strategies in which its different agencies participate in particular settings to help those in need achieve a level of self-reliance and improve the quality of life.

The Aga Khan Agency for Habitat works to ensure that the places people live are as safe as possible from the effects of climate change and natural disasters while also helping them to be prepared to cope with and respond to disasters that do strike. Beyond safety, AKAH aims to ensure people have access to services and opportunities to improve their quality of life. Established in 2016, AKAH combines several agencies and programs of the AKDN that had been working on housing, habitat and disaster preparedness and relief since the 1990s in South and Central Asia, including Focus Humanitarian Assistance, the Aga Khan Planning and Building Services, and the Disaster Risk Management Initiative.

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