

The ECD programme aims at building a strong foundation for pre-school children to ensure their smooth transition to primary schools. It focuses on developing children's ability to interact effectively with their world – supporting their development as confident life-long learners who are active and healthy members of society.



Interventions that have demonstrated a high potential in the region to impact wider population will be scaled up, such as SRI technique of crop production, vegetable cultivation and livestock development. New approaches that respond to the felt needs of the community and emerging opportunities in region will be piloted and promoted. These include interventions on adolescent girls, a savings programme for women and a migration support programme to improve wage-earning and negotiating skills among migrant workers from the community.

To align interventions with the national development programmes such as Right to Education (RTE) Act, AKF plans to strengthen its community-based ECD model and integrate elements of tested and proven good practice into government schools, while simultaneously implementing a school improvement programme to improve the quality of primary education in those same schools. AKF is also working towards raising communities' awareness of RTE and working with

government primary schools to support the constitution of School Management Committees, (SMCs), a key RTE provision, involving parents and teachers.

Programme Facts at a Glance	
Household coverage	1,287
Population coverage	7,982
Enrolment of children (3-5 years)	788 children (394 boys and 394 girls)
Promoting Systems of Rice Intensification + Systems of Wheat Intensification	123 farmers
Promoting vegetable cultivation	371 households
Beneficiaries of health camps	2,480

The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) is a private, non-denominational, development agency, established by His Highness the Aga Khan in Switzerland in 1967. The Foundation seeks sustainable solutions to long-term problems of poverty through an integrated, community-based, participatory approach that reinforces civil society and respects local culture. In India, AKF works essentially in three thematic areas: Health, Education and Rural Development. It also works to strengthen civil society institutions.

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The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is a group of private development agencies working to empower communities and individuals, often in disadvantaged circumstances, to improve living conditions and opportunities, especially in Africa and Asia. Its agencies work in over 30 countries for the common good of all citizens, regardless of their gender, origin or religion. Its underlying impulse is the ethic of compassion for the vulnerable in society.

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INDIA



Multi-Sector Programme in Uttar Pradesh

The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network is implementing a multi-sector area development programme in Uttar Pradesh (UP) to improve the quality of life of poor and marginalised groups. The programme is located in Bahraich District, one of the poorest districts in UP, with expansion planned to neighbouring areas over time. Bahraich District has a predominantly agricultural economy and low development indicators reflect its endemic poverty. The programme aims to improve livelihoods, education, health and sanitation conditions of rural communities. It creates community-based institutions and helps community members to plan and implement solutions to their own development problems.

The Approach

AKF's multi-sector programme addresses a range of needs among the target communities through implementing technical innovations adapted to the local context, and promotes their expansion through partnerships with civil society organisations and public systems. Currently, the programme works with 8,000 people in 1,300 households. Disadvantaged households from Muslim and Scheduled Caste communities represent over 80 percent of the target population.

At the beginning, the remote rural communities of the area had never experienced working with a non-governmental organisation. Winning people's trust required time, patient efforts and regular meetings. Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres and renovation of community hand

pumps proved to be important entry points to gain the communities' confidence. The programme next expanded its interventions in early childhood development, maternal and child health, safe drinking water and hygiene practices and agriculture and livestock development.

Promoting Quality Education

AKF aims to improve the quality of education at pre-primary and primary levels by working with community and government systems. The ECD programme has built a strong foundation for pre-school children to ensure their smooth transition to primary schools. ECD centres were set up with community support to stimulate learning activities for children. Emphasis is placed on increasing the enrolment of girls and addressing female illiteracy. Community contribution in the form

The programme has piloted the introduction of System of Rice Intensification (SRI) technique and similarly with wheat (SWI). Farmer-to-farmer visits, field demonstrations and exposure visits to neighbouring regions have been instrumental in increasing crop productivity by 50 to 100 percent.



“Our experience has illustrated to us that when we work simultaneously and synergistically on several fronts (economic, social and cultural), progress on one front spurs progress on the other fronts. The whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts.”

His Highness the Aga Khan at the Kabul Conference in Afghanistan (20th July, 2010).

Cover photo : Improved agricultural practices have contributed to increasing agriculture productivity of poor and marginalised farmers.

of time, material and labour was crucial in creating a strong sense of community ownership.

With a teacher-student ratio of 1:20, ECD centres provide quality pre-school experience and emphasise the holistic development of children. Teachers, primarily women from the area, have been specially trained to impart child-centred learning to children. They create a safe and nurturing classroom environment to facilitate children's independence and creativity. Through the formation of the *Bal Phulwari* management committee, community members plan collectively for the development and management of their centres.

The ECD programme includes improving health and nutrition of children. Sessions on personal hygiene are conducted for the teachers and children, such as hand washing practices, and personal hygiene kits are provided. Efforts are underway to partner with the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and mobilise *Anganwadi Workers* to monitor children's growth and development at the ECD centres.

Enhancing Rural Livelihoods

The programme enhances food security and household incomes by improving agricultural practices, livestock management and economic opportunities. AKF organises farmer-to-farmer visits, field demonstrations and exposure visits to neighbouring regions and provides technical

support and advice to motivate farmers and improve their knowledge. Bahraich being in the rice and wheat belt, the programme has piloted the introduction of System of Rice Intensification (SRI) technique, and similarly with wheat (SWI). The introduction of improved crop cultivation practices, such as line sowing, seed treatment, application of organic manure and weeding with low-cost tools, has increased small farmers' rice yields by 50-100 percent.

The programme promotes vegetable cultivation for food security through facilitating access to quality seeds and introducing simple techniques in kitchen gardens and pit and gunny bag cultivation to increase household consumption of green vegetables and for sale of surplus.

Farmers' groups are formed to increase their negotiating power and achieve economies of scale through "bulked-up" produce for marketing. Group members discuss and plan new technologies for crop production, access to credit and loans, procuring agriculture inputs and marketing. These collective efforts will enable the farmers' groups to secure more responsive services from government and market input suppliers.

The programme has organised camps on vaccination and de-worming of livestock in close partnership with the state government's Animal Husbandry Department. To improve the reach of quality veterinary services to remote communities, the programme

mobilises and trains local women to operate as community based livestock volunteers (*Pashu Sakhis*). As most of the women have no formal schooling, regular training, exposure visits to similar projects elsewhere and hand holding support help them to develop their skills and confidence. Through the services of this cadre, goats' mortality is reduced and owners realise better rates for the sale of animals.

Improving Community Health

A core strategy of the programme is to improve maternal, newborn and child health through building the capacity of government systems to improve delivery and reach, and empowering poor communities to access those public health services.

AKF has promoted knowledge and awareness among mother's groups in birth preparedness, safe delivery practices, neonatal care, immunisation, breastfeeding, safe drinking water, menstrual hygiene and sanitation, and health seeking behaviour. Health camps have been organised to build linkages between remote communities and government health service providers. The camps help beneficiaries to understand their health status and provide counselling on preventive aspects and referral for treatment from health service providers at community or facility level.

The ECD centres have generated interest among adolescent girls to enhance their literacy and life

skills. To meet these emerging felt needs, AKF has begun working with adolescent girls on improving their health and hygiene practices, with support to literacy and life skills to follow. Girls have been organised in groups to provide a supportive atmosphere for their development. Training programmes in partnership with *Mahila Samakhya* has instilled confidence amongst these girls and a desire to learn more.

To improve drinking water quality and promote sanitation, AKF promotes a range of measures, such as renovating hand pump platforms, water testing, soak pit construction, toilet demonstration and raising community awareness through Information, Education and Communication (IEC) material. Home-based solutions, which include the use of cloth filter, chlorination, alum and boiling water, are being explored with households.

The Way Forward

With a long-term perspective of providing development to Uttar Pradesh, AKF will consolidate its existing work and expand to other areas in the state. The programme will continue with its holistic approach in strengthening rural communities' capacities and establishing partnerships with government and civil society organisations. Lessons from implementing the multi-sector programme will be disseminated to the wider development community to influence practice and policy.

AKF's Multi-Sector Programme A Pro-Poor Approach

- Implementation of sectoral interventions for communities within a specific area has maximised impact on households.
- Different age groups are being engaged through the multi-sector programme. These include children within the 0-6 and 6-11 age groups, adolescents, mothers and farmers.
- The ECD programme is generating interests among families on education, particularly mothers and adolescents.
- Awareness generation activities on health and hygiene at ECD centres and with Mothers Groups are being reinforced with children (3-6 years) and mothers at the household level.
- Promotion of vegetable growth in kitchen gardens encourages nutritive meals for the family, especially for children.
- Increasing agricultural productivity is central to the growth of the rural economy and to enhance individual households' incomes and food security.
- Discussion of sanitation with women has led to awareness on hygiene and health-related issues such as hand washing, maternal and child health problems and ensuring provision of improved health services.



The programme organises health camps to build interface of communities with government health service providers, improve access to health services in remote villages and enhance community awareness about health benefits.