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# A K D N

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

Spring Newsletter: *Pakistan edition*



## President of Pakistan visits the Lahore Fort

**15 December 2021:** Dr. Arif Alvi, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, visited the 17th century Mughal-era Lahore Fort on 15 December 2021. The President was accompanied by Mr. Hafiz Sherah, President of the Ismaili Council for Pakistan, and Mr. Tausif Ahmad, Chief



Executive Officer (CEO) of Aga Khan Cultural Service Pakistan (AKCS-P). The ongoing project is one of the most extensive restoration projects in Pakistan being carried out by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) in partnership with the Government of Punjab and the Walled City of Lahore Authority. While touring the Royal Kitchens and the Picture Wall – one of the largest murals in the world and the principal reason for the site’s inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the President admired the detailed conservation efforts in preserving an important part of Muslim history. He described his visit to the fort stating “this was one of the best days of my life”.

Together with the Shah Burj Gate, the Picture Wall forms the original private entrance to the Fort. The 400+ metre Wall is exquisitely decorated with imagery of hunting, battle scenes, angels and demons, human figures, animals, birds, as well as geometric and floral patterns. It is embellished in cut glazed tile mosaic work, filigree work, fresco, painted lime plaster and cut brickwork.

The project to restore the Picture Wall and its components was initiated in 2018 and is expected to be completed by 2023. Since 2007, AKTC's Historic Cities Programme has worked on the rehabilitation of the Walled City of Lahore and the conservation of its monuments. This includes the restoration of the Wazir Khan Mosque and the Shahi Hammam. Rehabilitation works are ongoing, and a number of rehabilitation projects are co-funded by Norway, Germany and the USA.



*Group photo of President Alvi , honourable President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan with Mr. Hafiz SherAli, President, Ismaili Council for Pakistan, and the AKCS-P team*



*AKCS-P team briefing President Alvi about the traditional tile work at Lahore Fort*



*President Alvi being briefed about the restoration of Shah Burj Gate*

## Ground-breaking ceremonies held for two new Aga Khan Health Service facilities in Gilgit-Baltistan

**20 November 2021:** The Aga Khan Health Service, Pakistan (AKHS, P) held the ground-breaking ceremonies for the expansion of the Aga Khan Medical Centre in Gilgit and the construction of a new Aga Khan Health Centre in Hunza in November 2021. The state-of-the-art healthcare facilities promise continuity of quality health care services to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan and complement the Government's efforts to attain the Sustainable Development Goals in health. Mr. Khalid Khurshid, Honourable Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan who was the Chief Guest, highlighted that the expansion of the Aga Khan Medical Centre in Gilgit and the scale-up of its services will play a pivotal role in addressing the evolving health needs and increasing burden of disease in Gilgit-Baltistan.



*CM GB, Mr. Khalid Khurshid laying the foundation of the extended wing of Aga Khan Medical Centre, Gilgit*

The expansion of the Aga Khan Medical Centre in Gilgit will more than double capacity from 46 to 112 beds by 2023, transforming it into a fully functional general hospital. Services in the new wing will include acute and critical care, CT scans, dermatology, cardiology, dialysis, ophthalmology, teleconsultations and tele-ICU services, emergency medicine, oxygen generation, a full PCR lab and a blood bank. In Aliabad, the construction of a new 30-bed facility will be the first purpose-built, private, not-for-profit secondary level healthcare facility in Hunza. With the greater prevalence of non-communicable diseases in the region and a burgeoning tourism sector, modern and well-equipped healthcare facilities in the region will play an important role in addressing the health needs of Hunza and its surrounding areas. The Centre is expected to begin operations in 2023. Syed Amjad Ali Zaidi, Speaker Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly, who was the Chief Guest at the groundbreaking of Aga Khan Health Centre, Aliabad, acknowledged the government of Gilgit-Baltistan's partnership with the Aga Khan Development



*Representatives of AKHS, P briefing Khalid Khurshid, CM GB and Hafiz Sherahi, President, Ismaili Council for Pakistan about the expansion*



Network for bringing medical excellence in the region. He said, “Not only will people of Hunza and its surrounding benefit from this health Centre, but it will be beneficial to the entire region of Gilgit-Baltistan.”

## AKU intervention dispels myths around menstruation

**28 March 2022:** An intervention addressing menstrual health issues involving experts from the Aga Khan University’s Centre of Excellence in Women and Child Health and members of the community in District Dadu, Sindh, has resulted in a considerable increase in the use of a hygienic absorbent among non-users in the rural target community of Taluka Johi. Moreover, the project has succeeded in dispelling many of the myths and misconceptions regarding menstruation in the target area. The study helped improve the usage of homemade menstrual products. As part of the intervention carried out in collaboration with



*Community session in Taluka Johi of District Dadu, Sindh*

the Swiss Red Cross, about 25,000 adolescent girls and women were provided knowledge and information on menstruation, menstrual cycle and importance and ways of hygiene management through group awareness sessions. Common myths and misconceptions were also addressed during these sessions. Adolescent girls and women were also taught how to make a homemade reusable sanitary pad using cloths available at home. The intervention also engaged men so that they could extend their support to women in terms of expenses, access to material and medical care regarding menstrual health issues like any other health concern. At baseline, the study showed that around 40 percent of menstruating adolescent girls and women did not use an absorbent. Following the



*Researchers after the dissemination of the study results at AKU*

intervention, non-users of absorbents reduced to 11 percent, meaning that 90 percent of adolescent girls and women are now using an absorbent in the study area. Furthermore, 93

percent of adolescent girls and women in the study area are skilled to prepare a homemade reusable cloth pad for themselves.

## Year 2022's first quarter has been momentous for HBL Microfinance Bank (HBL MfB), formerly First MicroFinanceBank Ltd.

**1 January 2022:** Being a subsidiary of HBL since 2016, HBL MfB has enjoyed phenomenal business growth and consistently focused on staff wellbeing. In January 2022, HBL Microfinance Bank was officially rebranded with a promise of taking microfinance to new heights by delivering more impact, to more people, in more places. This change of name to HBL MfB has reinforced a sense of trust, stability and progressiveness associated with HBL to customers, regulators and the general public.

The first quarter also brought about HBL MfB's 20th Anniversary in March, 2022. This marked two successful decades of providing financial services to people with no or limited access to the financial



*Unveiling ceremony of the rebranding by Mr. Sultan Ali Allana, Chairman – HBL, accompanied by Mr. Amir Khan, C.E.O. and President – HBL MfB, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb, President and C.E.O. – HBL and Mr. Rayomond Kotwal, C.F.O. - HBL.*



*20th Anniversary celebrations of HBL Microfinance Bank by Mr. Amir Khan, C.E.O. and President – HBL MfB, Ms. Maya I. Ismail, Member B.o.Ds.– HBL MfB, Mr. Zahir Riaz, Member B.o.Ds. – HBL MfB in the presence of the Senior Management Team.*

sector, and uplifting their communities by offering innovative and inclusive financial products and services through a widespread footprint of 213 locations across Pakistan and 24/7 access to banking services through their alternate and digital delivery channels.



## Building resilient communities in vulnerable areas through provision of clean drinking water and promoting hygienic practices

**7 March 2022:** The communities living in mountainous parts of Pakistan are prone to natural disasters with limited access to critical services and economic opportunities. Climate change compounds these challenges by increasing the number of heavy floods, snow fall and frequent avalanches in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral. Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) from the Shishper Glacier is a recent example of the threats that climate change poses to the region. These natural disasters deeply affect the communities and their sources of living. The affects have been exacerbated by the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, lack of access to clean drinking water, safe sanitation facilities and accurate information have been significant challenges. These challenges were particularly severe in a few villages of Chitral where recent floods have destroyed the drinking water channel and people left with no option other than to use polluted water. This has forced communities into unhygienic practices which has resulted in increased number of waterborne diseases and COVID-19 cases.

The Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan and the High Commission of Canada to Pakistan stepped forward to urgently address these emerging issues in vulnerable areas of Chitral. These agencies formed teams and committees to build awareness and educate communities around COVID-19, which included community level messaging and outreach to encourage hygienic practices including hand washing and social distancing. It also provided communities with 150 health and hygiene kits with essential supplies including masks and sanitisers. The Aga Khan Agency for Habitat rehabilitated a water supply channel to give continuous access to clean



*Hygiene session in progress in Chitral, KPK*



*H.E. Wendy Gilmour, the Canada's High Commissioner to Pakistan, inaugurating the water scheme in Chitral*

drinking water at the doorsteps. This initiative has benefited communities in the villages of Seen Lasht, Dolomutch, Teerogole and Singoor in Lower Chitral, KPK. Through this intervention more than 5,500 community members have now access to clean drinking water and apply safer health and hygiene practices in daily life.

## Government engagement to expand health services with support from SMK and F4HE in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral

**20 April 2022:** A letter of collaboration has been signed between Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan (AKF, P) and Department of Health (DoH), Population Welfare Departments (PWD) of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan (AKF, P) is coordinating and engaging stakeholders

under its programmes including Sehatmand Khadaan-Healthy Families (SMK), and Foundation for Health and Empowerment (F4HE) with support of Global Affairs Canada (GAC). The partnership efforts will help Pakistan to achieve its national development commitments related on SDGs 3 and 5 to ensure universal access to reproductive health services, achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The partnership is also enhancing public and private sector capacity to implement priority thematic areas of Early Childhood Development, Adolescent Health, early



*Letter of Cooperation being signed between the Department of Health KPK and the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan*

detection and prevention of breast and cervical cancers and mental health, reducing disease burden and deaths. The collaboration will enhance the focus on the reproductive health and the availability of 24/7 BEMONC (Basic emergency obstetric and newborn care services). These BEMONC sites in each district will be linked with the other Health facilities of DoH and where possible with Lady Health Workers (LHWs) and Community Midwives (CMWs) to play complimentary role for referrals to BEMONC sites and community engagement and awareness for the health promotion and disease prevention (HPDP). These will also include capacity building of female health care providers, minor renovation work, providing need-based equipment, essential supplies, and newborn care to ensure continuum of care including antenatal care (ANC), delivery, postnatal care (PNC) and child health.

## Aga Khan Schools expand in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan

**21 November 2021:** The Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan (AKES, P) inaugurated the foundation laying of new state-of-the-art buildings at three schools in district Ghizer, Gilgit-

Baltistan. The new infrastructure has been designed keeping in view the rapid changes in the nature of teaching and learning, and the need to equip students to meet the complex challenges of the 21st century. Inspired by the natural beauty of the area, once completed, the new school buildings will ensure access of additional 1,500 students to high quality education in well-equipped and well-planned campuses with smart classrooms, modern science and computer laboratories, libraries, conference rooms, offices, canteens, and sports grounds. Planned over 72,000 square feet, the new facilities have been designed as green buildings with a focus on working in harmony with the local environment. Solar panels and insulated building materials will ensure minimal energy consumption and carbon footprint. The structures will also be seismic resistant and act as shelters for surrounding communities in the event of natural disasters. AKES, P also laid the foundation of two state-of-the-art regional Aga Khan Higher Secondary Schools in Gupis and Yasin, promising continuity of quality education until grade 12 for the students of the region. The two schools, Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, Gupis, and Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, Yasin, will have a combined capacity for almost 1,200+ students in a single shift. This will greatly improve educational opportunities in the area, not only for the 11,000+ students who are currently studying in more than 40 Aga Khan High schools in the region, but also those studying in other schools.



*Ground breaking at Aga Khan Higher Secondary School  
Chatorkhand, District Ghizer, GB*

The honorable Speaker of the Gilgit-Baltistan assembly, Syed Amjad Ali Zaidi, was the chief guest at Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, Gahkuch, and Aga Khan School, Damas, while the Deputy Speaker, Nazir Ahmed, presided over the ceremony at Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, Chatorkhand. President, Ismaili Council for Pakistan Mr. Hafiz Sherahli, attended as guest of honour at both the occasions along with leaders of the Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan and Ismaili Council for the Ishkoman Puniyal Region. Speaking at AKHSS Gahkuch, Speaker Amjad Ali appreciated AKES, P's commitment to providing modern and up-to-date facilities for its students, in addition to maintaining high standards of scholarships. He said that students studying in these institutions will have the chance to explore, question, and follow their dreams.

## **Serena Hotels and AKCS-P distribute profits with the communities of Shigar and Khaplu**

**19 January 2022:** An event was organised in January by Serena Hotels and Aga Khan Cultural Service Pakistan (AKCS-P) to distribute the profits earned from the operations of Serena Shigar Fort and Serena Khaplu Palace with the communities of Shigar and Khaplu, and to Women Enterprise CIQAM from the revenue of Serena Altit Fort Residence for their partnership at Serena



Altit Fort Residence. Ambassador of the Royal Norwegian Embassy H.E. Per Albert Ilsaas was the Chief Guest. Chairman AKCS-P, Mr. Akbar Ali Pesnani and Chief Executive Officer, Serena Hotels, Mr. Aziz Boolani also attended the event. The community representatives of Town Management Societies of Shigar, Khaplu and Head of CIQAM Green Solutions, Ms. Aqeela Bano and officials from the Royal Norwegian Embassy and Serena Hotels also participated in the event.

Tausif Ahmad, CEO of AKCS-P welcomed the guests and stated that now was the time to celebrate the long term relationship with the communities. The restoration and re-utilisation model, which was disrupted by the pandemic, is once again being revived. He affirmed that the historical Khaplu Palace and Shigar Fort have generated funds for the local community's public welfare programmes. Serena's administration of these projects, according to Mr. Aziz Boolani, is an extension of its Corporate Social Responsibility, which not only creates employment for the local population but also builds a value chain for its operations, helping the inhabitants of Khaplu and Shigar in every manner possible. Mr Akbar Ali Pesnani thanked the Royal Norwegian Embassy for their consistent support to AKCS-P for its interventions in Tilsit Baltistan and Punjab on various Heritage Restoration Projects. He reiterated AKCS-P's commitment to communities in its areas of operations and shared future plans in various parts of Pakistan.



*Presentation of the shield to the guest*



*A group photo of the stakeholders*

## Consultative workshop on “Youth Employability and Poverty Alleviation” for the members of Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly

**28 December 2021:** Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) held a two day (December 28-29) consultative workshop on “Youth Employability and Poverty Alleviation” for the members of Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly (GBA) in Islamabad. The inaugural session was graced by the Chief Minister, Gilgit-Baltistan, Mr. Khalid Khurshid Khan. In the workshop, an array of experts shared their insights about the emerging issues related to youth employment and shed light on contextual strategies for poverty alleviation in Gilgit-Baltistan. Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid said that in Gilgit-Baltistan there is a strong tradition of making decisions at local level. His government intends to incorporate this local tradition into the local government model to pave

the way for the representation of grassroot level communities in governance structure. Welcoming the participants and experts, CEO Aga Khan Foundation, Mr. Akhtar Iqbal, said that it is a great platform for learning about emerging issues related to the development of Gilgit-Baltistan and creating synergies with the government and civil society. Mr. Akhtar Iqbal lauded efforts of AKRSP in bringing together the legislative members of GB Assembly to discuss emerging and important issues of Gilgit-Baltistan. He vowed to work together with the government in addressing issues pertaining to social development. Speaking on the occasion Dr. Sania Nishtar, Former Special Assistant on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, appreciated the proactive approach of the government of Gilgit-Baltistan towards Ehsass initiatives. She said that Ehsass programme has introduced a system for the vulnerable communities in Pakistan, but there is a need to introduce the programme to the targeted people. A strategic plan was also discussed with members of GB Assembly and Ehsass Nashonuma and Ehsass One Window Centres in all tehsils of GB. Malik Amin Aslam, the former Federal Minister for Climate Change/Special Assistant to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, shared government initiatives in tackling climate change. He laid great emphasis on living in harmony with nature instead of fighting with nature. Speaking about future of work, the speakers emphasised on digitisation of the economy and promoting entrepreneurship in Gilgit-Baltistan. General Manager AKRSP, Jamil Uddin, expressed his gratitude to the members of GB Assembly and experts for making the session interactive and fruitful by giving undivided attention to the ideas discussed in the two days consultative workshop. Jamil stated that AKRSP intend not only to work in traditional areas, but it also intends to work in new geographies and on emerging issues. In the end Speaker GBA, Syed Amjad Ali Zaidi, thanked AKRSP for providing an opportunity to the members of GBA to get exposure to novel ideas about the emerging issues of Gilgit-Baltistan. He concluded the workshop with a note of optimism and resolve to work together with all stakeholders for the development of Gilgit-Baltistan.



*Chief Minister GB, CEO AKF, Speaker GBA, Chairman RSPN and other members at the consultative workshop*

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*GM AKRSP, Mr. Jamil Uddin speaking at the consultative workshop*



## AKU EB changing attitude towards education

Kanwal Nasir from Yasin valley in Gilgit-Baltistan is a first year MBBS student at Aga Khan University on full scholarship. According to her the decision of sending her to a school under the Aga Khan Education board (AKU-EB) system was absolutely right and essential for developing a strong learning foundation. She says, "we were well prepared for entering higher education institutions right from school. We had the knowledge and skills necessary to support our learning and integration into the advance systems of education in Pakistan and beyond. I will always be grateful to the AKU-EB system for changing our attitudes towards education and developing my critical thinking skills. While we worked hard to get admissions into institutions of our choice, we could have not achieved this without the strong learning foundation under the AKU-EB." Kanwal always aspired to become a doctor. This aspiration was attached to her childhood memory of seeing people suffer due to lack of health centres and no medical specialists that could be called for help. Kanwal is passionate to return to her home and contribute after completing her MBBS.



*Kanwal, an AKU-EB graduate shares her journey*

AKU-EB is the first private university led trans-provincial board (awarding body) in Pakistan which aims to shift teaching and learning away from rote learning and move towards higher order thinking to prepare students for higher education and lifelong learning. AKU-EB has been nationally and internationally evaluated for implementing international best standards and practices. The Board offers high-quality examinations for Secondary School (grades 9th and 10th - SSC) and Higher Secondary School (grades 11th and 12th - HSSC/ FSC) qualifications to public and private schools across Pakistan. Through AKU-EB's best international practices in assessment and state-of-the-art e-marking, the results are valid, reliable, and fair. Thus, AKU-EB qualifications are credible and highly trusted by the public and private sector universities. AKU-EB affiliated schools benefit from a government-recognised AKU-EB syllabus where learning outcomes are aligned with cognitive levels. Globally, AKU-EB is the only board to provide comprehensive School Feedback Report to its affiliated schools (based on students' performance in the AKU-EB examination).

## Nationwide study reveals limited learning in math and science

**20 January 2022:** more than 90 percent of primary and lower-secondary students in Pakistan have only a weak or basic understanding of the mathematics and science they are required to learn, according to a nationwide study conducted by faculty at Aga Khan University's Institute for Educational Development, Pakistan (IED). More than 15,000 students in grades five, six and eight from 153 public and private schools across the country completed standardised tests in mathematics and science as part of the study, which was funded by Pakistan's Higher Education Commission. All tests were aligned with Pakistan's curriculum and have been validated for use in the country by previous studies. The average mathematics score was 27 out of 100. The average science score was 34 out of 100. The average score in private schools was higher than

in public schools, but did not exceed 40 in either subject. In total, 78 public schools and 75 private schools participated in the study.

80 percent of students were the children of parents with a high school certificate or less. Researchers found that multiple factors were significantly correlated with students' learning outcomes. In increasing order of importance, those factors were high-quality teaching practices, a student's mother having a bachelor's or master's degree (a father's educational attainment was relatively less important), only one language being used in the

classroom, attending private school and going to school in Punjab. Surprisingly, students tended to learn less from experienced teachers than from those new to the profession. No teachers exhibited what the researchers described as good teaching practice. "In most classrooms, teachers spend their time reading and explaining words from the textbook instead of encouraging students to ask questions or participate in activities that bring concepts to life," said Associate Professor Sadia Bhutta, the study's principal investigator. Researchers also interviewed teachers to understand the challenges they face. The discussions revealed the urgent need to provide teachers with professional development opportunities to improve both their subject matter knowledge and their ability to reflect on their own pedagogy. IED's Dr Sadia Muzaffar Bhutta, Dr Nusrat Fatima Rizvi, Sohail Ahmad, Khadija Nadeem, Naureen Imran, Sabina Khan and Maimona Khan were part of the project's research team.



*Dissemination seminar at AKU-IED*

*Dear Readers,*

*We wish you all a very happy 2022. In this issue, we have covered the last quarter of 2021 and the first quarter of 2022. We want to thank the Government of Pakistan for the strong support and also all our partners who have been supporting our development work in the country for many decades.*

*If you have any questions about the articles, please contact the editor Laila Naz Taj, AKDN Communications Manager, Pakistan at [laila.taj@akdn.org](mailto:laila.taj@akdn.org).*

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*The next volume of AKDN Newsletter will be available in Summer 2022. For more information, visit our website: [www.akdn.org/Pakistan](http://www.akdn.org/Pakistan).*