



## PARTNERS

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation  
Ford Foundation  
Rockefeller Brothers Fund  
Synergos  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
U.S. Department of State  
World Bank Group

As a member of the Aga Khan Development Network, one of the world's leading poverty solutions networks, the Aga Khan Foundation helps communities around the world build better futures together. Harnessing the best from people of all walks of life, we build deep partnerships with local nonprofits, businesses, governments and community leaders based on a shared vision of prosperity for all. Working closely with our partners, we make long-term commitments to innovative programs that improve quality of life, from early childhood education to green space preservation. We invest in high-quality institutions such as clinics, banks and universities that anchor communities and provide opportunities for people to unlock their own promise. The Network's agencies work for the common good of all citizens, regardless of their gender, origin or religion and its underlying impulse is the ethic of compassion for the vulnerable in society.

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## A GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY LEARNING AGENDA

A strong civil society reflects the larger goals of good governance: allowing greater participation in decision making by community partners, improving leadership's links to constituents, and building open and peaceful pluralist societies.

Alongside our partners, AKDN engages with questions that are fundamental to strengthening civil society:

- How can outside groups best support and catalyze local assets and capacity?
- What are the essential elements of an enabling environment for civil society?
- What role does shared purpose or social cohesion play in improving quality of life?

In addressing these issues, we can create tools for assessing the capacity and improving performance of civil society organizations.

Coalitions that examine these issues with robust studies and analysis can point ways forward for vibrant societies. We invite you to join with us to learn how to best strengthen local civil society and improve quality of life around the world.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Aga Khan Foundation Email: [Civilsociety.akfusa@akdn.org](mailto:Civilsociety.akfusa@akdn.org)

Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy:  
[www.globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/about-the-gacp/](http://www.globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/about-the-gacp/)

Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship: [www.a4se.org](http://www.a4se.org)

Global Partnership for Social Accountability:  
[www.thegpsa.org/sa/](http://www.thegpsa.org/sa/)

## CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES AND PARTNERSHIPS



## Partnerships to Strengthen Civil Society for a Better Quality of Life

A robust civil society is crucial for a country's development and stability. When the private sector and citizens' groups play a role in weaving the social fabric alongside government, citizens are better able to address local priorities and improve their quality of life.

Essentially, civil society is about people coming together with common purpose to benefit society. In developing and fragile states, civil society often plays a central role, supporting and complementing governments to provide services and alleviate poverty. In all cultures throughout history, people often gain meaning and resilience from the bonds of civil society by helping each other.

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), consisting of many locally rooted institutions, approaches civil society from a long history of fostering pluralism, local representation and resilience. The approach sees a need in many countries for public forums based on merit and inclusion. The Network's emphasis has emerged from its values and grown through its work with community-level organizations and savings groups up to national rural support programs, commercial banks and insurance companies. AKDN is involved in a range of partnerships that strengthen and sustain civil society to improve trust, accountability and the quality of life.

*“Civil society is powered by private voluntary energies...committed to the public good.”*

—HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN,  
MAY 2006, NEW YORK







A community meeting in Pakistan allows for airing views on local priorities.



In Tanzania members of a local enterprise group share ideas and gain skills together.



Women in India pool their resources in a local savings group.

## ALLIANCES BUILD ON OUR EXPERIENCE

Experience shows that community-driven initiatives based on local assets, capacity and trust have longer-lasting benefits than externally driven development projects. In the 1980s, the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme pioneered AKDN’s strategy for building civil society. In the mountains of northern Pakistan, isolated and impoverished communities achieved significant improvements in quality of life when village organizations identified local priorities and mobilized resources from government, donors, and individuals, in their own communities, to address local needs. This generates considerable ownership in improvements that range from infrastructure—including hundreds of irrigation channels—to the “soft assets” of over 4,000 community organizations that manage local services and savings totalling millions of dollars. Building and strengthening a responsive civil society enabled communities to improve their own lives.

From the rural support programs, we learned the value of building sustainable, locally led institutions and networks. AKDN continues to work with civil society and governments, at the community level and through national and regional partnerships. A sector-wide approach to bolster civil society at all levels also works to strengthen the enabling environment so institutions can thrive. Today, regional partnerships support select national and community-level efforts of our partners to grow accountable institutions, merit-based leadership, credibility, ethics and trust in all levels of society.

### GROWING ASSETS, CAPACITY AND TRUST

A shared approach for a vital civil society focuses on three mutually supportive pillars: Assets, Capacity and Trust. Case studies from Africa and Asia show that these elements anchor people as stakeholders in their own development. As civil society organizations (CSOs) build on local assets (financial as well as other forms), and strengthen local capacity to improve the quality of life, greater trust can form among citizens, that benefits civil society and government. CSOs then become more durable and better able to improve the quality of life for all citizens, whether through service delivery, advocacy, or other activities.

## MAKING PARTNERSHIPS WORK

The Aga Khan Foundation U.S.A. (AKF USA) works with partners to ensure effective programs that sustain civil society over the long-term. Sound partnerships involve critical assessment of programs and partnerships that encourage learning among stakeholders. Across these partnerships, we explore where technology can increase the reach and cost-effectiveness of capacity building, complementing local experience and strengthening civil society organizations (CSOs) in ways that foster inclusion and efficient expansion.

AKF USA’s alliances demonstrate an international commitment to advance local solutions. Our civil society partnerships currently fall into four areas: strengthening local institutions, participatory governance, learning and research, and innovative financing models. Globally, AKDN has many more partnerships. The following illustrate examples involving the Aga Khan Foundation U.S.A.:

### STRENGTHENING LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

Works with partners to support a strong grassroots architecture and enabling environment for civil society:

#### Regional Hubs for Innovation in Civil Society

A partnership with U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, and others to launch centers that support civil society globally.

#### Afghan Institute for Civil Society

Working with USAID and Counterpart International, this independent institute supports Afghan CSOs through skills enhancement, certification and research.

#### Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy

Improves institutional sustainability and promotes local philanthropy through certification and research.

### PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

Supports two global governance alliances:

#### Global Partnership for Social Accountability

AKDN is a donor to the World Bank Trust Fund, which provides grants to improve local accountability.

#### Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship

Alongside Synergos and USAID, AKDN is researching the enabling environment in Central Asia to identify gaps and designing university curricula to address critical needs of social entrepreneurs.

*“Integral to the creation of good governance is the establishment of indigenous non-governmental institutions, custom-made to solve local problems.”*

—HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN, LONDON, FEBRUARY 1992

### INNOVATIVE FINANCING MODELS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Experiments with different models to create long-term local funding sources for social development:

**Multi-Input Area Development Financing Facilities** in Afghanistan and Tajikistan link investment in private sector economic drivers to sustain long-term social development in remote areas.

**Yetu Initiative** builds capacity, assets, and trust within civil society via increased linkages to the private sector and by using technology for local philanthropy in Kenya with partners from civil society like the Kenya Community Development Foundation as well as the private sector like Safaricom and Diamond Trust Bank.

### LEARNING AND RESEARCH

Has developed and supports several learning partnerships:

**Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy** AKDN collaborates with Mott Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, USAID, and the Global Fund for Community Foundations to learn from CSO projects that build assets, capacity and trust.

#### Social Cohesion in Kyrgyz Republic

AKDN works with the World Bank and local partners to research how community-driven development impacts social cohesion.

#### Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index

AKDN supports USAID’s global index that annually measures the enabling environment for civil society.