

Faces of *change*



For a quarter century, Aga Khan Foundation U.S.A. (AKF USA) has been investing in people, extending a helping hand to communities and individuals so they may live with dignity and hope.

A Village Transformed: Kharkoron lives up to its name

The Village of Kharkoron was first established as part of the Soviet social and agricultural restructuring of the 1960s. “When the Russians first brought electricity there was more than enough for everyone. But the village has grown since then.” Bobo Yoseph (Grandpa Joe), one of the original inhabitants said. “In 1970 they brought the transformer and everyone was happy” Bobo continued. “Then after a while we were all fighting because the lights were very dim. One part of the village would yell, threaten and sometimes fight or even cut the electricity to another part of the village. It was very bad. We all talked but couldn’t decide how to fix the problem. Every day there was a new argument. After one group cut the wires to one part of the village, some people reacted by threatening to break the transformer. Some villagers yelled

and had a fight saying ‘if they could not have lights then there would be lights for no one.’ Then we started a Village Organization with help from the Aga Khan Foundation. We learned that the Americans wanted to help us through the U.S. Agency for International Development. We asked the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme to help us. They succeeded at getting us a transformer from America.”

The set up and installation of the transformer was part of the U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Community Action Investment Program (CAIP). The CAIP helped communities to develop the skills necessary to improve public dialogue and effective communication.

The project was designed to resolve conflicts using many different tools and small projects. Economic and social disruptions resulting from the civil war and economic collapse were still rippling through small communities across Tajikistan. These simple yet locally important conflicts abounded. With USAID’s CAIP program in place and working through the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (a locally based NGO supported by Aga Khan Foundation’s Village Organization programs), the village is learning self-governance and decision-making. Villages like Kharkoron are being assisted in resolving a large number of varying conflicts while also learning the skills needed to face future problems confidently.

Through the Community Action Investment Program, USAID, MSDSP and the village of Kharkoron have all worked together to move away from conflict and closer to their ideals.

The transformer problem for the village of Kharkoron seems easily resolved. A 35-year old transformer meant to service 60 houses when it was first put into service was now laboring to service the 120 houses currently living in the village. Getting a new transformer seemed a clear solution. However, the limited incomes of such rural populations are far from sufficient for such a large capital material purchase. Through the Village Organization, the village began working together and managed to collect \$536. With a contribution from the Community Action Investment Program of \$5,074 Kharkoron had enough to complete the project and resolve the long-standing conflict.

“Please tell the Americans ‘thank you’ from all of us,” said Bobo. “We are very happy that the arguments are over and that there is enough electricity for bright lights and cooking.”



AGA KHAN FOUNDATION U.S.A.

An agency of the Aga Khan Development Network

1825 K STREET, NW, SUITE 901 • WASHINGTON, DC 20006
TEL: 202-293-2537 • FAX: 202-785-1752 • E-MAIL: info@akfusa.org

www.akdn.org