

## 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.*

## More Time for School and Play

14-year old Jamila Mahmoud had carried a countless number of buckets of water from the time she woke in the morning until sundown. Mud brick houses require a great deal of water for making bricks and the human needs for water are always present. Jamila explained “in the winter we would sometimes fall in the snow and spill the water and have to start over.” Jamila and more than 40 other children helped to build the village of Kudomon in Eastern Khatlon, with their own hands and backs.

Mirzuma, the Head of the Kudomon Village Organization woman’s group and the village matriarch spoke with confidence. “We came here more than four years ago and started the village because the government gave us the land for free.”



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“When we first came, there were 15 families to start the village and they all had children. It was very hard at first since there was no water here at all. So, water needed to be carried from the next village which is one and a half miles away. Since the adults were all building and making things ready for winter, it was the children’s responsibility to go 4 or 5 times a day and bring all the water they could carry. It was very hard but it was better for us than where we came from, and now this is our land and our village.”

“The other village didn’t want us to take the water. They would yell at the children and complain and call them names, as if we were not as good as them. The children listened every day to the complaining and scolding. So, we asked for help from Aga Khan Foundation and the Americans gave money. We were able to buy water from the other side of the hill. We created seven places for us to get the water in the village. Many new families came, and now we have 50 houses here.”

A woman standing behind her presented a plate of fat cucumbers and apricots. She mentions how the new water supply has made an impact on her village. “We have planted very many trees, vegetables and are making things here green now.”



Under the Community Action Investment Program, the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) completed some 224 small infrastructure projects relieving many small conflicts. Some conflicts that had escalated into violence were easy to identify. With the help of the MSDSP field staff and with the assistance of the villages themselves, small conflicts like that of Kudomon Village were identified and solved.

After nearly three years without having to carry water, Jamila and the other children of the village are able to attend school, play in the street and enjoy the simple pleasures of childhood. Rarely do they think back to what it took to build their community and their homes.