

## 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.*

### Improving Basic Education in Tajikistan Program Helps Students to Master Skills in a Shorter Time

School # 2, located in a remote area of Sagridasht in Tajikistan, is about 43 miles from the district center. The school was in the middle of military clashes between government and opposition troops. Severe cold and limited supplies of electricity make it difficult for the children to study. Teachers have limited access to new information since it is difficult to travel outside of this area to participate in professional development seminars.

With the independence of Tajikistan in 1991 came the new challenge of maintaining the quality of education to which

the people of Tajikistan had been accustomed. Years of civil war, withdrawal of Soviet support and a young government with few resources led to a decline in the quality of education at all levels.

But Improving Basic Education in Tajikistan (IBET) program, supported by Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), has created a positive impact on this school by improving teaching/learning approaches. Through training in better teaching techniques, School #2's teachers are now more confident and prepared to help children develop critical thinking, independent decision-making, and problem solving skills, which are vital life-long learning skills.

Firuz Safoeva, a 3rd grade-B teacher at School #2, explains how she has benefited from the training and teacher resource development. "I have been struggling with getting my children to learn multiplication during their math lesson for three months....With the help of Aknazar Maksadov, I now use more professional methods. My students enjoyed using the flash cards and various resources from the Learning Resource Centre and surprisingly they managed to learn the multiplication in one week as opposed to my three months of intensive work with them."

The Improving Basic Education in Tajikistan: A Multi-dimensional Approach program initially focused on grades 1 through 4 to improve the quality of primary level education. It worked with 18 core schools spread across three different regions in Tajikistan. Each core school spreads its training to two or three other satellite schools (of which there are 36). In 2006, the program expanded to include training initiatives for secondary level teachers to ensure that active learning occurs across all grades. The program gears attention to the school as a whole, including the state of the buildings, the competence of management, the training of the teachers and the support of the community. The project has included rehabilitation of schools, setting up a Learning Resource Center in each school, working with the parents committee in mobilizing community support and establishing mechanisms for managing school finances.

In total, 128 school management and 54 district education staff members improved skills in the areas of effective and participatory management styles, approaches to managing finances, school documentation, and other issues pertaining to education management. The skills of 63 primary and 105 secondary key teachers were enhanced in participatory learning and teaching techniques. These skills building activities were further extended to a wide range of teachers through methodological day trainings; in total approximately 672 primary and 650 secondary teachers benefited from the cascading model.



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