



AGA KHAN FOUNDATION U.S.A.

PRESS RELEASE

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**8,000 PARTICIPATED AT HOUSTON PARTNERSHIP WALK
ON OCTOBER 29, 2006 TO HELP END GLOBAL POVERTY**

***Local Doctor and Beneficiary of Non-profit Organization
Supports Partnership Walk***

Houston, Texas, October 29, 2006 – Over 8,000 participated in the Houston Partnership Walk today at the University of Houston, an event held annually in five major cities across the U.S. to raise awareness and funds to help alleviate global poverty. Approximately \$830,000 was raised by the Houston Walk. Partnership Walk brings together families, friends, students and leaders in government, business, media and the arts for a day of learning activities, fundraising and entertainment. Nationwide, over 27,000 participated as Partnership Walk was also held in Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, and Los Angeles, raising approximately \$3.4 million.

Partnership Walk is an initiative of Aga Khan Foundation U.S.A. (AKF USA) and organized by a network of volunteers in communities across the U.S. **100% of funds raised at Partnership Walk go directly to the projects supported by the Foundation.** The cost of organizing the Walk is completely underwritten by AKF USA and in-kind contributors. No contributions are used for administrative costs.

In a keynote address at the opening ceremony, U.S. Representative Al Green acknowledged the valuable contributions that Aga Khan Foundation has made, saying “people around the world want to eliminate poverty, and that is why this foundation is so important, because you have a network around the world.” U.S. Representative Sheila Jackson Lee also remarked on the value of AKF in today’s world, saying “if there is ever a time that this foundation is needed ... it is now, now is the time.” Jay Gogue, Chancellor of the University of Houston System and President of the University of Houston welcomed walkers to the event on the campus, saying “your cause is extremely just, and we are awfully proud to host you at the University of Houston.” A stage program of speeches, music, dance and performances throughout the day engaged participants in a multicultural celebration of world cultures. Serving as masters of ceremony were KPRC Channel 2 anchor Jerome Gray, KHOU Channel 11 anchor/reporter Vicente Arenas, and KTRK ABC 13 reporter Miya Shay. Visit www.partnershipwalk.org.

The theme for Partnership Walk 2006, “**Diversity is Strength**,” highlighted the Foundation’s community-based approach that values pluralism as a cornerstone for building peace, security and development. The Foundation invests in people to help impoverished communities and families seize the opportunity to move toward greater choice and voice in order to improve their lives. By promoting quality education, improving health care and placing tools for economic empowerment into the hands of people, the Foundation helps them build the skills necessary to lead self-sufficient, healthy and dignified lives.

At the *Village in Action*, demonstrations and development education activities were planned and designed primarily by youth from local schools and universities. Through this process, youth in particular learn valuable lessons and gain a deeper understanding of global citizenship. In recognition of AKF USA’s 25th anniversary,

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An agency of the Aga Khan Development Network

youth performed a special tribute on stage to showcase a quarter century of positive impact achieved through the Foundation's projects in health, education, rural development, microcredit and community organizations. Other exhibits demonstrated how the Foundation works with communities to create innovative solutions that improve the quality of life for people in remote, rural villages in Africa and Asia.

One beneficiary of the Foundation's programs is currently a local Ph.D. student at the School of Public Health at the University of Texas, Houston. Dr. Gul Nowshad was born and raised in the harsh mountain climate of remote Northern Pakistan, where the world's four highest mountain ranges – the Himalayas, Karakorum, Hindu Kush and Pamirs – form the “roof of the world.” Despite severe physical, financial, and social constraints, Dr. Nowshad persevered to obtain her education. She attended a boys school in the elementary grades, and walked eight miles daily to attend 6th to 8th grade. After receiving the highest marks in the entire region, she was awarded an Aga Khan Foundation scholarship to continue her studies in medicine in the nearby town of Gilgit and later in Islamabad. She became the first female physician in her valley, serving as a positive role model for thousands of girls in a region traditionally restrictive for women. She worked as a gynecologist, and a lady medical officer in Hunza Valley, and then came to realize the need for broader community health initiatives. She enrolled in a Master's of Public Health at University of Texas, Houston and plans to finish her Ph.D. by September 2007. Gul has high hopes of implementing an integrated, holistic health care system targeted to women and children in her native Pakistan when she returns with her two young boys and husband following graduation. Dr. Nowshad often speaks of her deep gratitude to Aga Khan Foundation for empowering her with the means to pursue her medical education. She urges all Houstonians to join in the Walk to learn more about the impact the Foundation has made on helping people in very disadvantaged circumstances find greater hope and opportunity.

AKF USA, established in 1981, is a private, non-denominational, non-profit international development organization committed to alleviating poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy. AKF USA is part of the Aga Khan Development Network (www.akdn.org), a network of private, non-denominational, development agencies around the world, established by His Highness the Aga Khan to empower communities and individuals, often in disadvantaged circumstances, improve living conditions and opportunities. The overarching goal of the Network's programs is to help poor communities achieve a level of self-reliance whereby they are able to plan their own futures. The Foundation presently supports 140 programs in 16 countries for the common good of all citizens regardless of their gender, origin or religion. The geographic focus of the Foundation's development programs is in East Africa and South and Central Asia.

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