

## 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.*

### Shakeeba's Struggle to Attend School in Afghanistan

Schools in Afghanistan face extremely low enrollment rates, extremely high gender disparities, few trained teachers, insufficient and destroyed school facilities, and dysfunctional/non-existing school support structures. Although education is compulsory for 9 years in Afghanistan, girls generally do not make it through even four years.

Eight-year old Shakeeba lives in Shina Masjeed village of Dahana-i-Ghori District in Baghlan, Afghanistan and is in 2nd grade. Until community-based education classes started in 2007, there were no other schools in her village. The government school was four hours away from their village. The boys went to the village mosque to study religious subjects.

Starting in 1st grade when the classes began, Shakeeba was thrilled to have the opportunity to attend school. She received a school bag, textbooks and stationery. Her teacher displayed great kindness by always helping them with their studies.

After finishing first grade, she could not continue to go to school. Due to illness in the family and other hardship, Shakeeba's grandfather would not allow her to attend school. It was very upsetting for Shakeeba to see her girlfriends continuing their education while she was forced to stay at home doing chores.

One day her teacher and one of the girls from her neighborhood came to Shakeeba's house to convince her grandfather to allow Shakeeba to attend school. The grandfather told the teacher that school was not a place for girls. Instead, girls should stay at home and help their mothers with the house work. The grandfather was set in his ways and could not be persuaded. The teacher left disappointed that Shakeeba would miss the chance to learn to read and write at an early age.

The next day the teacher came with a representative from the Aga Khan Foundation. They sat with the grandfather for a long time and explained to him the importance of education. The grandfather agreed finally and allowed Shakeeba to return to school. Shakeeba is now pleased to be back in school and extremely happy that she can study together with her classmates.

Peace Day was celebrated at schools in September 2007. Students and teachers spent half a day focused on peace day activities. Teachers and teacher trainers led discussions, story-telling and a celebration that included children creating collaborative posters outlining their hands and writing messages of peace. The posters were displayed prominently in the villages.

*Aga Khan Foundation is working in Afghanistan with CARE, Catholic Relief Services and the International Rescue Committee to expand access to quality education especially for girls. Since its start in April 2006, the "Partnership for Advancing Community Education in Afghanistan" has set up 2,076 classes in 870 communities in 17 Afghan provinces, reaching nearly 60,000 students (69% girls). The program is reaching villages where schools do not exist.*



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](mailto:info@akfusa.org)

[www.akdn.org](http://www.akdn.org)