

Project Name: Accelerate Prosperity

Organization(s): Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and Industrial Promotion Services (IPS) Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED)

Dates of Implementation: 2017 – ongoing

Countries: Pakistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic

Partner(s): AKF, AKFED IPS, University of Central Asia School of Professional and Continuing Education (UCA SPCE), UNICEF, Artha Networks Inc. (ANI), Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship

Funder(s): AKF; AKFED IPS; European Commission; USAID; UNICEF; GiZ; World Bank and SECO (as a sub-awardee)

Website: <http://accelerateprosperity.org/>

Project Description: Accelerate Prosperity (AP) is a new global initiative of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) jointly managed by AKF and AKFED IPS, aimed at supporting business start-ups and Small and Growing Businesses (SGBs), with a focus on women and youth entrepreneurs in rural regions and small towns.

AP combines lean startup business modeling methodologies, mentorship, angel investment networks, a digital deal flow platform, blended learning and gender-lens and youth-lens approaches and pioneers these services in towns that have previously been excluded. AP supports beneficiaries both non-financially and financially, introducing financing tools such as patient and tailored debt and quasi-equity to regions that have no exposure to these innovative financing tools.

In most cases, AP services are anchored in AKDN's wider efforts to address binding constraints to business growth in rural settings (e.g. investments in energy, telecoms, infrastructure) and work on upgrading promising ag and non-ag value chains as well as employable and soft skills. These investments reduce business risks and expand opportunities for youth entrepreneurship and employment.

Target Population: AP targets a wide range of entrepreneurs from rural towns and peri-urban settings, with a focus on women and youth (age 16 to 30), including low income, refugee and migrants, unemployed and those who have not completed primary or secondary education.

Results to-Date and/or Target Results: As of June 2019, AP has reached 6,000 youth (3,750 Pakistan, 1,650 Tajikistan, 600 Kyrgyz Republic), within boarder efforts that have reached about 24,000 people, including inspirational events, workshops and trainings. AP expects to reach 10,000+ youth and expand from five to 14 regions across four countries in Asia over next five years. It has invested directly and intermediated investments for its supported businesses with an overall leverage of 1:2 to date.

AP has secured financing under agreements with the European Commission, USAID, GiZ and UNICEF, and subcontract agreements under SDC, SECO and World Bank projects, and receives co-financing from AKF and AKFED IPS. AP is also partnering with an increasing number of venture philanthropists and impact investors, the former donating to AP for onward investments into supported businesses and the latter using AP to intermediate direct investments and loans, including nationals of Pakistan, UAE, the USA and Canada so far. AP also has established policies, program material and data tracking systems to support its expansion and replication plans with a focus on youth and women.

Interesting Features & Innovations:

Uses gender and youth lens to identify SGBs that can increase gender equality and youth inclusion.

Uses fit-for-purpose facilities and blended financing to reach underserved segments and communities.

Market driven with diverse revenue streams: AKF and donor funding, corporate sponsorships led by AKFED and consulting etc.