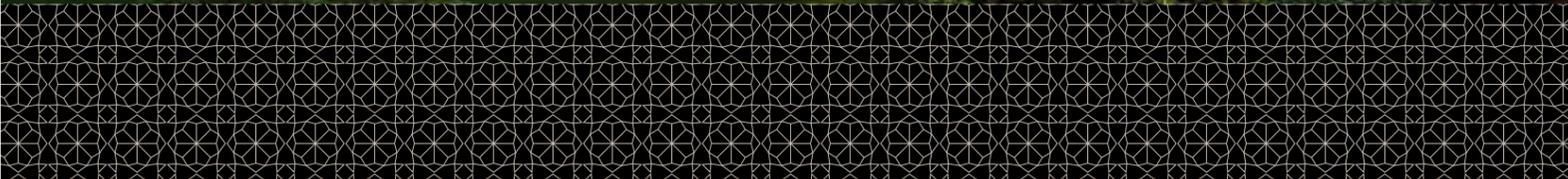




The Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme

STRATEGIES FOR
URBAN REGENERATION





Social and Economic Development

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Physical rehabilitation is a key, but certainly not solitary, feature of the approach used by the Historic Cities Programme (HCP) in its sites of interest. The sustainability of such interventions has been understood to depend on community involvement and development, targeted to permit financially viable solutions and the ongoing preservation and adaptive reuse of historic areas.

Once conceptualized, Area Development Projects (ADPs) attain their form through a process of multidisciplinary planning and a process of organic development during the initial phase of implementation. Analysis of qualitative and quantitative data enables HCP to make choices with regard to the depth and reach of proposed core socio-economic development activities. In generic terms, this means that activities aimed at improving the quality of life of residents focus on fulfilment of basic needs, provision of the means for social welfare and on creating a secure social and physical environment. Thematically these activities nearly always include better housing conditions, higher levels of employment, stimulation of income-generating activities, better education and better health (see the table below). Once activities have been defined and targets have been set, they are implemented in phases – starting with a first or pilot phase of limited extent (geographically, as well as in terms of time and the number of beneficiaries involved). Organic growth that is permitted in the early stages of the project is recognition of the fact that the process of delivery is part of the process and that this carries as much importance as the final product.

Development activities by theme	Cairo	Kabul	Mopti	Aleppo	Lahore	Delhi
Housing improvement	•	•			•	
Open space development and public buildings	•	•	•	•	•	•
Infrastructural improvement	•	•	•		•	•
Education programme (including TVET)	•	•	•	•	•	•
Health programme	•	•				
Micro-credit programme	•	•	•	•		

HCP's socio-economic development activities by theme in seven different Area Development Projects (ADPs).

The instruments for appreciating improvements in the quality of life, such as those that have been tested within the network of Aga Khan agencies between 2005 and 2010, can partially help to answer the question how relevant achievements are in view of overall improvements.

Achievements are measured in qualitative as well as in quantitative terms. The overall outcome is reviewed in relation to domains of asset creation that the Aga Khan Development



Outside the walls of the Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali, workers construct a pit for the preparation of *banco* – a manually mixed construction material made of clay soil, sand and various straw and organic additives – on the construction site.

Opposite page:
In the urban village of Nizamuddin Basti in Delhi a vibrant community is centred around the *dargah* of the 14th-century Sufi saint, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya.



A community meeting taking place in the *jataq*, or common public space, in the village of Ganish, northern Pakistan.

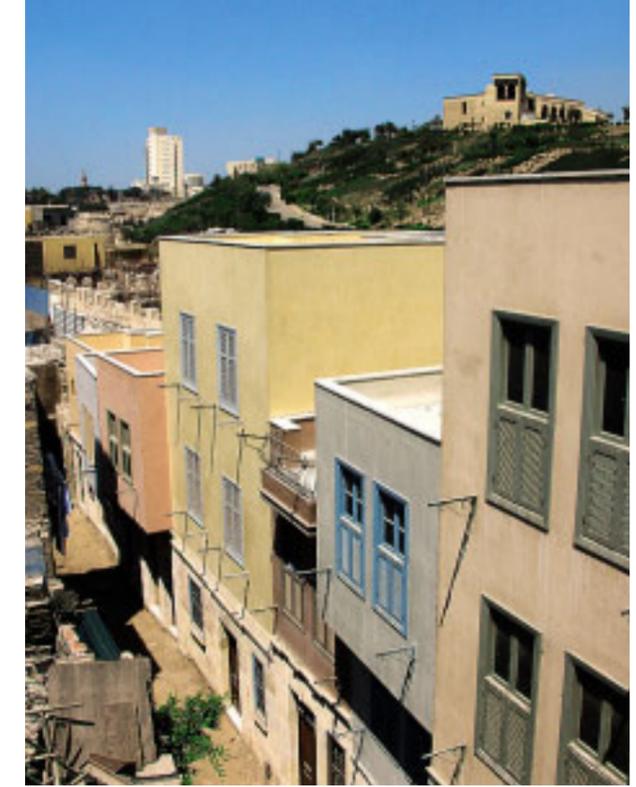
Network (AKDN) has defined. These are Economy, Health, Education, Social Life, Built and Natural Environments, Voice and Influence, and Local Perceptions of the overall Quality of Life. In order to fully appreciate qualitative improvements from an HCP perspective, improvements in the physical environment (housing, open space, solid waste collection), restoration or instilment of dignity (skills development and employment) and personal recognition (as happens through adult education and improved health) are taken into account.

Holistic Planning and Identification of Needs

When planning socio-economic interventions, available information concerning the size of the project area, its population and basic socio-economic data are collected and analysed. Key players are identified at both governmental and private level (including local Civil Society Organizations) and local leaders are contacted. Once an assessment is made of the desirable location for an ADP, suitable boundaries of the area are decided. These can be formal administrative boundaries (used in Cairo and Aleppo), informal boundaries recognized at local levels, such as *mohallas* or neighbourhoods in Lahore and in Kabul, watersheds (Mopti, Lahore and Kabul), mountain crests and rivers (northern Pakistan), as well as man-made boundaries such as major thoroughfares and perimeter walls (the Nizamuddin Basti).

Methods for Gathering Information

Project formulation in terms of the selection of development sectors, description of activities and budgeting is preceded by the execution of baseline surveys: a process of extensive fact-finding and orientation during which qualitative and quantitative information from within the targeted area is collected. These baseline surveys include variables that are generally difficult to assess in a straightforward manner, but that are nevertheless of great importance in the urban context. Household income and household expenditure, for



Left, the first stage of housing improvements on the east side of Atfet Asaad, a small residential cul-de-sac abutting the Historic Wall in Cairo.

Right, the work after completion.

instance, are notoriously difficult to measure and therefore need to be approached from various angles in order to arrive at acceptable estimates. Neighbourhood walks with knowledgeable individuals, focus group meetings, interviews with key informants and other sources of information, such as rejected loan applications for micro-credit, provide important additional information. By applying such methods in Cairo and Aleppo, it was possible to arrive at estimates of average household income and expenditure of the population that seemed plausible. In contrast, this was not possible in Zanzibar, in spite of persistent efforts. Zanzibari income levels appear to be substantially lower than household expenditure. Very telling for all household budgets is the percentage of income spent on food. Without exception, it was found that the urban poor that live on an income of less than \$1 per day (the UN definition of poor) tend to spend more than fifty per cent of their income on food. Zanzibar did not appear any different in that respect.

Although HCP collects a great deal of data (a typical baseline survey may produce 500 or more variables), the information sought still reflects a bias for the sectors of intervention that are close to HCP's mission. The development proposal for the revitalization of an urban area that eventually emerges, therefore, nearly always includes one or two major focal points of historical value that are the subject of physical rehabilitation. When used as a strategic 'entering wedge' into the community, such interventions effectively replace better-known strategies used by other agencies, such as productive investments, productive improved infrastructure, lending through micro-credit initiatives or arranging participatory social mapping exercises.

Analysis and Prioritization of Core Development Sectors

Once objectives are set and a strategy is in place, and all necessary background information and data concerning the project area have been collected and analysed, project activities for the major intervention sectors are planned. Although such activities may differ substantially from one ADP to the next, the seven domains of development by which their successes and failures are measured are nearly always represented.



Left, upgrading work has improved living conditions for some 15,000 residents of the Old City of Kabul in the neighbourhoods of Asheqan wa Arefan.



Right, people being entertained inside the entrance to Azhar Park in Cairo.



Landscaping and newly created pedestrian zones in front of the Citadel of Aleppo in Syria are part of a wider perimeter project.

1. Housing and public buildings

This sector is at the core of HCP's Programme, although in a majority of cases public buildings are central to the initiative rather than houses. The reason for this is that the costs to redo houses in historically sensitive areas are often prohibitively high and occupants generally do not have the means to make a substantial financial contribution.

Public buildings are present in all of HCP's Area Development initiatives. The choice of building is dependent on its historic significance for the neighbourhood and its accessibility. Even the Historic Wall in Cairo, which AKTC restored over a ten-year period, has been given a new function: in a departure from its original purpose, it is now attracting visitors rather than keeping them out. The Great Mosque in Mopti (Mali), which HCP restored, has a religious function, but also draws visitors from abroad. The completion of the conservation work in Aleppo's Old City by HCP marks the start of community activities aimed at bringing benefits from tourism to the inhabitants who live around the Citadel. In all of these cases, the public buildings have proven to be a suitable entry wedge for access to the community in order to start development activities.

2. Open space

Many poor historic centres where HCP is active have high population densities. Better use of limited public open space and the creation of additional areas where the public has free access are, therefore, of great importance. In places such as Aleppo's Old City, previous work by other development agencies in public open-space development would make HCP's involvement in this field less of a necessity. However, HCP's involvement in the development of a green zone on a sixteen-hectare vacant lot just outside the project area would provide substantial benefits for all inhabitants of the Old City. A similar situation existed in the historic District 1 of Kabul, where a four-hectare heavily encroached and polluted former park was rehabilitated as a city park. City parks, as green public spaces par excellence, are nowadays part and parcel of nearly all of HCP's interventions and are considered a core component in socio-economic development.



Squares, streets and even alleys can be put to multiple uses. In Cairo's Darb al-Ahmar quarter, a small but centrally located square, which is dominated by the thirteenth-century Aslam Mosque, was identified as a key public space and as a result was developed with multiple uses in mind. Furthermore, HCP was also involved in the development of a master plan for the reuse of public space in the entire district. Of equal importance is the creation of public space around recently rehabilitated buildings. Not only does this contribute to better visibility and access to the building, but it also helps to prevent encroachment and damage, ensuring longer lasting benefits to the public.

3. Education and vocational training

Levels of education in most, if not all, of HCP's intervention areas are generally low to very low at the start of launching development activities. Literacy levels, in particular for women, reach only seventy per cent in Cairo and in Aleppo, but are as low as twenty-five per cent in Kabul and only around thirty per cent in Mali and Zanzibar. Many children do not complete primary school, as parents often do not see the need for further education in the absence of career prospects.

In a number of cases HCP has started literacy classes for adults, either directly or in collaboration with experienced local NGOs. In addition to this, attempts are being made to increase the level of involvement of parents in the education of their children. The libraries for children and adults that were set up in Cairo have become a focal point for interaction with parents and children, as have after-school activities that are aimed at stimulating creativity and emphasizing the need for continued education. A similar library will now also be set up in Aleppo.

HCP is not involved in secondary and higher education for local communities, but instead focuses on vocational and administrative training. The assumption is that the vast majority of people in the poor areas where HCP intervenes would be best served with knowledge of a particular skill or trade that could be marketable, thus adding to the family income.

The AKDN school improvement initiative in Nizamuddin Basti in Delhi has created a pleasing school environment, and the renovated Municipal Corporation of Delhi School compares with the best in the city.



As part of an overall strategy to improve the life of residents, a class, organized by HCP's Health Programme, under way in the medical clinic in Darb al-Ahmar in Cairo.

4. Health

HCP does not see a role for itself as a major provider of health care. Still, information collected at source from the target group in the intervention areas nearly always points to the lack of available health services or to their high costs – placing proper health care out of reach for most households. As a result, many suffer from poor health conditions that could easily have been avoided. Since most surveys indicate mothers, mothers-to-be and children as the groups that are most at risk, efforts have been, and continue to be, made to focus on these groups. Preventive rather than curative health care is HCP's main principle. This means that the majority of health-related activities consist in awareness-raising.

5. Water, sanitation and disposal of solid waste

Providing populations with access to proper sources of water goes hand-in-hand with improved sanitation. Nearly all intervention areas where AKTC is active suffer from a lack of both. Where drinking water and sanitation facilities are available, the focus may be on increasing accessibility. HCP would generally only be working at the secondary level (the individual street) or even more likely at the tertiary level (individual houses) when providing access to water. Primary water supply is considered a government responsibility for which other agencies are better equipped. In Zanzibar, additional taps and toilets were built in buildings that could house up to a hundred people. In the Komoguel quarter of Mopti, Mali, access to public water taps in the open street was identified as an issue of high importance. The issue has since been addressed, not just by creating more public taps, but also by creating a system of proper drainage of waste water and sewage below street level.

HCP sees a role for itself in starting up and helping to sustain community-based initiatives for waste collection and maintenance of a clean and healthy environment. On a permanent basis, however, it is believed that solid waste removal is a community and municipal responsibility. HCP can initially act as a broker between the different parties involved, and it has kick-started periodic cleaning campaigns with volunteers, in order to help clean rooftops or vacant lots where rubbish has been allowed to accumulate.



6. Employment and vocational training

HCP's involvement in employment is mainly a consequence of its engagement in vocational and administrative training, as well as its involvement in stimulating the development of income-generating activities. The basic principle is that HCP, or any of its local development agencies, is not a job provider, nor an agent that acts as a broker between employees and employers. It does promote vocational training.

Technical, Vocational and Educational Training (TVET) is the one education component that can be found in almost all HCP's interventions. The reason for this is that physical rehabilitation of monuments requires able craftsmen from start to finish. More often than not, however, such able craftsmen are not locally available and need to be trained on the job. As a result, nearly all intervention programmes include crafts training –

A new pump supplies water in District 1 in Kabul Old City, part of a range of upgrading measures that include paving alleyways and selected streets, along with the construction of drains and the improvement of water supplies.



Above, in Komoguel, Mopti, street paving work is being carried out using 'stones' made of recycled plastic bags.

Below, work being done in the interior of the Sufi shrine at the centre of the Asheqan wa Arefan area of old Kabul.

in particular construction-related crafts such as masonry, carpentry and fine woodwork, plumbing and electrical engineering. Training in administration has proven particularly attractive to women who seek to improve their skills and move up in the labour market. Local crafts development through training in quality improvement is another element that is part of the TVET approach.

7. Urban planning

Nearly all cities where HCP is engaged in urban revitalization have master plans for urban development. Many of these plans, however, have not been adjusted to the realities on the ground and have therefore lost their relevance. In order to deal with the realities on the ground, HCP has in a number of cases taken on some planning tasks that are generally associated with governmental, municipal or district units.

Meticulous plot-by-plot investigative work carried out over a number of years in all of the historic cities concerned has yielded a wealth of information. Based on this, changes can now be proposed that will have a significant impact, not just in terms of retaining physical assets within the built environment, but equally in social and cultural terms. In Cairo it led to a decision in 2006 not to demolish a core part of Darb al-Ahmar as was

originally foreseen in the 1973 Master Plan. The recreation of Qazi Bagh, a four-hectare green open space in the heart of Old Kabul, is another example of a reversal of potentially harmful urban development (in this case it was the absence of any planning that had caused complete encroachment of green open space).

Sustaining Development Initiatives after Project Completion

Continuation of HCP-initiated socio-economic development activities beyond the lifetime of its projects depends on the character of the intervention, the implementing capacity of local counterparts and availability of funding. Integrated development projects, which contain a multitude of thematic elements, are generally split into several manageable components before being handed over, while some parts are considered to have been completed. Continuation of the vocational training packages beyond the project's lifetime is secured through a number of arrangements with private and governmental training institutes, whereby HCP aims at preserving the curriculum that was prepared and the quality of the training that was provided.

Physical rehabilitation usually comes to an end when the project is completed. The newly created built environment, however, requires continuous upkeep. In order to ensure that buildings and public works are properly maintained by the local entities that carry on after HCP has left, income-generating activities have been devised whereby funding comes from the public paying entry fees (for example to the Baltit Trust which manages Baltit Fort in Hunza, northern Pakistan), rent (by leasing restored public buildings to other organizations, for example the Old Dispensary in Zanzibar) or by organizing events. The Komoguel Project in Mopti is an exception, whereby physical rehabilitation of water and sanitation during the course of a number of phases will be handed over to a local counterpart that will continue similar interventions in Mopti and elsewhere.

Monitoring, Research and Evaluation

In the monitoring, research and evaluation of its projects, HCP follows the same hierarchical sequence it applies when designing projects, but it addresses these in reverse order. Project descriptions of the 'what' (goals and objectives), 'how' (strategy) and 'which' (activities) are monitored and evaluated by looking first at the results (which reflect the direct outcome of activities), then at the effectiveness (which measures the strategy) and finally at the impact (defined as lasting and durable change). There are compelling arguments for maintaining this hierarchical order in project design and in project monitoring and evaluation. Not only does it provide insight at which level outputs are directly attributable to inputs, but it can also help to trace and rank the less tangible, often indirect outputs. Development of important cross-cutting themes for HCP, such as environment, gender, and organizational and institutional development of Civil Society Organizations, are also evaluated in terms of their impact.



Top, a planning meeting with municipal officials and community planners in the Garden Pavilion of Bagh-e Babur in Kabul. Middle, restored Baltit Fort looks out over Hunza Valley in northern Pakistan. Bottom, an evening view of the restored Old Dispensary in Zanzibar.