“For the first time in my life, I have ideas of my own.
For the first time in my life, I am not afraid to speak my mind.
For the first time in my life, I feel like a human being.”

-Aga Khan Humanities Project student, Khujand State University, Tajikistan
Central Asia is going through profound cultural change. New foundations for identity are emerging as the region faces broader political and economic horizons. Central Asians are reaching into their past for inspiration, and seek assistance in drawing upon the rich traditions of their societies to foster tolerance, ethics, and civic virtues. Central Asian governments have also called for support in advancing teacher education and curriculum. In response, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture established the Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP) in 1997 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

AKHP promotes pluralism in ideas, cultures, and peoples by supporting the development and implementation of innovative humanities curricula based on the cultural traditions of Central Asia.

AKHP initiates and supports:

- Teacher training in primary and secondary schools
- Curriculum and pedagogical development in universities
- Community outreach projects
- Institutional development through long-term partnerships

Addressing current challenges and opportunities, AKHP builds bridges across communities in the region, rather than promoting any one perspective or providing religious instruction. AKHP helps Central Asians share their traditions and reestablish links with the outside world.

AKHP develops:

Critical insight

Ethical reflection

Participatory leadership

Open-ended curiosity

Cultural interpretation

Tolerance for diversity

Aesthetic appreciation

Ethics Training: ‘What Would I Do?’
AKHP students have created ethics scenarios that encourage dialogue and reflection on choices in everyday life such as rights and duties, love and family, and integrity and corruption. They call for in-depth consideration of ‘What would I do in such a situation?’
Nine universities in contact with one another

**Electronic Community: Connecting Ideas**

The Electronic Community project enables close communication between AKHP partner universities through electronic weekly bulletins and monthly newsletters. News and ideas are exchanged, connecting creative concepts to practical, forward-looking solutions. Future plans include the creation of an AKHP website and online learning opportunities.

**AKHP in Universities: Pioneering Educational Innovation**

AKHP has developed a broad and interdisciplinary humanities curriculum for undergraduate students written by Central Asians for Central Asians. Educators at nine partner universities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have been trained to teach AKHP courses, assess curriculum materials, coordinate student projects, and conduct further teacher training.

Students explore the themes and questions of the AKHP curriculum through rational debate, mediation, role-play, teamwork, and individual inquiry. All educational innovations are tested rigorously and piloted on site. Regular assessment ensures successful adaptation to the realities of the classroom.

The Ministry of Education in Tajikistan has incorporated the AKHP curriculum as part of the academic program in all partner universities in Tajikistan, and has requested the rapid expansion of the project.

**AKHP in Schools: Promoting Pluralism in the Classroom**

AKHP’s work in schools aims to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in the humanities at primary and secondary level.

AKHP trains teachers in activity-based instructional methods that foster creative thinking, problem solving, and cooperative learning in students.

At the request of the government of Tajikistan, the teacher training program is expanding to rural Khatlon province.

In addition, educational resource materials for teaching the humanities will be published, helping to make the learning process more child-friendly and relevant.

The result: humanities teachers working together across disciplines to strengthen their teaching skills.

**AKHP encourages job creators rather than job seekers, participatory leaders rather than dogmatic doers, and practical, reflective, and responsible citizens rather than extremists.**
Community Outreach: Building Civil Society

The Cinema Group has produced a number of documentary and animated films that have been shown at international film festivals and on television. The Cinema Group has also created training videos and programs for agencies such as Internews, Mercy Corps International, and the government of Tajikistan.

Student Projects help students connect theory to issues in civil society by designing and implementing team projects. Supported by small competitive grants, students have created results such as applied research into the causes of illiteracy in rural Tajikistan.

Student Internships introduce young people to potential careers in the public and private sectors, and expose local organizations to future leaders. Students not only learn professional skills and responsibilities, but also provide their intellectual and leadership abilities to organizations active in their community.

Partnerships and Development: Expanding Our Impact

Long-Term Partnerships To ensure sustainability and expand the project’s reach, AKHP builds long-term relationships with governments and partners in the region. Areas of collaboration include scholarly development, research design, archival techniques, leadership training, and academic writing.

Institutional Development AKHP has strong relationships with rectors and school administrators to ensure continual support for innovation. Our focus on educational leaders - both students and instructors - provides institutional impetus for change.

Learning From Doing All AKHP participants are trained to train others through rigorous procedures of team-based planning, observation, and honest feedback. We believe in learning from doing, and have systematic monitoring procedures that focus on lessons learned. Our recruitment and professional development programs promote respect for excellence, fairness, and concern for institution-building.