The AKU runs a wide range of training for medical personnel, including midwives, nurses and doctors. The AKU’s nursing programme in Kabul will graduate 89 nurses in April 2006, the first class to graduate under the new national curriculum, which AKU helped to revise and implement.

It has also launched training programmes that cover the spectrum of qualitative indicators, with a special focus on creating “multiplier effects” through the professional development of medical and teaching personnel. These programmes have been replicated in rapidly expanding programmes in East Africa, where over 600 students are pursuing nursing degrees and diplomas.

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The FMIC’s association with the Aga Khan University links it with other health-related programmes of the Aga Khan Development Network, including projects in nutrition, water and sanitation, and education. It also provides a strong link to the global resources of the Aga Khan Health Services (AKHS), one of the largest private non-profit health services networks in the developing world, with hospitals in Pakistan, India, Tajikistan, Kenya and Tanzania, as well as Afghanistan.

AKHS operates 240 facilities, including 119 Health Posts, 17 Basic Health Centres, five Community Health Centres and one hospital (in Bamyan). The FMIC is one of the world’s leading referral hospitals for children, providing services ranging from basic health care to tertiary care hospitals.

The AKU’s contributions to medical training have led to a marked improvement in nursing education and patient care in Pakistan, Afghanistan, East Africa and Syria. AKU’s contributions to nursing alone have been significant, leading to a marked improvement in nursing education and patient care in Pakistan, Afghanistan, East Africa and Syria.

The foundations of such an institution have been laid by a public-private partnership between the Government of Afghanistan, the French Medical Institute for Children (FMIC), La Chaîne de L’Espoir/Enfants Afghans and the Aga Khan Development Network. The partnership has resulted in the creation of a private, non-profit hospital, the French Medical Institute for Children (FMIC) in Kabul. The Aga Khan Development Network has been asked to join the partnership to manage the hospital and supervise its growth.
The FMIC has instituted a Welfare Support Programme that subsidises health services for poorer patients. The partners will contribute to the realisation of these services. The AKU’s University Hospital has been asked to manage the FMIC’s 93-bed facility. The University Hospital is the principal clinical training site for the AKU’s Faculty of Health Sciences, which is composed of a medical college and school of nursing. The Hospital, in Karachi, is well known throughout the region for the high standards of its staff and facilities and its patient welfare system.

In keeping with the Muslim ethic that requires the more fortunate to help the poor and sick, AKU’s patient welfare system, which is similar to that of FMIC, assists patients who are unable to pay for treatments, through subsidised care. About 75 percent of all patients treated at AKU’s University Hospital in Karachi are from low- to middle-income areas, many availing themselves of the patient welfare system. Over US$ 4 million in assistance has been awarded annually in recent years.

Phase One: A New Standard in Health Care

The FMIC will offer health care of the highest standard in the country and on par with the best medical institutions in the region. In its initial phase, it will provide paediatric surgical care, including general and orthopaedic surgery. Its 93 beds include 15 in the intensive care unit and 8 recovery beds. There are also 10 clinic and examination rooms for outpatients. The hospital is equipped with excellent diagnostic and treatment technology, including a state-of-the-art CT Scan, general radiology and ultrasound. It also features a well-equipped laboratory and operating theatres.

AKU’s University Hospital is providing key hospital management staff. In initial stages, the hospital staff will consist of both Afghan and expatriate personnel. As training programmes are completed, more Afghans will assume roles in the operations of the hospital. Afghan surgeons will be trained in France and at AKU’s University Hospital in Karachi.

The French Government will provide core expatriate medical staff in general paediatrics, paediatric general surgery, anaesthesiology, radiology, and pathology. Through short-term rotational missions, La Chaîne de L’Espoir will provide surgeons, nurses and technicians from France and elsewhere in Europe as well as North America.

One of the immediate aims of the hospital is to contribute to the Millennium Development Goal of reducing child mortality. Heart disease and other conditions among Afghan children can now be addressed through surgery.

Phase Two: Future Expansion

Reflecting the overwhelming needs of the country, in the longer term the partners plan to expand the hospital to include a variety of new services. The hospital will grow to 250 or more beds and will expand its range of services to include the delivery of care to adults. Land has been reserved for the future expansion of the facility. The FMIC would remain as an institute within the larger hospital.

New services will eventually include maternal care, obstetrics and neonatology, cardiology, neuroscience, oncology and other services yet to be defined. As the programme’s scope is expanded to include new services, such as obstetrics and gynaecological care, the hospital will make important contributions to the goal of improving the overall health of Afghans.

From the outset the hospital will be an important referral and training centre for nursing, paramedical staff and eventually physicians. On-site training provided by both La Chaîne de L’Espoir and AKU will include training for Afghan physicians, nurses and technicians in surgical specialisations, as well as anaesthesia, radiology, pathology, endoscopy, and intensive care.

Through these training programmes and by setting standards for the quality of health care, the hospital hopes to raise standards at other institutions in the country, thereby raising the general standard of health care.

As it does so, it will also contribute to the revitalisation of civil society in the country by training leaders in the medical profession and working with government agencies to rebuild the health infrastructure.

International Linkages

The FMIC will benefit from an extraordinary set of national and international linkages, including those with the Afghan and French governments, La Chaîne de L’Espoir and agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network.

Through these and other linkages, it will draw on the expertise of the Faculty of Medicine at Kabul University, the Aga Khan University in Karachi, and the Universities of Paris, Lyon, Toulouse and Caen in France.

La Chaîne de L’Espoir, a humanitarian organisation founded in 1988 by Alain Deloche, is active in more than 20 countries, primarily Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. It works to address health care inequalities that affect the lives of infants and provide necessary surgical care and education to disadvantaged children. Enfants Afghans, an NGO created by La Chaîne de L’Espoir, Dr. Eric Cheysson, Bacthiane, Muriel Robin and Marine Jacquemin, was set up to realise a modern hospital in Afghanistan.

The Aga Khan University Hospital in Karachi, which will operate the FMIC, has also been asked to manage the FMIC’s 93-bed facility. The University Hospital is the principal clinical training site for AKU’s core expatriate medical staff in general paediatrics, paediatric general surgery, anaesthesiology, radiology, and pathology. Through short-term rotational missions, La Chaîne de L’Espoir will provide surgeons, nurses and technicians from France and elsewhere in Europe as well as North America.

One of the immediate aims of the hospital is to contribute to the Millennium Development Goal of reducing child mortality. Heart disease and other conditions among Afghan children can now be addressed through surgery.

Cover Photo:
The new buildings of the French Medical Institute for children (FMIC) rise in contrast to other buildings which await reconstruction.

Equipped to international standards, the hospital’s laboratory, which is affiliated with the Aga Khan University (AKU) in Karachi, is developing expertise in microbiology, haematology, serology and biochemistry services.

About Aga Khan Health Services

Aga Khan Health Services (AKHS) is one of the largest private non-profit health services networks in the developing world, with hospitals in Pakistan, India, Tajikistan, Kenya and Tanzania, as well as Afghanistan. AKHS operates 240 facilities, ranging from Basic Health Centres to tertiary care hospitals, in South Asia, Central Asia and East Africa. In 2005, it treated nearly 2.4 million outpatients, admitted over 100,000 inpatients, and operated community health programmes for 1.5 million people.

In Afghanistan, AKHS operates a range of non-profit health initiatives, including 119 Health Posts, each with two Community Health Workers, as well as 17 Basic Health Centres, five Community Health Centres and one hospital (in Bamyan).

About The Aga Khan University

Barely 25 years old, the Aga Khan University has already had a wide impact, particularly in the health sciences and education. Currently, AKU has 10 teaching sites, in Pakistan, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and the UK, as well as Afghanistan, where it is delivering medical training. AKU’s contributions to nursing alone have been significant, leading to a marked improvement in nursing education and patient care in Pakistan, Afghanistan, East Africa and Syria. It has also launched training programmes that cover the spectrum of qualitative indicators, with a special focus on creating “multiplier effects” through the professional development of medical and teaching personnel. These programmes have been replicated in rapidly expanding programmes in East Africa, where over 400 students are pursuing nursing degrees and diplomas and Postgraduate Medical Education programmes including residencies in medicine, surgery, radiology, pathology, and anaesthesiology. Programmes will soon start in obstetrics-gynaecology and paediatrics. A Family Medicine residency is in place in Dar es Salaam. Similar programmes have started in Central Asia.

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