

# IMPACT

2021 UPDATE



**ENHANCING**  
*inclusivity in Pakistan*



**SUSTAINING**  
*marine ecosystems in the Indian Ocean*



**COLLABORATING**  
*with Unite Lebanon Youth Project*

# KEY numbers

⇒ **201**  
**SCHOLARSHIPS** provided  
*(81 current students)*

⇒ **62**  
**INSTITUTIONS** attended globally

⇒ **57**  
**SCHOLARSHIPS** at the Master's level

⇒ **52**  
**STUDENTS** in S.T.E.M. fields  
*(Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)*

⇒ **29**  
**COUNTRIES** of origin:

*Afghanistan, Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Cameroon, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Madagascar, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Palestine, Peru, South Africa, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Uganda and Yemen*

⇒ **39**  
**STUDENTS** pursuing medical studies

⇒ **6x**  
**MULTIPLIER EFFECT**  
*for every donor dollar contributed,  
thanks to the generosity of partners*

⇒ **12**  
**PHD STUDENTS:**

*international public law; international monetary and financial law; mobility and transport;  
forestry sciences; social forestry; wood sciences; educational studies; hepatology and  
electrical & computer engineering*



# from **THE CHAIR** *and* **CEO**

In 2021, with the continued impact of the pandemic and low vaccination rates in many countries, most of our scholars pursued their studies online. This proved challenging for many, given inadequate Internet and electricity connections in many locations. Yet they persisted! This resilience resulted in 29 students graduating as scheduled in 2021. Our congratulations to all of them and continued admiration for our current students, many of whom are still studying online, and our alumnae, who continue to make an outstanding impact, some of whose stories we have featured in this third issue of IMPACT.

Many of our alumnae are tackling one of our biggest crises: climate change. In addition, others are focused on addressing a fundamental way to combat poverty: improved education systems. Yet others are developing increasingly specialized medical and healthcare expertise. They are using their education, leadership skills and confidence to effect change in some of the world's most vulnerable and isolated communities.

In 2021, the Board placed increased focus on five key areas of operation: board governance; financial accountability and transparency; fundraising; staff management; and volunteer involvement, continuing to implement new policies identified in 2020.

We also ramped up our focus on securing long-term sustainable funding for three enduring university partnerships, and we plan to expand this approach to secure further support for refugee students at top universities in Lebanon, as well as students from Syria.

We hope you enjoy this issue of IMPACT – we'd love to hear your feedback! And we look forward to the continued, generous support of our partners and donors in 2022.

Rubina Havlin, ICD.D  
Interim Chair, Board of Directors

Narmin K. Ismail, MBA, M.S.M.  
Founder and CEO

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## Credits

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*Front cover (L to R):*

*Zohra Dewji, Sadaf Sutaria and  
Lalbegim Boronieva*



# OUR ALUMNAE

## where are they now?



*Suzan Khalil, Palestine*  
**MD, American University of Beirut**  
*Lebanon*



My education has given me the confidence and tools I need to give back to my community and create an impact. It has given me the power to be independent and the means to support my family.

Since completing my degree, I have started working in clinical research at the department of Cardiology at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). I am also currently working on my residency application and will be applying to Internal Medicine residency programs.

In ten years, I hope to have completed my residency and fellowship training and opened my own clinic. I see myself being more involved in non-profit organizations and charities that aim to improve the lives of children around the world and to support organizations fighting climate change.

I hope to be more active on the ground and be a voice for minority groups facing injustice. I hope to inspire more people around me to stand up and speak up against inequality and discrimination. I also hope to inspire my community to volunteer more of their time and efforts to support those who are less fortunate.

**I hope to be more active on the ground and be a voice for minority groups facing any form of injustice.**



Starting my professional career at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), I became more aware about development projects not being inclusive of all genders. In addition, I saw economic rights being denied to people in general and vulnerable communities in particular.

At HRCP, I also initiated and co-authored a fact-finding mission in Chitral to understand the alarming rate of suicides and assess the social and economic factors leading to the shrinking of a community that already faces the threat of extinction.

Currently, I am working with Accelerate Prosperity (AP), which is a new global initiative of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) – an international NGO that works in areas where economic opportunities remain insufficient for youth and women in rural and semi-rural areas. We do this by developing more formal structures to catalyze enterprises within AKDN's main area development programs. AP aims to support and catalyze sustainable small and growing businesses through its incubation and acceleration programs.

While at AP, I help facilitate the creation of Small and Growing Businesses (SGB), which are commercially viable businesses, to create jobs for local residents that are innovative and have an impact on society. The aim is to contribute to inclusive economic development by catalyzing SGBs, promoting entrepreneurship amongst women and youth, and creating space and networks to facilitate technical expertise and creative financial solutions that can bridge the gaps between entrepreneurs, investors, governments and donors.

I intend to create evidence-based practices on youth and gender engagement in Pakistan. Evidence-based practices will convince AKDN and the government to include youth and gender development programmes in the long-term project of AKDN, Impact Investing Initiative, a programme with which I am currently associated. For this purpose, I will capitalize on the already established professional relationships that I have developed with local community entrepreneurs, the Ministry of Information Technology, and other relevant stakeholders.

My ultimate goal is to work at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a policy maker who makes data-driven policy, based on best practices.

*Karima Khan, Pakistan*  
**BA, Politics, Philosophy and Economics,**  
**Asian University for Women**  
*Bangladesh*



**My ultimate goal is to work at the United Nations Development Programme as a policy maker that makes data-driven policy, based on best practices.**



# OUR ALUMNAE

## where are they now?

*Sadaf Sutaria, Pakistan*

**BSc, Earth and Environmental Science, University of Central Asia**

*Tajikistan*



**I want to develop and advocate for evidence-based policies in the marine realm that strike a balance between socioeconomic benefits and environmental protection.**

My undergraduate experience provided me with theory and skills related to natural sciences, environmental analysis, and environmental governance but most importantly gave me a new lens to view the world around me. It enabled me to view environmental problems from the perspectives of the local community and combine their traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge to develop solutions.

I currently use this lens in my work as a Tuna Policy Officer for the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-Mozambique), where I use research and advocacy to support WWF's efforts to manage tuna and tuna-like species in the Indian Ocean and facilitate regional projects in the South West Indian Ocean countries.

During my undergraduate program, I was able to relate my classroom learnings with the environmental issues prevailing in my hometown. My thesis on water resource management in Sindh, Pakistan was a small effort I made to create an impact in my province as well as improve the quality of life of the people here.

In my current job, I also engage with the coastal communities in Pakistan, attend stakeholder conferences and make policy

recommendations to reduce their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, and advocate for better environmental policies.

Over the next ten years, after graduate studies, I hope to expand my work on marine ecosystem management and ocean governance to a global scale. I envision working with the United Nations to draft global frameworks that would guide national and regional policies while maintaining a community-integrated approach to ensure that environmental communities are prioritized when seeking solutions to environmental crises.

Immediate action is needed to protect the environment and reverse ecosystem loss. This action could take the form of robust ocean governance policies and their implementation, which would protect the coastal communities dependent on oceans for their survival. I hope to use my experiences working with these communities at the grassroots level to develop and advocate for evidence-based policies in the marine realm that strike a balance between socioeconomic benefits and environmental protection. I look forward to amplifying the voices of vulnerable communities through my work and using my education to create a sustainable world.



*Bekaiym Egemkulova, Kyrgyz Republic*

**BA, Economics, American University of Central Asia**

*Kyrgyz Republic*



**All of the experiences that I had through my educational journey paved the way for me eventually labeling myself a feminist**

I am from a small family consisting of my mother, brother, and I. It was almost impossible to afford higher level education. However, I had several jobs to earn enough money to cover tuition fees and living expenses, and I managed to fund other educational expenses with the help of the Spark of Hope Foundation.

All the skills and knowledge that I got from my academic journey helped me to become a young professional. As a result, after graduation during the pandemic, I received several job offers from international organizations. Now, I am an independent young woman from Central Asia, able to financially support myself and my family.

The experiences that I had through my educational journey paved the way for me eventually labeling myself a feminist. In fact, once I started to notice just how much society oppresses women, the women's empowerment movement became more and more attractive to me.

During my studies, I had several internships and work experiences at international organizations such as DFID, USAID, PeaceNexus Foundation and UN Women as a consultant and program assistant. Currently, I am working as a conference assistant and SMM specialist at the American Councils of International Education in the Kyrgyz Republic.

In the coming years, I plan to explore opportunities in S.T.E.M. fields, and to that end, I plan to start learning programming languages soon and finding internship opportunities. Later, I may consider undertaking a Master's degree in Data Science or Econometrics.

I would like to be a role model for girls and young women from Central Asia. One day, I would like to establish my own educational scholarship foundation for women in Central Asia.





# Current scholars with **BIG** ambitions

Zohra Dewji, Tanzania  
**BBA (Co-op), Management, University of Toronto**  
Canada



*“The co-op program enables me to both study and gain valuable work experience at an early stage. I want to go back to Tanzania and implement my knowledge and experiences in management and economics to further help firms in developing countries dominate in the international market. Ultimately I want to help develop economic equity between developed and developing countries.”*







*“I want to support policy-making around digital trade, as it is the gateway for transformative and sustainable economic development for sub-Saharan Africa.”*

**Stella Nalwoga, Uganda**

**MAS, International Law and Economics, World Trade Institute, University of Bern**  
Switzerland



*“As Communications and Media is underdeveloped and not valued highly in my country, I want to develop expertise in the field and use it as a tool to positively impact society.”*

**Bibisoro Kukanbekova, Tajikistan**

**BA, Communications and Media, University of Central Asia**  
Tajikistan



**Shehzeen Lalani, Kenya**

**MD, Dalhousie University**  
Canada

*“I want to help the less privileged in my home country with basic health and safety education, and set up mobile clinics to offer them multidisciplinary medical support.”*



**Mariam Saadedine, Palestine**

**MD, Obstetrics and Gynecology, American University of Beirut**  
Lebanon

*“My aim is to empower refugee and vulnerable women to take charge of their reproductive, mental and overall health, as well as to be a role model for other Palestinian refugee women.”*





## *Letter from a scholar*

*Nazerke Turtayeva, Kazakhstan*  
**MSc/PhD, University of California Santa Barbara**  
*United States*



# *Solving the world's problems with computing*

Dear Spark of Hope Foundation, Thank you for supporting me in one of the important milestones in my life – my PhD journey. I am happy to share with you my educational journey, aspirations as a graduate researcher and student, as well as share the impact of computing research with which I am engaged.

Like most other Electrical and Computer Engineering students, my educational journey started with excitement about physics in high school. I am still grateful to my math and physics teachers in Kazakhstan who helped us understand the beauty and exactness of math.

During my undergraduate education at Nazarbayev University, I became interested in everything to do with computing, starting from transistors to computer architecture and operating systems. It was intriguing to be able to connect the dots between how applications actually run on a computer, say browsers or Zoom, to the actual movement of electrons down the wires.

To explore the field deeper, I was involved in a VLSI Processor project as an undergraduate researcher, and also participated in the Google Summer of Code program to propose design changes in existing Open Source

Processors. Following my general education, I decided to pursue graduate studies in Computer Architecture.

I am currently taking a number of engaging and challenging computing-related courses and getting this deeper understanding of its significance and versatility in unfolding so many issues. As computers are getting more ubiquitous, there are many tasks that can be solved with computer architecture as the fundamental basis. Examples include things like building highly powerful supercomputers to help accelerate climate research, or developing extremely energy-

efficient processors for prosthetic devices. One of the solid proofs is a recent resolution of a 50-year grand protein deciphering challenge by Google's AlphaFold AI project and machine learning tailored engines called Tensor Processing Units. By building extremely robust hardware, it was possible to run the algorithms on a brand new scale and to formulate a response to a long-standing challenge.

So the natural question is, what is the next challenge to solve and what will future computers look like? As part of my graduate studies, I would like to answer these questions and narrow down my research interests on building efficient computer systems from a software to a hardware level and test it on critical and impactful tasks.

Also, as one of the few female researchers in the field or in general in everyday engineering classrooms, I hope that I can inspire many female students to embrace computing and contribute to bridging the significant gender gap in the field.



### How is this scholarship helping you further your education?

Education has always been an important part of my life. I always wanted to go to university abroad and use that opportunity as a way to expand my horizons, and experience the beauty of a learning-driven environment. I am grateful and proud to receive the SoHF scholarship since it allows me to live my dream life. I am able to take classes from experts in the field, meet new people from different countries, explore different cultures, as well as expand my knowledge. It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and I am grateful that I am able to experience it.

### Why did you choose to study business administration?

I believe as we get older we go through different “career phases”. Growing up, I wanted to become a diplomat and study International Relations, however, when I received a scholarship to come to Canada and study in grades 11 and 12, I developed an interest in the business world. I took business courses in high school and decided that I wanted to pursue a career related to that field. I am not only learning the fundamentals of business, but I am also learning how to lead and motivate people, as well as how to communicate effectively, think critically and take risks. I chose to specialize in Marketing and Consumer Culture since it has everything I like: creativity, leadership, risk-taking, project development and more.

### Where do you see yourself in five years?

In five years, I see myself living and working in downtown Toronto, working in the Marketing/Project Management department of an established company. I have plans, goals and vision, however, if there’s anything I have learned with the COVID pandemic, it’s to be flexible and adaptable, no matter the situation. Therefore, I will work smart and hard to make my five-year plan successful, but I will also be open-minded and go with the flow, because nobody knows what can happen tomorrow.

### What impact do you hope to make on your community, country and the world?

Every girl deserves to have access to education. It has always been an issue in the developing world, and I want to change that. It’s a big problem in Tajikistan, specifically in remote areas. I am working hard to be able to have financial resources to help create educational opportunities for girls back home. It is a dream of mine to be able to help as many girls as I can so that they become future leaders. I want to motivate the girls to pursue their educational dreams and encourage them to not be afraid to pursue degrees in business and S.T.E.M. fields.

*Lalbegim Boronieva, Tajikistan*

**BBA, Business Administration**

*Trent University, Canada*



*An up-and-coming  
business  
leader*





# INSTITUTIONS *attended*

## BANGLADESH

Asian University for Women  
MAG Osmania Medical  
College Sylhet

## BELGIUM

University of Antwerp

## BENIN

African School of Economics

## CANADA

Algoma University  
Brock University  
Carleton University  
Dalhousie University  
McGill University



Ontario Tech University  
Queen's University  
Ryerson University  
Trafalgar Castle School  
Trent University  
University of Alberta  
University of British Columbia  
University of Calgary  
University of Toronto  
University of Waterloo  
Université Laval  
York University

## FRANCE

Sciences Po  
Sorbonne University

## HUNGARY

Central European University

## KAZAKHSTAN

KIMEP University



## KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

American University of  
Central Asia  
University of Central Asia  
(Naryn campus)



## LEBANON

American University  
of Beirut  
Lebanese American  
University  
University of Balamand

## LIBERIA

Cuttington University  
Monrovia Bible College  
United Methodist University

## NEPAL

Nepal Engineering College

## NETHERLANDS

UWC Maastricht

## NICARAGUA

Managua University Medical  
College - UNAN Managua  
UCAN Managua: Universidad  
Cristiana Autonomo de  
Nicaragua

## PAKISTAN

Aga Khan University



Allama Iqbal Medical College  
Ayub Medical College  
Benazir Bhutto Medical  
College  
Fatima Jinnah Medical  
University  
Government College  
University Lahore  
Institute of Space Technology  
Lahore University of  
Management Sciences  
(LUMS)

## PAKISTAN (CONT'D)

National University of Science  
and Technology (NUST)  
Rawalpindi Medical College

## POLAND

UITM - University of  
Information, Technology and  
Management  
WSB University

## SWITZERLAND

University of Bern  
University of Geneva  
University of Lausanne/EPFL

## TAJIKISTAN

University of Central Asia  
(Khorog campus)

## TURKEY

University of Ankara Yildirim  
Beyazit

## UK

Coventry University  
London School of Economics  
and Political Science  
University of Birmingham  
University of Sussex

## USA

Mount Holyoke College  
University of California  
Santa Barbara  
Wartburg College  
Yale University

*Photo credits (clockwise from left):  
McGill University; KIMEP University;  
Aga Khan University; AKDN/Gary Otte*



*Melek Nimer,*  
**Founder, Unite Lebanon Youth Project (ULYP)**  
*Lebanon*



# Collaboration with **Unite Lebanon Youth Project**

## **Tell us a bit about the Unite Lebanon Youth Project (ULYP).**

ULYP is a nonprofit organization established in 2010 to propel a paradigm shift in Lebanon from a nation that is divided along religious, political, socio-economic, and ethnic lines to one where people can co-exist, unite, and work together for a better future. ULYP does this through creating educational opportunities and giving equal access to quality educational programs to children, youth, and women in the marginalized communities. ULYP's programs raise awareness about mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance of the other to create a dialogue of peace.

## **How did the collaboration start and what does it entail?**

The collaboration began in 2014, and is based on an MoU that

established guidelines for the selection of candidates by ULYP to be considered for scholarships by SoHF.

## **What is the focus in terms of students and programmes?**

Our vision is to empower marginalized children, youth, and women living in Lebanon today with the skills and knowledge they need to change and become active agents of change for a better tomorrow, without discrimination.

Our Bridge program works with 150 excelling Grade 11 students making them better prepared for university entrance, offering SAT prep courses, college guidance and counseling, and career orientation sessions. Once they are accepted to university, they are matched with scholarships granted to ULYP scholars by

universities, governments, foundations and individual donors. and supplemented by SoHF scholarships. We support and follow up closely with our students during their university studies.

## **How are students selected for the SoHF scholarship?**

ULYP's Bridge program presently has 300 students enrolled in universities in Lebanon and abroad and close to 700 graduates. SoHF has been supporting our students in medicine and engineering over the years from within this pool.

## **How does this partnership help Palestinian refugee students in Lebanon?**

Access to post-secondary education is one of the many challenges faced by Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon.

ULYP's role is to make it possible for students graduating from United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools and public schools to continue their education.

## **What are your post-graduation expectations of students?**

We stay in touch with our students post-graduation, sharing opportunities for graduate and postgraduate studies and employment. Alumni that have secured meaningful employment are expected to pay their annual alumni fees that are pooled in our "ULYP Alumni Scholarship Fund" which supports current students. Our graduates also give back by providing guidance to others, and supporting students who are interested in following a similar path.



# FROM OUR *benefactors*

As one of only ten young women in my medical school class in Uganda and not having any role models, I recognize how crucial it is to have the support of the community. I am grateful for the opportunity to support The Spark of Hope Foundation in its mission to provide educational opportunities for girls and women, and I look forward to following them on their journeys.

*Dr. Fatima Dhalla and Family*

*Toronto, ON*

The Spark of Hope – what a wonderful concept – practical, well thought-out, efficiently executed and producing amazing results! One cannot think of a better use of funds. It is reaching out to the remotest corners of the underdeveloped world and connecting the ambitious and dynamic girls and women there to top universities to make their dreams come true. Bravo to the founder and the team at The Spark of Hope Foundation in achieving this transfer of knowledge and making the world a better place. Keep it up!

*Farida and Ally Esmail*

*Toronto, ON*

## BECOME A *benefactor*

**Our goal is to assist 1,000 students over the next decade with the multi-year support they need.**

1. Your helping hand supports young women from areas of conflict and remote areas to become tomorrow's leaders.
2. These bright women will break the cycle of poverty in their families and make huge changes in their communities.
3. Your donation is multiplied 6x by participating universities and other partners. This increases your impact dramatically.
4. Your donation is tax deductible, reducing your actual cost significantly.
5. You can take advantage of convenient, affordable, and tax-smart ways to make a strategic donation, including gifts of stocks and securities, annuities, and bequests.

**Silver Benefactor:** \$250 per month or \$3,000 per year for four years provides a half scholarship.

**Gold Benefactor:** \$500 per month or \$6,000 per year for four years provides a full scholarship.

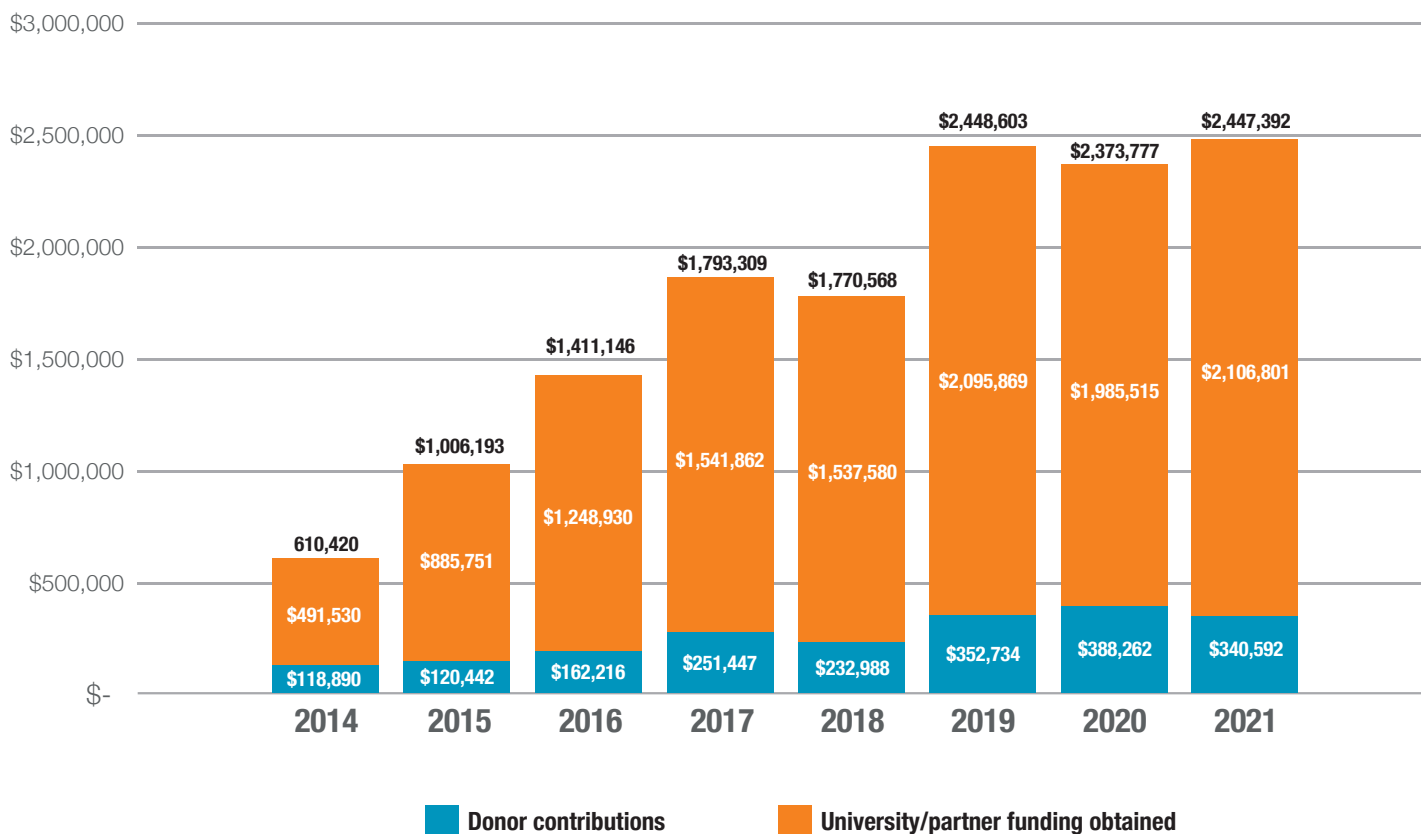




# REVENUES *and* COSTS

Our annual revenues, raised through donor contributions, are allocated primarily to scholarships to help support our students. This generous donor support helps secure six-fold funding from university and partner collaborations.

Our program management, evaluation, marketing, and reporting costs amounted to only 7% of total funding in 2021. The Foundation's Board of Directors, partnerships and volunteers help us maintain this efficiency.



PROGRAM MGMT.  
AS % OF  
TOTAL COSTS

16% 12% 9% 8% 7% 7% 7% 7%



# AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

*Karachi, Pakistan*

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Photo: Aga Khan University