

# Project Highlights



AGA KHAN FOUNDATION  
CANADA

An Agency of the Aga Khan Development Network

This report summarizes the progress, findings and impact of a project supported by Aga Khan Foundation Canada.

## In Mozambique: Building Food Security and Raising Incomes



In Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province, nearly two-thirds of the population lives in poverty. Through a multi-pronged effort, the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) is working to enhance food security and incomes for tens of thousands of households. It aims to strengthen agriculture and entrepreneurship, improve nutrition, and enhance community savings, while equipping local organizations to sustain the progress.

Following decades of strife, Mozambique held its first free elections in the mid-1990s and has enjoyed considerable growth since the early 2000s. Yet over half of the population lives in poverty, and food insecurity is chronic. Life expectancy for both men and women is under 50 years.

Cabo Delgado is the northernmost province of Mozambique, and also one of its poorest. With 63 percent of the population living below the poverty line, over a third of children are underweight and almost one in ten are severely underweight.

The province has great potential, but many hurdles to overcome. Recent oil and gas discoveries may bring new jobs and revenues, but they may also harm the

environment, displace communities, and lead to price inflation. Agriculture, fishing, and forestry are key sources of income and livelihoods for the rural population. But prospects for growth in these areas are undermined by isolation and a lack of financing, transport, and storage infrastructure. And while tourism and handicrafts hold promise, markets are poorly developed.

Many households would be lifted from poverty if communities had improved agricultural production, better access to markets, capital, and credit, and more input on village-level development planning.

**“(Food insecurity) is a major brake on overall socio-economic development. It affects everything from the health of an unborn child to economic growth.”**

Kofi Annan, 7th Secretary-General of the United Nations, 2011

**Photo:** Farmers work together in a field in Namapala. Farmer Field Schools educate and connect farmers, using environmentally-sustainable techniques to improve agricultural production and diversify crops for smallholder farmers.

## An Integrated Approach to Development

Since 2010, Aga Khan Foundation Canada and Aga Khan Foundation Mozambique have been working in seven districts of Cabo Delgado to tackle these development challenges. In partnership with Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, the **Enhancing Food Security and Increasing Incomes in Northern Mozambique (FSI)** initiative leverages earlier efforts through the Coastal Rural Support Program. Building on Canada's previous support to Cabo Delgado, this initiative is part of a wider effort to address the myriad roots of poverty through a broad, multi-input area development approach.

### MULTI-INPUT AREA DEVELOPMENT (MIAD)

To address poverty, the Aga Khan Development Network applies a holistic approach that responds to the many inter-related factors that undermine development within a given region.

The project will reach 35,000 households, more than three quarters of the population in the targeted districts of Cabo Delgado. While focusing on agriculture as the main source of livelihoods, the initiative targets adult literacy; household nutrition and health; agricultural and handicraft value chains; market access; and community savings and credit. Through a set of integrated interventions, the project aims to see lasting improvements in the ability of villages to mobilize and plan for their own wellbeing. Across these efforts, the Foundation strives to enhance women's access to resources and the means to improve their livelihoods and family wellbeing.



A silversmith in Ibo works on a new piece of jewelry. Artisans have joined forces to streamline their work, access new markets, and earn greater profits. // Children enjoy a nutritious meal in Pitolha, prepared by a community nutrition group. The group regularly visits preschools to prepare high-nutrition meals.

## Increasing Food Security Through Better Nutrition and Productivity

Smallholder farmers are the economic backbone of northern Mozambique, where households typically grow crops such as maize, cassava, groundnuts, and beans. Cabo Delgado has rich soils and available land, but farming practices are outmoded and production is dispersed over many remote farms, served by poor roads. Individual farmers lack cash to buy inputs such as seed and fertilizers, and have little information on production and marketing. For traders and suppliers, the effort to reach these small producers does not pay off. Meanwhile, increasing floods and droughts and erratic rainfall patterns related to climate change are compounding the stress on farmers.

### INCREASING FOOD SECURITY

As of 2013:

- Nearly 2,200 producers are testing improved methods in 113 Farmer Field Schools
- Through 11 seed multiplication groups, 135 members are lowering their input costs and producing seed for local markets
- 49 storage silos are protecting crops after harvest
- 16 nutrition groups are helping over 2,000 households improve their diet
- More than 300 home gardens are enriching household meals

To enhance household food security, AKF works with producers to increase the productivity and range of both food and cash crops. Farmers participate in Farmer Field Schools, experimenting with new techniques under local conditions. They test improved seeds, fertilizers, and agro forestry and conservation agriculture methods that protect soils. Farmers also learn about practices such as living fences, low tillage, mulching, and crop rotation that can increase yields while enhancing resilience to the impacts of climate change. Seed multiplication groups established through the project also make farmers less dependent on commercial seed suppliers, reducing their costs. Through these practices, FSI aims for a 50 percent increase in average yield and production of three major crops: maize, sesame, and beans.

Farmers are also learning new practices in animal husbandry to increase and protect their livestock. To reduce crop losses after harvest, the initiative teaches proper food conservation practices, and is facilitating the construction of storage silos.





Members of this savings group meet regularly to contribute a portion of their income to a shared lockbox. These groups increase poor rural communities' ability to save and access small amounts of credit.

Nutritional counseling, combined with the promotion of home gardens, is helping households make the most of their diet, with particular attention to the needs of children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and those living with HIV/AIDS. By growing and properly storing drought-resistant and nutrient-rich foods such as sweet potato and sesame, families are enhancing and diversifying their meals, even during the lean season.

## Raising Incomes Through Market Development

Whether in agriculture or handicrafts, producers in Cabo Delgado need to overcome the disadvantages of their small scale. FSI helps them come together to commercialize their products, gain market access, earn more by adding value to their commodities, and diversify their sources of income.

Sesame, horticulture, and handicrafts have been identified as core sectors, based on earlier analyses of local value chains. AKF supports the marketing efforts of established producer and artisan groups through training, exchange visits, and participation in fairs, helping them to establish linkages with buyers and service providers. It encourages them to formalize their interactions through purchase agreements and other contracts. Sales commissions have been created to negotiate on behalf of producer groups. These efforts enable businesses, community and producer associations, and government agencies to play a more permanent, stable role in supporting value chains that benefit farmers and artisans.

## Enhancing Governance and Self-Reliance

Rural isolation strains the ability of households and communities to effectively organize and plan for their collective wellbeing. To address Cabo Delgado's weak base of civil society organizations and limited access to government extension services, private sector suppliers, and microfinance institutions, AKF is strengthening the governance and effectiveness of community-based institutions.

### COMMUNITY BASED SAVINGS GROUPS

As of 2013:

- 302 savings groups are serving 4,887 members
- 53 percent of members are women
- 17 trainers continue to mobilize new savings groups

With few financial services available, people in rural Cabo Delgado struggle to save or invest in their livelihoods. By creating new opportunities for savings and credit, the project is helping rural households, especially those headed by women, seize opportunities and enjoy greater security. To date, thousands of community members have increased savings and accessed small loans through savings groups established by the FSI project. Interested community members pool their money, and can borrow small amounts, paying back the loan with interest. Members commit to regular contributions and agree on loans to other members. Once a year, all or a portion of each fund, plus interest, is distributed among members according to their level of savings. These periodic payouts provide much-needed capital for household and livelihood needs, and ensure money is recycled in the local economy. They provide an important buffer against emergencies, and a measure of self-sufficiency.

The programming also strengthens self-reliance through Village Development Organizations (VDOs)—community based committees that address the varied needs of members, including women and vulnerable groups. They provide a space for discussion and input on strategies, giving villages a voice in district planning, and access to various government services and opportunities, such as state development funds. *Continued on back.*



VDOs serve as links to district agriculture departments, supporting producers in building market access and sharing knowledge of new and improved farming methods.

Based on a needs assessment carried out in 2010, the FSI initiative currently focuses on equipping VDOs to play a broader role in development and governance. The project aims to see these local organizations leading community planning processes; creating linkages with state and private sector actors; promoting gender equality; and building synergies with other interest groups. Strong VDOs help to ensure that development efforts are coordinated through a single focal point, sustainable and accountable to the community.



Enhancing Food Security and Increasing Incomes in Northern Mozambique (FSI) project area

## Looking Ahead: Lasting Progress Towards Income and Food Security

By the time FSI concludes in 2016, communities in Cabo Delgado will have made progress in the following ways:

- Farmers will have better access to supplies, markets, and extension services. They will continue testing innovations through Farmer Field Schools, and have a greater voice in provincial agricultural policies.
- Households in target areas will apply new knowledge to improve their nutrition practices.
- A vibrant network of small businesses and producers' associations will benefit producers, especially women, by stimulating the local economy.
- Financial savings groups will continue to grow beyond the project's seven districts.
- A growing network of strong, accountable, and gender-sensitive VDOs will serve as hubs, giving communities input on district-level planning.

**The ultimate goal:** Strong local institutions that will sustain these new strategies over the long term, bringing durable improvements to incomes, food security, and overall wellbeing.

### Aga Khan Foundation Canada

Aga Khan Foundation Canada (AKFC) is a non-profit international development agency, working in Asia and Africa to find sustainable solutions to the complex problems causing global poverty. Established in 1980, AKFC is a registered Canadian charity and an agency of the worldwide Aga Khan Development Network.

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