



آغا خان یونیورسٹی

THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
Institute for Educational Development, Pakistan

JANUARY - JUNE

AKU IED NEWSLETTER

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From the Dean's Desk

Dr. Farid Panjwani, Dean AKU - IED

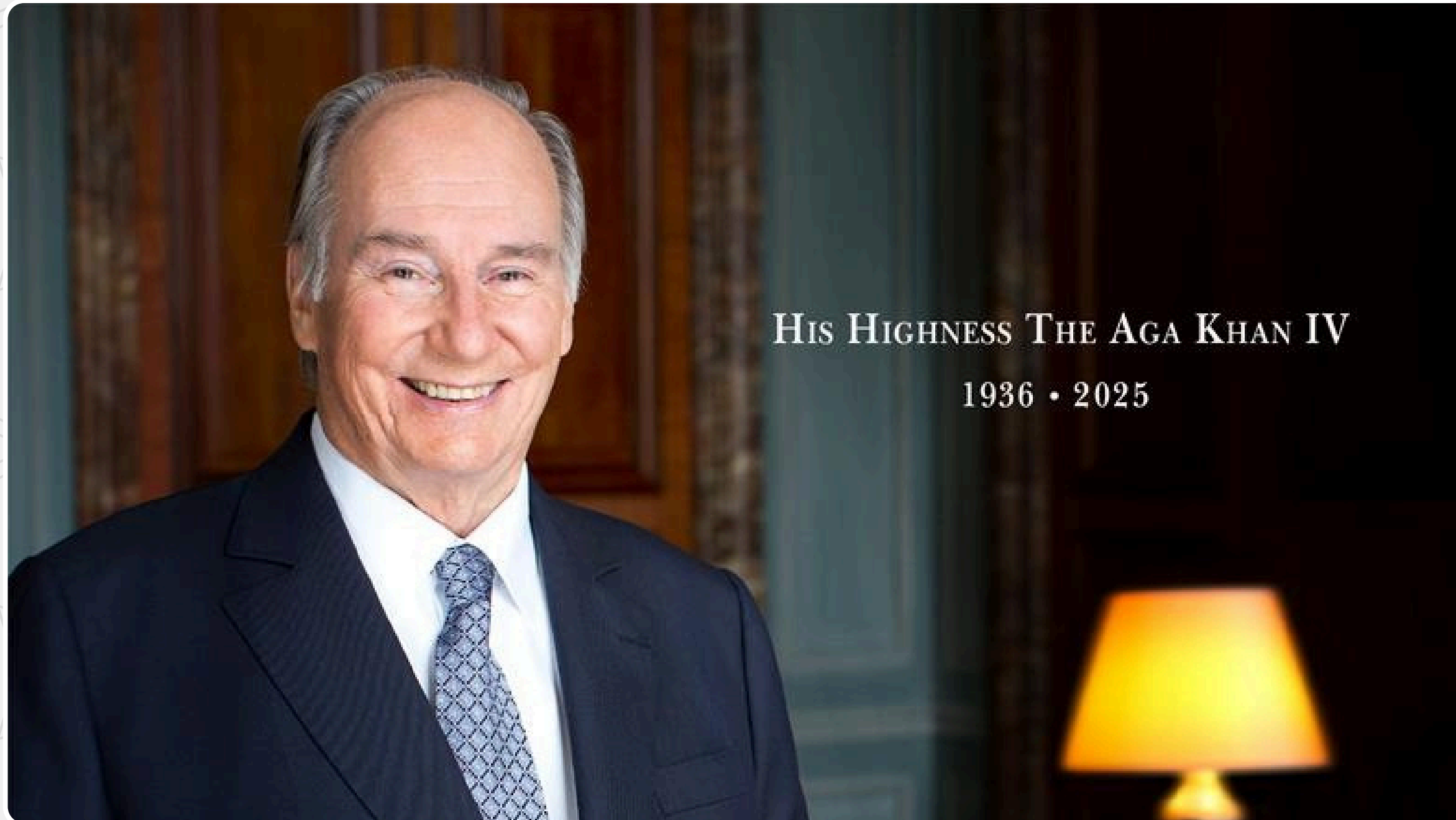
Reflecting on a Legacy of Purpose and Service

The first half of the year has been a time of both achievement and profound reflection as we honour the legacy of His Highness Prince Karim Al-Hussaini, the Aga Khan IV, our beloved Chancellor. In whatever little I know about the former Chancellor, three things stand out about him. First, is his curious and incisive intellect that led to an unmatched ability to plan and execute; the second is his unbounded compassion and concern for the weak which ensured that his idea of value always included what is in it for the poorest, the most marginalised and the stranger; and, third is his interpersonal capacity of warmth and sincerity that touched every person he met, leaving behind countless stories of perennial inspiration.

His Highness's vision for Aga Khan University was not merely a blueprint for institutional excellence but a call to each of us to strive for something greater than ourselves. As we mourn his loss, we also find strength in the continuity of his legacy through His Highness Prince Rahim Aga Khan, who now carries forward this mantle of leadership with the same dedication to pluralism, education, and human dignity.

This term has reinforced our collective responsibility to uphold and advance the mission entrusted to us. With Prince Rahim's guidance, AKU will continue to evolve as a beacon of hope and progress, bridging knowledge and service in ever more innovative ways.

The newsletter reflects how at the AKU-IED we are trying to implement this vision. In all we have done, we had the support of our university leadership, donors, academic partners, alumni, schools and government officials. We are indebted to them. This newsletter is the result of the team work among our faculty, students and staff. We look forward to your feedback and continued engagement with us.



His Highness Prince Karim Al-Hussaini, Aga Khan IV, and Chancellor of Aga Khan University (AKU), passed away peacefully in Lisbon on 4 February 2025, at the age of 88. As the founder and chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), His Highness dedicated his life to improving the quality of life for communities worldwide. Under his visionary leadership, AKU has grown into a globally recognized institution committed to excellence in education, healthcare, and research. His enduring legacy continues to inspire and guide the University's mission.

Highlights

Strengthening Education in Gilgit-Baltistan

Spearheaded by an AKU-led consortium and funded by the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan, the 9-month Education Fellows programme offered recruitment, training, and deployment of 1,254 teachers in government schools, colleges, and technical institutions across all 10 districts of the region.

Selected and equipped with training in gamification and activity-based learning methodologies, the Education Fellows are now actively contributing to teaching and learning in more than 600 schools throughout the region.

To assess the impact of the initiative, the Professional Development Centre North (PDCN) team conducted a comprehensive Student Learning Achievement Test in 240 sample schools across Gilgit-Baltistan. Approximately 4,000 students from Grades 5 and 8 participated in this standardized assessment, offering valuable insights into learning outcomes and programme effectiveness.

The project culminated on 30th June, and planning is underway to initiate the next phase of this transformative project.





Global honour for AKU-IED faculty

We are proud to announce that Dr. Fozia Parveen, environmental scientist and AKU-IED faculty member, has been selected for the prestigious Young Global Leaders Class of 2025 by the World Economic Forum. This honor recognizes her as one of 100 exceptional leaders under 40 worldwide who are redefining leadership through innovation and impact. As part of this elite global community representing nearly 50 countries, Dr. Parveen will join visionary changemakers driving sustainability and inclusive development. The Young Global Leaders programme identifies outstanding professionals who demonstrate not just excellence in their fields, but also the strategic vision and commitment needed to shape our collective future. Through immersive learning experiences, global collaborations, and peer exchange, this platform will amplify Dr. Parveen's work while connecting her with a powerful network of leaders transforming industries and societies worldwide. Her selection underscores both her remarkable achievements in environmental science and education, and her potential to contribute meaningfully to global dialogues on sustainable development.

Learn more [Young Global Leaders Class of 2025](#)

Towards an Inclusive Future

AKU-IED is poised to take a transformative step forward by establishing a dedicated unit for inclusive education, focusing on children with special needs. Made possible through the generous support of an endowment fund, this unit is envisioned to create a lasting and meaningful impact. It will introduce a comprehensive and forward-looking curriculum, foster collaborative research, and serve as a vital platform for policy dialogue and advocacy. By partnering with institutions that share our commitment to special needs education, we aspire to champion an inclusive, research-driven approach, ensuring that every child's right to quality education is recognized and realized.

Enriching classrooms: An endeavor with Khan Academy

[AKU-IED and Khan Academy](#) have partnered through an MoU signed by Dean Dr. Farid Panjwani and CEO Zeeshan Hasan. This collaboration focuses on educator capacity building, community engagement, and professional development. The partnership will provide teachers with essential tools and skills to create transformative learning experiences, leveraging both institutions' expertise to enhance educational outcomes.

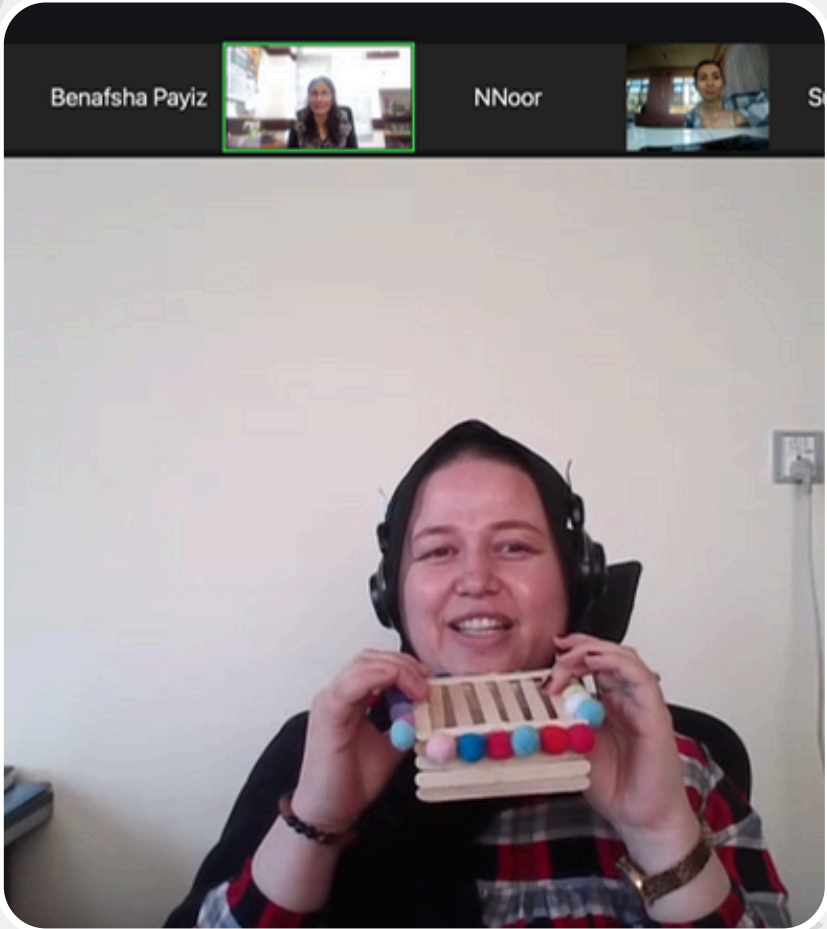
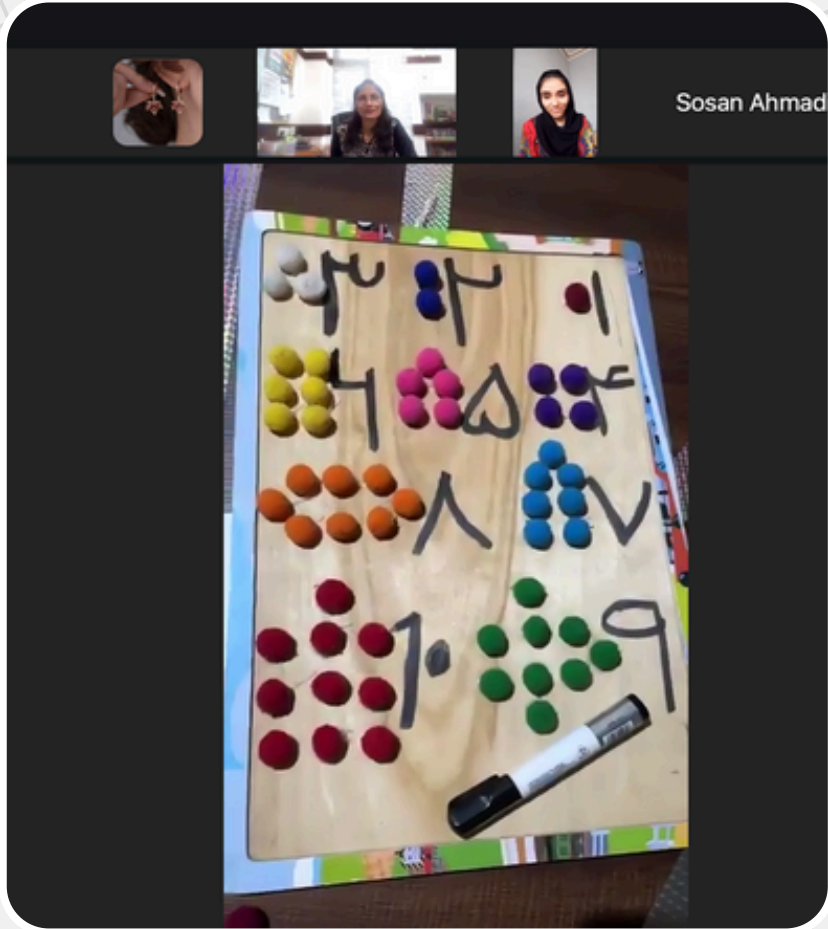


Empowering Early Childhood Educators in Afghanistan

The AKU-IED designed and delivered a first-of-its kind Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) Online Certificate Course for the educators of the Aga Khan Education Services Afghanistan.

The course was aimed at strengthening the capacity of the teachers by conducting high quality and contextually relevant workshops for Early years schoolteachers to support children’s learning experiences. The programme, targeting 15-20 educators, addressed the evolving socio-cultural and technological landscape, prompting educators to critically examine traditional approaches and emphasize holistic growth especially in early years of the children’s development.

Our faculty members, Ms Yasmeen Mehboob and Dr. Nasima Zainulabidin, led the innovative course which commenced in August 2024 and concluded in May 2025.



Enhanced learning spaces at AKU-IED

To provide an enhanced learning experience, the iconic library at the Karimabad campus was given a major uplift. Inaugurated by Professor, Vice President Academics and Provost, Dr. Tania Bubela, the upgraded facility offers enriched resources to support students and researchers in their academic pursuits.

Building on this momentum, we also launched a digital library, providing seamless access to a wealth of research materials for both students and faculty. These enhancements reflect our commitment to fostering a dynamic and accessible learning environment.

Convocation 2024

At Convocation 2024, AKU-IED awarded degrees to 37 graduates, including 4 distinguished BEd students, 8 M.Ed graduates with distinction, and 5 distinguished MPhil scholars, notably Nooreen Aziz, who received the Global Award for Impact and Innovation.



New Joining



Dr Nazim Aman
Assistant Professor,
Social Studies



Meera Hasan
Manager Marketing
& Communications



Christopher Vaz
Head of PDCK

Alumni Advisory Council

The Alumni Advisory Council was formally launched on May 26, 2025, with its inaugural meeting held at AKU-IED and attended by the then Director, Alumni Affairs, Mr. Abdul Haq Wahedna. The Council comprises 10 members.

The meeting took place on August 12, 2025, at AKU-IED, with participation from Ms. Nuzhat Kamran, Director, Alumni Affairs, and outgoing Director, Mr. Abdul Haq Wahedna. (Dr. Farid Panjwani, Professor & Dean, Haris Tohid Siddiqui, Senior Manager and Fiza Ashraf from Partnerships, Planning & Operations, were present at both meetings).

The elected Chair of the Council is Mr. Zain-UI-Muluk, Manager, Examination Board, Aga Khan University, Karachi, and the elected General Secretary is Ms. Rubina Zaidi, International Educational Consultant, Dubai.

The Council aims to strengthen meaningful connections among AKU-IED alumni, provide strategic insights into educational trends, and support the institute's academic, research, and outreach initiatives. It offers alumni the opportunity to share their expertise, champion innovation, and enhance AKU-IED's impact within and beyond the education sector. Members play a vital role in advising on emerging opportunities in education, strengthening alumni engagement, contributing to programme and research advocacy, and promoting resource mobilization through strategic partnerships.



Research & Development

Championing Climate change and Sustainability

AKU-IED in collaboration with NED University embarked on a Water Sustainability Project funded by the Government of Punjab. Targeting Murree's pressing water scarcity issues, the project, led by our faculty member, Dr. Fozia Parveen, focuses on Rainwater Harvesting (RWH) and community-based Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) interventions. By engaging local residents through workshops and awareness campaigns, the initiative aims to promote sustainable water management while improving public health, an essential step for a region heavily impacted by tourism and climate pressures.



Empowering Climate Champions: The Climate Action Fellowship in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The US Mission's Climate Action Fellowship trained 50 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa teachers, selected from 500 applicants as climate education leaders, through workshops in Chitral and Peshawar, teaching climate science and sustainable pedagogy. Participants developed action plans with digital support and attended webinars on composting and biodiversity conservation. The programme awarded seed grants for school projects like recycling and tree-planting through a competitive pitch event. Fellows also gained hands-on experience through field trips to Gol National Park and Kalash Valley.

The fellowship drove systemic change through multi-level policy engagement: local pre-dialogues in Peshawar/Chitral connected educators with policymakers, culminating in an Islamabad summit where fellows presented reform proposals. Lasting resources included an open-access climate teaching guide and [The Last Valley](#), a fellow-co-authored climate novel. [Learn More](#)



Early Childhood Education at the forefront

Early childhood education also saw notable advancements through the KIX-sponsored SPICA Project, which explores the Child-to-Child (C2C) methodology to enhance learning in government schools.

Led by our faculty member Dr. Nasima Shakeel, the project brought together 52 researchers for a week-long workshop in Islamabad in February, fostering cross-country collaboration and innovative pedagogical strategies.

The visit included school observations, workshops, and collaborative discussions on implementing the approach across different educational settings.

Meanwhile, efforts to expand early childhood education continued through the Advancing ECD Education in Chitral with IREAD initiative. Despite systemic challenges, AKU-IED and IREAD have made steady progress, from establishing 11 ECD centers in 2010 (now managed by Aga Khan Education Services Pakistan - AKESP) to launching 43 community-led centers between 2021-2023. The upcoming Phase III (2025-2027) aims to strengthen existing centers while adding 12 more, ensuring sustainable access to quality early education.

Leading with Holistic Education

A significant milestone was the completion and submission of the SIP Annual Report 2024, compiled by our faculty member Sultan Alam. The report highlighted several critical interventions, including intensive training sessions under School Development Programme (SDP), extensive 30-day monitoring across five districts, and Diagnostic Teaching and Learning programmes reaching 340 teachers in 20 clusters. Additionally, a 35-day quality assurance exercise covered 23% of schools, while a specialized librarian training ensured better resource management in Phase-II schools.

The School Improvement Plan (SIP) project commenced in 2016 with a focus on improving children learning outcomes in public sector community and low cost private schools in marginalised areas of Northern Pakistan, by strengthening the capacity of all stakeholders to support them.



Pedagogical and Curriculum Enhancements

Student-centered game-based approach to science education

Games teach. In recent years, there is a renewed stress on drawing upon the idea of game to create learning experiences across several subjects. In a fascinating project, Ms. Kiran Qasim Ali brought together student-teachers and teacher educators to co-design a series of educational board and card games for science learning. The goal of this project was to create practical and engaging tools to support science learning in classrooms, particularly in low-resource setting where traditional methods often fall short.

Of the 50 resulting games, 20 are showcased on our website in the Free Resources section which covers key topics from four science disciplines: biology, chemistry, physics, and earth sciences.

The low-cost, no-cost feature of the games make them highly adaptable for the diverse classroom contexts in Pakistan. Each game was designed with a clear learning outcomes and tested through pilot trials with children, giving student-teachers hands-on skills in designing instructional materials. [Explore these games here!](#)



Collaborative initiative with Durbeen

The AKU-IED conducted a third-party impact study for Durbeen comparing its enriched program with a control group, evaluating its innovative pedagogy, curriculum enhancements, and alternative assessment methods for potential scalability across public teacher education institutions.

Durbeen collaborated with the University of Helsinki (From 2018 to 2020) to enhance the B.Ed. (Elementary) curriculum and assessment systems while building faculty capacity at Government Elementary College of Education (GECE) Hussainabad. This initiative gained formal recognition in 2019 through a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Karachi, which designated GECE Hussainabad as a pilot project (2020-2024). As part of this agreement.

The impact study revealed significant improvements in student teachers' professional knowledge and classroom readiness, with pre- and post-tests showing marked gains in content mastery and pedagogical skills. Classroom observations demonstrated superior teaching performance across all evaluated constructs compared to the control group, a notable improvement from initial assessments where they excelled in only one area. While focus groups highlighted increased engagement and teaching confidence, challenges remained in bridging theory with practice and sustaining student participation, indicating areas for further refinement in the program's approach.

Professional Development

Redefining School Leadership

AKU-IED's Professional Development Centre Karachi launched its first flagship course, inspiring over 350 head teachers and school leaders. The groundbreaking 12-module, 4-month programme focused on visionary planning, pedagogical innovation, and emotional intelligence. The closing session featured insights from Dr. Abbas Hussain, Mr. Andrew Williams, and Dean Farid Panjwani. A key question arose: How can educators navigate the future of learning? The consensus highlighted reflection, adaptability, and lifelong learning as essential for exceptional leadership. This initiative set a new benchmark in professional development, reshaping educational leadership in Pakistan and beyond.

[Learn more about our Professional Development Center Karachi](#)

Empowering Teachers through Action Research

The past term was marked by meaningful collaborations and impactful initiatives aimed at strengthening education through research, professional development, and community engagement.

Empowering Teachers through Action Research stood out as a key achievement, with AKU-IED joining hands with HHS to support the Maryam Farooq Research Centre (MFRC). After months of rigorous work, the inaugural cohort of 6-8 teachers presented their research proposals, showcasing their commitment to improving classroom practices. This initiative reinforced the importance of fostering a research-driven culture in partner schools, empowering educators to become reflective practitioners.



Partnerships and Visits

AKU-IED's leadership and faculty, led by Dean Dr. Farid Panjwani, undertook several visits to strengthen educational collaboration and inclusivity. They engaged with Al Murtaza Professional Development Centre and Dream Model Street School, discussing teacher certification and practitioner research while observing the impact of sustained efforts in Mowach Goth. The team also visited the Institute of Behavioral Psychology and Behbud Schools to explore partnerships in special and equitable education.



At NJV School, they witnessed its revitalization under Akhuwat, emphasizing holistic and digital education. A key milestone was the MoU with Karachi Grammar School (KGS) to enhance teacher development through shared expertise and research. Additionally, BEd and MPhil students visited Deh Chuhar, observing a transformed school, while a trip to Deaf Reach School highlighted inclusive education for deaf students, aligning with AKU-IED's focus on special needs training. These efforts reflect AKU-IED's dedication to fostering equitable, high-quality education through meaningful partnerships across Pakistan.



Graduate Programmes

Faculty Retreat

The five-day Faculty Retreat brought together faculty for strategic planning, including course alignment, digital training on the VLE platform, and refining BE practicum mentorship strategies, culminating in a leadership session by Mr. Sohail Zindani.



Mentor Development Programme

The Mentor Development Programme at Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) was organized in the spirit of strengthening school and university collaboration and ensuring the highest quality support for our B.Ed student teachers during their practicum. This initiative reflects our shared commitment to preparing future educators through meaningful field experiences. The programme brought together school mentors for interactive sessions aimed at refreshing their skills, deepening their understanding of the practicum process, and equipping them to guide student teachers effectively. The successful completion of the programme culminated in reflective sharing by the mentors and a certificate ceremony to acknowledge their valuable contributions.



Events

One of the many highlights was the celebration of [International Mathematics Day](#), where over 100 out-of-school children engaged in creative, play-based learning activities centered on the theme Mathematics, Art, and Creativity. Organized in collaboration with [Right to Play](#), the event demonstrated how unconventional pedagogical approaches can transform math into an accessible and empowering subject. Dr. Munira Amirali, the event organizer, emphasized the urgency of such interventions in Pakistan's education landscape, where millions of children lack foundational skills.

Additionally, the A.R. Nagori National Art Competition celebrated young talent, with over 700 submissions on the theme Journey to Happiness, reinforcing the institute's dedication to fostering creativity and holistic development.

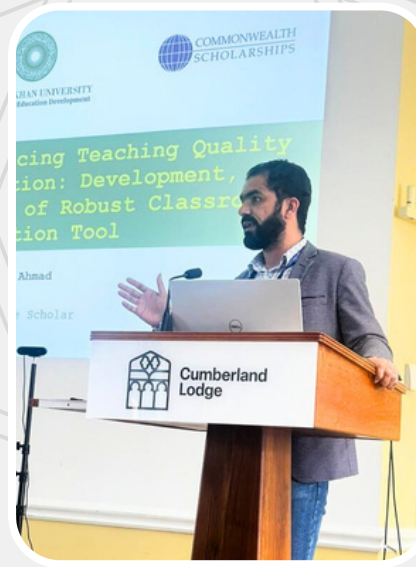


The term was further distinguished by high-profile visits, including delegation comprising of higher education regulators from Aga Khan University Pakistan (AKU PK) and East Africa (EA), accompanied by key representatives from the Higher Education Commission (HEC), the Minister of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic, and AKU leadership, all of whom explored collaborative opportunities in teacher training, research, and policy development.



Alumni & Student Achievements

A moment of pride for AKU IED was Anika Bano (MEd Class of 2011) receiving the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award. Anika exemplifies resilience and determination in her mission to support the differently-abled. After discovering her daughter had a hearing impairment, she and her husband, Afzal Rasool, co-founded the [Narjis Khatoon Hearing Impairment School in Skardu](#), where she also teaches at the Government College of Education for Women. The school empowers 48 children through education, vocational training, and sign language, with students gaining international recognition for artwork and participation in the Global IT Challenge. Overcoming societal stigma, Anika's advocacy for disability rights has transformed lives, earning her the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award in May.



Sohail Ahmad began his doctoral journey at AKU IED in 2021 with a fully funded scholarship, excelling academically and professionally through involvement in large-scale research projects and publishing around 20 articles, including chapters and peer-reviewed papers. He also led academic initiatives such as organizing the first international doctoral conference, research café, and doctoral lecture series. Encouraged by his mentors to seek international exposure, he was awarded the Commonwealth Split-site PhD Scholarship in 2024, spending a year at the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Education. There, he participated in advanced research training, seminars, and conferences, presenting his work at the REAL Centre and the Commonwealth PhD Scholars' Network. Additionally, he collaborated on a multi-country research project, co-authored book chapters, and worked on papers with international scholars, significantly enhancing his research skills and building lasting professional connections.

Aisha Naz Ansari, Research Specialist at the Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development, Pakistan, has been awarded the status of Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy UK (AFHEA) in recognition of her excellence in course planning, innovative teaching practices, and contributions to higher education. She has served as a member of the Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaboration (ESIC) working group, managed by Cochrane, and has contributed to the Cape Town Consensus. With over 30 publications, including research articles, systematic reviews, and blogs in national and international forums, her work spans systematic reviews, educational technology, educational psychology, teacher education, public-private partnerships, and classroom teaching and learning.



Faculty Achievements

In faculty achievements, Dr. Farid Panjwani was appointed to the Academic Board at IBA Karachi, Dr. Dilshad Ashraf joined the International Advisory Group for the University of Edinburgh's CEID Research, and Dr. Sajid Ali became a member of the Sindh Teacher Education Development Authority (STEDA) Board of Governors. The AKU Awards Ceremony celebrated excellence, honoring Dr. Meher Rizvi for outstanding contributions to teaching, and received the Best Teacher Award, nominated by students, Dr. Riaz Hussain received the Award for Scholarship of Discovery, Dr. Munira Amirali received the Award for Scholarship of Application and Kiran Qasim Ali received the Award for Scholarship of Teaching. Ms. Yasmeen Mehboob received the Dean's Award for Extraordinary Contribution, Dr. Nasima Shakeel received the Dean's Award for Early Career Large-Scale Researcher, along with Mr Darvesh Karim who received the Dean's Award for Extraordinary Contribution. Dr. Mola Dad Shafa received an award, on behalf of the PDCN team which was presented with the Dean's Award for Community and Public Service, the Professional Development Centres North and Chitral teams were recognized for their impactful work.



Professor & Dean
Farid Panjwani



Professor & Director
Research & Publications
Sajid Ali



Dr. Munira Amirali
Director Masters
Programme and
Associate Professor



Dr. Dilshad Ashraf
Associate Professor



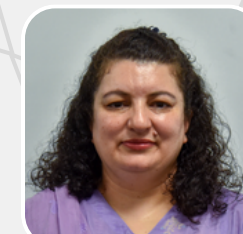
Dr. Meher Rizvi
Associate Professor



Dr. Mola Dad Shafa
Associate Professor
and Head PDCN



Dr. Riaz Hussain
Assistant Professor
and Head, PDCC



Dr. Nasima Shakeel
Assistant Professor



Dr. Yasmeen Mehboob
Senior Instructor



Kiran Qasim Ali
Senior Instructor



Darvesh Karim
Senior Instructor

Donor Acknowledgements

Our heartfelt appreciation goes to the Ramji Foundation for their commitment to our Special Needs Education Programme, which will launch later this year. We are also deeply thankful to the Shroff Foundation for their steadfast support of our Early Childhood Development (ECD) Programme and for providing scholarships to our BED students specializing in ECD. PDCC, supported by IREAD, operates 43 ECCE centers, enrolling over 1,000 pre-primary students through teacher capacity building, community awareness, and field-based support. Due to its success, IREAD has extended its partnership for three more years and will establish 12 additional ECCE centers in remote areas of Chitral. Professional Development Centre Chitral (PDCC) also secured an endowment fund from the SOLAS Trust, ensuring long-term financial sustainability and strengthening PDCC's initiatives to better serve local communities.

Their contributions play a pivotal role in advancing education and creating meaningful opportunities for our students. We are truly grateful for their partnership and shared vision.

In Memoriam

It is with profound sorrow that AKU-IED mourns the passing of Dr. Parvez Pirzado, a devoted educator, visionary researcher, and cherished member of our community. His unwavering commitment to advancing education and public health has left an indelible mark on all who had the privilege of learning from and working alongside him.

Dr. Pirzado's legacy is defined by transformative contributions, including the pioneering Health Action Schools project, the impactful STEP initiative, and the revitalization of PTAN. His passion for innovation and equity in education will continue to inspire generations of educators, researchers, and practitioners.

While we grieve this immense loss, we also celebrate his life, his intellect, and his enduring influence on the field. May his soul rest in eternal peace, and may his family, friends, and colleagues find strength in his remarkable legacy.



Blogs and Educational Resources

AKU-IED offers a wealth of resources and learning materials for teachers, parents, and the public interested in deepening their understanding of education and related initiatives. [Explore our free resources!](#)

Ideas have the power to drive transformation. Our blog is a platform for sharing scholarly insights, practical initiatives, and fostering open, candid, and critical conversations about education in all its dimensions. It serves as a dynamic space for meaningful intellectual exchange. [Explore our blogs!](#)

