

In November 2010, the earliest days of our project we travelled to a then cold, foggy Karimabad, and met with community leaders from upper Hunza (Gojal). This is the area stricken by the Attabad landslide, and recently cut-off, with no road link to the rest of Pakistan, no way to get crops to market, and a failed agricultural season due to the also catastrophic summer monsoons that created what the UN referred to as the “worst disaster in the history of the UN”.

In order to get to our meeting, the 35 community leaders who came had to brave the winter winds in an open boat on the new lake that had formed as the Hunza River backed up behind the landslide, forming a body of water some 35 kilometers long and 400 feet deep.

Our project had been the only outside group that responded to the leaders’ plea for help in the previous spring when farmers had no way to get seeds and fertilizer from down country.



For reasons that were never entirely clear to us, the government was unable to respond, and neither were the Aga Khan Agencies, such as FOCUS or AKRSP, or any other international or national groups. Our response was small compared to the need, but still very much appreciated. Our colleague Frieder Krups, a German businessman, was able to obtain \$70,000 US in emergency loans from his YPO (Young Presidents Club) contacts. With this money our team purchased seeds and fertilizer, and mobilized 300 volunteers to carry the bags over broken bridges, on and off trucks, onto boats, and into the hands of desperate farmers.



Our meeting with the leaders began with prayers as all meetings do in Hunza, and then we started to talk. “You say you want to work with us. What exactly do you want?” we asked. “Development,” they responded. “What is that?” we said. They began telling us all the things that would be there when “development” was successful, such as economic prosperity, life-long education, good governance and needed infrastructure.

We drew a tree, and started calling those outcomes “the fruits of development”. “If these are ‘fruits’ of the development tree, what are the roots?” we asked. “What is needed in order to produce these fruits you have identified?” They began to name things like community mobilization, human resource development, leadership training, institutional strengthening and financial resources.



When it was done we sat around and looked at our “tree”. “This is an excellent framework for our partnership”, we said, “because in this tree we have both your vision and a strategic framework for our work together.”

The following March, we held the first regional development forum, and introduced Book I in the HiMaT Leadership and Development training program (there are now seven books). The title of Book I is “The Tree of Development”, and it is largely based on the

thinking and the framework advanced by community leaders. Its topics include questions such as: What is development? What develops in development? Which processes and strategies empower and drive development? How can you measure development progress?

Leaders were surprised and delighted to see their own thinking given back to their communities (properly credited) in the foundation course, which began the mobilization of people for sustainable improvements in their quality of life. We now have nearly 4,000 people in these courses, and the “tree” is very much alive and growing.

