



HIMAT INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



2016 IMPACT EVALUATION REPORT



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Canada

and

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Development team,
Pakistan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document reports on an evaluation process carried out between August and December 2015 which sought to understand the impacts and outcomes to date of the **Himat Indigenous Leadership and Development Program** being carried out since 2011 in the Hunza region of Gilgit Baltistan (until recently known as the Northern Areas) in Pakistan, under the auspices of the Karakorum Area Development Organization (KADO) in collaboration with the Four Worlds Centre for Development Learning (based in Alberta, Canada).

Early Days

The Himat Indigenous Leadership and Development program began full operations in the Hunza region of Gilgi-Baltistan in the spring of 2011. This was after a little more than two years of pilot program initiatives through which the Himat team learned its way into a basic understanding of how to work effectively with these high mountain communities in a way that has the potential to set them firmly on a pathway leading out of poverty and into sustainable peace, prosperity and human wellbeing.

Our Theory of Change

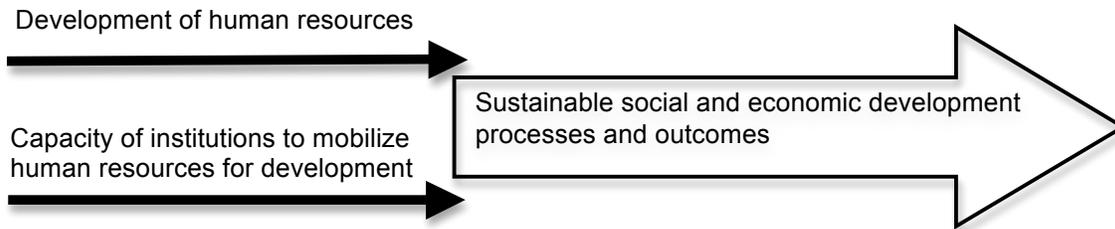
A theory of change describes what the implementers of a program believe is needed in order to facilitate a specified change. At the foundation of the Himat Program is the intent of contributing to the roots of peace in Pakistan through processes of capacity building, community mobilization, and social and economic improvement. As everyone knows, Pakistan has been plagued by extremist violence and increasing civil unrest for many years. *While these conditions do not directly create extremism, we believe they contribute significantly to creating susceptibility to extremist influence. We believe that ignorance, poverty (especially extreme poverty), and marginalization lead to radicalization.*

Our goal is to develop viable pathways for human betterment that will lead to sustainable peace, prosperity and human wellbeing in grassroots populations in rural Pakistan.

Background Development Thinking

At its core, authentic development is about human beings. It begins with a first spark of hope, that tiny glimmer of possibility within each individual that life could be different and somehow better. That tiny spark needs to be nurtured until it grows into a bright flame of light through the spiritual and intellectual awakening of the individual, gradually reorienting his or her life towards self-improvement in the path of service to her family and community.

We can think of development progress in terms of two interrelated movements in communities and regions. The first is the development of human resources at the grassroots of society through intensive training and engagement in practical projects for social and economic improvement. The second movement is a gradual improvement in the capacity of development-promoting institutions to harness and effectively utilize emerging human resources to build sustainable social and economic development processes and outcomes at steadily increasing levels of mutually reinforcing diversity and complexity.



Five Key Strategies

The Himat program combines the following five key strategies in each locality in order to produce a unique convergence of outcomes and impacts rooted in the particular circumstances and realities of the individuals, communities and institutions that comprise that place.

1. **Spark of Hope: Spiritual Foundations** - Igniting the spark of hope, vision and engagement of human will and purpose by anchoring the development process in the people's own spiritual teachings, values and beliefs; by exposure to stories of success that demonstrate the possibility of meaningful change; by encouraging the development of communities of mutual support, and by inviting every individual to arise in service to their families, their communities and humanity
2. **Capacity Development** - Building the capacity of individuals and communities to contribute effectively to the processes of development through intensive training, integrated with practical development action, as well as continuous coaching, mentoring and technical support
3. **Institutional Strengthening** - Focused training and monitoring of development-related institutions at the level of communities, cluster areas and regional networks through leadership training, through the conduct of external financial audits to ensure transparency and accountability, through participatory processes that strengthen the bonds of trust and confidence between community members and their institutions, as well as through the provision of technical assistance when requested
4. **Comprehensive Development Planning** - Supporting villages in cluster areas (LSOs) to develop 10-year comprehensive community development plans (CCPs). These plans are made through intensive consultation with grassroots community members, and cover the full spectrum of development needs and targets, including improvements in the quality of life of children, youth, women, men, elders and families, and the political, social, cultural, religious, administrative, environmental management, and economic dimensions of life. Once developed, these plans become a solid framework for continuous improvement through sustainable development processes. Plans are updated and refined every year through action planning at the local community and cluster levels.
5. **Quick-Wins and Practical Projects** - Utilizing small seed grants to grassroots development action groups to encourage broad-based participation in practical social and economic projects. These projects are nurtured and often become sustainable businesses or voluntary social programs that combine to generate a fermentation at the grassroots of successful change efforts contributing to overall improvement in the quality of individual, family and community life.

Achievements

1. **Community mobilization:** A high degree of community mobilization has been achieved in Gojal (northern Hunza) where the project has been working for 3 to 4 years. In these three LSO areas, 100% of households are now engaged in their local VOs, WOs and LSOs. Engagement levels are gradually increasing in central and southern Hunza as training and mobilization activities continue.
2. **Training reach:** More than 10,000 people have taken training as a part of the Himat Indigenous Leadership Training program and other Himat-provided training opportunities.
3. **Small business start ups:** More than 300 new business startups have been generated, some of them directly as a result of Himat training and quick-win seed grants, and many others have emerged as community awareness and acceptance of the idea of small business as a viable livelihood option took hold in people's thinking.
4. **Greatly increased savings:** A dramatic resurgence of savings as more than 100 savings and loans programs were revitalized, and also the emergence of two community banks in the form of Cooperative Credit Associations.
5. **Democratization:** The development of a regional LSO umbrella network organization (GOLSON) which has created a powerful platform for inter-community learning and cooperation as well as for collective advocacy to government and other outside entities and helpers. This network is standing squarely on the shoulders of a powerful democratization process at the grassroots in which civil society development organizations have learned to engage the people they serve and represent as partners and collaborators in development planning and implementation. Two solid indicators of this development are the shift to elections (leaders were selected in the past by various means) for the members of boards of directors and the holding of annual AGMs and other development forums through which community members have opportunities to voice their concerns and share their views. At this writing, the concept of an LSO network is being extended to include all of the LSOs in the Hunza region. Similarly, there is a strong movement now afoot to form an association of community savings and loans programs in order to create a much wider pool of capital that can be democratically controlled from the grassroots to benefit communities.
6. **Emerging resilience:** The institutional strengthening that has taken place in the north has clearly changed the picture of the ability of some communities to respond to natural disasters. After the Attabad disaster of 2010, LSOs were relatively nonfunctional in their ability to lead emergency relief and recovery processes. By contrast, the monsoons of August 2015 created disastrous flash flooding and mudslides in two LSO areas (Chipursan/CLSO and Sost/GRSO). CLSO was by far the hardest hit. Thanks to excellent emergency response planning and training by FOCUS (the emergency response agency within the Aga Khan family of organizations), combined with the leadership training, institutional strengthening and community mobilization work of Himat, hundreds of community volunteers were mobilized within minutes.
7. **Agricultural renewal:** Agriculture has experienced a severe crisis in our project region, and farmers are now engaged in ongoing learning and experimentation as

they struggle to shift toward more ecologically sustainable approaches, revitalize depleted soil and develop alternative crops and value-added agricultural products.

8. **Transferrable training materials:** The Himat Indigenous Leadership Training Program now consists of nine extensive courses, complete with training manuals translated into Urdu and beautifully printed for durable community use.
9. **Skilled team of community development professionals:** The Himat field team has now become a highly skilled and capable group of professionals with knowledge and experience that is both extremely practical and highly capable of adaptation to new challenges and new levels of complexity.
10. **External recognition:** Three of Himat supported LSOs were evaluated within a field of 30 LSOs across Gilgit-Baltistan related to their strength as development-promoting institutions in a study designed and implemented by the very respected Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (PCP), with design support from the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) and the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP). Out of the entire field of 30, two of our LSOs (Chipursan - CLSO and Sost - GRSO) tied for first place, beating out all others evaluated by a considerable margin. This achievement was a huge encouragement to the communities themselves, but also to the Himat team, because it validated the effectiveness of Himat's low-cost, learning-driven, community training and mobilization approach.
11. **Ultra-Poor initiative:** The Himat team has collaborated with local religious and civil society leaders to develop a made-in-Hunza approach to helping the ultra-poor to take the journey from chronic dependency and poverty toward self-reliance and sustainable prosperity. A key feature of this approach is the underlying philosophy that generally poor communities are capable of helping the ultra-poor in their midst, if they are determined to do so.

General Findings and Lessons Learned

The most important question to answer about a poverty alleviation initiative is the following. "Is anyone better off as a result of the Himat Program? Are people moving out of poverty?"

Unfortunately, at the beginning of its work, Himat did not conduct a "before and after" household survey to establish an objective baseline. We did, however, engage communities in a participatory analysis of their situation (captured in a "Community Story" report), and we did conduct ongoing checks of household-level food security through surveys and consultation with women's organizations. For example, for several years after the Attabad disaster, more than half of the families needed food aid for seven or more months of the year in order to survive.

Community participants in this evaluation process were emphatic in saying that most families are somewhat better off than they were five years ago, and that Himat has made a major contribution to that improvement.

We estimate that in northern Hunza where Himat has been working for the last five years, we have seen a shift (from just after the Attabad disaster in 2010) when more than 60% of households were ultra-poor or very poor (i.e., needing food aid and other relief in order to survive) to less than 20% of households in that category today. What we cannot claim is that Himat is responsible for all of this change. In fact, while there are many factors to look at, the biggest one has to be the ingenuity, creativity and hard work of communities themselves.

We want to recognize at the outset of this section that it is very difficult, and often scientifically dubious, to attribute societal outcomes to any one program or strategy. There are always multiple social, economic, political and other factors at work in any situation. Also, we recognize that at the same time as the Himat program was hard at work among the communities of Hunza, other actors were also making important contributions. Among these must be included the institutions of the Ismaili Imam, such as regional Ismaili Councils, their Arbitration and Social Welfare committees and the Regional Economic Development Board, as well as the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP). Additionally, the Central Asian Institute and many smaller NGOs were also making contributions. The impacts and outcomes reported below are those toward which we have reasonable certainty that the Himat Program has made a significant or even seminal contribution.

1. The impact of igniting a spark of hope

- a. After four years of holding training activities, development forums and conferences, one might think that the novelty would wear off and communities would vote with their feet by no longer participating in these activities, *especially since they were required to pay their own travel costs and take turns hosting events (this means preparing meals and organizing sleeping arrangements for as many as 100 visitors to a small village)*. On the contrary, attendance at every major Himat function continues to increase, and enthusiasm for the outcomes being experienced at the community and the regional levels continue to rise.
- b. One sure sign that people are waking up is when they begin expressing hope, joy and enthusiasm through the arts. Many Himat conferences and gatherings have been graced with the presence and contribution of outstanding local musicians and artists who share their songs, stories, dances and poetry to inspire and uplift their fellow participants.
- c. At the community level, there has been a reawakening of grassroots participation, energy and enthusiasm to work together to bring about collectively agreed-upon development outcomes that will benefit everyone.
- d. Finally, largely due to the strategy of engaging thousands of grassroots people in values-driven, hope-inspired and action-oriented training for development, there has been a resurgence of human resources that have arisen to work in the path of their own development. Five years ago these same people could be said to have been developmentally "asleep". Now they are awakened and are creating a fermentation at the grassroots of creativity and new possibilities.

2. The development of human resources

We find that there is a direct and immediate relationship between the degree of the development of human resources at the grassroots of a cluster (i.e., an LSO area) and that cluster's achievements related to broad-based community mobilization, institutional strengthening, social and economic improvement, increased social harmony, cooperation both among themselves and across the region, finding ways to solve most of their own development problems, and establishing linkages and securing assistance from outside funders and helpers on their own terms.

3. *First and second stage development*

We use the term “first stage development” to refer to initial training and mobilization activities at the outset of a long-term development process. Each strategy that is implemented at this stage has its own intended outcome.¹

What was totally unexpected, however, was what would happen when all of these strategies converged and reach a critical mass in any given cluster of communities. What, in fact, did happen was that new synergies emerged within and between communities that resulted in the creation of a whole new level of unanticipated (on our part) outcomes. This is what we call “second stage development”. For example, we worked very hard to revive savings and loans programs and to encourage business development. We knew that, eventually, businesses would grow to the point where they would need investment capital in order to realize their potential. We began to look for sources of funding to start a regional business development fund, but what emerged was much better. Several communities spontaneously developed their own Cooperative Credit Associations, and began encouraging local savings and loans managers within the cluster to shift their funds to this community-owned financial institution. While this development is still in progress, it demonstrates that what begins to emerge in second-stage development are new potentialities and possibilities that are born out of the combined interaction all the other seemingly unrelated but organically interconnected things that are going on when communities are trained, mobilized and engaged and systematically pursuing collectively generated development goals and plans.

4. *The time factor*

Our finding is that a minimum of three years of intensive and continuous work is required in most cases before sustainable results begin to appear. Some communities may take even longer, requiring up to 4 to 5 years of intensive work before they are able to effectively initiate and sustain transformational development initiatives, depending on the capacities and conditions that existed within that community at the outset of the process.

5. *The money factor*

You can get big results without big budgets. The Himat program has operated since its inception on a total annual budget of less than US \$75,000 per year for all of its costs, including field team salaries, administration, training materials, field activities, travel and accommodations, and even Canadian team travel for coaching and mentoring visits. We know for a fact that this amount of money is approximately what one senior manager in some international NGOs working within Pakistan are receiving. The communities themselves tell us that, while all outside assistance is good, the Himat program has had far more positive and sustainable impact in the past five years than any other single initiative. This is because, they say, Himat focused on building community and institutional capacity to manage development programs, rather than simply delivering another development program.

¹ Our 5 key strategies are: ignite a spark of hope, capacity development, institutional strengthening, comprehensive community planning and quick wins and practical projects.

6. *The participation imperative*

It is true that it took a paradigm shift on the part of community leaders and grassroots activists to shift people's expectations from asking for money to realizing the value of training and support. Over and over again, the principle "development comes from within" was validated, as grassroots community people developed their will and capacity to contribute to their own development, and that of their families and communities. The sheer vitality and availability of human energy for development in many communities (compared to the inertia, apathy, negativity and conflict that existed before Himat training and mobilization processes began) is certainly one clear validation of this approach. The "let a thousand flowers bloom" approach to community economic development, in which the Himat team was careful not to present communities with prepackaged ideas of what they should do, but rather encouraged grassroots people to draw on their indigenous intelligence and experience to create economic opportunities and initiatives of their own making proved to be a powerful approach when combined with effective training, a little seed money and a lot of support. These are only examples, but they illustrate the critical importance of fostering people's participation as a primary methodology for sustainable development.

7. *Development is both spiritual and material*

Since human beings are both spiritual and material in nature, how can it be otherwise than that the improvement of the human condition must also be both material and spiritual, and that these two are interconnected and inseparable? A critical element that has been woven through the Himat approach in all aspects of our work has been to stress a heart connection within every participant to the guidance of their faith regarding how we human beings need to behave toward and think about one another, and how one's life is only complete when one dedicates it to the service of others and the betterment of the world. Spiritual capacities such as the ability to have a vision or dream of a better life, the capacity to believe in the potentialities that live within that vision, the volitional capacity to commit ourselves to a path of hard work and learning, and to persevere in that path—this is the software of development. The hardware is the things we learn and do to change the outer world, such as implementing a new approach to community governance, initiating businesses, developing new infrastructure schemes, reforming agriculture, engaging youth in life-path learning and action activities, and reaching out to include the ultra-poor to help them develop capacities within themselves to improve their lives. All of these have both an outer and inner component. You can do all the right things, but if you don't do them with the right spirit, they will not succeed.

The Way Forward

1. *Integration with KADO*

From the perspective of the long-term sustainability of Himat's work, and the preservation of the lessons learned from project experience, the more that Himat becomes embedded in all aspects of KADO's operations, and not just partitioned off as one of many programs, the more likely it is that lessons learned by the Himat program will be able to contribute effectively to the ongoing evolution of KADO as an organization.

2. *Strengthening village and regional financial systems*

One critical emerging issue that Himat will need to address going forward is the need for a community banking system.

There is a great deal of capacity building that is needed in order to help communities to take full advantage of the money that is now effectively trapped within their savings program and unavailable for development purposes. A training program is needed for fund managers that provides them with tools and procedures that they can follow to create micro-lending programs at the village level. An association of savings and loans programs is also needed focused on strengthening the capacity of member programs, but also on creating safe ways to pool savings at the LSO level or even beyond through Cooperative Credit Associations so that larger amounts of capital can be made available for development purposes without risking the security of local savings.

3. *Expanding the Himat Training Program to create a Development Training Institute*

The Himat training program has proven itself to be a primary driver of community mobilization and development wherever sufficient numbers of grassroots people have been trained. It will be important to concentrate on building up a critical mass of trained human resources in each LSO area before attempting subsequent stages in community development activities.

The potential exists to share this training program with the rest of Pakistan in several ways. New partnerships are possible. Another possibility is acquiring accreditation for the courses through developing partnerships with institutions of higher learning.

All of these possibilities can be best pursued by developing a kind of "Development Training Institute" which serves as a coordinator of curriculum and new program development, and facilitates the training of tutors and coordinators, as well as the development of new program sites wherever they may occur.

4. *Supporting the development of a Hunza-wide Regional LSO Network Organization*

In order to expand and reinforce the democratic voice of community people across the region and to give them a platform for mutual learning and collaboration, it will be important to expand the LSO collaborative network already in operation in the north to include all LSOs in Hunza.

5. *Supporting the development of a Regional Women's Network Organization*

Hunza women have identified the need to build their own regional organization that will focus on strengthening local women's organizations (with particular attention to strengthening women's role in the development process), as well as to give women a strong voice from their unique perspective in advocating for the needs of the region.

6. *Supporting the further development of a Regional Farmers Alliance*

There is now a need to create a farmer-run organization that focuses on building the capacity of the agricultural sector in Hunza to make the shift toward eco-agriculture;

i.e., toward sustainable farming practices and a new range of crops and value-added products that can bring new income to the region. As well, consolidating the buying of farm inputs and the selling of agricultural products and putting the control of these into the hands of local farmers (now much of it is in the control of outsiders who come to the region as middlemen to buy and transport crops to market) will add great strength to the agricultural economy of Hunza.

7. Youth development

Focusing on the development needs of youth, both within communities already mobilized and within communities just beginning their mobilization process, will give a new and unexpected vitality to the development process in each cluster.

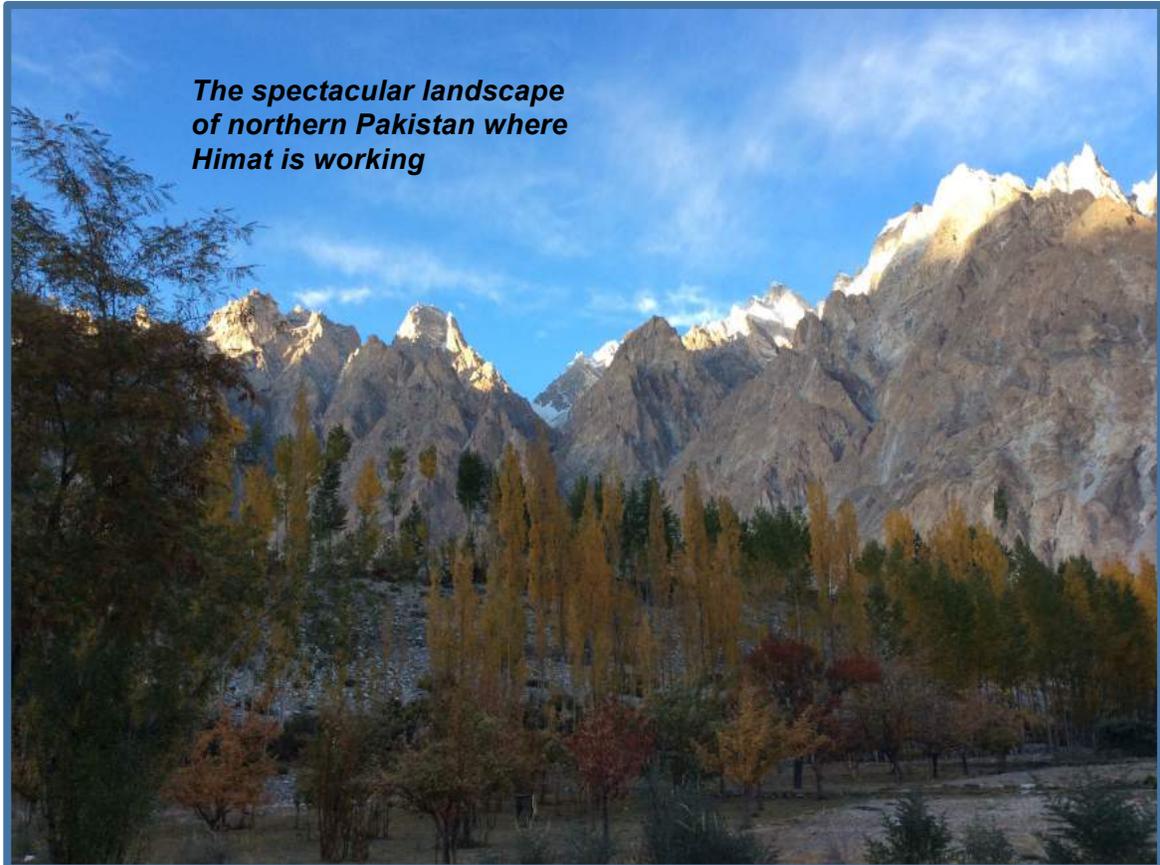
8. Beyond Hunza

Some of the most effective development strategies now practiced across Pakistan were originated in Hunza and eventually spread across Pakistan. The Himat training and mobilization approach has been called (by community leaders) "a new wave" of development innovation that again started in Hunza, but has the potential to benefit many other regions in the country.

We now have the responsibility to find ways of taking these approaches to the rest of the country. In doing so, we know that we must remain as humble co-learners, and not think for a minute that we have "the answers". Everything we have learned will need to be relearned in new social and cultural contexts. While it might be easier to stay where we are, the Himat program itself would benefit from having the galvanizing experience of implementing our approach in completely different areas from those of its origins in order to develop a better understanding of how these approaches can best be introduced anywhere in the world.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This document reports on an evaluation process carried out between August and December 2015 which sought to understand the impacts and outcomes to date of the **Himat Indigenous Leadership and Development Program** being carried out since 2011 in the Hunza region of Gilgit Baltistan (until recently known as the Northern Areas) of Pakistan, under the auspices of the Karakorum Area Development Organization (KADO) in collaboration with the Four Worlds Centre for Development Learning (based in Alberta, Canada).



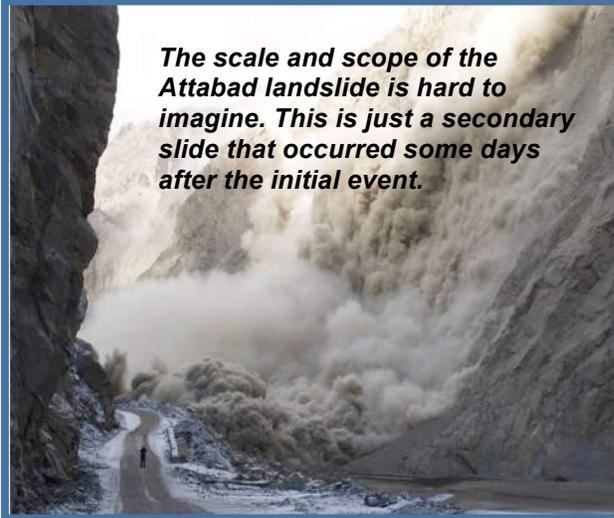
Early Days

The Himat Indigenous Leadership and Development program began full operations in the Hunza region of Gilgit Baltistan in the spring of 2011. This was after a little more than two years of pilot program initiatives through which the Himat team learned its way into a basic understanding of how to work effectively with these high mountain communities in a way that has the potential to set them firmly on a pathway leading out of poverty and into sustainable peace, prosperity and human wellbeing. We thought we were ready to launch a full-blown program in the spring of 2010, but these hopes were cut off by a "perfect storm" of crises and catastrophes. By the end of 2008 and all through 2009, the global financial crisis created unprecedented price increases for basic commodities and farm inputs, which saw the cost of fuel and fertilizers rising 5 to 6 times that of previous years. This meant that for high mountain communities that had become dependent on marketing potatoes to down country cities, the cost of production now, in many

instances, exceeded the market value of their crops.

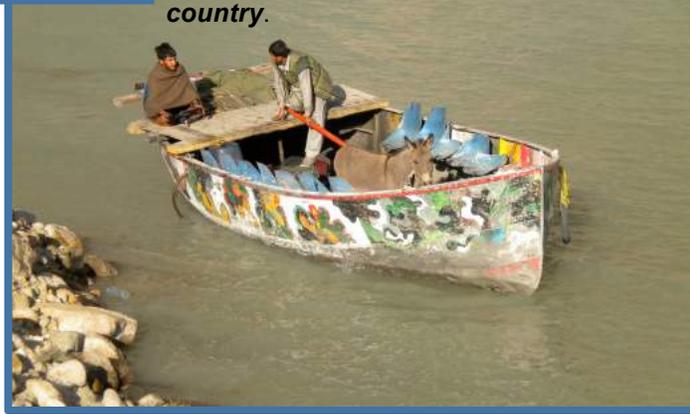
Disaster Strikes

Then, in January 2010, a huge landslide (known as the Attabad disaster) completely blocked the Hunza Valley. Where there had once been a highway running beside a beautiful river in a steep narrow valley, there was now a pile of rubble almost a kilometer high that completely filled the valley from wall-to-wall. Not only was a large portion of the Karakoram Highway destroyed, completely cutting off some 40 villages and 25,000 inhabitants from the rest of Pakistan and from any access to markets, but now the Hunza River had backed up and formed a lake some 30 km long



The scale and scope of the Attabad landslide is hard to imagine. This is just a secondary slide that occurred some days after the initial event.

Traveling by boat becomes the only option for the people of upper Hunza to connect with the rest of the country.



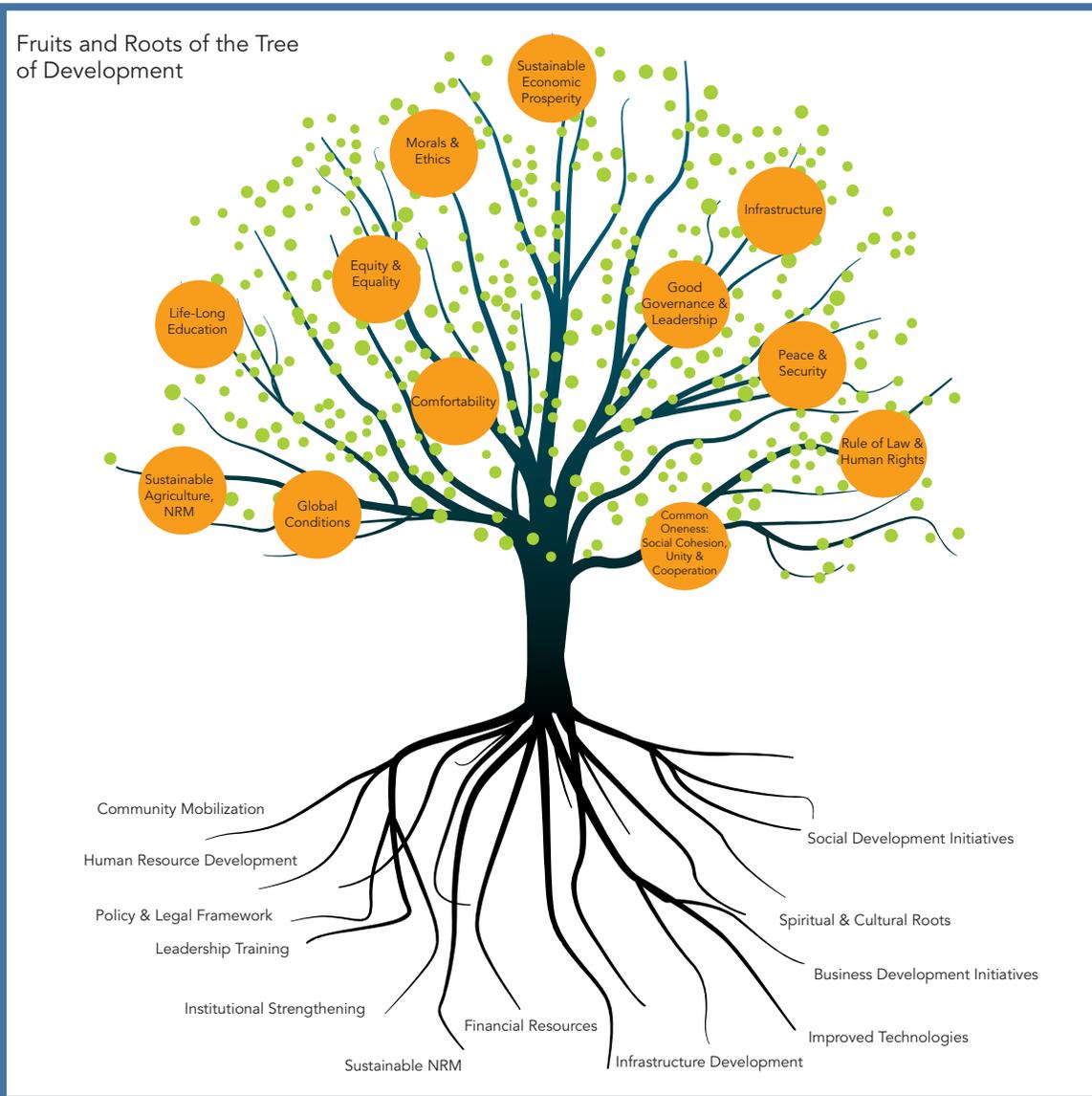
and 400 feet deep. The only way people could travel or transport goods was by boat, but there were no boats in high Himalayan villages 9,000 to 11,000 feet above sea level. It took months to bring boats in from the coast and to begin building a transportation system. At that time, in this totally agriculture-based economy, the cost of shipping potatoes and fruit to market exceeded the market value of crops six times over. The entire region was plunged into destitution. During most of 2010, our Himat team coordinated emergency relief activities, including helping farmers to access fertilizer and seeds so that they could at least plant food crops for the coming year.

Launch

In the late fall of 2010, community leaders asked to meet with the Himat team to consult about launching a full-blown development project to help communities recover from the social and economic deprivation they were experiencing. When we asked the leaders how we could help, they said, "We need development". "Development," we said, "what is that?" Their answer was that development is better education and training for our people; increased economic prosperity; better governance and community management; improved social wellbeing of our youth, elders, and families; strengthening of the roots of our cultural identity and heritage; better safety and security for our communities; improved access to health services; electricity for all our villages; etc.; etc. They summed it all up by saying, what we want is "comfortability", which they defined as "everyone having enough, and no one having too little or too much".

We responded by saying, “All those things you have named are the fruits of the tree of development. But what are the roots? What is needed and what has to be done in order that those fruits will grow and mature?” The leaders responded without hesitation. “We need extensive training and capacity building, access to credit, access to ideas and information from around the world (window on the world), better leadership, stronger institutions, greater unity and cooperation within our own communities, stronger roots in our cultural and spiritual values, better connections with governments at every level.” “That all sounds like an excellent framework for a development initiative. Let’s work on those things together,” we offered.

Then we had to explain how the Himat initiative was going to be different from any development program they had ever experienced in the past. “We are not donors. We are partners. We don’t come with funds to distribute. In fact, we don’t have much money. What we do have is knowledge and experience from around the world related to how to build effective development processes. What we can bring is learning opportunities, capacity building, and access to information and knowledge. But we also know that you



are strong people with a lot of knowledge and experience from many generations of living on this land, and any development that's going to work here will need to build on who you are and the strengths and knowledge you already have. We will walk with you as you learn your way into the capacities you need in order to manage and carry out your own development processes, and we will stick with you over the months and years it will take for your capacities to grow and become established."

Community leaders graciously accepted our proposal, but it really took some time for them to learn the difference between donors and partners. We began holding development forums several times a year. At these forums, some 120 representatives from villages across the region (consisting of approximately 40% women, 30% youth, elders, and elected as well as religious leaders) gather for reflection on the development challenges everyone is facing, and for consultation and learning. The development forums are hosted by clusters of villages through their LSO (elected area development council). 90% of the costs of putting these important events on are born by the communities themselves. In contrast to every other NGO we know of operating in northern Pakistan, we do not pay travel costs or per diem expense money. These costs are borne by local community councils and women's organizations. And yet, in the four years of our operation, participation continues to increase. People come and participate because they want to be there.



Participants of a 2011 Himat development forum held in Khyber, upper Hunza

When we began full project operations in the spring of 2011, our experience and reach had been limited to a cluster of 11 villages in the Chipursan Valley. Between 2009 in 2011 we expanded to 41 communities. By the end of 2015 we are working with some 120 communities in northern, central and southern Hunza. Also by this time our work was beginning to receive recognition and respect in other parts of Pakistan.

Before we go on to report on the impacts of the work carried out by the Himat program over the past four years, we want to review the development thinking that underlies this work.

Our Theory of Change

A theory of change describes what the implementers of a program believe is needed in order to facilitate a specified change. At the foundations of the Himat Program is the intent of contributing to the roots of peace in Pakistan through processes of capacity building, community mobilization, and social and economic improvement. As everyone knows, Pakistan has been plagued by extremist violence and increasing civil unrest for many years. Even a cursory review of human development conditions in many areas of the country that have experienced civil and sectarian unrest shows very low levels of literacy and education, poor access to health and other government services, and dehumanizing poverty and marginalization. *While these conditions do not directly create extremism, we believe they contribute significantly to creating susceptibility to extremist influence. We believe that ignorance, poverty (especially extreme poverty), and marginalization lead to radicalization.*

Our goal is to develop viable pathways for human betterment that will lead to sustainable peace, prosperity and human wellbeing in grassroots populations in rural Pakistan.

Background Development Thinking

Some people think development is building an irrigation channel, a link road, a school building or a micro-power generation station. Of course, all of these things are good and needed, but development is much more than installing a building or a facility.

Others think development is about money and increasing economic prosperity. And, of course it is. Surely we need economic progress, but development is something deeper, and if that "something" is not engaged, sustainable economic progress that reaches everyone in a population is unachievable.

At its core, authentic development is about human beings. It begins with a first spark of hope, that tiny glimmer of possibility within each individual that life could be different and somehow better. That tiny spark needs to be nurtured until it grows into a bright flame of light through the spiritual and intellectual awakening of the individual, gradually reorienting his or her life towards self-improvement in the path of service to her family and community.

We can think of development progress in terms of two interrelated movements in communities and regions. The first is the development of human resources at the grassroots of society through intensive training and engagement in practical projects for social and economic improvement. The second movement is a gradual improvement in the capacity of development-promoting institutions to harness and effectively utilize emerging human resources to build sustainable social and economic development processes and outcomes at steadily increasing levels of mutually reinforcing diversity and complexity.



Five Key Strategies

The Himat program combines the following five key strategies in each locality in order to produce a unique convergence of outcomes and impacts rooted in the particular circumstances and realities of the individuals, communities and institutions that comprise that place.

6. **Spark of Hope: Spiritual Foundations** - Ignite the spark of hope, vision and engagement of human will and purpose by anchoring the development process in the people's own spiritual teachings, values and beliefs, by exposure to stories of success that demonstrate the possibility of meaningful change, by encouraging the foundations and development of communities of mutual support, and by inviting every individual to arise in service to their families, their communities and humanity.
7. **Capacity Development** - Building the capacity of individuals and communities to contribute effectively to the processes of development through intensive training integrated with practical development action, as well as continuous coaching, mentoring and technical support.
8. **Institutional Strengthening** - Focused training and monitoring of development-related institutions at the level of communities, cluster areas and regional networks, through leadership training, through the conduct of external financial audits to ensure transparency and accountability, through participatory processes that strengthen the bonds of trust and confidence between community members and their institutions, as well as through the provision of technical assistance when requested.
9. **Comprehensive Development Planning** - Supporting villages in cluster areas (LSOs) to develop 10-year comprehensive community development plans (CCPs). These plans are made through intensive consultation with grassroots community members, and cover the full spectrum of development needs and targets, including improvements of the quality of life of children, youth, women, men, elders and families, and the political, social, cultural, religious, administrative, environmental management, and economic dimensions of life. Once developed, these plans become a solid framework for continuous improvement through sustainable development processes. Plans are updated and refined every year through action planning at the local community and cluster levels.
10. **Quick-Wins and Practical Projects** - Small seed grants to grassroots development action groups are utilized to encourage broad-based participation in practical social and economic projects. These projects are nurtured and often become sustainable businesses or voluntary social programs that combine to generate a fermentation at the grassroots of successful change efforts contributing to overall improvement in the quality of individual, family and community life.



A small family business using local wool to make quilts and mattresses

PART TWO: IMPACT EVALUATION PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

Background

Participatory evaluation has been woven into the fabric of the Himat program since its earliest days. At least two development forums have been held every year, during which participants are asked to join with the Himat team in evaluating both the work that is ongoing in communities as well as the resources and services being provided by the Himat team. A formal impact evaluation process was completed at the end of 2014. The report entitled *Gaining Momentum* closely examined the impacts and outcomes of work carried out between October 2012 and May 2014. That report was widely circulated both in communities being served and to partners, donors and other interested parties.

Methodology

Some people believe that the only truly valid evaluation methodology for a development program is an external evaluation carried out by a professional evaluator. We don't believe that. External evaluations are usually carried out at the behest of funding agencies to ensure that their money has been well spent. As the primary fundraisers, as well as co-implementers of the project, we're very concerned that money is well spent. But we're more concerned that the project is accomplishing its purposes and achieving its goals.

There are a number of practical reasons why we have chosen not to take the course of hiring an external evaluator. 1) Our entire annual budget is less than \$75,000 a year. A formal evaluation by an external professional evaluator would cost anywhere from \$15-\$25,000 for the scale of evaluation we would require. 2) Unless an external evaluator was also an experienced participatory development practitioner, that person would have a very difficult time understanding and evaluating what the Himat program is really doing, particularly in terms of what empowerment really means and how you can tell when communities and institutions are gaining the capacity to manage their own development processes. 3) It is the communities being served that themselves need to be the primary evaluators of the program. Who knows better than they what the impacts of the project have been on their lives and their communities? 4) The function of external technical helpers to the evaluation process is to gather and systematize data produced by community stakeholders, and to facilitate processes through which those same stakeholders can interpret the meaning of data collected and draw conclusions related to the evaluation questions. This approach is entirely consistent with the ongoing methodology of the Himat program.

For these reasons we decided to employ a community-based, participatory methodology, utilizing the Himat field staff as technical helpers and facilitators of the process, and the entire team (including Canadian partners) to collect and analyze data in consultation with community leaders and partners. The steps followed in the evaluation process were as follows: 1) initial framing of evaluation questions in consultation with community leaders and project partners; 2) participatory engagement of a broad spectrum of community representatives (elected leaders, women, men, elders, youth, entrepreneurs, farmers) from all of the communities served, but with a special emphasis on the communities that have experienced two or more years of ongoing program services (because in communities that have had less than several years of engagement with the five key strategies, it is typically too early to measure impacts); 3) gathering of supplementary statistics related to indicators of development progress including data

related to food security, savings and assets accumulation, business activities, women's engagement, youth engagement, leadership and institutional capacity, community implementation of social and economic initiatives, and general social and economic conditions; 4) consideration of the strength and operational capacity of institutions at the local and cluster levels; 5) data analysis and preparation of a draft evaluation report; 6) review of the draft report by a focus group of community leaders and key activists; 7) refinement of the draft report based on community input; and 8) production of a final report.



This Report

The rest of this report will be organized as follows.

Part Three: Sector Review

- A. Training and Capacity Building
- B. Livelihood and Agriculture
- C. Institutional Strengthening
- D. Comprehensive Community Planning
- E. Women's Development
- F. Reaching the Ultra-poor

Part Four: Achievements

Part Five: General Findings and Lessons Learned

Part Six: The Way Forward

PART THREE: SECTOR REVIEW

This section of the report presents a general overview of each of six sectors of activity of the Himat program, as well as the contributions made by community participants and the members of the Himat team about the progress that has been made. These six sectors are as follows:

- Training and Capacity Building
- Livelihood and Agriculture
- Institutional Strengthening
- Comprehensive Community Planning
- Women's Development
- Reaching the Ultra-Poor

A. Training and Capacity Building

Based on our experience in the pilot initiatives taken between 2008 and 2011 in upper Hunza, it was clear that grassroots people at the village level had been exposed to very little or no training and orientation about what development really is and how it can be promoted. In the minds of many people, development was something that was brought to them by benevolent outside institutions. The idea that development comes from within, and that the capacity to improve the social and economic condition of people and communities could be developed through learning and effort—this was something new to most people at the grassroots level. Based on our pilot experience, but also on experience from around the world related to effectively mobilizing populations for social and economic improvement, we knew that learning needed to be a fundamental driver of change within the Himat initiative. Our starting assumption was that the development of human resources who understood what development is and how to promote it at the grassroots of society would spark many positive changes, and would feed all aspects of the development process, from institutional strengthening and livelihood improvement to youth and women's development.

The Himat Leadership and Development Training Program was launched in the spring of 2011. Some 120 participants were introduced to the first two modules in what has now become a nine-module program that is still expanding. These people then went home to



Learning through play is an important feature of the Himat training program

their communities and initiated study-action circles to take others through the courses. Those individuals could, in turn, start study circles of their own. In this way, through the efforts of more than 100 volunteer tutors, hundreds of study circles have taken approximately 10,000 learners through the Himat courses.

The nine courses thus far being delivered deal with the following topics: 1) what development is, 2) development leadership, 3) participatory development planning, 4) community small business and economic development, 5) governance for development, 6) transforming conflict, 7) facilitating learning, 8) personal growth for life path improvement, and 9) orientation and training for coordinators of the *Life Path Program* (focused on preparing community institutions, leaders and volunteers to work with the ultra-poor in their midst).

In addition to these core courses, Himat has offered specialized training sessions related to agricultural improvement, youth entrepreneurship, women's development, small business development, financial management of institutions, and other livelihood-related topics. As well, the five-member Himat team spends roughly half of its time in the field visiting and working with communities to support them on their development journey. These field visits provide many opportunities for mentoring and coaching community implementers of development processes and for advising and supporting the work of community institutions.

Features that distinguish the Himat capacity building program include its dissemination model (as mentioned above) that does not rely on expert trainers, but rather on community members sitting together as co-learners. Another essential feature of the Himat program is that each course has an immediate practical application. So, for example, after Book Five on Governance for Development, the LSOs hold an open AGM at which their board of directors is elected through secret ballot from among all community members based on capacities and orientation to service (that is, without candidates and electioneering).

What the people said about Himat's Training and Capacity Building Work

The following observations were compiled from a participatory evaluation session conducted with community institutional leaders and social activists.

1. **The Himat training program revitalized our development institutions:** In our LSO area, the village-level organizations had been inactive and nonfunctional for 18 years. After all those many years, these institutions have been reinvigorated and are now functioning. This is a direct result of Himat training and support. Our LSO just received an award for being one of the best development institutions in Gilgit Baltistan. We started from nothing a few years ago, and all of our development has come from the training and support of Himat.
2. **Leadership skills development:** Many of our community leaders attended the training programs, and this was an opportunity for them to build their capacity. All of us working within developing organizations acquired a lot of knowledge and skills so that we can carry out our roles much better. As a result our governance system has improved enormously. Leadership is renewed by democratic election (rather than selection, which had previously allowed leadership on our institutions to stagnate). We now have budgets, annual audits, and financial transparency and accountability. We have development planning and careful management of the implementations of those plans. Directors of our institutions now have clear terms of reference and these responsibilities are understood by everyone. None of this was happening in

any systematic way before Himat training.

3. **Democratization of development processes:** Our communities and our institutions have become much more democratic. We now consult and the decision of the majority usually rules, rather than the opinion of one or two people. The training we received taught us how to plan for our own development. We didn't really know how to do that before.
4. **Mobilization and engagement of community members:** Because of the trainings, there are many more competent people who have arisen to serve our institutions. In the past we didn't have the human resources. Human resource development has become a normal part of life across the region, as more and more people prepare themselves for service in some part of the development process.
5. **Women's development:** The Himat trainings required that we send a high proportion of women. This opened the door for women to become involved in the development process and to be active in our local institutions.
6. **Economic development progress:** Livelihood-oriented training, combined with quick-win small grants, led to hundreds of business startups. Before Himat there were almost no businesses, and people couldn't imagine how they could ever start a business. One very visible success story is that now almost every village has a Ladies Shop run by women who have learned how to successfully manage a business.
7. **Fostering collaboration:** Himat training has noticeably increased unity and harmony within our communities and between communities. People are working together in groups, collaborating between communities, and finding ways to resolve long-standing differences.
8. **Conflict resolution:** An example of how training has impacted our capacity to resolve conflicts is that two of the largest villages in our region were locked in a 30 year land dispute for which no one could find the resolution. Utilizing what we learned in a Himat course on conflict transformation, this seemingly impossible to resolve conflict is now resolved.
9. **Complementing other training opportunities:** The Himat training has built on the foundation laid by AKRSP many years ago and has expanded on that vision. Other training done by AKRSP and the Social Planning Board have also contributed to our learning and development.
10. **A spark of hope:** We have realized that not to have hope is a sin. God has given us many gifts. We have great mental and physical capacity. All we need to do is use what we have.

Himat Team Observations

In reflecting on their own experiences and observations on the impact of Himat's capacity-building initiatives, team members noted the following.

1. **The value of community leaders and other community members learning together for development progress:** In upper Hunza, more than 2,500 community leaders have taken training along side other members of their communities. We observed that when both community leaders and grassroots people take training together, their development processes become much more effective. Unity is built in the community. Trust is built in institutions and leaders. And hundreds of people are

readily mobilized for development in each community. Where this training has not yet engaged a significant core group of leaders and community members, these communities continue to struggle with disunity issues, with a lack of clarity on how to move forward on a development path, and with great difficulty in mobilizing grassroots community members for development. This is true in communities with excellent people serving in leadership positions who are extremely dedicated and hard working. We conclude that learning together through the courses of the Himat Indigenous Leadership and Development Program is a fundamental prerequisite to success in achieving development outcomes. (We acknowledge that other training programs may well achieve this purpose, but we know of none that work in this way so effectively to animate and prepare human resources for successful engagement in development processes).

2. **Strengthening the “inner foundations” of development:** The Himat courses do much more than impart content to participants. Also, and perhaps more importantly, they ignite spiritual susceptibilities for unity, collaboration, and the desire to serve one's family and community without selfish purpose for the genuine good of others. As well, these courses instill a basic understanding of development principles, such as the critical importance of vision, of people's participation, of sound morality and ethics, of the practice virtues such as honesty and truthfulness, justice, and compassion. Even more deeply, these courses help people connect with the animating spirit of their own Faith and beliefs. In other words, they help people to plug into the spiritual engine that can animate and guide them through every difficulty.
3. **Specialized learning needs:** Beyond the core courses of the Himat Indigenous Leadership and Development program, which is only a foundation upon which many other kinds of learning need to be added, there are many concrete learning needs of great significance that the Himat program will need to pay attention to in the near future. Among these priorities must be included the following. a) Technical training for farmers related to making the shift to sustainable agriculture that involves such critical topics as soil reclamation and renewal, how to significantly reduce the use of toxic chemical fertilizers and pesticides, alternative cropping, and value-added agricultural products production. b) Training related to the creation of a community-based banking system that is owned and operated by communities, that is oriented not to profit-making but to the promotion of development, and that is democratically managed by the people who have entrusted their money to the system. As community-created Cooperative Savings and Loans associations arise, some of these institutions are learning to pool greater and greater amounts of capital. For these financial institutions to be successful, a system of safeguards; accurate, accountable and transparent record keeping; human resources with the skills to manage these bodies; and many other functional priorities need to be developed.
4. **Embracing increasing complexity:** As the development process advances, it will become more complex and require management systems that can embrace diversity and complexity in a much higher level than is required for local development management. Two examples of this include formation of a regional LSO network organization, and the formation of a regional cooperative banking network. The possibilities opened up by these developments have the potential to take the region much further than they have ever been able to go before. All of this will require intensive training and support.

5. **Taking what we have learned to other parts of Pakistan:** The Himat program was begun as a peace-building-through-constructive-development initiative. The work is well advanced in upper Hunza, but we are still 3 to 4 years away from being able to bring all participating communities to the state of readiness and mobilization that has been achieved in the North. Nevertheless, it is now time to consider ways of taking what we have learned to other more troubled regions of the country. In considering this possibility, we need to take ourselves back to our earliest days as a project, when we assumed nothing and always approached each new situation as humbly as we could and as learners. Clearly we cannot simply replicate training exactly as we have done it up until now if we are preparing to work in Sind, Punjab or Baluchistan. In each situation, we will need the collaboration of insiders to help us understand how to move forward effectively. That said, the strength and value of what we have already developed and tested must not be discounted. Our communities in the Hunza region could serve as valuable learning sites to which we could bring development leaders from anywhere in the country.

A Capacity-building Case Study ***Book One: The Tree of Development goes to Shimshal***

Introduction

Himat's work in Gojal since 2010 has demonstrated the power of training and capacity building to stimulate real change in terms of social and economic wellbeing at both the household and community level. The Himat Indigenous Leadership Development Series has proved to be a platform for Gojal communities and leaders to learn from each other and share their development progress; a process that helps build unity and sustainable development. The people in one of the regions in the Himat project area—the Shimshal Valley—had been largely left out of project activities because of their geographic isolation and the economic impact of the Attabad disaster.

The Himat team committed itself to deepening its work with Shimshal communities by facilitating the series of Himat courses in their region rather than expecting community members to travel out to other LSO areas.

In December 2015, the Himat team collaborated with the Shimshal Nature Trust (SNT—the civil society agency that united the four Shimshal communities) to offer Book One: The Tree of Development to Shimshal residents. The aim of this session was to engage local people in the development process and help them understand the philosophy and concept of participatory development (development comes within). More than 39 community members and leaders participated in this session. Community volunteers organized food and other logistical requirements for the two-day session.



Session proceedings

On the day scheduled for the start of the session, community volunteers (including youth and village leaders) were engaged with the construction of a pony track to create access for cattle to a nearby pasture. For this reason, the SNT Chairman suggested running the session in the afternoon and evening. As customary for Himat training programs, the session began with the recitation of verses from the Qur'an, a welcome from the host (the SNT Chairman) and an introduction to the purpose of the session and the methodology that would be used. An icebreaker activity helped the participants relax and feel ready to focus.

The participants were then immediately introduced to the Himat study-action circle process that would give each of them the opportunity to become tutors for other members of the community after this initial session.

Learning stories are always an important component of Himat sessions. In this case, the Sugar Crystal Miracle inspired the participants to demonstrate leadership by remaining undeterred by the many kinds of barriers that arise in development work.

The Sugar Crystal Miracle

Imagine a great clear glass urn filled to the brim with water. You begin to drop grains of sugar into the water, counting each one as you drop it in. One, two, three..., four hundred..., eight hundred..., twenty-eight thousand..., on and on it goes. Each grain you drop into the water disappears as it is absorbed into solution. It is invisible—gone. The water appears unchanged.

For each grain of sugar you drop into the water, you think of some effort you have made for your community. So many meetings where almost nobody came. So many meetings and workshops and hours and hours of hard work that nobody noticed. Gone. As if you had done nothing. The community appears unchanged.

But you continue to drop the grains of sugar into the water, and you count. Two million..., six million..., and, suddenly, after so many that you have lost count a hundred times, you will drop one more grain into the water, and it will be enough. The water is saturated. It cannot hold another grain in solution. And so a dramatic shift takes place before your eyes. As you continue to drop grains of sugar into the water, a beautiful crystal forms before your eyes, tangible, and undeniable.

And so it is in communities. Like the sugar in solution that needed to reach the critical saturation point before making itself visible, a critical mass of vision, energy, unity and commitment must be reached before it appears that much of anything is happening in community transformation. Before that moment in time, it can look to all the world like nothing is happening. Despite all the sacrifices, the plans, the campaigns, the programs, nothing seems to change. But then something happens. A trigger, a catalyst of some sort, perhaps only in the heart of one key person, perhaps an event that stuns the whole community. Whatever it is that happens, the result is that a sudden, dramatic and often chaotic shift occurs, and for a brief moment in time, a new possibility appears on the horizon. Everything seems to be shaken up and disassembled into its constituent atoms. Will it come back together in the same old pattern, or will it reassemble in a completely new form?

History has shown us many such moments. Some of them are so close to our own time that it is hard to predict what the new pattern will be because the period of rapid transformation still lingers. Such is the case with the collapse of the Soviet Empire, signaled by the tearing down of the Berlin Wall by thousands of ordinary citizens in an extraordinary moment.

There are many community stories that seem far less dramatic, but to the careful observer, they identify the key moments when time seems to stand still and everything seems possible.

But those moments do not occur at random. There is an underlying pattern, a buildup toward that critical shift point. And knowing without a doubt that such a point will come can give us heart as we struggle on, dropping our grains of sugar into the water and watching them disappear as if nothing at all has happened.

During a reflection time about the lessons for them demonstrated by the following cartoon of people in a lifeboat, workshop participants said, "This is the real story of our society. The poor are not given equal status as the rich. These people are usually ignored in the development process by the local organizations and leaders. This picture tells us that everyone in society is equal. If someone gets behind in the development process, this is a great loss of the whole society. We all benefit when an equal and balancing life leads towards equitable development."



Another activity was a blind-fold game that was played to help energize participants and stress the role of vision in development processes. Two groups of men and women performed this game. With closed eyes they tried to cross a variety of barriers that had been set in their path. Without vision, they faced many difficulties in reaching their destinations. During a follow-up reflection, they said, "Among all of the important leadership qualities, one of the most important is being visionary. Without vision, we cannot lead the community in the right direction."

The second day of the workshop began with singing together a spiritual song. This spiritual attachment increased their spirit of learning and enthusiasm. After reflection about what they had learned from the previous day, participants worked in small groups to explore the fruits (outcomes) of effective development processes, such as health, education, infrastructure,



environment, politics, social (religious) wellbeing and cultural vitality, as well as the roots (pre-requisites) for achieving these fruits (such as access to credit, strong civil society institutions, human resource development, and infrastructure). Next participants ranked the current conditions in the community with respect to these fruits and roots. After displaying their analysis on a "spider graph", the participants were excited to be able to see their assets and the primary work areas on which they have to focus in the development efforts at a glance.

Two Important Outcomes of the Book One Session

1. At the end of the learning session, the participants reiterated their commitment to becoming tutors for other members of the community and several stepped forward to serve as volunteer coordinators to support the tutors in each village.
2. The communities decided to form an LSO in their region that would be able to work closely with the religious institutions and with SNT to promote the overall development of the region under one umbrella.

Case Study prepared by Didar Ali, Himat Capacity Building Coordinator

B. Livelihood and Agriculture

Except for a few small towns, the entire economy of the Hunza region is based in agriculture. As recently as 1975, most people were still subsistence farmers with no connection to markets or the production of commercial crops or value-added products. Gradually, after 1975, "modern" agricultural methods and inputs were introduced. People began mono-cropping potatoes and growing fruit with the help of AKRSP and other international helpers. For some 20 years, most people were making a fairly good living—enough so that many families could afford to send their children to high school and even university. Then the global financial crisis of 2008 – 2009 and the Attabad disaster of 2010 combined to completely destroy the fragile agricultural economy of northern Hunza. Twenty-five thousand people in some 40 communities were plunged into utter destitution. Most required food aid simply to survive. Many families reported eating nothing but chapatis and tea for months at a time.



Himat quick-win seed grants have been used to improve irrigation systems and to build bridges for accessing barren land that could be cultivated.

The challenge for the Himat Program was to assist the people to move towards self-reliance, sustainable prosperity and wellbeing despite the formidable obstacles that they faced. Some of those barriers can be described as follows.



1. When people tried to return to traditional crops after the collapse of the potato market, they found that the soil had been seriously depleted by the overuse of chemical fertilizers and too many years of mono-cropping. What at first seemed like a temporary economic setback now seemed like an ecological disaster. Even if the road that had been destroyed by the creation of the Attabad Lake were to be reopened and normal potato farming could resume, it was clear that it couldn't continue for long and that fundamental changes were needed.
2. It was also clear that there was almost no small business experience in most of the communities. People believed that the only people who could start businesses were those with lots of money. Yet, it was critical to find ways of bringing alternative sources of income into the livelihood picture.
3. At the same time as this disaster-induced economic crisis was in full swing, the region was experiencing major population growth. When we looked into a long-term history of the Hunza area, we found that while people grew most of their own food, they often experienced periods of time when food needed to be imported due to

weather-related crop failures and other problems. There simply isn't enough arable land to support the population increase. Again, it was clear that a diversification of the regional economy is essential.

4. Some enterprise development had been promoted by external agencies trying to help the region, but, according to community leaders, these always ended up benefiting a very small number of people, and usually such enterprises could not sustain themselves for long if there was any kind of change in economic conditions. Quite a lot of investment had been made into the tourist industry, but after the 9/11 attacks, international tourists stopped coming to Pakistan and tourism was all but dead.
5. Investment capital, even at a very micro level, was not available to most people because the savings and loans programs connected to the LSO/VO/WO system had collapsed in most places, and commercial banks were all refusing to loan to anyone in the area. This is because, after the financial and agricultural collapse sending almost everyone into destitution, a small handful of people defaulted on their bank loans. Somehow the commercial banks colluded and the entire upper Hunza region was blackballed from accessing loans.

The Himat Livelihood strategy consists of the following elements:

- a. **Training courses** related to economic and business development, entrepreneurship, and skill related courses to support the start up of specific enterprises - Many hundreds of people took one or more of these courses.
- b. **Quick Wins** – These are micro grants awarded to small groups of women, men and youth who propose a business or social innovation project. These grants ranged from PKR 5,000 to 15,000 (US\$ 50 to 150). About 120 such grants were given out. The combination of these two strategies created a new entrepreneurial mindset in the communities with which we worked. The results were actually astonishing to all of us. Not only did most of the quick-win projects end up generating the startup of small businesses, but there were also a huge number of business startups by people who were not recipients of quick-win grants and had not even taken the Himat training. We estimate that there are now more than 300 businesses that have started since the inception of the Himat Project.
- c. **Support for the agricultural sector** - In order to stimulate development in the agricultural sector, a Farmers Alliance was organized focused on improving agricultural production within a framework of ecologically friendly and sustainable agriculture. Training in permaculture approaches to soil reclamation and alternative cropping methods have encouraged many farmers to commit themselves to a path of moving towards 100% eco-friendly production. In the meantime, many alternative and more profitable crops have been introduced, kitchen garden production has been significantly improved through the introduction of new seed varieties, and model plots have been established to demonstrate the possibilities from alternative crop approaches.

Both in the agriculture and business development areas, there is still a long way to go in terms of what can and needs to be done. What has been accomplished so far has been severely limited by the resources available to do the work.

What the people said about Himat's Livelihood and Agriculture work (highlights)

The following observations were compiled from a participatory evaluation session conducted with community institutional leaders and social activists.

1. **Livelihood initiatives have increased:** Himat came at a crucial time. We needed to learn how to develop ourselves. We cannot wait for others. A significant sector of our people had to find some new livelihood options. Now many are involved in livelihood activities ranging from mattress making, to ladies shops, to a barbershop. None of this was happening before.
2. **Creativity and initiative come from the grassroots:** It was a strategic decision not to provide people with ideas or schemes for their economic improvement. What we did, instead, was create the space for them to think for themselves and we provided training and support to help them to realize their own ideas. Based on the philosophy of "let 1,000 flowers bloom", we invited grassroots people to form groups and provided them with seed grants and training so that they could reflect on their own environment and capacities and create new options. The result was something we could not have imagined. There were so many good ideas attempted, and so many of them worked, that we soon realized that our belief in the people's capacity for a creative response was well placed.
3. **Awareness and skills training have made a difference:** All the new emphasis and support related to business by the Himat program has significantly speeded up community acceptance of the idea of business for all of us. Himat programs and initiatives have increased awareness about the possibility of developing viable businesses and skills that help ensure success. Himat has offered many specific trainings related to some aspect of livelihood development, often involving youth and women leaders. Those who got this training have been sharing what they learned with others.
4. **All sectors of the population have become involved in business:** Now many young people, and many women have become involved and are initiating a lot of creative projects. Another new thing is that husbands and wives are getting involved in businesses together as business partners. Unemployed people have gotten awareness and opportunities through the quick-win projects to start businesses.
5. **Women entrepreneurs are especially successful:** Previous to the Himat project, women were almost universally tied to household duties and agriculture. Now many women are getting involved in small businesses such as Ladies Shops and other enterprises at the village level. Some women have grown their businesses to such a degree that they are buying and selling outside the village and linking with other businesses across the valley.
6. **Quick-win grants provided important stimulus:** Quick-wins gave many people livelihood opportunities they wouldn't have been able to get any other way.
7. **Agricultural innovation:** In the past people said nothing could grow in Chipursan. Now the community plants many kinds of vegetables as alternative cash crops. As well we now have new strains of livestock. Five years ago throughout upper Hunza, we only produced potatoes. Now we grow a lot of other things such as different strains of wheat, garlic, peas, lentils and various types of fodder for our livestock. We're also using different agricultural techniques that are increasing our production. Some people have gotten into value added production of apple and apricot products like juices and jams, at least for our own use, and we are working towards

developing commercial capability.

8. **A special emphasis on fruit production:** Complementing the work that Himat is doing, JAICA (Japanese aid) is working with our fruit farmers on a special project to improve production, link to international markets and create value-added products. For the first time ever in 2015, a large portion of the apples that we grow were picked up and sent to market. This combination of opportunities is creating hope.
9. **Household-level impacts:** There has been a marked improvement in household-level income since Himat help us increase our awareness about crop options. We now have a nursery and we grow plants that our short growing season wouldn't allow us to grow before. Our kitchen gardens have significantly improved from the introduction of new seeds and gardening methods. At the household level we see that people have many more chickens, goats, sheep etc., and our use of dairy products has increased.
10. **Food security:** As a result of all of this activity, food security has increased. We are now much more aware than before that good nutrition is important for children in child development.
11. **Savings and access to credit:** Our savings and loans programs have not only been revitalized, but we have grown them into larger cooperative financial institutions. Before we had no way of getting business loans. Now we can loan to each other for smaller loans through our savings and loans programs, and we are finding ways of financing bigger projects because we have accumulated capital.
12. **The role of wage labour:** Construction on the highways and other laboring jobs are bringing more money into the communities, and this money is circulating many times through our small businesses before it goes out again. This is new. The Attabad disaster created opportunities such as loading and unloading at the boat landings and working on the roads and bridges. The Chinese used us like donkeys, but we have gotten money that has benefited our communities.

Himat Team Observations

1. **Himat had to learn its way into being effective in this sector:** We waited for more than two years from the start up of the program to become fully engaged in business development. This is because we kept trying to find a business "expert" to come in and lead the sector. Finally, we realized that we needed to do what we are asking the communities to do, which is to do it ourselves. We pooled our collective knowledge, research, and best practice innovations around the world and then took the plunge. We haven't looked back since, and the results speak for themselves. We are now doing the same thing in the agriculture sector. Essentially, what is needed is not technical experts; it's education and training, and that we can deliver.
2. **Stimulating livelihood improvements requires resources:** Progress in the livelihood and agriculture sectors has been constrained by lack of resources. We are actually a tiny project compared to other international NGOs working in the area, but we have had outstanding success because we focused on mobilizing people and building their capacity. They did all the rest. While we have made some preliminary efforts to find additional resources to augment our activities in these areas, we now need to make a concerted effort to expand this work.

A Case Study in Livelihood Enhancement *From Crisis to Opportunity in Small Farm Production*

Dawar Khan is a young farmer who lives in the tiny village of Sher-e-Sabz in the Chipursan Valley, at the remote point where Pakistan meets Afghanistan, Tajikistan and China on its far northern border.

In this high mountain community, people have been farming potatoes and wheat for decades at 10-11 thousand feet. Dawar Khan owns a jeep, but his income as a driver is not sufficient to meet his expenses, because he is supporting many family members to get more education and to cover their health costs.

The January 2010, Attabad landslide disaster permanently flooded out a 35-kilometer stretch of the Karakorum Highway (KKH), completely cutting off the upper Gojal area (including Chipursan) from direct road access to markets. Now it costs three times more to produce potatoes than they can be sold for down country, because of the huge increase in the costs of transportation and a doubling of input costs (seeds, fertilizer, fuel, etc.).



And there is another problem. Much of the arable land in the Chipursan Valley has become increasingly unproductive over the years from continuous mono cropping of potatoes, and the use of increasing amounts of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. It's like an addiction. Every year farmers needed more chemicals to produce the same, or even fewer results.

When Himat introduced pulses (lentils, peas, beans) as an alternative crop with the potential both to replenish exhausted soil and to produce food crops that would help to fill the growing food gap, Dawar Khan decided to cultivate Dal Masoor (a kind of lentil). He chose Dal Masoor because it is known to grow well on lands that are relatively low in fertility and it doesn't require chemical fertilizers. After consultation with his family he bought 25 kg of Dal Masoor to cultivate seven canal of land (just under one acre), which is half of his family's entire land holdings. That same amount of land was capable of producing two 50 kg bags of wheat worth about 2,000 RS (about \$20) in the market.

This is what Dawar reported to Himat field staff at the end of the growing season. "I paid 149 PKR/kg for the Dal Masoor seeds (25 kg @149 PKR/kg = 3,725 PKR or about US\$ 40). We were able to produce 350 kg of Dal Masoor. We kept back 20 kg for my family and 25 kg as seeds for next year's crop. That left 305 kg to sell in the market, for a value of 38,235 PKR." After I covered production costs of my seeds, transportation and labour, I was still left with 32,210 PKR or about US\$ 350.

This is a major amount of money for a small-hold farm in northern Pakistan where they typically earn less than \$700/year in good times. In Gojal, in the middle of a dreadful disaster that is causing a great deal of misery in many households, Dawar's story is a bright point of light.

Dawar believes he can double his income next year, and says he is eager to motivate and involve his friends and relatives in this new line of agricultural production, so that more families can benefit.

C. Institutional Strengthening

Institutions are the organized focal point through which community aspirations and will can be expressed, pursued systematically, and consolidated over time. LSOs, VOs and WOs constitute a powerful network of mechanisms through which communities can make plans, marshal resources, mobilize and coordinate the energy and creativity of community members, and weave a wide diversity of efforts into a coherent development process that leads to real and measurable improvements in the lives of the people. This area of work focuses on strengthening the capacity of local Village Organizations (VOs), Women's Organizations (WOs) and Local Support Organizations (LSOs) to guide and support social and economic development processes that are led and managed democratically from the grassroots by the people whose development is being promoted. These local and area development councils are civil society organizations, registered as such with the government. The province of Gilgit-Baltistan, where the Hunza region is located, is part of the "disputed territories" in the long-standing struggle between India and Pakistan. One outcome of this reality is that there is almost no local government presence in terms of funding or actual on-the-ground services and leadership for development. Hence, this vacuum has had to be filled by civil society. The strength and functionality of civil development institutions in such a region becomes hugely important to the kind of development progress that can be made.



Community member casting her ballot at an LSO AGM



An LSO treasurer receiving book-keeping training

When the Himat Program began working in 2011, fully two thirds of the development institutions in the region were either poorly functioning or not functioning at all, according to community leaders. Long-standing conflicts within and between communities were paralyzing sporadic efforts to create collaboration. There had been no capacity building or training for nearly a decade. According to community leaders, there was a marked leadership gap in terms of a practical understanding of what development is, of how to advocate to government and other key development actors concerning the needs of the communities, and a poor understanding of the critical role development institutions need to play in the development process. There were no development plans of any sort in place at the village or LSO levels that had been generated from the grassroots. In the majority of communities, savings and loans programs had collapsed for lack of trust in the trustees of the programs. Most people said that they felt alienated and mistrustful of their own development institutions. There was almost no community mobilization focused on development improvement. Most institutions had not renewed their leadership in many years. In some cases, more than a decade had elapsed and still the same leadership (often doing very little to nothing) was in place. Initial efforts to engage and revitalize these institutions were resisted or ignored.

Himat institutional strengthening work consists of a combination of the following strategies: a) leadership development; b) governance training; c) technical assistance and mentoring; d) financial auditing; e) financial management training; f) grassroots training, mobilization and engagement in collaboration with local and area institutions; g) comprehensive development planning; h) creating regional platforms for inter-institutional collaboration; and i) supporting the creation of linkages with key government officials and departments.

What the people said about Himat's Institutional Strengthening work (highlights)

The following observations were compiled from a participatory evaluation session conducted with community institutional leaders and social activists.

1. **Building a foundation of understanding about the concepts and processes that guide effective development:** Himat contributed enormously to help our grassroots people understand what real development is and how community members can become the authors of their own development.
2. **Strengthening confidence and trust on the part of community members in their development institutions:** Before, most of our community members didn't understand or identify with our development institutions. Now everyone appreciates what we are doing, and people believe in their institutions. Trust in all of our institutions has significantly increased because of the audits and also because of better leadership.
3. **Community mobilization and voice:** A much higher percentage of our community has been mobilized and is engaged in more development activities than ever before. Community consultation is much better. Everyone has a voice now. Many more opportunities have been created for women and youth to participate in the development process because of stronger VOs and WOs, as well as because of the work of the new LSO, which didn't exist before Himat helped us to set it up and get it going.
4. **Financial transparency and accountability:** Before Himat we had low or no transparency and financial accountability. Financial auditing has now become the norm for all of our institutions. This was not happening before. Now 100% of our development institutions are audited every year. Roughly 80% of our businesses are

also now being audited regularly.

5. **Participation of women and youth in leadership positions:** More young people are involved in leadership positions than ever before. In the past, youth and young adults had no interest in participating in development activities. Now almost all youth want to be involved and to be part of our development organizations. Right now 35% of our Board of Directors is women. It should be 50%.
6. **Strengthening basic organizational capacities:** Because of Himat training and support, all of our organizations are much more functional. As we polish something, the shine comes out. Himat helped us to learn how best to use human resources as they became trained, how to better manage our money, and how to follow our terms of reference and guidelines.
7. **Regional unity and collaboration:** Before, we never saw representatives from other communities come to our area to consult about regional matters. Because of the increase in our institutional strength, have much higher levels of unity, trust and cooperation among us. We learned that between all of our villages, we have a lot in common in terms of development needs. By integrating all of our local plans into a valley-wide plan, it made a lot of sense to us that we should work together, help each other integrate much of our development work into a single plan rather than competing with one another. Now we all work together and cooperate across our region. We now have a regional platform (GOLSON). We never had this before and it's a huge step forward for us both for sharing ideas and for supporting one another as we reach out to government and other entities.
8. **Increased financial sustainability:** When we started working with Himat five years ago, we had almost no savings and no way of sustaining our institutions into the future. Now we have our own Cooperative Savings and Loan Association, millions of rupees in savings and a substantial Sustainability Fund to support the work of the LSO into the future.
9. **Still work to be done:** There are still about 15% of our local organizations (mostly VOs that are run by men) that are not functioning well, and we still need help with these.

External Evaluation

An external evaluation of 30 LSOs across Gilgit-Baltistan was conducted by the Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (PCP), to assess the strength and capacity of these institutions to lead and manage development activities in their area. The LSO assessment tool utilized by PCP was developed in consultation with the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) and the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP). It included such categories for assessment as: a) democratic governance, b) management capacity, c) networking and volunteerism, and d) effectiveness and impact. In April 2015, teams of evaluators visited each LSO area and spoke at length with directors as well as with grassroots community members. Three LSO areas that Himat has been working with were included in the field of 30 districts that were evaluated.

Two LSOs that Himat has been working with for about four years (Chipursan Local Support Organization and Gojal Rural Support Organization) received an "A" rating, and tied for first place with the highest score received across the entire field. One of these (Chipursan) only started operating about five years ago with Himat facilitation and support, and is one of the most remote and disadvantaged LSO areas in the region.

Many of the other LSOs evaluated in the PCP study have been receiving technical support and/or funding from large international NGOs for at least a decade. A third LSO that Himat has only been working with for about a year was also included in the study, and received a “C” rating.

The Himat Team has decided to utilize the evaluation tool (probably modified to more strongly reflect requirements for development leadership) to guide our ongoing institutional strengthening work. Our strong intention is that each and every LSO will qualify for an “A” rating, and that our highest-ranking communities will be able to give guidance, encouragement and support to the others about how to strengthen their institutions.

Himat Team Observations

1. **Human resource development (i.e. training and coaching) is fundamental to institutional strengthening.** Those institutions in which the majority of leaders and grassroots people have taken the full spectrum of Himat training courses related to such topics as: a) foundations of development, b) development leadership, c) participatory development planning, d) governance for development, e) community economic development, and f) conflict transformation have the best chance for excellence in institutional functioning. Because institutional strengthening has been linked with capacity building, there is a measurable increase in available human resources in the region capable of running development institutions.
2. **Institutional strengthening takes time.** The strongest institutions among those we work with are those we have worked with the longest (or, in the words of a former Himat Team Leader, “If you want long-term results, you have to go long”).
3. **The areas that have received the most concentrated attention have seen the most progress.** In the three LSO areas of upper Hunza where Himat has been working since 2011, roughly 90% of Village Organizations and Women’s Organizations are functioning and making significant progress. Much work is still needed in central and southern Hunza, where less than half of local organizations are strong.
4. **Institutional strengthening needs to occur at all levels.** We have been fairly effective in working with LSOs, but less so with VOs and WOs. We understand that strengthening these institutions is really the responsibility of the LSO, but saying so doesn’t mean it’s going to happen. We need to focus on accompanying LSO leaders in the work of strengthening the foundations of their local institutions. Clearly, regular audits have contributed significantly to improvement in local institutional functioning, but there is still a significant number of VOs and WOs that are not keeping good records, that are not meeting as regularly as they should, that are not effectively engaging community members in development work, that are not mobilizing savings for development, etc. Even though LSOs may be very well functioning, VOs and WOs are the foundation institutions of local development, and they need to be fully engaged and their human resources fully developed. This is the next frontier for our institutional development, along with strengthening institutions in central and southern Hunza.
5. **Building regional collaboration:** The regular interactions of LSO representatives during the development forums trainings have not only supported them to strengthen their LSOs, but also enabled them to form their own LSO network in upper Hunza that is soon to be expanded to the entire Hunza Region.

6. **Institutional financial sustainability:** A significant proportion of LSOs in our program region have created endowment funds for their financial sustainability as well as constructed their own office buildings.
7. **Building resilience for coping with natural disasters:** After the disastrous monsoons and flash flooding during the summer of 2015, LSOs in areas most severely impacted demonstrated extraordinary leadership and resilience in responding to the disaster and in helping their communities to recover. This type of leadership was simply not available after the 2010 Attabad disaster, which is another indicator of the positive impact of Himat institutional strengthening efforts.
8. **Savings and loans programs at the village and cluster levels:** We observed that in 2010 there were very few savings and loans programs functioning at any level in our project areas. Now we see more than 100 types of those programs operating at the VO, WO, and LSO levels in some communities, and a significant proportion of savings has been made available for small loans to stimulate business or to backstop emergencies. But, in many other communities, local institutions are still reluctant to loan to their members for several reasons. The first is a hangover from several decades of bad management and the complete collapse of many savings and loans programs a decade ago. Now the programs have been restarted and savings have been rising steadily for the past several years. The second reason local institutions are reluctant to loan to the members is because they simply lack the capacity and the tools to manage a loans program.

Several LSO areas have started a cluster level Cooperative Savings and Loans Association. These institutions are accumulating capital and loaning to members, but still face the challenge that millions of rupees of savings are trapped at the VO and WO levels. If all, or a significant proportion of these savings could be pooled, an enormous reservoir of development capital could be made available to all the communities in the region. Clearly, there is a role for Himat in assisting the institutions in control of all of these funds to acquire the knowledge, skills and tools they need. However, another barrier that exists, primarily at the VO and WO level in certain LSO areas, is that these local institutions have still not submitted to a discipline of regular annual audits, which are needed to ensure transparency and accountability and to increase user confidence in the systems. Himat has been able to help all LSOs in this regard, but there are still some clusters in which very few audits have been completed at the village level. This is clearly an important next step to be taken.

Another problem of considerable significance relates to how all this trapped capital is now being held. Many local and cluster institutions are putting their money into commercial banks. These institutions offer very low interest rates for savings accounts and charge very high rates (20% or more) even for micro loans. As stated above, several LSOs have started Cooperative Savings and Credit institutions (mini banks) and are able to offer better interest rates and more available loans than their commercial counterparts. As well, the profits (i.e., accumulated interest and/or service fees) will automatically be reinvested back into community development. The challenge is to convince local institutions across the region to take their money out of the commercial banks and put them into cooperative savings and loans programs that they themselves will be able to control. As it stands, millions of rupees remain trapped in commercial bank accounts, which continues to benefit the owners/shareholders of those banks, as they now hold the capital and are able to use it for very profitable investment. As a consequence, this money, which really

belongs to grassroots people, cannot be used for their development.

This entire issue of further developing the savings and loans programs into a community banking system that truly serves the development needs of the region represents one of the primary institutional development challenges to be addressed in the months and years to come.

9. **The creation of a regional umbrella agency:** As a result of the frequent interactions of community leaders and grassroots people from every community in upper Hunza, an environment of interaction, cohesion and cooperation was created for the first time among the people. This created a solid foundation for the communities to create a regional umbrella organization (GOLSON), which now provides a platform for regional cooperation and collaboration on common issues. This never existed before, and work is now underway to extend this network to include all the LSOs in Hunza. This development has greatly strengthened the capacity of regional development institutions to represent the needs of their communities to government and to external funding and technical assistance agencies and to the world.

A Case Study in Institutional and Community Resilience: *The 2015 Chipursan Flood*

Chipursan is the remotest valley of Gojal in the Hunza District of Gilgit-Baltistan. The valley consists of 11 widely scattered villages with an approximate population of 5,000 souls. The distance between the villages and inadequate communication facilities contributed to a lack of cooperation between villages for their shared development aspirations and made it difficult to mobilize community members in every sphere of communal development or other relevant issues.

This case study describes how this remote valley decreased the distance between hearts and minds and brought the entire population from the valley into one. As early as 2008, the intellectuals, elders and leaders from the Valley realized the need for a communal umbrella organization that would represent the entire valley in its holistic development. Accordingly, the Chipursan Local Support Organization (CLSO) was formed. It now has strong roots in the community and represents all 22 village-level men's and women's organizations from all 11 villages. Since its inception, the CLSO is involved in the socio-economic development of the Valley and has brought significant improvement in the lives of the inhabitants.

The community's capacity to cope with the flash floods in the summer of 2015 illustrates the extent to which the unity and spirit of voluntarism has flourished through the community mobilization efforts of CLSO.

In July and August 2015, Pakistan experienced disastrous floods in its mountainous regions. The Chipursan Valley was one of the affected areas. Flooding damaged its main infrastructure, including the primary road through the Valley, most of the main irrigation channels, and large sections of agriculture and forest land. Fortunately, due to preemptive measures taken by the LSO and volunteers from the village, no single soul was harmed.

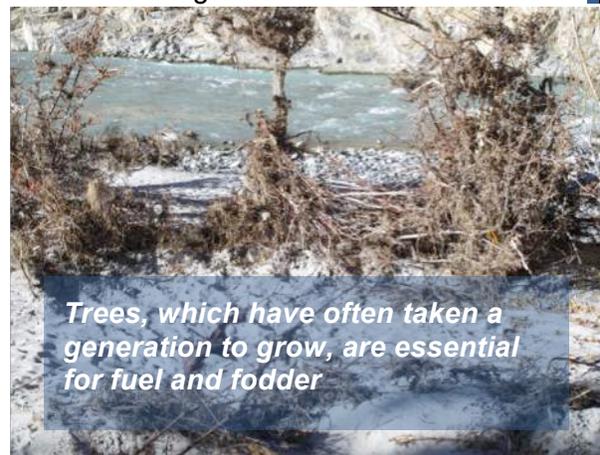
LSO representatives and eye witnesses described the night of August 4th, when the most severe damage occurred as follows. “It was deep dark midnight and it was raining heavily with a loud thunderstorm. It was the time when people were mostly asleep, when all of a sudden, the villagers heard a strong blasting-like sound, and the houses were trembling like in an earthquake. The people living near the riverbank came out of their homes and, in the dim light of lamps, they saw massive flood waters moving toward the village. Villagers rapidly contacted their village volunteers and the LSO Chairman about what was happening. The LSO chairman immediately contacted his directors in each village and the leaders of other community institutions to advise them to immediately take precautionary actions in each village by moving the household members from the riverbank and other flood risk locations to safer areas. Volunteers were mobilized in each village and they remained alert for the rest of the night to cope with any situation. Meanwhile, an emergency team was formed consisting of representatives from the LSO, Ismaili Council and other volunteers, and they received frequent updates from each village. Almost every village was suffering damage. In one village, the river backed up for about 1 hour, and then the water burst the banks and inundated the village. Villagers from higher ground opened their houses to their fellow villagers whose homes were threatened and women volunteers served tea to the household members who had to flee their homes, and also to the volunteers out in the night responding to each new threat.”

Early in the morning, the emergency team visited each village to assess the damages



and also encourage the volunteers and villagers for their exceptional services. The emergency team developed a detailed report on the overall situation and immediately sent a delegation to the government and private agencies in the region to report the damages. The delegation struggled valiantly to take the community's request for assistance in the reconstruction of the damage in the Valley to different organizations and

departments. As well as visiting government departments and development agencies, the delegation team also used social and print media to inform the public and the authorities about the situation in Chipursan. At the same time, village volunteers immediately began themselves to do what they could to repair their irrigation channels and repair the only jeep-able road.



What is also truly remarkable is that villagers also reached out to their neighbours to ensure that their immediate needs would be met. Some farmers offered those who had lost their crops and their agricultural land some of the yield of their own cultivated lands, others offered their forests for fodder for the cattle and volunteers ensured that every affected household could meet their emergency food needs.

Soon after the visit of the delegation, some external supports began helping the Valley repair damaged roads and bridges and some parts of the irrigation channels. There is still a great deal more to do to rebuild irrigation channels that can withstand natural disasters, preventing further erosion in many parts of the villages and preventing more destruction in future.

Conclusion:

As this story illustrates, the dedicated work that the people of the Chipursan Valley have undertaken to strengthen their development institutions has contributed to significant development outcomes.

- The community succeeded in establishing an umbrella organization that is owned and accepted by all community members.
- This organization (CLSO) has come to truly represent the community in its development journey and has become effective and efficient in tackling development-related challenges.
- The governing and management capacities of the leaders have improved enough to communicate with the external agencies more professional and effective approach.
- An indigenous philanthropic spirit is growing and is committed to supporting each other in the community in any difficult time.
- Volunteerism has strengthened and the community has a strong realization of its own development aspirations, capacities, strengths and assets.

Case story by Ashraf Karim, Himat Team Leader

D. Comprehensive Community Planning

Comprehensive community planning is a process of engaging grassroots community members to analyze their situation; identify needs and opportunities; search for and find pathways to a more sustainable, healthy and prosperous life; anticipate the learning and capacity development that will be required on the way; and develop a blueprint for the construction of the future that is desired. Such planning anticipates that all community members are important development actors who will need to work together to bring the changes that are desired. The planning documents that result from a process of institutional and community engagement clearly identify the roles that various actors must play, ranging from staging, managing and coordinating collective efforts, supporting individual and small group initiatives, as well as utilizing community-generated indicators to measure progress and refine strategies as the work progresses.

The whole point of including community planning as a key strategy within the Himat program is that communities themselves need a framework of action that identifies collectively agreed-upon goals, spells out a theory of change that can be tested and refined, and provides a basis for managing and evaluating the process as it progresses.

Without such a framework, unified action and sustained effort over time toward addressing collective needs is very difficult to achieve. Instead of systematic and coordinated effort over time, what most often happens in the absence of a plan is that communities follow the whims and inclinations of individuals in leadership positions, or simply respond to the initiatives brought to them by outside agencies, who more often than not deliver programs and benefits that were conceptualized in offices far away from the community and, which, when finished, rarely leave behind any capacity for sustainable outcomes.

The Himat Comprehensive Community Planning process involves the following steps and stages.

1. **Preparation:** This requires consultation between LSO leaders and the Himat Team about the nature and purpose of participatory planning, about the already existing initiatives the LSO is engaged with and how these can be included and built upon, about identifying the natural leaders at the cluster and community level that can become part of a planning team of facilitators who will work alongside the Himat Team, and about the logistics of organizing various steps and stages of the planning process, including clearly mapping out who is responsible for what parts of the work and the costs. For example, when community representatives gather together for a full day workshop, it is the LSO itself that needs to cover the cost of transportation and of the meals and refreshments required.
2. **The Community Story** – Community representatives from all the villages in a cluster, including elders, youth and a significant complement of women, work in small groups and in plenary sessions to describe what is happening now in the life of the community for children, youth, women, men and elders and in the political, economic, environmental, administrative, social, as well as cultural and spiritual dimensions of life. People talk about what life was like in the past, how things have changed to create the present, and what the future would look like when things are really good. This participatory action research study produces a fairly extensive report that is then fed back to the community for verification. Once completed, this report serves as a baseline study, a needs assessment and as the foundation for comprehensive planning. Such reports are often 50 to 75 pages long, but divided into convenient sections that can be utilized for targeted purposes.
3. **Village level planning** – Each of the villages in a cluster is supported in the process of setting development priorities and making plans particularly tailored to the needs of that village. Separate village plan documents are prepared, verified and refined.
4. **LSO level planning** - An LSO-level comprehensive plan is developed in consultation with LSO members that takes into careful consideration the contents of the village level plans, but also addresses important areas for collective collaboration across the cluster. Such a plan is organized into chapters such as: a) prosperity development, b) natural resource management, c) lifelong learning, d) social development, e) community management, f) political development, g) youth development, h) women's development, i) cultural and spiritual development, etc. A plan like this is designed with a ten-year horizon. It is not a recipe book for detailed action, but rather a framework to guide quarterly and annual work plans for all those who are working on development implementation.
5. **Implementation** - The implementation stage is, of course, the most important part. Once the Comprehensive Community Plan (CCP) has been verified by the community and finalized by the LSO, it then becomes a working document from

which an annual action plan and quarterly implementation strategies are developed. The CCP is not written in stone. It is a living document. As implementation begins and continues, the community will learn whether or not the strategies they have devised are actually carrying them to where they want to go. Constant revision and continuous improvement are fundamental in this approach to planning. At least once in every year the community needs to gather to reflect on the actions being carried out in light of the plan, and then decide whether to revise the strategies they are using or to update the plan itself to keep abreast of constantly changing circumstances. Learning how to guide and shepherd such a process is a fundamental challenge for the LSO that can require fairly constant technical support as they learn how best to stimulate and support action groups within the community.



Participants of the 1st Himat comprehensive community planning activity in the Chipursan Valley in 2009

What the people said about Himat's Community Planning work (highlights)

The following observations were compiled from a participatory evaluation session conducted with community institutional leaders and social activists.

1. **Fostering regional cooperation:** We used to be quite separate between our villages. We almost never worked together, and in fact we are often in competition with each other. Sometimes you had conflict over how land should be used or who had the right to use it. Making a valley-wide plan across all of our villages has helped us to see that we have much in common and that cooperation is better than separation.
2. **Mobilizing youth and giving them a voice:** The youth from all of our communities can

see that the future is in cooperation between us all. Inviting everyone to help to make a development plan has given many youth a chance to have a voice in something that matters for the first time in their lives and now there will be no turning back. Now these youth are eager to participate in development activities and to give their views in development forums.

3. **Democratization:** Planning has given everyone a voice.
4. **Strengthening and linking development institutions at all levels:** Our 10-year plan is an important step for us. Now all of our VOs and WOs are more solidly connected to the LSO, and the LSO is committed to helping local communities to accomplish their goals. Everyone will need to learn to adapt to this more coordinated approach, because mostly we have worked on our own in the past.
5. **Planning will not work without building human resources:** In the past, there would have been little use in making comprehensive plans at the LSO level because we didn't have the human resources who could do all the work needed to carry out the plans. Now we have lots of human resources trained that can be engaged in implementing the CCP.
6. **Social and economic development must go hand-in-hand:** We tended to think of only the economic infrastructure parts of development. By making our CCP we see that people are the most important part and that social and economic development are very connected to each other. If people are not healthy or unified—if they can't or won't work together—then you can't get economic progress and it's really hard to cooperate for anything important.
7. **A CCP is a tool for negotiating with government and donors:** We use our CCP in negotiating with government departments and in discussions with potential funders. It shows them that we know what were doing and it helps us to make sure that everything that comes into the community fits with what our people really want.

Himat Team Observations

1. **Managing the technical support work is both complex and time-consuming:** It took our team several years to learn how to facilitate an effective CCP process in an LSO area. The write-ups alone at each stage of the work took months to complete. At first we tried to make this the responsibility of one team member, but it soon became clear that this was too much of a burden for any one person. As well, this imbalance was resulting in long delays between stages of work. A reasonably prompt turnaround time between when the community holds its meetings and when the feedback document is returned to them keeps the momentum of the process going and growing as more and more people become interested and engaged. Long delays can cause a drop-off in enthusiasm and a decrease in trust in the process.
2. **Capacity building is an essential prerequisite for effective planning:** We now have had the experience of completing the community story and planning process in northern, central and southern Hunza. The differences in the depth of the process between the various communities is remarkable in terms of the effectiveness of community engagement and the understanding that the LSO and other institutional leaders have of what the process is really for. In communities where a significant core group of individuals have completed basic training modules related to: a) what development is, b) development leadership, and c) participatory planning, the planning process takes on a vitality and relevance that is immediately connected to

action. In fact, in those communities where training has already taken place, the planning process itself is a kind of mobilization that results in the channeling of human resources for development purposes. This leads us to conclude that in future it will be best to insist that a core group of people within a cluster complete at least the first three modules of the *Himat Indigenous Leadership Training Program* before we begin the comprehensive community planning process.

3. **Successful planning requires mentoring support for implementation:** Up until now, we have concentrated most of our attention on making plans, but have given very little attention to supporting plan implementation. We have now learned to schedule a one-year action planning process with the LSO immediately following the completion of the CCP. However, what we have not focused on is building the capacity of the LSO to work with their own communities in achieving the goals of their plan. It may be that we will need especially focused training resources for this purpose, but in the future, Himat Team members will need to walk with LSO leaders wherever a CCP has been completed to help them to learn how to work systematically with all the development actors in their cluster to achieve the goals of the plan. The LSOs will need to become capacity builders within their own clusters, taking on much of the work that Himat did with them a few short years ago. Himat is really a kind of Rural Support Program (RSP). Only when LSOs have become mini-RSPs in their own areas can we say that it's time for Himat to move on to other parts of the country. Working with LSO leaders to build their capacity to become effective training and technical support specialists for their own communities represents a whole new level of challenge and responsibility for the Himat Team, and this challenge needs to be addressed within the framework of comprehensive community plan implementation.
4. **Harmonizing the efforts of all social and economic development agencies:** Supplementary to comprehensive community planning, other groups within communities also need support in making action plans. Eventually, a common role of the LSO needs to be providing facilitative leadership for this work. Separately focused plans may be needed for such areas as co-management of natural resources, financial sector management, small business development, women's development, youth development, community recreation, and many other kinds of social action initiatives. Once these plans have been made, they need to be harmonized with the CCP in consultation with the LSO so that all plans and activities fit under the coordinated umbrella of the CCP.

E. Women's Development

Women's development has not been treated as a separate sector within the Himat project, but rather integrated fully into all the other sectors. For example, from the earliest days of the project, communities were required to send at least 40% women to trainings and development forums. Many quick-win awards were strategically directed to women and women's groups. However, very early on in our work with communities, women collectively approached the team and asked for help in developing their unique capacities for service in the development sector. After consultation with women leaders, it was decided to organize the first-ever upper Hunza regional women's development conference. Since the first conference was held in 2011, we've now held five such annual conferences. In 2015 we began holding conferences in both the north and the south of our project area to accommodate women in central and southern Hunza.

Also in 2015, we have added a dedicated Women's Development Coordinator to the Himat Team. Coming out of the 2015 Women's Conferences, what has emerged are the following needs and priorities.

1. **Strengthening Women's Organizations (WOs) to move beyond being savings and loan associations to becoming an active facilitator of development within the framework of an LSO's Comprehensive Development Plan:** This will mean strengthening the voice of women in their capacity to participate fully in the collective decision-making processes of their village and cluster level institutions. It must also mean that women's unique perspectives as well as talents and skills need to be taken fully into account in development decision-making, planning and implementation. The role of Himat must be to build the capacity of women leaders and women-run institutions to work with the women of their area towards these goals. At the foundation of this work are the training and mobilization courses of the Himat Development Leadership Training Program.
2. **Developing a Regional Women's Development Network Organization:** This organization would link together more than 100 Women's Organizations across northern, central and southern Hunza. The purpose and function of this initiative is to create a women-led capacity-building and advocacy institution that can focus on strengthening the foundations of women's development in every community and can, as well, participate eloquently and effectively in development-related decision-making at every level and in advocacy to government on issues of concern to women.



Top left: women creating carpets with local, undyed wool

Middle: women consulting about food security at the first of 5 annual women's conferences in upper Hunza

Bottom left: women's small business arising from a quick-win seed grant for people displaced by the Attabad landslide living in the Aliabad IDP camp

Emerging Sector

Other than describing in broad-brush strokes the work that has already been done related to women's development, we have not attempted to evaluate this important area as a separate sector because it has not had enough developmental time to emerge as a distinct sector of Himat's work. This certainly does not mean that we have ignored women's development. On the contrary, the majority of trained activists and entrepreneurs across all the communities where Himat has been working are women. Nevertheless, participants in the evaluation process spoke clearly about some of the impacts the Himat Project has had on women (and please note that many of the evaluation participants were women).

What the people said about Himat's Women's Development work. (Highlights)

The following observations were compiled from a participatory evaluation session conducted with community institutional leaders and social activists.

1. **The mobilization of women for social and economic development:** The Himat training requires that we send a high proportion of women. This opened the door for women to become involved in the development process and to be active in our local institutions. Now, a much higher percentage of grassroots women are involved and engaged in some kind of development activities. Many of these are women who never before had a voice, but are now finding their voices through Himat training courses, development forums, and through increased democratic opportunities for everyone to participate within our civil society institutions. Many women are getting involved development activities and in small businesses such as Ladies Shops and other enterprises at the village level.
2. **Changing gender roles:** Prior to the Himat project, women were almost universally tied to household duties and agriculture. Now many of our women are working alongside their life partners as business partners. This represents a big change in roles. In the past women had their work and men had theirs. We're now learning how to more effectively work together.
3. **Women entrepreneurship:** Some women have grown their businesses to such a degree that they are buying and selling outside the village and linking with other businesses across the valley.
4. **Stronger women's organizations:** Because of Himat training, many of our Women's Organizations are much more functional than they were. Before, we had little or no transparency and accountability. Now we have both because of regular audits and training.
5. **Women's voice in development institutions at the cluster level:** Right now 35% of our board of directors is women. It should be 50%.

Himat Team Observations

1. **Investing in women's development brings results:** Our previous investments in women's development have brought huge dividends to the region. Concentration of quick-win grants to women recipients resulted in the creation of a large number of women-led businesses, not only run by women who had received the seed grant, but also started up by other women in villages across the region. Similarly, in the training sector, many women arose to serve as volunteer tutors and coordinators, and their work has been hugely instrumental in reaching thousands of people with

Himat training courses.

2. **Building the capacity of women's organizations to unleash the potential of women for contributing to development processes:** The next step in women's development is to build the capacity of women-led institutions to reach down into the grassroots of every village in our region in order to release the tremendous potential that is trapped in old ways of thinking and doing things that have left women confined and underutilized in the development process.
3. **Focusing Himat strategies specifically on women:** We have already seen that the training and mobilization strategies we have utilized across many villages and LSO areas have worked very effectively to engage and mobilize men, women and youth for active participation in development activities. While we must always be alert and vigilant in order to meet the unique learning and support needs of every sector of the population, we can have confidence that what we have already been doing is working, and that we simply need to focus these already proven strategies on women and women's organizations in order to achieve a great deal of progress.
4. **Women's Advisory Council:** Nevertheless, to be consistent with our philosophy that says "development comes from within", it will be very important that our work in the women's development sector is guided and led by grassroots women leaders. In order to achieve this, we will need to set up some kind of Himat Women's Development Advisory Circle with representatives from across the region until such time as a fully fledged Regional Women's Development Council emerges and is able to step into this role.

A Case Study in Livelihood Improvement *Journey from housewife to entrepreneur*

The start-up

Seven members of a women's group are fully engaged in a business activity in a small ladies shop. Each day they are happier than before to see their gradual progress from a small seed grant to a small enterprise. They are enjoying the joint venture of entrepreneurship. The ladies shop does not only benefit these members economically, it is also a kind of social service

providing a facility for the women folk of the village to buy their basic necessities. Before starting this business they were housewives only, serving their own families. Now they are feeling pride and are confidently generating additional income for their families to have a better life.



These individuals were mobilized toward economic development after they participated the Himat study and action circle course on community economic and business development (Book Four of the Indigenous Leadership Development Program). As this group of women generated ideas for what they could do, most of them wanted to do something to improve their livelihood, but there was no platform for taking initiative. Hesitation, social hindrances, shyness and lack of confidence were the major obstacles. The quick-win project of Himat-KADO provided a wonderful opportunity to form a group of like-minded women.

Through the quick-win review and approval process, this group was selected and granted only 10,000 PKR for seed money (only 75% or 7,500 PKR was provided at start-up and the rest after the group had proved its commitment). This amount was insufficient for any start-up, but a very strong means for uniting the group members to form a great team and establish a joint enterprise to fulfill their goals.

It was very difficult to open this business after getting a small amount as a Himat quick-win project. For help with planning and executing this project, they conducted several meetings with Himat coordinators. They realized that they would need to find additional financial and technical support to begin and operate this business successfully. After many sessions, they decided to each contribute 10,000 PKR from their own resources to augment the seed money. They faced difficulties at their household level to convince their family members to contribute funds for their share, but frequent interactions and meetings made it possible. The third obstacle was the infrastructure, procurement and record keeping. During the initial stages, they came up with the solutions after finding several skills within their families, and also requesting technical support from some volunteers related to keeping the financial records and purchasing goods from down country. (For example, a local businessman is helping the group purchase goods while he is visiting down country and China. By courier, he sends the required supplies to the shop. He is also providing soft loans in cash and kind. A local head teacher helps the group maintain its financial records, secure a loan from their V/WOs, set a price for products and market the business. He has even provided his shop (wooden cabin) for running the ladies shop.)

This shop is benefiting more than 350 women (50% of the village population) by giving them a venue for buying their basic needs. This segment (women and their household needs) was always previously ignored in the business sector. Previously, they had to travel to Aliabad or the Tehsil headquarter to get minor necessities. It is for this reason that the group came up with the idea to establish a ladies shop in the village.

The gradual growth of their sales ensured a profitable business and increased the interest of group members to expand this business to the next level. They added more goods like garments, cosmetics and stationary and started buying goods from China and Lahore to get better quality marketable items. This activity is not only benefiting the members economically and socially, but is also improving their personal skills in financial management, purchasing and selling goods, record keeping and pricing on goods, etc. These skills are also very useful in their household management.



The future plan of this group is to double their shares and invest more money after the completion of their annual financial audit.

Group members are very happy and cooperate with each other; they are utilizing maximum time in productive activities, and they feel this activity has broadened their minds and also changed their ways of thinking and life.

The project is an example for other people as well. Many individuals are starting their own businesses after seeing their progress. Sometimes this group fears that, after getting experience, many of its members may start their own activities. In this case, the partnership may be at risk.

Case study by Didar Ali, Himat Capacity Building Coordinator

F. Reaching the Ultra-Poor

Reaching the ultra-poor began as a special initiative of the Himat program in 2013. It emerged out of a recognition that while there had been a very significant groundswell of grassroots mobilization that has taken place in communities that have been collaborating with the Himat program for more than three years (enough time to reach a critical mass of trained human resources, to gain institutional strength and to achieve some success in community economic development and social change initiatives), a major piece of the puzzle in terms of poverty alleviation remained beyond our reach.

The ultra-poor are notoriously the hardest to reach among a generally poor population. These are individuals and families that cannot survive without some kind of charity, who typically suffer from high food insecurity, poor or no access to healthcare, illiteracy or very low education levels, general deprivation within the family, and significant marginalization within their own communities. These are the invisible poor who are so absorbed in the daily struggle to survive that they almost never even consider participating in community training events or other development activities. In turn, they are forgotten by most of the more successful people in their communities.

What this means is that multi-pronged strategies like the Himat initiative never reach them and they go on, month after month, year after year, generation after generation trapped in deprivation. Usually that deprivation is multidimensional. Certainly, it involves an acute shortage of assets (land, tools, capital, etc.), very low social capital (i.e., social connections and support), low levels of literacy and basic education, poor basic health and often severe health-related handicaps (sometimes stemming from injuries or congenital problems), and crushingly low self-esteem accompanied by severe feelings of unworthiness, often reinforced by the attitudes and prejudices of those around them.

It took the Himat team most of 2013 and 2014 to come to grips with the true nature and extent of the ultra-poor challenge in the communities with which we work (nine LSO areas). While numbers differ from community to community, many areas reported that as much as 10% of their populations is ultra-poor, and that many of these people were not being effectively reached by any programs—government, religious or developmental. The Himat team decided to launch a special initiative directed at reaching the ultra-poor and helping them to make the journey out of the poverty trap.

The Emerging Model

A review of global best practices related to helping the ultra-poor served as a basis for developing a made-in-Hunza approach to the problem of working with the ultra-poor.

The following steps and elements were identified as a strategic map to be tested in a pilot initiative: a) identifying the ultra-poor, c) recruiting participants and doing an initial needs assessment, c) preparing a "Life-Path Journey plan and providing initial training and orientation, d) providing ongoing mentoring support, e) supplying targeted asset transfers, f) forming solidarity groups, g) supporting learning goals, h) building social-support systems and social capital connections, i) providing livelihood seed grants, j) accessing microcredit and k) graduating to sustainable wellbeing.

While we learned from some of the best programs in the world such as BRAC in Bangladesh and Fonkoze in Haiti, we saw that how these and many other programs like them operated was to establish an assets transfer fund, a micro-lending fund, and hire a core team of trainers and outreach workers. We had none of these, and even if we were able to get a grant from a generous donor to test our model, the resulting initiative would be very short-term and not sustainable. We learned that local religious institutions have been providing charity to some of these families, sometimes for generations, and were, in fact, experiencing considerable frustration because the families remain poor generation after generation. They asked Himat for help in devising a program that they could implement and that would bring different results. This is when we realized what needed to happen. We needed to find a way to get poor communities to take care of the poor in their midst. Our insight: The "poor" are able to help the "ultra poor".

What is unique and different about the Himat approach to working with the ultra-poor and any other approach we are able to find around the world is that our goal is to build the capacity of relatively poor communities and their institutions to work with their own ultra-poor, to help their own ultra-poor make the journey out of the poverty trap and into sustainable wellbeing and relative prosperity. This implies that the work has two simultaneous dimensions. First, working with ultra poor families to support and assist them as they make the journey. Second, working with local and area institutions and a core of volunteers to systematically prepare them to work effectively with the ultra-poor in their midst.

Steps already taken

1. **Identifying pilot sites:** Three LSO areas agreed to participate in a pilot project. Seven families from each area were selected through a consultation process involving LSO leaders, religious leaders and key community informants.
2. **Recruiting participants:** Selected families were visited and asked if they were willing to participate in a shared journey out of poverty, one in which they would have to do a lot of hard work, but during which they would be accompanied and supported by many others. Most of those who were approached accepted the challenge.
3. **Developing a baseline and needs assessment:** Written profiles of each family's circumstances and history were developed in consultation with the families and a small core group consisting of representatives from collaborating institutions, including Himat.
4. **Initial training sessions:** The first in a new series of training courses especially designed to meet the learning needs of the ultra-poor was developed. This course focuses on awakening hope, building self-esteem and developing motivation for change. The new series is called *Life Path*. This course was piloted in May 2015 with seven ultra poor families in one LSO area as well as some 60 volunteers who had agreed to become part of the support team for the initiative. This approach was taken so that the ultra-poor could feel part of a larger support community and not

singled out. While this approach could have boomeranged, it didn't. All participants did very well in the course and many new and important human connections were made. Follow-up refresher sessions are now being carried out by volunteers working with each family separately.

5. **Training manual for community volunteers:** Upon the request of community and religious leaders, an 82-page training manual and program guidebook was written for them and for volunteers who would work with them to facilitate the *Life-Path* program. This new course is entitled *Walking Together on the Life Path Journey*. At this writing, the new draft training program is being reviewed, refined and translated for implementation in the spring of 2016 or before.



Participants of the 1st Life-Path training session for ultra-poor households and community volunteers

Himat Team Reflections

1. **Initial pilot going well:** In one of the three pilot areas, intensive work has been going on with families for 9 to 12 months while the rest of the program was being developed. This is because local partner organizations in that community are particularly strong. Out of the seven ultra poor families participating in that pilot, six of them have already experienced significant economic improvement in their lives through involvement in livelihood activities.
2. **Participant selection:** In another of the pilot areas, leaders selected families that

were almost universally burdened with irreversible cognitive handicaps that would prevent them from making any sustainable economic progress outside a sheltered workshop situation. Team members then realized that our program assumes that an individual has the capacity to learn and grow and eventually to participate in sustainable livelihood activities. These people clearly did not have those capacities. They need a different kind of program. Team members then went back to consult with the community working group to help them to understand what was needed in terms of selection of ultra-poor families with potential to benefit from the program.

3. **Early days:** No attempt has been made to evaluate the impact of this still emerging program. Nevertheless, we are reporting as an important initiative within the full spectrum of Himat activities because *the emergence of this ultra-poor program is itself an impact of the Himat initiative.*

A Case Study of the Progress of a Life Path Group in Hussaini, Gojal

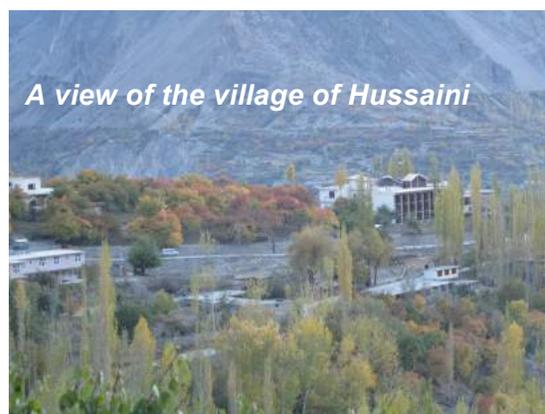
A pilot project of the Life Path Program began in Hussaini with a group of seven women. Before the Program began, these households were considered destitute. They relied on charitable gifts of money and materials (such as food and clothing) from local institutions and some community members just to survive.

After these women were identified as ultra-poor, Himat team members met with them and their family members several times to recruit them for the Life Path Program and to carry out an initial needs assessment. The next step was to help each woman prepare her own life path journey plan (which described her needs and aspirations in the form of a plan for moving forward).

At the same time, a Life Path Solidarity Team, consisting of religious, political and social leaders, as well as representatives of HOLD (the Village umbrella development organization), was formed and made a commitment to working with the ultra-poor as they take their journey out of poverty, dependency and hopelessness to greater self-reliance and wellbeing. This Team began actively supporting the ultra-poor households both morally and socially.

As a result of this initiative, the Life Path Program participants have begun actively participating in the community social gatherings, and are demonstrating a spirit of willingness to work actively toward enhancing their skills with the aim of becoming capable of initiating small businesses. The households' children are being actively encouraged and supported at school and community learning centers. Three older children have secured scholarships from IQRA and NOMUS to continue their education. The Solidarity Team is also searching for possible employment opportunities for household members in both the public and private sectors, and applications have already been submitted in health, environment and education departments.

Most importantly, Life Path participants have now recognized their own capacities, including their capacity to work toward their own development without fear of social constraints and the stigma of poverty.



PART FOUR: ACHIEVEMENTS

This section consists of a summary list of the primary achievements of the Himat Projects over the past approximately five years.

1. **Community mobilization:** A high degree of community mobilization has been achieved in Gojal (northern Hunza) where the project has been working for 3 to 4 years. In these three LSO areas, 100% of households are now engaged in their local VOs, WOs and LSOs. Engagement levels are gradually increasing in central and southern Hunza as training and mobilization activities continue.
2. **Training reach:** More than 10,000 people have taken training as a part of the Himat Indigenous Leadership Training program and other Himat-provided training opportunities. This has been achieved through a tremendous community effort on the part of volunteer coordinators and tutors to reach as many people as possible with training opportunities. In Gojal, roughly 40% of all adults have taken some training.
3. **Small business start ups:** More than 300 new business startups have been generated, some of them directly as a result of Himat training and quick-win seed grants, and many others emerging as community awareness and acceptance of the idea of small business as a viable livelihood option took hold in people's thinking.
4. **Greatly increased savings:** A dramatic resurgence of savings as more than 100 savings and loans programs were revitalized, and also the emergence of two community banks in the form of Cooperative Credit Associations, all of which represents a powerful grassroots response to the refusal of commercial banks to loan to anyone in northern Hunza in the years immediately following the Attabad disaster.
5. **Democratization:** The development of a regional LSO umbrella network organization (GOLSON) has created a powerful platform for inter-community learning and cooperation as well as for collective advocacy to government and other outside entities and helpers. This network is standing squarely on the shoulders of a powerful democratization process at the grassroots in which civil society development organizations have learned to engage the people they serve and represent as partners and collaborators in development planning and implementation. Two solid indicators of this development are the shift to elections (leaders were selected in the past by various means) of the members of boards of directors and the holding of annual AGMs and other development forums through which community members have opportunities to voice their concerns and share their views. At this writing, the concept of an LSO network is being extended to include all of the LSOs in the Hunza region. Similarly, there is a strong movement now afoot to form an association of community savings and loans programs in order to create a much wider pool of capital that can be democratically controlled from the grassroots to benefit communities.
6. **Emerging resilience:** Like much of the mountainous regions of Pakistan, Hunza is very susceptible to natural disasters such as landslides, earthquakes and flash flooding. The institutional strengthening that has taken place in the north has clearly changed the picture of the ability of some communities to respond to natural

disasters. After the Attabad disaster of 2010, LSOs were relatively nonfunctional in their ability to lead emergency relief and recovery processes. By contrast, the monsoons of August 2015 created disastrous flash flooding and mudslides in two LSO areas (Chipursan/CLSO and Sost/GRSO). CLSO was by far the hardest hit. Thanks to excellent emergency response planning and training by FOCUS (the emergency response agency within the Aga Khan family of organizations), combined with the leadership training, institutional strengthening and community mobilization work of Himat, hundreds of community volunteers were mobilized within minutes. Despite the fact that roads and bridges had been destroyed and the primary irrigation system serving these communities was completely wiped out, as well as the fact that a very significant amount of precious agricultural land was buried in 2 to 3 feet of mud and rocks, these volunteers were undaunted and worked around the clock to ensure that everybody was safe as they began immediately to recover what was recoverable and to help those families that needed immediate relief. Parallel to this effort, the Canadian team was able to raise almost PKR 1.5 million (\$15,000) within a few weeks due to the emergency contributions of our generous donors. This money was the first and only outside help to reach the community for many weeks, and in fact, the only other help that was ever provided was a very miniscule amount of foodstuffs provided by the government, and some partial clearing of the main road out of the valley.

7. **Agricultural renewal:** Agriculture has experienced a severe crisis in our project region, and farmers are now engaged in ongoing learning and experimentation as they struggle to shift toward more ecologically sustainable approaches, revitalize depleted soil, and develop alternative crops and value-added agricultural products.
8. **Transferrable training materials:** The Himat Indigenous Leadership Training Program now consists of nine extensive courses, complete with training manuals translated into Urdu and beautifully printed for durable community use. These training resources are completely transferable to other areas of Pakistan although, of course, some modifications will always be required to accommodate local religious and cultural norms and the particular social and economic circumstances of each region. The flexible adaptation of this material was anticipated in the design stage.
9. **Skilled team of community development professionals:** The Himat field team has now become a highly skilled and capable group of professionals with knowledge and experience that is both extremely practical and highly capable of adaptation to new challenges and new levels of complexity.
10. **Ultra-Poor initiative:** The Himat team has collaborated with local religious and civil society leaders to develop a made-in-Hunza approach to helping the ultra-poor to take the journey from chronic dependency and poverty toward self-reliance and sustainable prosperity. A key feature of this approach is the underlying philosophy that generally poor communities are capable of helping the ultra-poor in their midst, if they are determined to do so. Two years in the preparation, a pilot program has now been launched in three LSO areas. A new series of training courses has been conceptualized for this initiative to be taken both by ultra poor families and community leaders and volunteers who are implementing local programs. Two modules of this training program have already been developed, and one of them has been piloted. The program is called the *Life-Path* Initiative.

11. **External recognition:** Three Himat-supported LSOs were evaluated within a field of 30 LSOs across Gilgit-Baltistan related to their strength as development-promoting institutions in a study designed and implemented by the very respected Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (PCP) with study design support from the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) and the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP). Out of the entire field of 30, two of our LSOs (Chipursan Local Support Organization and Gojal Rural Support Organization) tied for first place, beating out all others by a considerable margin. This achievement was a huge encouragement to the communities themselves, but also to the Himat team because it validated the effectiveness of Himat's low-cost, learning driven community training and mobilization approach.

PART FIVE: GENERAL FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Introduction

The most important question to answer about a poverty alleviation initiative is the following. "Is anyone better off as a result of the Himat Program? Are people moving out of poverty?"

Unfortunately, at the beginning of its work, Himat did not conduct a "before and after" household survey to establish an objective baseline. We did however, engage communities in a participatory analysis of their situation (captured in a "Community Story" report), and we did conduct ongoing checks of household-level food security through surveys and consultation with women's organizations. For example, for several years after the Attabad disaster, more than half of the families needed food aid for seven or more months of the year in order to survive.

Community participants in this evaluation process were emphatic in saying that most families are somewhat better off than they were five years ago, and that Himat has made a major contribution to that improvement.

We estimate that in northern Hunza where Himat has been working for the last five years, we have seen a shift (from just after the Attabad disaster in 2010) when more than 60% of households were ultra-poor or very poor (i.e., needing food aid and other relief in order to survive) to less than 20% of households in that category today. What we cannot claim is that Himat is responsible for all of this change. In fact, while there are many factors to look at, the biggest one has to be the ingenuity, creativity and hard work of communities themselves.

We want to recognize at the outset of this section that it is very difficult, and often scientifically dubious, to attribute societal outcomes to any one program or strategy. There are always multiple social, economic, political and other factors at work in any situation. Also, we recognize that at the same time as the Himat program was hard at work among the communities of Hunza, other actors were also making important contributions. Among these must be included the institutions of the Ismaili Imamat, such as regional Ismaili Councils, their Arbitration and Social Welfare committees and Regional Economic Development Board, as well as the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP). Additionally, the Central Asian Institute and many smaller NGOs were also making contributions. The impacts and outcomes reported below are those toward which we have reasonable certainty that the Himat Program has made a significant or even seminal contribution.

1. The Impact of Igniting a Spark of Hope

Strategies used to build up hope included the following: a) giving expression to and valuing the importance of cultural and spiritual beliefs at the foundations of the communities; b) actively supporting local thinking and local initiatives with coaching, mentoring and other forms of support; c) bringing communities together from many different LSO areas to share their stories and successes and to learn from one another; d) emphasizing the critical importance of communities themselves becoming eager and involved in their own development processes as a fundamental prerequisite to success; e) utilizing music, dancing, poetry, storytelling and other arts to create vision, educate about values, and generate a positive spirit among participants; and f) expecting that communities would bear some of the cost for the ongoing delivery of the program, since

it is their program, for their benefit.

Findings

- a. After four years of holding training activities, development forums and conferences, one might think that the novelty would wear off and communities would vote with their feet by no longer participating in these activities, *especially since they were required to pay their own travel costs and take turns hosting events (this means preparing meals and organizing sleeping arrangements for as many as 100 visitors to a small village)*. On the contrary, attendance at every major Himat function continues to increase, and enthusiasm for the outcomes being experienced at the community and the regional levels continue to rise.
- b. One sure sign that people are waking up is when they begin expressing hope and joy and enthusiasm through the arts. Many Himat conferences and gatherings have been graced with the presence and contribution of outstanding local musicians and artists who share their songs, stories, dances and poetry to inspire and uplift their fellow participants.
- c. At the community level, there has been a reawakening of grassroots participation, energy and enthusiasm to work together to bring about collectively agreed-upon development outcomes that will benefit everyone. Communities are no longer waiting for someone else to come and solve their problems and, in fact, are now quite prepared to ask hard questions of would-be outside helpers rather than simply accepting whatever they bring in the hopes of gaining some scrap of benefit. People have taken ownership again of their own development processes. They see themselves as the drivers and authors of the process. Of course they recognize that they will always need support and assistance from the outside, but they are now capable of guiding outside support and assistance so that it fits within the framework of the community's own development thinking, rather than trying to fit community thinking into externally developed frameworks.
- d. Finally, largely due to the strategy of engaging thousands of grassroots people in values driven, hope inspired and action oriented training for development, there has been a resurgence of human resources that have arisen to work in the path of their own development. Five years ago these same people could be said to have been developmentally "asleep". Now they are awakened and are creating a fermentation at the grassroots of creativity and new possibilities.

2. The Development of Human Resources

We find that there is a direct and immediate relationship between the degree of the development of human resources at the grassroots of a cluster (i.e., an LSO area) and that cluster's achievements related to broad-based community mobilization, institutional strengthening, social and economic improvement, increased social harmony, cooperation both among themselves and across the region, finding ways to solve most of their own development problems, and establishing linkages and securing assistance from outside funders and helpers on their own terms.

Findings

- a. Across the spectrum of communities Himat is working with, two categories may be seen: a) communities in northern Hunza where the project has been working for 3 to 4 years and where a very high percentage of grassroots community members have

taken at least one course (and many have taken more) of the Himat Development Leadership Training program series of courses; and b) communities in central and southern Hunza that have had two or fewer years of experience working with the project and in which very few leaders and community members have participated in trainings and development forums. The comparison in terms of community capacity for managing and implementing development processes is striking between these two categories of communities. Attempts by Himat staff to do long-term development planning in the absence of training and mobilization efforts as a foundation for the work have been slow to bear fruit, and the team is now forced to backtrack and insist that a strong core group of leaders and community members participate in basic training as a prerequisite for long-term planning, and before the initiation of quick-win programs to stimulate social and economic innovation.

- b. The courses of the Himat training program are directly linked to some important component of development action, and that combination of learning in the course of ongoing development action seems to be a winning formula for greatly enhancing development processes. So, for example, there is a direct relationship between success in community planning and participation in Books One (understanding what development is), Book Two (development leadership) and Book Three (participatory planning). Similarly there is a direct correspondence between success in business initiatives and participation in Book Four (community economic development and small business). Institutions begin functioning at a much higher level once their leadership has taken Book Five (governance for development), etc. etc.

3. First and Second Stage Development

We use the term “first stage development” to refer to initial training and mobilization activities at the outset of a long-term development process. Each strategy that is implemented at this stage has its own intended outcome.² The launching of the Training Series was aimed at producing a groundswell of trained human resources capable of contributing to a process they both understood and identified with because it was of their own making. Our institutional strengthening strategy was obviously focused on developing stronger institutional leadership, as well as the capacity of institutions to effectively utilize human resources and manage development activities. Our course on Small Business and Economic Development, combined with quick-win seed grants, was aimed at generating a new wave of business consciousness and activity, etc. As reported elsewhere in this document, all of these strategies did, to a considerable degree, achieve the intended outcomes proposed for them.

What was totally unexpected, however, was what would happen when all of these strategies converged and reach a critical mass in any given cluster of communities. What, in fact, did happen was that new synergies emerged within and between communities that resulted in the creation of a whole new level of unanticipated (on our part) outcomes. This is what we call “second stage development”. For example, we worked very hard to revive savings and loans programs and to encourage business development. We knew that eventually, businesses would grow to the point where they would need investment capital in order to realize their potential. We began to look for sources of funding to start a regional business development fund, but what emerged was

² Our 5 key strategies are: ignite a spark of hope, capacity development, institutional strengthening, comprehensive community planning and quick wins and practical projects.

much better. Several communities spontaneously developed their own Cooperative Credit Associations, and began encouraging local savings and loans managers within the cluster to shift their funds to this community-owned financial institution. While this development is still in progress, it demonstrates that what begins to emerge in second-stage development are new potentialities and possibilities that are born out of the combined interaction all the other seemingly unrelated but organically interconnected things that are going on when communities are trained, mobilized and engaged and systematically pursuing collectively generated development goals and plans.

4. The Time Factor

To carry out the kind intervention that the Himat theory of change calls for requires continuous direct engagement by a field team that is able to walk alongside grassroots people and their institutions as they learn their way into a new way of thinking about development, and as they gradually build up their knowledge and capacity to effectively manage their own development processes. This is a much bigger agenda than putting in a water system or training a particular target group for some kind of business initiative. This approach to development is building up the capacity of the entire community system and the network of communities it is a part of. This requires overcoming old ways of thinking (including dependency thinking), and developing awareness, vision, self-confidence, self-reliance and the management skills to pursue long-term goals systematically over time.

Our finding is that a minimum of three years of intensive and continuous work is required in most cases before sustainable results begin to appear. Some communities may take even longer, requiring up to 4 to 5 years of intensive work before they are able to effectively initiate and sustain transformational development initiatives, depending on the capacities and conditions that existed within that community at the outset of the process.

Our findings are based on the particular circumstances of the Himat experience in the first five years of program operation. We are a five-person field team attempting to work with nine LSO districts consisting of more than 50 registered villages, which themselves consist of more than 200 smaller communities. It is probable that if we had been able to double or triple the number of our field staff, we might well have been able to help communities to move along at a somewhat more rapid rate. But there are natural limits to how fast this type of development can move. One of these limits is the capacity of our own field team. At the outset of the project in 2008, as we were beginning our pilot work, our field team were relatively inexperienced. They had not yet internalized a map of the development process nor did they thoroughly understand the capacity-building approach to development. As well, there were no training materials developed, and no program framework to follow. All of these things needed to be developed over time. Since 100% of our field staff is drawn from the communities with which we are working, they already had a great deal of knowledge about community realities and needs, and a strong network of family and community relationships. Nevertheless, team learning is a prerequisite for the promotion of community learning.

Whatever the limitations our team may have had, communities also have their limitations. It's not possible for the team to move any faster than the community is willing or able to move. A participatory approach requires that the community lead the process. It's definitely worth the time it takes to ensure that communities step into the driver's seats of their own development and are not prematurely led by outside helpers down pathways for which the community has no sense of ownership.

5. The Money Factor

You can get big results without big budgets. The Himat program has operated since its inception on a total annual budget of less than \$75,000 US per year for all of its costs, including field team salaries, administration, training materials, field activities, travel and accommodations, and even Canadian team travel for coaching and mentoring visits. We know for a fact that this amount of money is approximately what one senior manager in some international NGOs working within Pakistan are receiving. We are also aware that internationally funded projects with budgets of more than \$10 million were directed toward at least some of the communities with which Himat has also been working. The communities themselves tell us that while all outside assistance is good, the Himat program has had far more positive and sustainable impact in the past five years than any other single initiative. This is because, they say, Himat focused on building community and institutional capacity to manage their own development programs, rather than simply delivering another development program.

6. The Participation Imperative

It is true that it took a paradigm shift on the part of community leaders and grassroots activists to shift people's expectations from asking for money to realizing the value of training and support. Over and over again, the principle "development comes from within" was validated, as grassroots community people developed their will and capacity to contribute to their own development, and that of their families and communities. The sheer vitality and availability of human energy for development in many communities (compared to the inertia, apathy, negativity and conflict that existed before Himat training and mobilization processes began) is certainly one clear validation of this approach. The "let a thousand flowers bloom" approach to community economic development, in which the Himat team was careful not to present communities with prepackaged ideas of what they should do, but rather encouraged grassroots people to draw on their indigenous intelligence and experience to create economic opportunities and initiatives of their own making proved to be a powerful approach when combined with effective training, a little seed money and a lot of support. These are only examples, but they illustrate the critical importance of fostering people's participation as a primary methodology for sustainable development.

7. Development is both Spiritual and Material

Leadership qualities such as trustworthiness, an orientation to selfless service to the community, compassion for the plight of others in need, and respect for all are critical to the success of development institutions in being able to effectively mobilize and secure the trust of the grassroots communities they serve. These, and many spiritual qualities like them, are what some refer to as human virtues, and they are not only fundamental to development leadership, they are fundamental to life itself. *Since human beings are both spiritual and material in nature, how can it be otherwise than that the improvement of the human condition must also be both material and spiritual, and that these two are interconnected and inseparable?* A critical element that has been woven through the Himat approach in all aspects of our work, has been to stress a heart connection within every participant to the guidance of their faith regarding how we human beings need to behave toward and think about one another, and how one's life is only complete when one dedicates it to the service of others and the betterment of the world. Spiritual capacities such as the ability to have a vision or dream of a better life, the capacity to believe in the potentialities that live within that vision, the volitional capacity to commit

themselves to a path of hard work and learning, and to persevere in that path—this is the software of development. The hardware are the things we learn and do to change the outer world, such as implementing a new approach to community governance, initiating businesses, developing new infrastructure schemes, reforming agriculture, engaging youth in life-path learning and action activities, and reaching out to include the ultra-poor to help them develop capacities within themselves to improve their lives. All of these have both an outer and inner component. You can do all the right things, but if you don't do them with the right spirit, they will not succeed.

HIMAT HIMAT

*Himat, himat
can change our homeland.
Himat, himat
can change our garden.³*

*Don't give me bread; I'm not hungry.
Don't give me a stick; I'm not blind.
Don't tease me; I'm not a child.*

*If we stand up as teachers,
if we stand up as leaders,
if we stand up as farmers,*

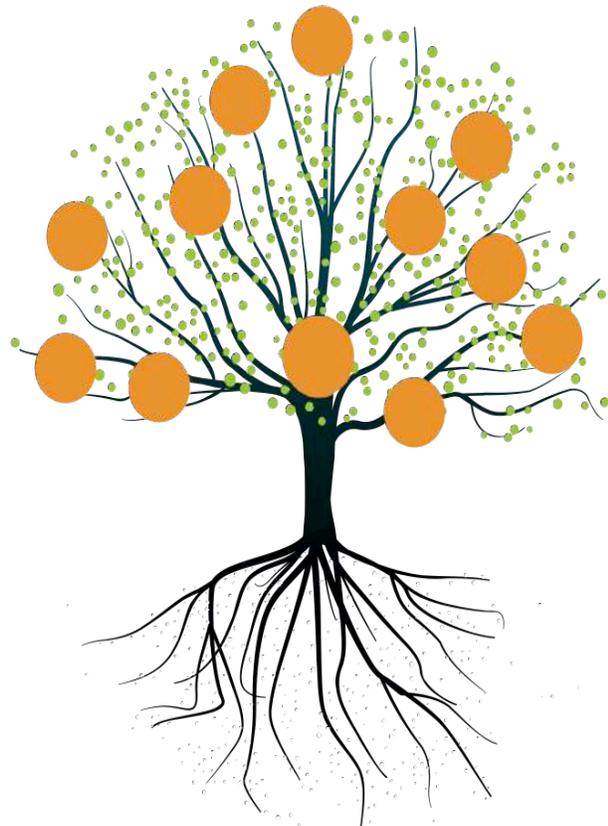
*then Himat, Himat
can change our homeland.
Himat, himat
can change our garden.*

*If we have all these things,
Then why are we idle and passive?
And why are the fruits of our tree⁴
so small and weak?*

*Let us take good care of this tree,
and then we will taste
how the fruits are sweet and good.*

*Himat, Himat
can change our homeland.
Himat, himat
can change our garden.*

(Asgher Ali Rumi)



³ Garden here is a metaphor referring to all the produce of life's efforts.

⁴ The tree of development

PART SIX: THE WAY FORWARD

This section briefly describes seven areas of focus that we anticipate for the following year and beyond. Clearly, other priorities may well emerge as Himat learns from the communities with which it works, but at this point, the following pathways are clearly visible as important steps in the development of our Project area.

1. Integration with KADO

The Korakoram Area Development Organization (KADO) is the organizational home of the Himat program. The long-term goal of Himat has been to support KADO in becoming a regional RSP (Rural Support Program) capable of shepherding the development needs of the Hunza region into the long-term. KADO has been in existence as a credible indigenous NGO for more than 15 years, and it was for this reason, as well as its orientation to grassroots development, that Himat sought out and developed a working partnership. While Himat is administratively integrated into KADO as one of its programs, there is still much that can be done to build the capacity of KADO to become an effective catalyst for promoting the emergence of strong development systems in Hunza and wherever else it may choose to work. The Himat program has been gaining experience in how this work needs to be done from the community level up. The challenge going forward is to effectively integrate what Himat has been learning into the culture, goals and daily practice of KADO more generally. The underlying challenge in this regard is not to allow external funding opportunities and priorities to take over the organization's vision and agenda-making prerogative. From the perspective of the long-term sustainability of Himat's work, and the preservation of the lessons learned from project experience, the more that Himat becomes embedded in all aspects of KADO's operations, and not just partitioned off as one of many programs, the more likely it is that lessons learned by the Himat program will be able to contribute effectively to the ongoing evolution of KADO as an organization.

2. Strengthening Village and Regional Financial Systems

One critical emerging issue that Himat will need to address going forward is the need for a community banking system. In Hunza, in the past, when capital being accumulated at the community level was integrated to create a micro-financing institution, what ended up happening is that the management of that institution did not remain in community hands. Rather, what happened is that banking experts designed systems that well suited the banking sector, but soon alienated and excluded poor communities, which no longer had a democratic voice in the management of their own money for purposes of their own development. Soon, for many reasons beyond their control, grassroots people had no access whatsoever to loans through that fund.

We are now witnessing the resurgence of savings and loans programs at the grassroots level in communities across Hunza. But, there is a great deal of capacity building that is needed in order to help communities to take full advantage of the money that is now effectively trapped within their savings program and unavailable for development purposes. A training program is needed for fund managers that provides them with tools and procedures that they can follow to create micro-lending programs at the village level. An association of savings and loans programs is also needed focused on strengthening the capacity of member programs, but also on creating safe ways to pool savings at the LSO level or even beyond through Cooperative Credit Associations so that larger amounts of capital can be made available for development purposes without risking the

security of local savings.

3. Expanding the Himat Training Program to create a Development Training Institute

The evident success of the Himat Leadership and Development training program needs to be expanded in both reach and depth of impact in all the LSO areas where Himat is currently working. This human resource development program has proven itself to be a primary driver of community mobilization and development wherever sufficient numbers of grassroots people have been trained. Based on these lessons learned, it will be important to concentrate on building up a critical mass of trained human resources in each LSO area before attempting subsequent stages in community development activities.

The potential exists to share this training program with the rest of Pakistan in several ways. New partnerships can be made with other institutions such as PPAF, NRSP, AKDN and large RSPs in other parts of the country. We understand fully that programs will need to be adapted to fit the cultural and situational needs of each area. Another possibility is acquiring accreditation for the courses through articulation agreement partnerships with institutions of higher learning.

All of these possibilities can be best pursued by developing a kind of "Development Training Institute" which serves as a coordinator of curriculum and new program development, and facilitates the training of tutors and coordinators, as well as the development of new program sites wherever they may occur.

4. Supporting the development of a Hunza-wide Regional LSO Network Organization

In order to expand and reinforce the democratic voice of community people across the region and to give them a platform for mutual learning and collaboration, it will be important to expand the LSO collaborative network already in operation in the north to include all LSOs in Hunza. LSO leaders will need encouragement and technical assistance in pursuing this development, which should be given high priority as long as it seems to be of importance to LSO leaders (they have stated numerous times that it is).

5. Supporting the development of a Regional Women's Network Organization

After five years of coming together in women's conferences to talk about common issues, Hunza women have identified the need to build their own regional organization that will focus on strengthening local women's organizations (with particular attention to strengthening women's role in the development process), as well as to give women a strong voice from their unique perspective in advocating for the needs of the region.

6. Supporting the further development of a Regional Farmers Alliance

The foundation of the local and regional economy is agriculture, but agriculture itself is sorely in need of renewal because of many years of unsustainable farming practices brought to the region by well-meaning outside helpers. There is now a need to create a farmer-run organization that focuses on building the capacity of the agricultural sector in Hunza to make the shift toward eco-agriculture; i.e., toward sustainable farming practices and a new range of crops and value-added products which can bring new income to the region. As well, consolidating the buying of farm inputs and the selling of agricultural products and putting the control of these into the hands of local farmers (now

much of it is in the control of outsiders who come to the region as middlemen to buy and transport crops to market) will add great strength to the agricultural economy of Hunza. The development of this critical sector needs to be given a high priority by the Himat team moving forward.

7. Youth Development

Focusing on the development needs of youth, both within communities already mobilized and within communities just beginning their mobilization process, will give a new and unexpected vitality to the development process in each cluster. This can be done through special youth development forums, through a very strong focus on completing the courses in the Himat Leadership Training series, through investing small seed grants on youth social and economic projects, and through giving youth a voice in every forum that Himat is a part of. To do this will likely require intense focus for short bursts of time by the Himat team to support the development of a youth core group and to train and support youth leadership in a particular LSO area.

8. Beyond Hunza

The Hunza region is renowned for the fact that its people are early adapters to innovation. Some of the most effective development strategies now practiced across Pakistan were originated in Hunza and eventually spread across Pakistan. The Himat training and mobilization approach has been called (by community leaders) "a new wave" of development innovation that again started in Hunza, but has the potential to benefit many other regions in the country.

The original intention of the Himat program was to contribute peace building in Pakistan by giving people hope and opportunities for a better life through processes of constructive development. We've had the opportunity to learn how to create a low-cost and effective development training and mobilization program that has proven itself to be effective. We now have the responsibility to find ways of taking these approaches to the rest of the country. In doing so, we know that we must remain as humble co-learners, and not think for a minute that we have "the answers". Everything we have learned will need to be relearned in new social and cultural contexts. While it might be easier to stay where we are, the Himat program itself would benefit from having the galvanizing experience of implementing our approach in completely different areas from those of its origins in order to develop a better understanding of how these approaches can best be introduced anywhere in the world.