

# AP Asia Project Empowering Entrepreneurs in Central and South Asia

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**The Accelerate Prosperity in Central and South Asia (AP Asia) initiative, a joint effort between the European Union and the Aga Khan Foundation, has successfully empowered thousands of entrepreneurs across Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.**

Over the past four years, AP Asia has supported more than 2,800 entrepreneurs, leading to the creation of 4,746 full-time jobs. This initiative has been instrumental in fostering economic growth and creating sustainable livelihoods, particularly for women and youth.

Speaking at the AP Asia Dissemination Event held at the Serena Hotel in Islamabad, Head of Cooperation for the EU Delegation to Pakistan Jeroen Willems highlighted the transformative impact of the initiative. "Pakistan and countries in the region can bank on a lot of talented young entrepreneurs. They can create jobs, drive innovation, and spur growth. With EU-funded programs like AP Asia, we are helping unleash the full potential of start-ups by combining talent with expertise and soft loans," Willems said.

Akhtar Iqbal, CEO of AKF Pakistan, talked about the collaborative nature of the project. "By empowering entrepreneurs and facilitating access to essential resources, we are not only creating employment opportunities but also building resilient communities capable of driving long-term growth. AP Asia is a testament to the power of collaboration in fostering entrepreneurship and sustainable development," he remarked.

Najmuddin Najm, CEO of AKF Afghanistan, added, "With a growing, enterprising, and youthful population in Central and South Asia, the region has immense potential to emerge as a hub for trade and investment. Through AP Asia and continued EU support, we are committed to unlocking this potential."

The dissemination event held in Islamabad brought together key stakeholders to discuss the project's impact and explore future opportunities. Entrepreneurs from the region shared their success stories and highlighted the importance of continued support for entrepreneurship.

The AP Asia initiative is a testament to the power of international cooperation in driving economic development and social progress. By providing access to finance, mentorship, and training, the project has empowered entrepreneurs to create innovative businesses and contribute to the growth of their communities.