

## Foreword

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture has been active in Northern Pakistan for well over two decades. During this period, its Historic Cities Programme has been a leading force in the conservation, rehabilitation and re-use of a number of important historic and cultural sites that are emblematic of the region's rich and often turbulent past. The impact that these efforts are having on the local socio-economic environment is well described in this report by Hermann Kreutzmann and Jolyon Leslie, each of whom carried out a mission to the area in 2009. Since then, a number of important developments have started to affect the region. One such development is the new provincial status that the former Northern Areas of Pakistan were given. It is expected that the new Province of Gilgit-Baltistan will have more decision-making powers for matters that directly affect the local economy. Another development has been the sudden and protracted blockage of the Karakoram Highway, following a major landslide in January 2010 at Atabad. This blockage has since dramatically reduced the flow of traffic between China and Pakistan. Lastly, there is the issue of security, which has become problematic following a number of high profile attacks against locals and foreigners. Although some of these developments have led to temporary set-backs, there is a general-held belief that the future prospects for the region look good and that trade and commerce, as well as tourism, will bounce back as more crossing points into Gilgit-Baltistan will open. New roads into the region are not only expected to be constructed from within Pakistan, but are also expected to come in from Afghanistan and nearby Tajikistan. Rather than being perceived as threats to the cultural identity of the region, AKTC sees such development - if properly guided - as an important tool for the preservation of the region's unique cultural heritage.

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