Here [in the Karakoram Mountains and the Pamir plateau, on the western side of the better-known Himalayan range and the Tibetan plateau], everything that characterises high mountains and the people residing in them exists in its most extreme form. The physical bulk of these mountains is enormous, and they are amongst the world’s highest; climactic variation is extreme, and natural hazards -- earthquakes, avalanches, rock-slides, and mudslides -- are frequent, endangering human lives, herds of livestock, and roads and infrastructure, as well as houses, schools, hospitals, and all of the built environment. The lives of the impoverished are, by definition, precarious, a precariousness that is even worse in high mountain regions. The populations experience extremes of poverty, and isolation, and constraints on opportunities and choice. At the same time, they sustain great linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and religious pluralism, and show remarkable resilience in the face of extraordinarily harsh circumstances.

Aga Khan; MHI
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