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SNAPSHOT

Building A City, One Street At A Time



Photo Credit: USAID/LARA

Community members discuss street widening plans.

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Welcome to Araban, an informal settlement in the city of Jalalabad, where the streets and passageways are so criss-crossed and narrow that fire trucks cannot respond to emergencies and sanitation trucks are unable to collect garbage. Such conditions are hazardous for residents, as proven by a fire earlier this year that gutted shops, market stalls, and some homes.

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To address these conditions, USAID’s Land Reform in Afghanistan (LARA) project is working with the people of Araban, the city government, and with the Ministry of Urban Planning to improve the road system and thereby improve living conditions.

As with many things, the obvious solution – widening the roads by two meters on either side – came with its own complications. First, residents would have to donate land, which many were reluctant to do, fearing they would lose money and occupancy rights. Secondly, while it was easier for residents with larger plots to donate, for smaller plot holders, the loss of a few meters meant the loss of essential living space.

To address these concerns, the project utilized a highly participatory and consultative approach. To start, the city government explained to residents that their occupancy rights were contingent on street improvements. Next, the project developed a compensation plan for residents negatively affected by the loss of land. Finally, working with all stakeholders, the project developed community agreements for street widening that will be incorporated into the Ministry of Rural Development’s new master plan.

As a result of these efforts, in early September residents agreed to donate the necessary land for the street improvement project. Improvements are already underway and residents will see significant improvements as the project moves forward.