

# EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY BASED UPGRADING METHOD FOR IMPROVING INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

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Cooperation for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan, Kabul

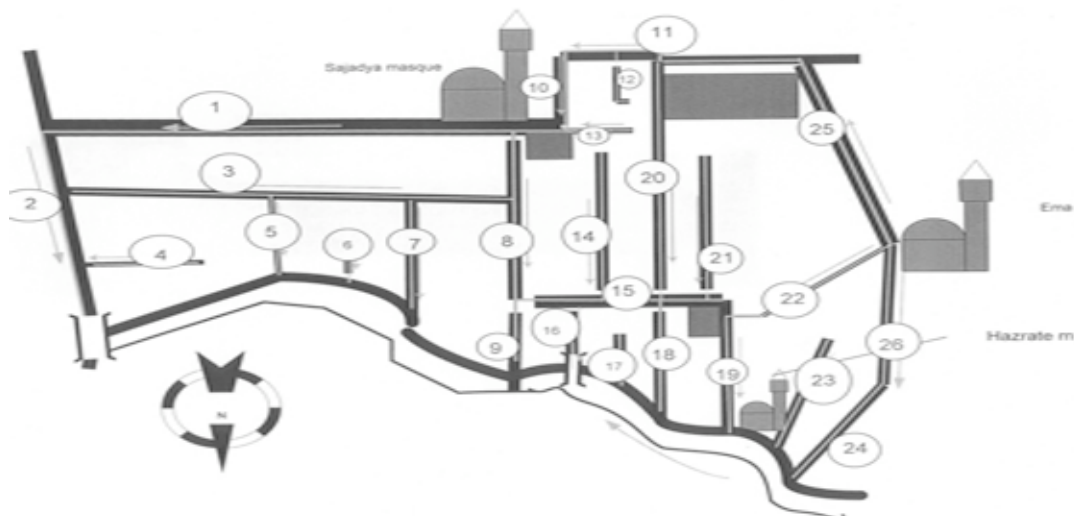
In 2005, the USAID contractor, Emerging Market Group with Terra Institute and their LTERA project, contracted with the Afghan NGO, “Cooperation for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan”. The purpose of that contract was for CRA to help apply a version of the community action planning methodology to improve the physical environment of a neighbourhood of 250 houses in Kabul’s District 13, an informal settlement created by its residents. This neighbourhood was identified for the project through consultations between CRA, the LTERA Project, and the Kabul Municipality.

## 1. Community Based Upgrading of Informal Settlements

Community based upgrading (CBU) is based on community consultations. In a neighbourhood of District 13, a Community Council (CC) composed of men and women in equal numbers discussed the priority needs of the neighbourhood. Their decision was to pave the passage-ways of the community with concrete. CRA/LTERA then advised the CC on how to achieve that goal over a 11 month period through June, 2006.

The community street network which the CC upgraded is shown in this map.

Figure 1: Street Map of Portion of District 13, Kabul



This pilot experience offers an opportunity to compare, the community based upgrading approach that CRA/LTERA is using, with the conventional construction company approach.

How does community upgrading impact on the economies of affected communities? From observations and conversations with residents (we recommend a structured study of these factors), we conclude the following:

1. The market values of the houses increase in comparison with non-upgraded communities.
2. People pay less for transportation in the upgraded community.
3. Some families get economic support through local employment in the upgrading.
4. Because of proper drainage and clean streets families pay less for health treatments.
5. Locally employed people learn and build their capacity during implementation of the project. They are now able to work as contractor or skilled labour and support their families.
6. Implementation of the upgrading project encouraged the families to invest in their neighborhood. Through investment in their houses many people got employment and income.
7. Home improvements after the project require construction material, stimulating demand and investments in local supply of such material..

From a project cost point of view, how does the CBU approach compare with the conventional construction company approach?

1. Community mobilization approach: In the District 13 case, the total project cost was \$170,000; it was completed in 11 months by June, 2006, including technical assistance. The physical work done was three km. of 10-12 cm. thick concrete street pavement, over a layer of 10 cm compacted gravel. The community contributed around 15% of total value of streets through voluntary labour and some financial contributions, which includes adding a 75 cm wide and 5 cm thick sidewalk along 3 km. of road.
2. An actual construction company bid for the same job was for \$225,041, including an estimated 10% profit, but this bid **did not** include the 75 cm sidewalk paving for pedestrian use.

There is a financial saving of 24% of community upgrading approach over the conventional construction company approach, for more area paved by the community upgrading approach.

“Community Based Upgrading” can be economically advantageous. It also can produce significant improvements in social conditions in the pilot community, with the clear involvement of both genders in the project design and implementation on an equal basis. In the community of District 13, there clearly is a significant community sense of ownership of the paved streets, shown by the community members’ contributions of labor during the project, their work for assuring the proper curing of the concrete, the post project maintenance of the streets and drains free of garbage and trash. There also was no detectable corruption of the construction process, due to the careful monitoring of the work by male and female members of the neighbourhood C.C.

From a public health perspective, the new streets effectively reduce the constant threat of disease bred in the filth of the muddy rights-of-way during significant parts of the year.

From a democratic governance point of view, the community of District 13 has become a well organized group of previously fragmented households, with strong relations with the Kabul Municipality. The conditions for future community upgrading activities covering other problems affecting the community in cooperation with the Municipality are well established.

Figure 2 shows the conditions of a typical passage-way before the project began—distressing filth in a passage-way too narrow for a vehicle to pass.

**Figure 2: A Passage-Way Before Upgrading**



Figure 3 shows the same street after the main upgrading, with the community portion yet to be paved. The width of the street is now sufficient for a vehicle to pass.

**Figure 3: Street after Upgrading**



Table 1 shows a comparison of the Community Based Upgrading approach with the conventional construction company approach.

**Table 1: Advantages of community upgrading methodology**

<b>Community Based Upgrading Approach</b>	<b>Construction Company Approach</b>
Able to implement small scale projects in the residential areas	Able to implement large scale projects
Majority of works done by manpower	Majority of works done by machines
Has labour and facilities to implement small scale projects	Has construction machines and wealth to implement large scale projects
The project management process is very transparent	The process financially is not very transparent
Community participation and contribution is very high	Community participation is limited and contribution is nothing
Community feel ownership of the project and take care of the project during implementation and after completion of the project	Community does not feel ownership of the project
Employment of the local labour	Limited opportunities for local employment
Participation of women in decision making and monitoring of the project activities on daily bases	Women participation in decision making is nil
The project leadership has community support during implementation of the project	Limited community support
Community pays especial attention on quality, quantity, and cost of the project activities and construction material	Community does not feel any responsibility
Cause good relation among community members and between the community council and the Municipality's District Office	Lack of coordination between community and Municipality
Because of community contributions the project financial cost is cheaper than construction company. See below.	The project financial cost is higher than the community approach, for the same physical result. See below.
Community contribution is between 10 – 15 percent cost of the project	There is no community contribution.

**Conclusions:** We are not advocating the immediate adoption of the CBU approach for all situations of upgrading in informal settlements throughout Kabul, since the capacity for implementing that approach on a massive scale does not yet exist. There are construction companies with the capital and organization which theoretically could upgrade access roads in informal settlements on a massive scale. We do conclude, however, that the capacity for carrying out the CBU approach should be created as soon as possible, and that funds be made for carrying out CBU on a massive basis should be made available as soon as possible.