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AFGHANISTAN

SNAPSHOT

Where Instability Threatens, Roads Unite

Road links rural communities to government services and local leaders



Photo: USAID/LGCD

Local staff conduct a final assessment of Bakwa's new roads.

“Now, in addition to the connection to the main road to Farah City, we are better connected to the other towns around us.”

Located on the border of one of Afghanistan's most insecure areas, Bakwa District in Farah Province has seen little development aid. Coalition forces and USAID have identified Bakwa as an area in need of stability initiatives because insurgents are using it as a safe area. In response to this need, USAID has worked with the local community to implement a small-scale community roads project. This has connected Bakwa residents with government-delivered services, demonstrating the Afghan Government's ability to respond to their needs.

In March 2010, project staff facilitated a meeting between Bakwa representatives and community leaders to identify possible stabilization projects. Following continued discussions, USAID awarded nine grants designed to allow communities throughout the district to level and surface approximately 15 km of roads leading from rural towns to the main “Ring Road” that passes through Bakwa's center and connects every major city in Afghanistan.

These projects not only provided 228 residents with temporary employment (while local residents contributed labor, additional materials, and equipment); they also helped to build relationships between the communities and their local government.

The improved access to main roads also enhanced access to markets. “During the planting and rainy season, the way was inaccessible for cars and we had trouble getting to the city and reaching health services before the road improvements,” said Mullah Habibullah, head of the Kanaka Community Development Committee. “Now, in addition to the connection to the main road to Farah City, we are better connected to the other towns around us.”

Projects such as these contribute to USAID's flagship stabilization effort in the region. They engage communities in unstable areas to take an active role in their own security. They also address priority grievances of at-risk populations by uniting communities in development activities.