



SNAPSHOT

A Dirt Road Becomes a Community Lifeline

A rural road is widened and paved through the active planning, direct labor and contributions of village beneficiaries.



One of the farmers who contributed in building and paving Nasrallah Road in Beheira Governorate. / Photo: USAID

“For the first time I learned [how] to define my village’s needs”

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Often impassable during winter months, Nasrallah Road in Abu Hommos District of Beheira Governorate was the only option for many citizens of Berket Ghittas Village to reach neighboring communities, schools, markets, the workplace, and health services.

Widening and paving the roadway was therefore one of the highest priorities for the participatory planning committee established with assistance from USAID. Citizen involvement ensured that the project was included as part of the unique integrated district development planning process. The 3.7-kilometer stretch of paved road now facilitates travel between four districts and three villages serving 25,000 citizens.

Naziha from Mohamed Ali village said, “The road helped us in everything. We were like dead people before the road was paved. We couldn’t get a woman going into labor to the clinic, children were not able to go to school, and even workers couldn’t go to work. As long as there was rain we were locked in our homes.”

The community worked hard to achieve this result. The budget could not accommodate the full cost of the project so villagers contributed sweat equity in the form of land, equipment and labor to raise the elevation of the roadway and prepare the surface prior to paving. “Even the women helped in making the road,” said Nasr Saad, a farmer who contributed part of his land to widen the right-of-way. I told them “take what you want from my land,” he said. Villagers worked day and night, “bringing sand and their heavy machines.” The in-kind contribution by the citizens was valued at nearly \$50,000.

This type of “decentralization” model engaged communities in planning, advocating for their priorities, and cooperating with their neighbors to improve their quality of life. Abeer El Alfy, a member of one of the planning committees in Beheira, said “...for the first time I learned [how] to define my village’s needs...” She went on to say that her voice [that of a woman from the village] was heard and equal to the voices of the rest of the committee. This by itself was a great achievement.”