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SNAPSHOT

Maymana Women Lobby for Local Park

Citizen advisory groups are a forum for women to have their voices heard on municipal priorities.



Photo:

Citizen representatives, including local women's leaders, participate in the final inspection for the USAID-funded renovations made to the Women's Park in Maymana on August 7, 2012.

Local women's groups have strongly supported the selection of the Women's Park as a municipal project for USAID support, recognizing the need for public spaces for women to socialize.

Telling Our Story

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Women leaders in the city of Maymana in Faryab Province have successfully lobbied their municipal government to rehabilitate a local women's park. As a result of their efforts, on July 8, 2012, construction on a Women's Park selected by the Maymana Municipality and supported by USAID reached substantial completion and was handed over to the municipality for public use.

Local women's groups strongly supported the selection of this project, recognizing a key lack of public space for women in the city. Many years ago, women had used a park area in the center of the city, but it fell into disrepair as many women stopped visiting due to safety concerns. With an improved environment in the city, however, many women now want a usable public space again.

"Women don't have many places to socialize," said Ms. Sharifa Azimi, the Director for the Faryab Women's Affairs Department. "The only place for women to socialize is when some women gather in the cemeteries on Wednesdays to pray," she added.

Ms. Azimi and other local women leaders took action to address this public need by suggesting the renovation of a women's park during a Service Delivery Advisory Group (SDAG) meeting, which is a citizen advisory forum organized by the Maymana Municipality to discuss priorities for projects that could receive support from the USAID-financed program RAMP UP North.

"I fought strongly for the renovation of this park, even though some participants wanted other projects," said Ms. Farukhlega, a member of the SDAG and the Faryab Women's Leadership Committee. "The best thing about this park is that it can be a place for women to gather during market days, which are held twice a week," she said.

The Maymana Municipality also responded to the women's request during the SDAG meeting by supporting the Women's Park construction and also committing funds from their annual development budget to fund a boundary wall for the park.

"These park improvements are sustainable because the municipality funds park maintenance from renting small shops that women can use to sell their handicrafts," said Ms. Azimi.

Women's engagement has been a focus of the RAMP UP North program, which works to strengthen the public's relationship with municipalities through improved service delivery and community engagement mechanisms like the SDAG.