PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN SLUM DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE KABUL OLD CITY

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Abstract— **Kabul the capital of Afghanistan has witnessed a major population growth in the last decades which caused a significant increase in the number of informal settlements. The residents are suffering from many problems such as poor infrastructure, shortage of public facilities, depriving of the sense of ownership and facing much environmental degradation. Even though majority of the residents are living in such condition, the government response has been quite weak. The government's main planning strategy has been upgrading in the form of provision of facilities and improving elements of physical infrastructure, unfortunately most of the projects which had not community's support, faced with lots of challenges such as people's resistance or even in some cases the project rather than solving the problem, compounded them to a worse condition. A major reason as to why many projects have not been effective in achieving certain objectives in the past is the results of local people were not being involved.**

Community participation plays an important role in slum development projects. The development of an integrated urban development concept these days without the mobilization of participants and community seems difficult and impossible.

Therefore this paper looks into factors and methods which can help in creating a participatory approach for developing of the slums in Kabul city. Furthermore, it describes the result of a questionnaire which was conducted on a part of the Kabul Old City due to hear resident's problem related to the slum upgrading and collect their opinions on this regard. The research also point out some factors which can severely hamper the successful implementation of a slum upgrading project if not adequately addressed.

Index Terms— **Community empowerment, informal settlements, job opportunities, people participation**

I. INTRODUCTION

Rapid urbanization since 2001 has dramatically reshaped the spatial and demographic profile of Afghanistan. Estimates indicate that between 49-60% of returnees to Afghanistan settle in towns and cities [1]. Which, according to a report "disproportionally absorb households that have a displacement history", this is especially true in Kabul. Afghans have returned from abroad and other provinces to Kabul in search of the improved social and economic opportunities. Quality of education, healthcare, jobs and livelihood, opportunities for enterprise and relative security have pulled people to Kabul. Today, informal settlements cover about more than 69% of Kabul [2], even most of the places have turned into slums which typically lack legal land tenure and are not integrated with the "formal city" which further exacerbates the precariousness of their living conditions [3]. As a result, households and communities take it upon themselves to address their housing needs [4] and Afghanistan is no exception. After 2014 most of the international aid has been significantly decreased, this put a negative impact on the employment rate, GDP, security and other economic sectors of government. Currently, Afghanistan is facing with economic crises due to some constraints in respect to the developmental budget. The core national budget which has adopted by the government of Afghanistan for the year 2018 has estimated around $5.5 billion which about $1.6 billion of that has allocated for the development budget [5], unfortunately this much money does not suffice for developing of the entire informal settlements in Afghanistan, for instance in Kabul about 69% of the city has covered by the informal developments and based on many researches slum development requires enough budget and strong financial support to start [6]. People have skills, ideas and the seed of the best solutions, but what they don't have is the space and support to explore and refine them [7]. Through participatory approaches people can find sustainable, easy solutions to problems and as well as can financially contribute to the project.

Participatory upgrading involves dwellers in developing infrastructure, housing and access to basic services in their communities and cities. It helps to incrementally improve existing physical, social and economic conditions by making the best use of people's ability and willingness to contribute with their own human, technical, financial and organizational resources. Participatory processes are also a means of enhancing the role of youths in society. Youth's involvement in community activities creates a necessary sense of belonging and the opportunity to become socially productive. Young people want to contribute to their community and believe themselves capable of doing so.

Community participation can build sense of ownership and will give residents the feeling that they are an active and important part of the project. Moreover, participatory approaches are cost-effective since, if people are taking responsibility for a project, then fewer expensive outside resources will be required, it therefore allows for more efficient use of resources available to the project.

Fig. 1. Community's participation in urban planning

The purpose of participation have been more modestly defined to include information exchange, resolving conflicts and to supplement planning and design. Participation reduces the feeling of anonymity and communicates to the user a greater degree of concern on the part of the management or administration. With it, residents are actively involved in the development process; there will be a better-maintained physical environment, greater public spirit, more user satisfaction and significant financial savings. The main purposes of participation are:

- To involve people in design, decision-making processes and as a result their trust and confidence in organizations, making it more likely that they will accept decisions, plans and work within the systems when seeking solutions to problems.
- To accelerate the implementation process and minimize the project cost.
- To provide people with a voice in design and decision-making in order to improve plans, decisions and service delivery.
- To promote a sense of community by bringing people together who share common goals.

II. METHODOLOGY

The methodology which has conducted in this study relied on some case studies and practical projects which have done in different countries in respect to the community involvement and partnership in the slum upgrading projects and through the international experiences which took place in these countries we determined a number of recommendations to deal with the problem and to create a sustainable participatory approach for sensitive development of the informal settlements. Furthermore a developmental plan has proposed for a part of the Kabul old city which is an informal settlement area and require people's participation; therefore a comprehensive questionnaire developed due to collect people's idea and opinions. After analysis, the expected problems have identified and a number of recommendations proposed to overcome those problems.

III. SOME CASE STUDIES AROUND THE WORLD

The problems of land, housing and services in Asian cities are too big and too complex for both communities, government or any other development agencies to solve alone. As aforementioned that slum development requires enough budgets to start so good solution to these problems that reach the scale of need require partnership, but partnership isn't easy especially in Afghanistan which due to many reasons has long history of mutual distrust to get over. For involving people in the partnership there is a crucial need for a specific partnership model which should be based on the socio and economical condition of the people and to properly meet their needs.

Fortunately, nowadays in many countries as well as Asian cities, community organizations are involved in large-scale partnership initiatives with their cities and other actors to find effective, lasting and replicable solutions to these problems. The outcomes of these partnerships comprise some of the most innovative and exciting work happening in development today. These projects show that cities and communities can cooperate and work together. Some examples and cases of community partnerships in housing, resettlement, infrastructure and sanitation are mentioning as follow:

A. Lo Barnechea Social Housing Project

Lo Barnechea is a commune of Chili located in the most expensive neighborhood of Santiago. The residents were suffering in slum with a very low quality of life. On 2010, authorities proposed a community participation plan for development of the area. According to Alejandro Aravena who is the main architect and planner of this project; from the beginning, the main priority was the location, the families were living in slums but the location was so good due to the existence of job opportunities, facilities, transportation and other services. Therefore, they endeavored to not relocate the people in order to keep all those networks. So they figured out a sustainable design with very low budget subsidies, to allow the families to keep on benefiting from the proximity to jobs, education, transportation, health facilities and even recreation. With a subsidy of 10,000$ which was given to a poor family then they became owner of the house. The government bought the land (4000$), provide infrastructure at 3000$ and build the house with another 3000$. Instead of producing big and pricy apartment units, they made half of a good house with 40m² building coverage. Architect Alejandro and his team believed that this method is more efficient and participatory as later it allow the family to make other half of the house by their own according to their own need and time. The units are arranged around a collective courtyard; it appeared a successful project and obviously enhanced the life quality of the residents.

B. Partnership in resettlement

About 200,000 poor households were lived in informal settlements along the railway tracks in Metro Manila, where they carry on with all aspects of their lives within meters of trains. Nobody would choose to live in such a dangerous

situation, but for lack of other affordable housing options, these railway slum households have remained for decades.

In 1997 the government launched a mega-project to expand and improve Manila's railway tracks for transport and cargo, the idea was welcomed in a city choked with traffic jams and pollution. But because project required all the land within 15 meters of the tracks, 80000 households living in slums along the tracks found themselves under threat of eviction.

At first, the Asian development bank was to provide loans to the Philippines government for the project, but later withdrew when it became clear that the enormous cost of resettling all the affected households properly would make the project impossible. After the ADB withdrew, a Chinese government consortium stepped in with financing.

As Philippine National Railway is a public-private company, relocating affected households is not covered in the project budget, therefore they figured out another financial model due to cope with this problem. The National Housing Authority was responsible to consider the resettlement process; each municipality the railway passes through (each with its own policies and rules) was responsible for the relocation within their own boundaries.

In the resettlement package people get:

- Serviced land plots 40 m² at a subsidized cost of 2200$, which covers the cost of developing concrete roads, drains, electricity and water supply in the new areas.
- Housing materials worth 870$ plus 220$ cash for labor.
- Loans, the serviced plots, building materials and labor budget are all given to people on a cost-recovery basis. The total amount of 3290$ will have to be repaid in 30 years at 6% annual interest, in monthly payment.

This project represents how resettlement can cause less disruption to the neighborhood if people are key partners in the process.

C. Partnership in sanitation

Most of India's infrastructure budget is being poured into cities, but little of this goes into sanitation in slums. As a result, half of all urban Indians do not have access to a functioning toilet. But some breakthroughs in Mumbai and Pune make a good example of what can happen when authorities do decide that universal sanitation is a priority and join hands with a poor community federation to ensure that every single poor household in the city has a clean toilet to use. Millions of poor people in Indian cities are defecating along roadsides, railway tracks and footpaths, where they are shouted at, molested, dumped on and insulted. Nobody would endure these things if they had any other choice. Either no toilets are available or they are in such bad conditions or locations that defecating in public is preferable. Indian slums are littered with broken-down, badly planned, badly-maintained and badly-lit public toilets.

Authorities are beginning to acknowledge that if half the city lives in degraded, unhealthy environments, without access to basic services, its bad news for the city as a whole. But most officials who make decisions about sanitation in slums have

never seen a viable, community-managed toilet themselves. This lack of knowledge makes things slow to change. There are very few examples of how to make toilets that are affordable, replicable and work. Since 1995, the alliance of National Slum-dwellers Federation, Mahila Milan and SPARC has helped slum communities in over 50 Indian cities to design and build community-managed toilets. They started small with toilet blocks of 5 or 10 seats in Mumbai, Kanpur and Bangalore. These early toilets were all idea-testers, built to provide examples for everyone to see and learn from. They showed new ways for poor communities and governments to work together to provide toilets that are better, cheaper and made using the greatest source of energy in India [8].

Shared costs mean shared responsibilities; the National Slum-dwellers Federation's simple cost-sharing toilet paradigm is this: communities plan, construct and maintain shared toilets in their own settlements, at the ratio of one toilet per four households. The state brings sewers, water supply and electricity to the site and pays for the materials. The project put a significant impact on creating jobs, built community skills and transformed relationships between municipality and community, by making service delivering a joint venture rather than a contracted activity. The toilets were all maintained by communities, charging a small monthly fee of 10 rupees (0.25$) per household.

D. Community partnership in infrastructure

Sri Lanka's pioneering community contract system is a good example of how a government can facilitate the delivery of basic services and infrastructure to the city's poor communities with relatively little budget or effort, by contracting the task entirely to communities, and letting them be the designers, builders and managers of those improvements. About half of Colombo's populations live in its 1,506 poor settlements. These settlements vary in size from 60 to 1,200 households - many of them badly under-serviced. Since the 1980s, many of these communities have been supported to plan and carry out their own infrastructure improvements, under the community contract system.

The idea of community contracts first came up with the national government's program which was launched in 1985 in 51 Sri Lankan towns, with technical support provided by the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA). Under the program each community form community development councils which would then survey and map the existing settlement and work with NHDA staff to draw up new layout plans of houses, lanes, community spaces and infrastructure networks for each community.

Communities could apply for small government grants to support infrastructure projects they planned and built themselves, by a community contract between the community and the authorities. Instead of hiring contractors and engineers, communities did the work of building water supply systems, toilets, drains, footpaths and access roads themselves, and the government supported them with technical and financial

assistance. The community contract system gave the community full control over the process of infrastructure delivery, and was a simple, flexible, transparent and community-built strategy for accomplishing this.

The Program ended abruptly in 1993, but the community contract system is still alive in Sri Lanka, in a smaller-scale, still empowering communities to design, implement, manage and maintain their own settlement infrastructure, with support from the government, local authorities, NGOs and other agencies.

E. The afghan experience of community-led urban development and slum upgrading

Over the last ten years, the government of Afghanistan and several municipalities have worked with a number of supporting agencies in making and implementing participatory urban development programs. Some of the projects which implemented have focused on specific elements of urban reconstruction and community upgrading, including improving infrastructure and preserving historical districts and reviving the cultural heritage of Afghan cities.

The world bank-financed Kabul Urban Reconstruction Project (KURP) was approved in July 2004 by the transitional government of Afghanistan and operated between 2006 and 2011. Within the five years period, KURP implemented upgrading projects within 19 gozars, reaching 142,215 people [9]. The objective of this program was to upgrade urban infrastructure to improve the delivery of basic urban services in under-serviced communities in Kabul.

While KURP had a degree of resident participation, "the project was not formally mandated to develop local-level democratic and inclusive representative bodies, but it facilitated the establishment of elected community councils called Gozar Cooperating Shuras (GCSs) [9]. One of the key lessons learned from KURP is that "Community participation has proven crucial to make upgrading work" [10].

Furthermore, the World Bank's final report on KURP [9] noted: "the implementation of urban upgrading in Kabul positively impacted the opposition at the local and national level to service improvements in informal and unplanned areas. Visible results of service delivery improvements demonstrated the viability of urban upgrading as a relevant intervention in Afghanistan's urban context for integration of under-served residential areas into the main fabric of the city".

As a follow-up to KURP, the Kabul Municipality Development Program (KMDP) commenced in August 2013 and targets over 1773 ha of informal settlements for upgrading, potentially reaching 775,000 people in Kabul city. A notable change in the design of KMDP is the integration of community contributions towards upgrading, community have opted to use their own funds for sanitation improvements, small culverts and street lighting (light bulbs on boundary walls).

There are also some other projects implemented by national and international organizations, but the level of community participation was very weak, in most of the cases people were just involved in some small meetings and consultations which

later considered the main reason as to why many projects have not been effective in achieving certain objectives and finally it caused that people lose their trust on government.

Today the biggest problem which can be assumed in implementing of any developmental or upgrading project is the lack of trust. In here we are going to present a result of a survey which was conducted by the author on June, 2018 in a part of the Kabul city informal settlement, due to evaluate people's trust on government and consider their opinions on participatory development approaches.

IV. LOCATION

A part of the old city of Kabul which is an informal settlement area was selected as a study area. Kabul's Old City is mainly situated in the south of Kabul River and comprises many historic quarters. These quarters are named either after a trade establishment or after the names of a tribe and tribal leaders. The study area is called "*Bagh-Ali-Mardan*" and a development plan with a very minimum compensation and contribution ratio based on the Land Readjustment method was prepared. The result after analysis appeared more efficient and applicable due to the preservation of the historical buildings and low destruction cost, the model was designed based on the socio-economy and cultural condition of the country with 16.24% of contribution ratio which is much affordable and can enhance quality of life and provide better and standard urban services for the residents. Fig 2 shows location of the study area.
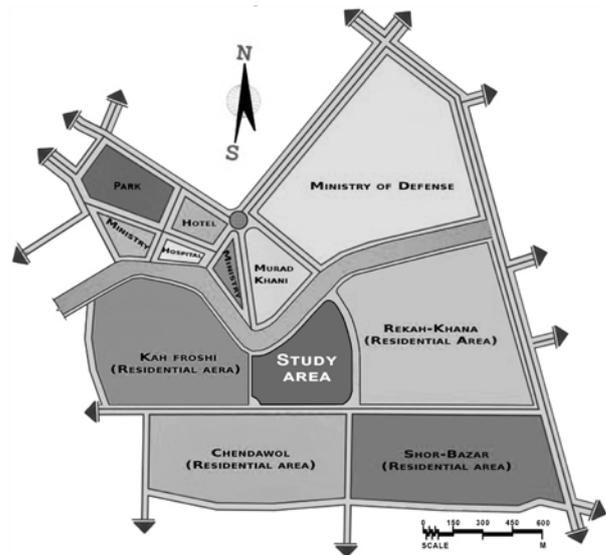

Fig. 2. District map of Kabul, location of the study area

V. THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESEARCH LIMITATION

Considering the social background and traditional customs of Afghanistan it's too important to engage community in the entire process and it counts a key to success of upgrading projects. Therefore, a questionnaire under the framework of socio-economy survey was prepared by the author and conducted on the research area. Some constraints and limitations in respect to this research are mentioning as follow:

• However the questionnaire was prepared, and face-to-face interview was done with the people but some residents were unwilling to cooperate during the interview due to the privacy of houses, security and since informal settlements suffer from tenure insecurity so people think that the government will expropriate their land, therefore we couldn't succeed to conduct the survey with all landowners.

• Unwillingness of some residents to respond accurately and in detail; during the survey and interview there were many cases that the residents responded the questions with short answers and even some of their answers were quick and without thinking, but we endeavored to avoid from the discrepancy of data by asking same questions from different people from neighborhood. Followings are pictures on the site while interviewing with the residents.

Fig. 3. Interviewing with the residents of Bagh-Ali-Mardan

Several questions were put into this questionnaire, a total 35 forms have been filled and interviewed with the people in order to collect the required data and get their opinions on contribution ratio, how to build their trust and how to deal with the residents if their lots affected in the new plan.

The questionnaire were consisting of 27 different questions, the respond of some questions which was related to community participation are mentioning as follow:

A. Education Level

Regarding the education level of the residents whom interviewed, about 8% were holding bachelor degree however the illiteracy rate were too high among the people who interviewed. The figure bellow shows the education level of the participants.
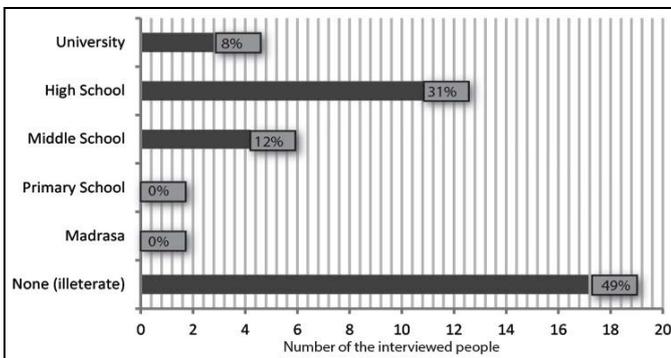

Fig. 4. Education level of the respondents

B. Income group type

According to a report in 2015 about the monthly income of the afghans, they reflected an average monthly income of 11.214AFN (Approx. 174USD). So people were asked about their monthly income based on the categorization of the income groups which was given by the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MUDH), we found that almost majority of the residents (68%) were belong to the lower mid-income group (earning 300-500$ per month), more details have provided in the bar chart below:
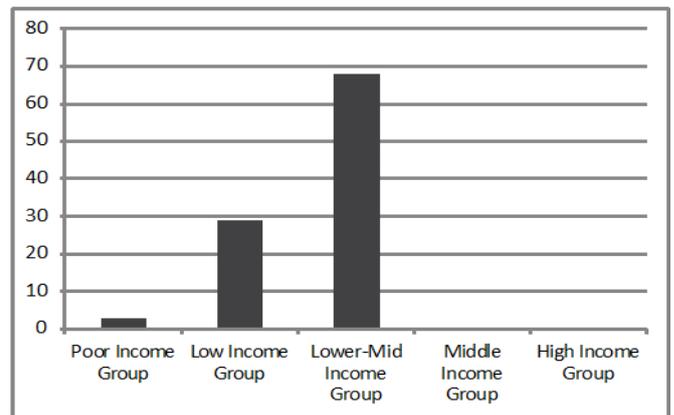

Fig. 5. Monthly income of the residents

C. Land title deed

As informal settlements are divided into four different groups according to their title deeds and land ownership plan, the research area belongs to one of the settlements where most houses were built on privately owned lands, according to land law, private land means a land which the ownership is legally proven, these residents are not legal owners in a strict sense they have acquired their ownership from customary or traditional land owners, therefore most of the residents on the area were holding customary title deeds, according to our survey sheets almost 16% were found that have no any document to prove their ownership.
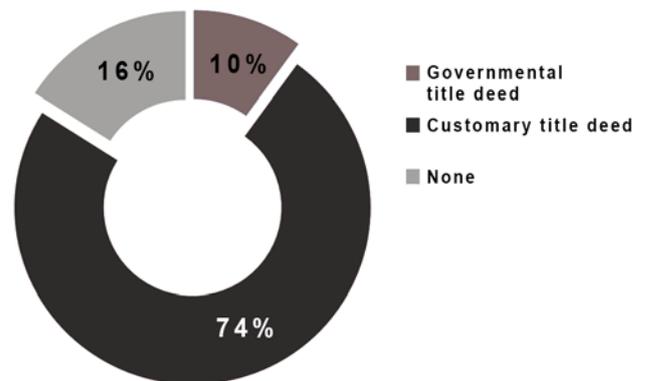

Fig. 6. Land ownership status of the area

D. House typology (Construction material)

Basically there were three types of housing typology based on their construction material; majority of the houses are made of Mixed-brick wooden flat roof with concrete floor almost about 75% and some houses are made of Mud-bricks with wooden beams, recently concrete houses also have been made in this area. The houses are irregular and unstable; orientation is another problem which has not taken into consideration while constructing the houses.
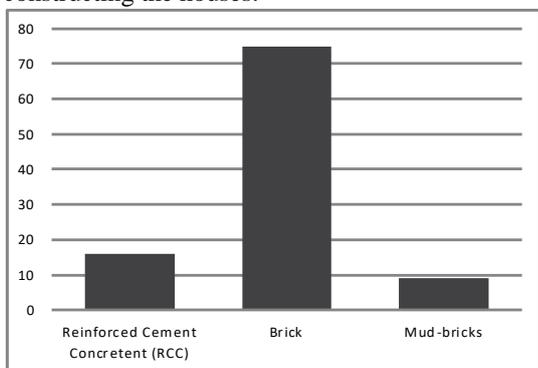

Fig. 7. House typology (Construction material)

E. Resident's idea on upgrading their area

Fortunately most of the respondents regarding the upgrading were positive and there were only few people who checked "No idea" on this question.

F. Which types of the upgrading method have been implemented on your area so far?

According to our interview and survey, the only upgrading method which was conducted on the site so far was "*On-site upgrading*"; recently some governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) showed interest in implementing some upgrading and road improvement projects.

G. What is the level of your trust on the government?

The biggest problem which can be assumed in implementing any developmental or upgrading method in Kabul is the lack of trust; during the last decades despite of lots of opportunities and financial supports but due to many reasons government couldn't completely succeed to implement enough developmental projects and win people's trust. The figure bellow shows the trust level of the people on government.
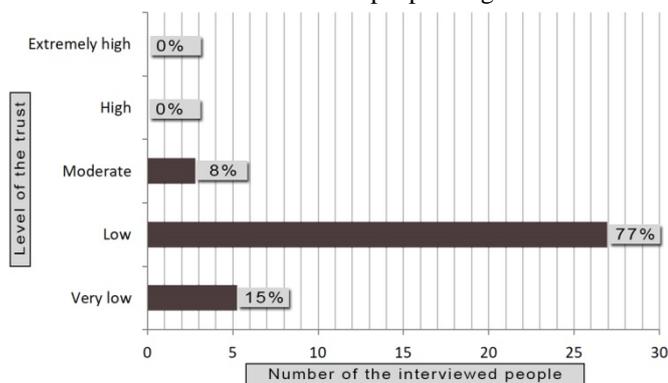

Fig. 8. The trust level of the people on government

H. Do you agree with the 16.2% of contribution rate regarding upgrading your area?

Fortunately there still exist some signs of optimism and hopefulness, despite of many problems people still want development and apparently they are ready to deal with the challenges in order to develop their area. Regarding the question if the government honestly and truly implements developmental projects, people are willing to contribute with the government. Based on our survey very few of the residents almost 10% were not sure about it.
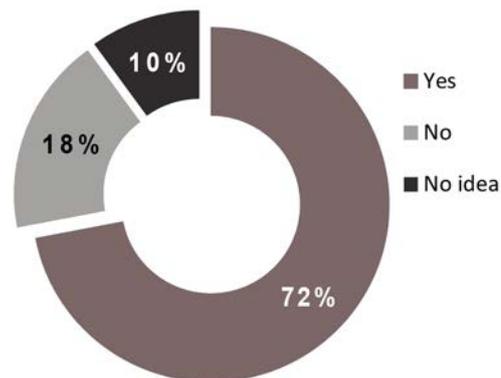

Fig. 9. Resident's agreement on the contribution ratio

I. If the new plan affects your plot, do you agree to exchange your land with an apartment on the site?

In the new proposed development plan for the *Bagh-Ali-Mardan* area, we preserved 10157m² area and about 69 lots have destructed, therefore we proposed 13911.9 m² area to be developed vertically by mid-rise apartment buildings due to move the affected and destructed lots into these apartments. Therefore, we questioned people regarding their agreement or disagreement on land exchange to apartment, almost 83% of the participants preferred moving to apartment.
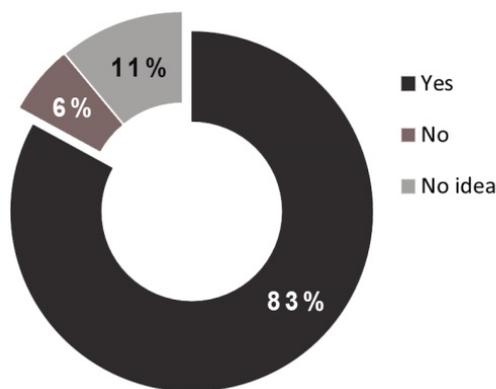

Fig. 10. Agreement on exchanging the land to apartment

J. Which types of the land exchanges do you prefer to deal with?

Regarding this question, most of the people showed their interest with the "Land to apartment" option, and 10% of the people choose to get a new parcel at the same area, as this area is one of the key locations of Kabul and due to the existence of

high price lots and being close to the main market, no one wants to relocate to another place outside the project area.
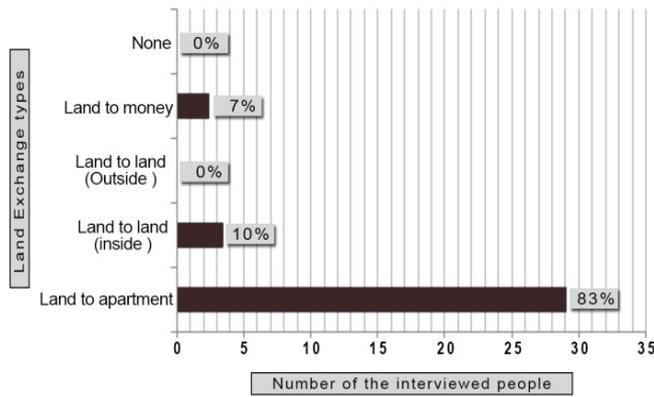

Fig. 11. Resident's idea on different types of land exchanges

VI. DISCUSSION

Many countries realized that top-down projects which were designed without much involvement of the community they were meant to serve, are never going to solve the growing problems. It also experienced that when community organizations are at the center of the planning and implementation processes, the projects are more likely to be successful. The international experiences which took place in Sri-lanka, India and Philippine in respect to the community's participation in urban planning and design shows that community can play a key and central role in both planning and implementation. Evidence show if a slum stayed in same place and haven't evicted for many years, the community will gradually improve and consolidate, housing and living condition will improve, support structures will deepen and collective system for resolving needs and problems within the community will get stronger. A good example of such case is the projects which have mentioned in Sri-lanka, India and Philippine cases, the residents themselves develop considerable capacities to organize community development councils, collaborated with other organizations and developed pragmatic relationships with local politicians and government agencies to get the things they needed in the settlement. Unfortunately in some countries due to weak economy, low-income, land tenure issues and other problems, the Community Development Council (CDC) couldn't form and work on that way; Afghanistan is no exception, however efforts have been made by many governmental and non-governmental organizations to resolve the problems and establish a people-participatory approach planning but due to many reasons the result was not satisfactory and efficient. The India sanitation participatory project changed the nature of partnership between municipality and community. The city pays for construction of the toilets and the communities pay for maintenance, water-supply and electricity. It is like mixed contribution, and people perform like a joint-venture to the project.

People participation can make the cost of the project cheap as in Sri-lanka, it cost the government only 29000$ to provide water supply, drainage and sewage system to 109 dwellers in poorwarama which is just 266$ for each households.

VII. CONCLUSION

Collaborative involvement builds social capital-developing friendships and mutual trust, sharing and strengthening common values. Building social capital is a means of building human capital-strengthening the capacities of individuals and families to overcome adversities and take advantage of opportunities.

Residents involved in community building spend their time jointly working on productive activities that address the problems they identified. Through resident participation in setting goals and developing implementation strategies, residents assume ownership in the process.

Governments have tended to look at slums and informal settlements as a serious problem to be reckoned with, as blights on the urban landscape, as dens of anti-social elements or as evidence of civic misbehavior which should be punished, but over the past two decades, many governments and policy makers have taken a second look at informal settlements, they believe that slums are a solution rather than a problem, because they provided the cheapest answer to the question of housing. It's easy to provide them with the simple basic services generally at one-fifth of the cost it takes to provide these same services to the planned built-up colonies. Moreover, the resident as a human force can consider as a strong element in contributing to the GDP growth if properly managed and planned.

Slums and the community who are living in the slums are important part of the cities; it can be engines of economic and social development. Therefore this research looked into some case studies on people's role in slum development and efforts have been made to figure out the failure and potential points of each project in terms of the community's participation in slum development and finally determined some recommendations to deal with the problem in Kabul.

Some Asian cities have a long grim history of housing project failures, in many cases the exercise engendered in breaking up the social networks, upsetting of existing economic systems and expansion or emergence of other squatter settlements elsewhere in the city [11].

Through the international experiences which took place in Philippine, India and Sri-lanaka, it is proved that community participatory planning is playing a vital and important role in implementing urban planning project and accelerating the process. Moreover, community-led approach is only half of the cost of top-down urban upgrading program [12]. The afghan experience of community-led urban development and slum upgrading showed that, in the past the government's main planning strategy has been upgrading in the form of provision of very basic services and paving the road. Those projects could not succeed to achieve the certain objectives as to why people and community were not being properly involved in the

process. People were just involved in decision making steps or even in some projects they were put in the picture at the end of the planning and process.

As aforementioned that a development plan based on the LR method has been prepared for a part of the Kabul old city which is an informal settlement area. Based on the background and traditional customs of Afghanistan, it is a big necessity to engage community (Shura) in the entire process of upgrading, therefore a questionnaire and face-to-face interview was conducted with the residents on June 2018 by the author in order to collect the required data and their opinions about their settlement development. Among many answers which provided by the participants, lack of trust considered the biggest challenge against development projects. In order to rebuild the trust, government should consider bottom-up participatory approaches.

Factors like not giving priority to the people, top-down planning and administrative & financial corruptions while planning and implementation have caused to increase resident's distrust on the government. In order to overcome this problem and build the trust, government should implement a pilot project which is based on bottom-up approach; a district which has enough educated people should be taken as a pilot project in order to easily get their agreement and overcome the public resistance. Secondly, the area should be small in size due to face with fewer problems and easily implement the project.

Moreover, a key factor is to respect the religious and historical places in any project, the Afghan general public will never accept disrespect and relocation of mosques or shrine sites in their neighborhood. Therefore, planners and architects need to make careful analysis of the target area and carefully formulate them into coherent strategies for newer developments. In addition, considering the income level of residents, efforts should be made to preserve more houses and make less destruction. In the pilot project, due to minimize the financial contribution of the residents, government should consider some subsidies and involvement of the private sector through several public-private-partnerships (PPP) models in the project.

In conclusion, community participation in the project will promote self-awareness and confidence, making people examine their problems and to think positively about the solution. Moreover, as Afghanistan is facing with financial crisis so this approach can significantly help to decrease the project cost and as well as generate job opportunities.

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