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## SUCCESS STORY

# USAID RESTORES LAND RIGHTS FOR 72 SHAREHOLDERS

In 2008, a group of 72 shareholders of the dehkan farm *Mirzo Gado* were assigned 65 hectares of land. Four years later, a local government official illegally withdrew eight hectares of that land without asking their permission and transferred the land to another dehkan farm for fishery purposes. For years, the shareholders were unsuccessful in trying to get their land back. Despite awareness-building efforts, many farmers remain uninformed of laws on land-use rights and as a result, some local officials are able to manipulate or obstruct dehkan farm members' ability to exercise their rights.

The USAID Tajikistan Land Reform and Farm Restructuring Project (LRFPR) regularly supports roundtables to promote dialogue between farmers and government officials. On February 25, 2014, shareholders from *Mirzo Gado* participated in a roundtable on farm restructuring conducted by USAID-sponsored Legal Aid Centers (LAC), *Ilhom* and *Tajagrofond*.

**“Roundtables on farm restructuring issues are a good platform to discuss land problems together with the responsible state officials in order to find a solution.”**

- Said Sharipov,  
shareholder of the *Mirzo Gado* dehkan farm

The farmers were able to talk directly to the representative of the rayon State Unitary Enterprise Registration of Immovable Property, and asked for clarification regarding their case. The representative explained that the chairperson's decision was illegal, and detailed the specific measures the farmers needed to take to regain their land.

Then, the LAC *Tajagrofond* lawyer worked with LRFPR lawyers to help the farmers petition for the return of their land. The farmers submitted their claim to the Economic Court of the Khatlon District on March 2, 2015.

On March 13, 2015, the court declared that the actions of the chairperson of the Jomi district were illegal and ruled the eight hectares of land be returned to the 72 shareholders. The farmers received their lands back and

started to cultivate their eight hectares. Their restored shares of land will increase *Mirzo Gado's* harvest production yields.

Expanding land-use rights of farmers fosters greater transparency in land administration, leading to more efficient use of land and improve the livelihoods for Tajiks living in rural areas.

**Photo Caption:** LAC lawyer Ibrobim Sharipov consults Mr. Said Sharipov and other shareholders of the dehkan farm *Mirzo Gado*, March 5, 2015.