BURKINA FASO

IMPROVING URBAN LIVING CONDITIONS IN OUGADOUGOU AND BOBO-DIOULASSO

The Project to Improve Urban Living Conditions (PACVU) started in 1997 in the cities of Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso in Burkina Faso. It works to ensure that efforts to improve urban living conditions are founded on the priorities of residents, but links residents' leadership in decision-making to the fact that they must contribute resources to projects that they have chosen.

Out of the 1.2 million people living in Ouagadougou and half a million in Bobo-Dioulasso, 25% fall below the nationally defined poverty line for urban areas, and the need for infrastructure such as water supply, electricity, sewerage, streets, markets, schools, healthcare centres, and income generating facilities has significantly increased. At the same time, since 1993, the country has been engaged in a decentralisation process designed to empower local communities by providing them with a legal status and greater authority to take on responsibilities in their living environment.

In this context, PACVU works by allocating resources to under-equipped neighbourhoods in these two cities, whose residents determine their own needs and priorities for infrastructure and services.

An essential aspect of this participatory approach is to raise the awareness of residents and help them to organise local decision-making bodies through which they can be involved in the decision-making process. To this end, a social infrastructure team was set up, which collaborates with the Communes (municipalities) of the two cities. The team is responsible for the 'social marketing' of the project through activities such as meetings with the locally elected...
representatives, religious communities, development associations and inhabitants of the neighbourhoods, production of radio programmes and audio-visual documentaries, theatre forums, and even football tournaments between eligible neighbourhoods. These activities aim at encouraging initiatives at the grassroots level and giving them the support of the Communes through PACVU.

As noted earlier, a key aspect of PACVU’s approach is that communities must contribute financially to their projects - both to help raise funds and because the believe is that residents will be more committed to managing and maintaining facilities if they have invested personally.

A pilot project in Ouagadougou was used to decide the contributions by communities for each type of infrastructure. The result was a system in which contributions relate to the type of investment - eg communities must pay from 5-10% of the cost of basic sanitation facilities, up to 30% for income generating facilities.

Both communes (Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso) contribute 10 to 15% of the cost of the facilities and IDA (International Development Association) finances the remaining 60 to 80% in the form of a long term loan. Some flexibility had to be shown in regards to the idea of cost sharing. For example, the level of community contribution to the implementation of such micro-projects as drainage, or primary school wall building (10 to 20%) was found to be too high by the communities and so the Communes took on a larger proportion of the costs.

Within three years of activity, 78 micro-projects requested by residents were implemented. For greater sustainability of the infrastructure, management protocols were included from the formulation of the micro-projects and signed between the communes and the communities on one hand, and between the communities and service deliverers on the other hand. The approach has encountered some problems. For example, the time lag between disbursement of funds and start up of projects (5 to 7 months) was a point of contention with residents.

However, in general it seems that the clarity and transparency of the rules of participation - and the clear connection established between participation in decision-making and participation in financing, which goes beyond more traditional cost-sharing methods - have strengthened the willingness of the communities to make a financial contribution.

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