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Revitalization of the Social Fabric and Housing Programme, Santa Maria da Feira Portugal

Good Practice

New for 2002

Categories:

Poverty Eradication:

- access to credit
- income generation
- job creation
- vocational training

Social Services:

- crime reduction and prevention
- education
- health and welfare
- public safety
- recreation

Housing:

- access to housing finance
- affordable housing
- construction industry
- eco-logical design
- homelessness
- land tenure and security

Level of Activity: Regional (international)

Ecosystem: Continental

Summary

Comprehensive Revitalization of the Social Fabric and Housing Programme embraced 5 parishes in the Municipality of Santa Maria da Feira (Town of S. Joao de Ver, City of Lourosa, City of Fiaes, Town of Lobao and City of Santa Maria da Feira).

This programme allowed 261 families to gain access to adequate housing and it assisted 300 families as part of the project that fights poverty. This rehousing was accompanied by initiatives that promoted social re-integration, by reorganizing daily living and by offering a whole set of practices that are inherent to its new living framework. We should also like to indicate a programme supporting conservation of dwellings and another supporting the construction of individual housing.

As concerns the eradication of poverty, noteworthy are the elimination of those mechanisms causing poverty and social exclusion through cooperation between the public and private sectors, integrated multisectorial action and participation and joint responsibility of local groups and communities, with the aim of activating their resources and competence so as to become autonomized in relation to the

downgrading processes of which they are targets.

As a complement to housing and to the politics governing the fight against poverty, a network of diversified social services has been created, which includes fields ranging from family psychosocial support, to alcohol and drug abuse. In the field of education, educational initiatives were promoted for health, environmental awareness, adult education and training, mechanisms for supporting children having special educational needs and free-time activities for children and youths.

Narrative

SITUATION BEFORE THE INITIATIVE BEGAN

Local institutions' relative passivity towards population growth, impelled by an industrial model that turns to intensive, undifferentiated labour with low levels of qualifications and schooling. Thus, social and environmental problems arise, expressed as an increase in precarious housing conditions and the proliferation of shantytown dwellings.

ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIORITIES

Priorities, as defined by the partners by means of an extensive diagnosis of each parish, foresaw the impelling of institutional dynamics for solving the community's problems and for granting adequate housing to needy families at controlled costs. Along with that, they promoted the set up of local communities that ease social integration: these communities are essential for reducing poverty and social exclusion, education (along the lines of health, schooling and the environment), vocational training, vital for getting a job and creating sociability habits, thus offering improved quality of life and greater buying power.

FORMULATION OF OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Objectives, as set by the partners, considered improved housing conditions, by favouring families' involvement in the process of social integration and allowing them to acquire social skills and work habits. At the same time, they fostered health, success in school and vocational training, which contributed towards changing risk situations and delinquency, thus allowing people to establish ties for socialization and solidarity. The project's development strategy was based on a territorial approach and

on an "ascending" and lasting execution founded on representative partnership and on the expanded participation of citizens, and on the mobilization of local resources and entrepreneurs.

MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

Financial resources came from contributions granted by City Council, the Central Government (INH, IPJ, Commissariat, IEFPP), the European Union (APPVSCV) and APPORT contributions, all of which are directed towards building and refurbishing housing, creating support centres for families, such as an Educational Advancement Centre and Resource Centre, for education initiatives, and pedagogical and vocational training for acquiring movable goods and real estate and for creating Community Councils aimed at greater commitment to resolving their problems.

Logistic resources, the assigning of facilities and some equipment, were made available by several intervening partners in the project.

Technical and human resources were made up of psychologists, sociologists and social workers, social instructors, animators, architects, landscape artists, planners, engineers and construction workers, and were mobilized by City Council and by the partners, considering the exhaustive diagnosis carried out in each parish, as pertaining to the precarious situations of the lives of needy families.

Next, plans of action were drawn up in the fields of housing, sanitation and water supply, access to

credit, the environment, education, vocational training, jobs, social integration and reduced crime levels, according to the needs that are determined at the time of the analysis.

PROCESS

The implementation of housing projects took integration into account as an extension of the urban fabric by building housing cores with few housing units. This practice fostered not only social harmony, but also avoided the de-integration of people from their family roots. The projects were equipped with support infrastructures: multi-purpose sports facilities, children's playgrounds, tutoring rooms and free-time activities and areas for the population to get together and organize activities. City Council has been concerned not only with doing away with shantytown dwellings and other related constructions after the families are re-located, but also with the salvaging of dwellings.

One of the major difficulties encountered with respect to the lack of perception on the part of owners regarding legal and technical demands, as concerns the required accommodations, as well as weak spots in legal instruments which force owners to demolish or to carry out repair work. One of the measures taken to overcome these difficulties was direct negotiation with those concerned.

"Giving out a house", did not, of itself, constitute a factor causing the integration of those concerned; thus, the allotment of housing was accompanied by the implementation of initiatives fostering social integration. After serious social problems were detected, the Project for the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion called "Rights and Challenges" was carried out, in conjunction with other public and private organizations. This project fosters a series of initiatives aimed at the social integration of citizens. Organizational support instruments were designed for structuring intervention after people are relocated.

Several work meetings were fostered with the various entities, partners and their technical corps, aimed at determining the link-up of partners. With this course of action, a shortage of human, material and financial resources was noted, with these constituting the main obstacle to the creation of partnership networks. Consequently, a reinforcement of institutional competencies was achieved by means of networking, thus altering behaviours. The Rights and Challenges Project has played (and still plays) an important and innovating role as a mediator of various partners, a stimulator of means of communication-areas for reflection and training - aimed at bringing institutions closer to the community.

Negotiation was the basis for on-site intervention, thus preparing the major players for analysing problems and defining the most appropriate solutions.

Intervention was made possible where communication, the exchange of know-how, along with commitment, led to community initiatives capable of advancing integration and socio-cultural and economic valuation.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

New social solutions and new local dynamics were created, aimed at creating new projects and reinforcing the competencies of organizations operating on site in the social sphere.

The result of the work carried out was a deeper spirit of partnership in terms of territorial logic, in sharing resources, reinforcement of personal, social and vocational skills of the population most in need and suitability of services rendered. Access to housing has offered adequate living conditions. Partner Community Centres have created new solutions by instituting social services for supporting family and community, psychosocial support and programmes for free-time activities. Cooperation networks materialized, stimulated local potential, synergies and resources, thus making social intervention more effective. More flexible procedures were adopted, and actions closer to the population were outlined, by carrying out solidarity mechanisms and creating new opportunities.

We implemented training courses for those on long-term unemployment and first-job seekers, thus

integrating the unemployed in the job market and allowing for the creation of micro-businesses. In terms of education, services and support centres for the educational community were created. In the area of health, Health Education initiatives were carried out with the institution of the Alcohol Abuse Centre and infrastructures for treating and re-integrating drug addicts. The Environment Club develops environmental education initiatives and raises awareness with adults and school-age children, having been widely acclaimed and contributed towards a change in behaviour. Noteworthy is the work carried out in the use of bins for separating rubbish, recycling and reuse.

SUSTAINABILITY

Financial: financial resources were used for building and preserving housing and for acquiring movable goods and real estate. Forty percent of the cost of building 261 dwellings was funded by the INH, with the remaining amount funded by City Council, which took out a bank loan, partly with subsidized interest rates. In the rehousing programme, the government contributed with 40% in non-returnable aid, with the remaining amount funded by City Council, which reinvests the amount of the rents or the amount of the eventual sale of the dwelling in maintenance or up-skilling or in new residential projects.

Social integration programmes were co-financed by City Council, the Central Government, Local Partner Entities and the European Union.

Social and economic: Young people, women with few qualifications, the unemployed or those with precarious jobs attend vocational training courses and pedagogical initiatives for their social integration and improved quality of life. Children benefit from services that make sure their rights are respected.

The elderly benefit from discounts when purchasing goods and services and leisure activities and make use of day centres and homes. The handicapped are the target of special schooling policies and vocational integration. They benefit from transport to and from school and specialized services.

Cultural: A policy for integrating all citizens is fostered where no one is segregated, both in schools and in cultural activities that have been developed. Local fame is valued by reconstructing historic buildings, ancestral festivities and the certification of regional quality products.

Environmental: The incorporation of the Environment Club allows for the integration of underprivileged youths and children, using education and environmental awareness as a strategy. They perform activities ranging from reusing and recycling to cleaning and conserving green spaces in residential areas, as they stress greenery as support for improved quality of life.

LESSONS LEARNT

The strengthening of social partnerships largely contributed towards the structuring of partnership networks as a function of common aims and projects and of the implementation of new and innovative solutions, services and dynamics more appropriate to local problems that are detected.

Access to information on social rights and duties on the part of the population and the creation of dynamics that ease the progressive acquisition of autonomy urged civic participation and citizenship. The Social Housing Programme has been exemplary in a balanced and integrated framework of the social and urban fabric involved.

The degradation of housing and related social problems has now become part of the concerns of City Council and Partner Organisations' Social Policies.

The dynamics carried out on the social and institutional fabric involved the appearance of new services: Support Services for Family and Community.

In terms of activities and budgets, we included various programmes directed at children and youths, the elderly, those on long-term unemployment, children and

youths at risk, youths and adults with little schooling, families living in derelict housing, individuals with drug and alcohol abuse problems.

The housing programme and the programmes fighting poverty and social exclusion will be extended to the entire municipality, coordinated by comprehensive partnership agencies. The project took into consideration the aspect of itinerant environmental education, specifically those aspects pertaining to separation and selective collection of waste, with specific equipment for selective waste collection being placed in each residential area.

In future projects, we will seek to improve the energy policy, in terms of materials and equipment to be used in construction and issues of accessibility. Also, there will be more environmental education, as other topics besides selective collection are introduced, such as energy issues, water conservation, and issues pertaining to noise, among others.

REPLICABILITY

The re-housing programme was referred to by official, national and local bodies as being good practice to be implemented in other municipalities, so much so that it was given two awards: National INH 1st Prize for 2000 and Honourable Mention for 2001. Several city councils and construction companies have requested information from City Council on the procedure and methodology used, namely the Protocol agreed to by the INH, City Hall and private firms, as well as the technical-financial framework for the construction of all housing projects: children's playgrounds, garages, multi-purpose sports facilities, tutoring rooms and free-time activity areas, and spaces for population organizations.

The city councils that contacted us were those of Ovar, Matosinhos, Alter do Chao, Sever do Vouga and Cabeceiras de Basto. The Projects for the Fight Against Poverty for Ermesinde, Guimaraes, Ovar and Vila Nova de Famalicao requested information about our projects for education, vocational training, environmental education, integration of drug addicts and alcoholics.

The work performed by the Environment Club showed positive replicability in the municipality's schools which implemented their own Environment Club. Its performance has allowed for cooperation with various associations within the municipality.

We intend to prepare the organization of a forum for discussing and presenting social and environmental policies that have been developed as well as their impact on the population's quality of life. In parallel, projects and local institutional dynamics will be displayed as part of an exhibit so as to intensify the development of inter-institutional partnerships. To this end, in 2001 City Council organized Housing and Social Integration, a conference that was open to the public, in which this project was debated with Portugal's most respected specialists around the following topic: "People are not objects that are kept in drawers".

Key Dates

1997- start of the project and creation of the Resource Centre

1998- Creation of the Environment Club and the Centre for Educational Promotion

1999- Handover of the first keys in Balteiro

2000- Opening of the Headquarters of the Association of Fully Treated Alcoholics

2000/2001 -First INH National Housing Award and Honourable Mention

References

1. "Centenas de casas ate Dezembro" (Hundreds of houses by December), Jornal de Noticias, 12 November 2001.
2. "Um novo ciclo de Desenvolvimento" (A new development cycle), Primeiro de Janeiro, 2 August 2001, p. 5 and 6.

3. "Os oscars da Habitacao" ("Oscars" for Housing), Primeiro de Janeiro Newspaper, 2 August 2001, p. 6.
4. National Housing Award from INH in 2001, Honourable Mention, National Housing Institute, 2001, p. 26 and 27.
5. "Casas premiadas entregues amanha" (Prized houses delivered Tomorrow), National Housing Award from INH in 2000, 1st Prize, National Housing Institute, Jornal de Noticias, 10 July, 2000, p.35.
6. "Sair do Ghetto" (Leaving the Ghetto) Primeiro de Janeiro, 27 December 2000, p. 3 and 4.
7. "Um Clube a pensar no ambiente" (A Club for the environment), Jornal Terras da Feira, 11 December 2000, p. 15.
8. "Entrega de chaves e 1 pedra na Cadinha" (Handover of keys and 1st stone at Cadinha), Jornal Noticias de Lourosa, no. 49, 12 July 2000, p. 6 and 7.
9. "Autarquia merece respeito e apreco" (City Council deserves respect and consideration), Jornal Terras da Feira, no. 898, July 2000, p. 4.
10. "Soltam-se os Sonhos" (Dreams are let loose), Jornal Terras da Feira, no. 898, July 2000, p. 10.

Additional Partners:

Manpower and Vocational Training Institute (I.E.F.P.)
 Sao Joao da Madeira Manpower Centre
 Avenida Benjamim Araujo 372, Apartado (P.O. Box) 252
 Sao Joao da Madeira
 3700-061 Sao Joao da Madeira
 Portugal
 Person to Contact: Dr. Marques Pinto
 Type of Organization: National Government Services

Portuguese Institute for Youth
 Rua das Pombas, apartado (P.O. Box) 182
 Aveiro
 3811-901 Aveiro
 Portugal
 Person to Contact: Dr. Manuel Malicia
 Type of Organization: National Government Services

District Centre for Solidarity and Social Security – Local Service for Santa Maria da Feira
 Rua Eng. Duarte Pacheco, no. 15
 Santa Maria da Feira
 4520-225 Santa Maria da Feira
 Portugal
 Person to Contact: Dr. Custodia
 Type of Organization: National Government Services

National Housing Institute (INH)
 Rua D. Manuel II, 296, 6
 Porto
 4050-344 Porto
 Portugal
 Person to Contact: Defensor Castro, Eng.
 Type of Organization: National Government Services

O Abrigo(The Shelter) Community Welfare Centre
 Rua da Estacao, no. 541
 Santa Maria da Feira
 4520-618 S. Joao de Ver
 Portugal

Person to Contact: Mr. Jose Antonio
Type of Organization: NGO

Sao Tiago de Lobao Health Care Centre
Rua da Tapada Nova
Santa Maria da Feira
4505-450 Lobao
Portugal

Person to Contact: Prof. Cardoso
Type of Organization: NGO

Padre Jose Coelho Health Care Centre
Rua Padre Manuel Francisco de Sa, 81, Apartado (P.O. Box) 102
Fiaes
4509-908 Fiaes
Portugal

Person to Contact: Mr. Jorge Pedro
Type of Organization: NGO

ANOP- National Association of Project Workshops
Rua das Escolas (ISPAB)
Santa Maria da Feira
4535 Pacos de Brandao
Portugal

Person to Contact: Dr. Fernanda Marques
Type of Organization: NGO

Association of Fully Treated Alcoholics of Sao Paio de Oleiros
Edificio do Hospital, apartado (P.O. Box) 57
City: Santa Maria da Feira
Post Code: 4535 Sao Paio de Oleiros
Portugal

Person to Contact: Mr. Jose Maria
Type of Organization: NGO

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Type of Organization: Local Authority

Partners

Social Development Association - Health, Culture and Life

Father Bernardino Queiros Alves

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Santa Maria de Lamas

4535-402 Santa Maria de Lamas

Portugal

Type of Organization: Non-governmental organisation (NGO)

Educational Area Centre (C.A.E.)

Manuel Oliveira, Eng.

Rua Dr. Elisio de Castro, 97, r-ch.

Santa Maria da Feira

4520-213 Santa Maria da Feira

Portugal

Type of Organization: Central Government

Type of Partner Support: Technical Support

Santa Maria da Feira Health Care Centre

Dr. Rola

Rua Prof. Egas Moniz, no. 7

Santa Maria da Feira

4520-909 Santa Maria da Feira

Portugal

Type of Organization: Central Government

Financial Profile

Year	Total Budget (US\$)	S. M. Feira City Hall % Budget	INH % Budget	CRNLCP % Budget	Feira Health Care Clinic % Budget	CAE % Budget	APPV-SCV % Budget
1997	892,799.66	3.65	2.72	0.98	0.06	0.08	0.15
1998	319,321.10	1.17	0.00	0.98	0.12	0.13	0.18
1999	667,579.52	1.22	0.00	1.03	0.12	0.15	0.19
2000	637,741.45	1.38	0.00	1.03	0.13	0.15	0.20
2001	8,991,763.03	37.87	36.34	1.33	0.14	0.15	0.21
Total	11,509,204.75	45.30	39.06	5.36	0.57	0.66	0.92

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