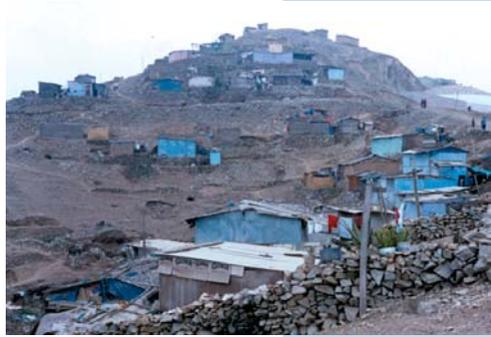


PERU

THE 'NEIGHBOURHOOD DOCTORS' IN PERIPHERAL LIMA

'Ayni' is a word from the Indian language Quechua. It refers to a special form of mutual support: "by helping you, I may enable you to help someone else". It is in this spirit that the team of the 'Neighbourhood Doctors' from Aynimundo started their work in Pampas de San Juan, a sector of the poor district San Juan de Miraflores in the Southern part of Lima.



Pampas de San Juan is one of the countless clusters of neighbourhoods in the 15 poor districts of Lima. After people claimed possession of the land and built their first straw and wooden houses, the long and arduous process of neighbourhood consolidation started, legalising land tenure, opening up roads and organising drinking water. They build the city themselves: roads are opened, and terraces are constructed, connected by trails. Although

every drop of water had to be carried uphill in the first years, several people managed to bring some green to the desert. Communal spaces were created providing a crèche and a communal kitchen where inexpensive meals were produced and community meetings were held.

However, this process of building a city through self-help also has its limitations. Each small neighbourhood followed its own lifecycle through the process of legal approval and installation of basic services, without taking into account the situation in the neighbouring settlement. The lack of good quality technical assistance in both the planning and the building processes resulted in urban chaos.



Therefore, a small team of professionals (architects, a social worker, engineers, topographers and a lawyer) offered their professional skills to the inhabitants, to help them to realise their plans. A small office was opened up in Pampas de San Juan, to bring the professionals close to the people.

The project was conceived as an effort to combine four different kinds of activities, which were to be closely linked and mutually supportive:

- setting up a small-scale office of 'neighbourhood doctors' (the office also manages a very modest community development fund);
- developing a Local Agenda 21;
- training young professionals (architects and engineers) to work with people;
- reflection and debate (to learn the results to support similar initiatives elsewhere).



The project started with a very intensive process of participatory design of an integrated urban development plan in eight poor neighbourhoods (450 families) without legal land titles. In a series of workshops the people developed the plans. The neighbourhood leaders then gathered in many workshops to develop a plan for the area as a whole. The 'neighbourhood doctors' converted these proposals to technical plans, which were presented to the land-titling agency (awarded in 1999 and 2000).

The proposal also resulted in the first outlines of a Local Agenda 21 for the area. The main component of this Local Agenda 21 is a



project where treated wastewater can be used for irrigating the area, which would make it possible to green the desert, without relying on the very scarce potable water. The district municipality endorsed the plan and initial agreements were reached with other important actors, such as the Water Company and a national government-led wastewater treatment programme. The very difficult and unstable political situation in Peru inhibited the further development of this component. The 'neighbourhood doctors' however continued their work with the inhabitants.

Three pilot projects have been implemented from the community development fund. In one neighbourhood a park was constructed. A second pilot project included the design of a multifunctional community centre, with kindergartens and a day-care centre, a communal bakery, rooms for training and small-scale workshops and a communal kitchen. With voluntary labour, two classrooms were also built, resulting in a revived neighbourhood organisation, which felt itself capable of implementing other improvements in the neighbourhood. In the same neighbourhood Aynimundo ran a 'Summer School': a course programme (carpentry, pastry, sewing, theatre, general awareness raising in drugs, sexuality, violence, and parenthood) for young people and adults, and a creativity programme for the children.

The basic principle of the project is to work as much as possible with the resources available within the communities, adding technical assistance as a tool and the limited financial resources of the community development fund as a catalyst. The 'neighbourhood doctors' only work in settlements where the inhabitants run the organisational arrangements and undertake activities to raise their part of the funds and/or contribute materials and labour.

The most important contribution of the 'neighbourhood doctors' is not the material output of a park or the classrooms, but the building together of the social network of the neighbourhood. The formula of Aynimundo and their team of 'neighbourhood doctors' can be easily replicated elsewhere, especially in Latin America, where there is a strong tradition of community based organisations. The structure is simple: small scale, long term finance for professional assistance; ad hoc fund raising for the construction of infrastructure; and community responsibility for maintenance of the infrastructure.



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