



## Urban Agenda Platform

*The global platform for sharing progress, action and knowledge on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve sustainable urban development.*

# Improvement without Barriers

Region	Latin America and the Caribbean
Award Scheme	World Habitat Awards
Themes	Housing
Start Year	2013
Sustainable Development Goals	Goal 10 - Reduce inequality within and among countries Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

## Summary

The Improvement without Barriers (Mejoramiento Sin Barreras) programme focuses on advancing the living conditions of people with mobility difficulties by providing them with specifically designed bathrooms and improved access routes to their homes. This improves the quality of life for people living in some of the city's poorest neighbourhoods.

## Background and Objective

Medellín is the second largest city in Colombia with a population estimated at over 3 million residents. The way many settlements in Medellín are built makes them inaccessible to most people with mobility problems. Often, they are built on land that nobody else is using, which is frequently steeply sloping, with narrow roads and tracks that are rarely surfaced. Problems with accessibility start at home. Many disabled people struggle because the layout of their home is unsuitable. Most homes in low-income settlements are built on small sites at minimal cost. Few homes have bathrooms that are accessible for disabled people. This means that many disabled people need full time carers to help them and, in some cases, people have to wash or use toilet facilities in unsuitable places, affecting their privacy and creating risks to their health. This not only makes disabled people dependent on others, it also places great demands on their carers. Typically, carers are family members, who in some cases have to provide 24/7 care. This often prevents carers from working and participating in society. Additionally, adapting homes so that they include proper access for disabled people is usually beyond the means of people living in low-income communities. The main objective of the Improvement without Barriers programme is to improve the quality of life of people living with a disability, their families and carers.

## Actions and Implementation

The City of Medellín has introduced a number of measures aimed at tackling poverty. It is in this context that the programme 'Improvement without Barriers' was introduced. ISVIMED was tasked with helping people with disabilities and their family members be more independent and improve their quality of life through small improvements in the physical infrastructure of their homes. The decision was made to concentrate on improving bathrooms by upgrading them and improve access routes to and around their homes. ISVIMED see bathrooms as particularly significant. The privacy that being able to bathe independently brings is important in developing self-esteem and confidence. The criteria to apply for the programme is: Living in a regularised house and land (if this is not the case at the time of application, ISVIMED can help). Living in a zone that is not marked as high-risk (e.g. not on an unstable slope). Owning the home and not having any other property. Having an income of no more than two salaries of the legal minimum wage. Having resided in Medellín for at least six years and in the house for at least three years. Having access to water and sewerage. The main difficulty encountered during the development and implementation of the programme was the lack of reliable data about people with disabilities. To overcome this problem, the project was promoted through the media and encouraged people with a disability to come forward and apply. The budget timetable for the City of Medellín and the change in administration within the local authority meant the programme could only be offered for a two-year period.

## Outcomes and Impacts

Between 2013 and 2015, the project successfully improved 1,450 homes. Government housing programmes in Latin America rarely apply to both formal and informal housing sectors. The programme is uniquely focused on people's needs not on a sector. The programme is focused on minimal intervention at low cost, enabling it to reach a large amount of people quickly. By making improvements to the houses where people with disabilities live, the programme is providing the conditions that are necessary to help disabled people live autonomously whilst freeing up time for their carers. The programme has a team of evaluators employed throughout the implementation phase to monitor performance. The evaluation has yet to be completed.



#### Urban Agenda Platform

*The global platform for sharing progress, action and knowledge on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve sustainable urban development.*

## Gender and Social Inclusivity

The programme is part of ISVIMED's wider Housing Improvement programme which focuses on the needs of low income people, particularly those living in low-income communities. The project focuses on improving the living conditions of disabled people with mobility difficulties by providing them with bathrooms. This significantly improves the quality of life for people living in some of the city's poorest neighbourhoods. ISVIMED see bathrooms as particularly significant. The privacy that being able to bathe independently brings is important in developing self-esteem and confidence. By making improvements to the houses where people with disabilities live, Mejoramiento Sin Barreras is providing the conditions that are necessary to help disabled people live autonomously whilst freeing up time for their carers.

## Innovative Initiative

Government housing programmes in Latin America rarely apply to both formal and informal housing sectors. The programme is uniquely focused on people's needs not on a sector. The programme is focused on minimal intervention at low cost, enabling it to reach a large amount of people quickly.

## Conclusion

The programme has a team of evaluators employed throughout the implementation phase to monitor performance. The evaluation has yet to be completed.