



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.

Three Public Spaces to enhance community resilience

Region

Latin America and the Caribbean

Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Summary

According to 2014 WHO's estimations, in Haiti 74,4% of the urban population live in informal settlements. Due to weak planning practices and law enforcement, during the past 30 years, the urban fabric of the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince developed informally and predominantly configured into private space.

Background and Objective

According to 2014 WHO's estimations, in Haiti 74,4% of the urban population live in informal settlements. Due to weak planning practices and scarce law enforcement, during the past 30 years, the urban fabric of the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince developed informally and predominantly configured into private space. Public space results in crowded, dangerous and unhealthy circulation spaces, a problem that exists in Carrefour-Feuilles, an informal neighbourhood in the Southern outskirts of Port-au-Prince, where the project is located. Establishment of Priorities: Emergent Vernacular Architecture (EVA Studio) was awarded the design and the construction supervision of three public spaces in Carrefour-Feuilles ("Place Tapis Rouge", "Terrain Campeche" and "Place Kay Alfred"), within the framework of the LAMIKA Program (LAMIKA_Factsheet), an acronym for "A Better Life in My Neighborhood" in Creole). An American and Haitian Red Cross joint initiative begun in 2014, the LAMIKA Program applies an integrated neighbourhood rehabilitation approach, combining soft and hard project components aimed at reducing risk, improving the economy, social life as well as the built environment of Carrefour-Feuilles. As a participatory urban analysis identified the lack of infrastructure and basic services as the most critical issue in the neighbourhood, Global Communities, the implementing partner of the LAMIKA Program and a leading organisation in implementing construction works in fragile urban settings, relied on EVA Studio's technical services and expertise for all the stages of the project, from site assessment, through the completion of the public spaces and post-occupancy evaluation. Formulation of Objectives And Strategies: [Objectives] Within the framework established by the urban study conducted by the American Red Cross, the construction of the public spaces is aimed at: - Mitigate environmental risk in open space related to landslides or flood; Improve the accessibility of the pedestrian network in the neighbourhood and at the connections to the neighbouring zones; - Create safe public spaces intended to compensate for the lack of adequate indoor housing spaces and to promote social cohesion by enhancing the participation of different population groups to urban life. [Strategy] EVA Studio's strategy to implement the objectives highlighted above, consisted in: - Defining an inclusive design and construction process leading to functional and durable public spaces; - Multiplying the impact of the investment for risk mitigation infrastructure, by providing quality public space as an added value. Mobilisation of Resources: [Human Resources] EVA Studio's team, one architect and two national site supervisors, during 12 months worked jointly with the community mobilisation team of the Red Cross and Global Communities. This joint work has allowed to entail a fair participatory process aiming a fluid and informed exchange with community members. 3D visuals and a site's maquette facilitated the understanding of community's aspirations and needs. The team's most difficult task was to motivate community members to shift their mindset from the focus on the private sphere towards a [Financial Resources] The funding for the project was provided within the framework of the LAMIKA Program. The average construction cost for the three public spaces is 155 USD/m². "Placemaking" activities, while impacting the budget to a very limited extent, were of critical importance for the achievement of the project's results (for instance in Place Tapis Rouge the cost of Placemaking activities is equivalent to the 5% of the total construction cost).

Actions and Implementation

Through a participatory approach and by placing community members at the core of the process, the design aims at providing the residents of different ages and gender with multifunctional spaces. The architectural programme is intended to provide space for all those individual activities that inadequate indoor housing space can not comfortably host, as well as for those activities related to community and social life that currently must occur in a not neutral space (for instance in spaces related to a religious confession). EVA Studio services included participatory workshops, during which the current uses of the site and relevant issues were discussed, in order to find suitable and effective design solutions that could address the most urgent needs, ambitions and goals identified by community members. The programme of the space and the architectural design have been therefore established in different stages directly with the community. EVA Studio provided technical services integrated with "placemaking" strategies aimed at encouraging a sense of ownership towards the public space within the community. For instance, in "Place Tapis Rouge" the wall that runs along the perimeter of the site has been transformed by the community and local artists with colourful murals. The designs emerged from one of the community workshops, during which both



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artists and residents discussed the meaning and value of art. The children from the area, their parents and artists from Le Centre d'Art, a leading institution for the art Haitian scene, and French artist Bault worked together on the final piece, which reflects Haiti's rich painting tradition. The construction works have been implemented by local contractors and by using locally-available resources. All the construction materials are sourced from the local market and all the pavers are manufactured in Haiti. In order to ease the perception of a network of public spaces and corridors, EVA Studio proposed the same architectural language, the same type of pavers, and details in the three public spaces. The three projects aimed at exploring the unexpected impact boundaries of Architecture, in a context where the values of Architecture are unexpected and unfamiliar.

Outcomes and Impacts

[Social and economic sustainability: facilitating local livelihoods] The three public spaces, as they ease displacements among different areas of Carrefour-Feuilles and as they improve the image of the neighbourhood reducing its stigmatisation, they facilitate commercial and exchange between Carrefour-Feuilles and the rest of the city. At the local scale, the construction of the three public spaces relied as much as possible on local workforce, 75% of which resides in Carrefour-Feuilles (including skilled and unskilled labour). A frequent site supervision and training of local workforce permitted to achieve a better quality, necessary to achieve the execution of a durable built environment. Local artisans were included in the project as they were commissioned to build some of the furniture installed in the public space. [Social and economic sustainability: strengthening local construction chain] EVA Studio's design employed only local construction techniques, local materials and local plants species. Local contractors implemented the construction works of the three public spaces with the technical support of EVA Studio's team and under the supervision the Haitian Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communication (MTPTC). For instance the coloured pavers of "Place Tapis Rouge" were designed and produced with a local manufacturer.

[Environmental sustainability: solar lamps] The installation of solar lamps in public spaces in informal communities in Haiti is often controversial: lamps and batteries are often stolen or not replaced if not functional. As per the postoccupancy evaluation, the project demonstrated that theft can be prevented if community members are actively engaged in the installation process. As per the community feedback, solar lamps allow kids and women to more safely circulate in the neighbourhood after dusk and their presence affects positively the daily routine of these groups. In a neighbourhood where electric supply is discontinuous and not accessible to everybody, solar lamps installed in public space represent an equal opportunity for the inhabitants.

Gender and Social Inclusivity

Three are the main components that enable access to quality public space in a given country: national and local laws and regulations, the financial plan of the responsible authority and an appropriate design. In Haiti, these three components are weak. Experiences and lesson learned for local implementation of public spaces, and more in general of upgrading strategies for fragile urban setting, are rare. As explained before, public spaces are neglected in project proposals which most commonly focus on mitigation infrastructure. A way forward, for the implementation of public spaces in informal settlements in Haiti, would consist in: - Formulation of good practices show-casing successful and appropriate detailing and approaches. - Creation of programs that encourage community-driven public space implementation for scaling up the impact of the good practices.

Innovative Initiative

- [Building quality public spaces: a low extra investment for a bigger impact] In fragile informal neighbourhoods occupying vulnerable urban areas, rehabilitation interventions generally give priority to the construction of mitigation infrastructure aimed at reducing environmental risk. On the other side, financing public spaces is often neglected by local authorities and donors as simplistically considered a "nice thing to have" for a community, rather than an essential element of the urban fabric. The project has demonstrated that architectural design can merge beautiful and functional public space with (anonymous) mitigation infrastructures. Quality public space does not demand a high investment in addition to that for mitigation measures. It requires, instead, design appropriateness to local culture, environment and climate: this not only to the definition of design features, but also to the identification of the design process. - [An inclusive process increases the durability of the intervention] The active participation of community members in the process can help overcome the most common issue of implementation of the construction of public spaces in informal settlements: from land tenure to site safety and to maintenance in the longer term. In this sense, public space becomes a way to empower people and an opportunity to develop social capital. The post-occupancy evaluation of three public spaces in Carrefour-Feuilles, have highlighted that in Haiti, the more public places provide space and comfort for outdoor activities, the more they acquire value for community members and the more they will provide an unsolicited maintenance. - [In-situ improvements and better access to public spaces significantly improve life in informal settlements] According to the post-occupancy evaluation, children and youngsters are those in the community most benefiting from the public spaces. Women much appreciate the safe environment in which children can spend their time outdoor, increased by the presence of lights after dusk. The upgrade and the creation of public space functioned as a way to organise the privatised fabric of the informal settlement. Public space can enhance community resilience by improving quality of life, providing access to services, ameliorating social cohesion around the care of a common good.

Conclusion



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The public spaces implemented by EVA Studio within the framework of the LAMIKA Program align with the vision and recommendations of the New Urban Agenda, adopted in October 2016, which, among other priorities, promotes access to quality public spaces. Haiti has a very weak and unorganised urban planning legal framework, which has negatively affected urban development until now. It was with the National Housing Policy (Politique Nationale du Logement et de l'Habitat) published in October 2013 and with the Guide for Neighbourhood Rehabilitation (Guide du professionnel, Réhabilitation de quartiers, Les étapes de la planification urbaine) published by CIAT, MTPTC and UCLBP in 2013, that a framework to reduce risk and ameliorate the quality of life in informal settlements was first established. Between 2010 and 2016, national authorities in collaboration with international organisations have implemented multiple neighbourhood rehabilitation programmes aiming at integrating housing reconstruction and urban development (like the LAMIKA Program). Through these programmes, a significative amount of tools and processes for slum upgrading have been piloted. These experiences are the first step to consolidate guidelines to intervene in informal settlement to reduce risk and ameliorate the life of the millions of urban dwellers living in highly vulnerable conditions in urban areas in Haiti. References: Amphitheatre in Haiti - http://www.domusweb.it/en/news/2016/12/28/eva_tapis_rouge.html - Domus Web - 28 December 2016