



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.

Integrate to develop

Region	North America
Award Scheme	Dubai International Award
Start Year	2017
Sustainable Development Goals	Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Summary

• We consider that for low income families to rise their quality of life, their promoted development must be comprehensive; hence, we have focused, on the one hand, on the improvement of their habitability conditions, and on the other hand, on dietary savings, lowering medical bills, having an additional activity that supplies extra income and avoiding direct pollution of the environment that surrounds them.

Background and Objective

Tlapacoyan, in the center/North State of Veracruz, is enclosed in the higher basin of the Río Bobos/Nautla, at 453 mamsl, with a population of 58,000, mostly dedicated to the primary sector, highly marginalized, socially disarticulated and under government aid.

Actions and Implementation

• The leading group that promoted the settlement did it by visiting precarious neighborhoods of the town, raising awareness families that chose to hear about the advantages of communal work and a change of attitude regarding old individualistic vices. When 120 interested families were gathered, a selection process began based on their punctuality in meetings, idea contributions, acceptance of majority mandates, solidary participation and conviction on meeting proposed goals. That's how the Tlacualoyan Community was established with 93 definitive members. Then consolidated, all necessary services were petitioned and managed during two municipal administrations, managing to obtain them in a 5 year lapse. The Assembly agreed upon the public register of the plots of land once all services were included in the settlement to avoid pre-sales or abandonment during the process. Once these goals were achieved, COCIT was formally set up and managed the construction of the Composing Unit, the Family Vegetable Garden, the Botanical Garden and the Community Training Center; the construction of these was done with financial resources from the UACH and the COCIT workforce, sympathizers of the Tlacualoyan settlement and other members of communities that began to become interested in reproducing the experiences they observed. Until this date these programs are still in operation. • In order to execute the described process, four types of problems were confronted and dealt with: Financial, Political, Social and excessive profits. • The plot of land chosen to establish the settlement is an uneven land close to the downtown of the city, with a magnificent panoramic view that investors in collusion with municipal authorities pretended to turn into a high-end residential area; this meant procedures with the Municipality were slowed down with multiple unfounded requests which tried to overturn the settler's petitions. Perseverance and resorting to higher instances during 2 years solved that barrier. • The price of the plots of land was dropped by buying the whole 3 hectares, with no profit for the negotiators, and being able to fit 93 habitable plots, with the rest dedicated to green areas; the form of payment of the plots as well as the purchase of building materials was done with small and constant contributions. • The lack of traditional credibility towards the leaders of the project was dealt with by multiple personal visits, and each decision was taken according to assemblies with majority votes and clear accountability, creating an atmosphere of trust and solidarity.

Outcomes and Impacts

• The connection, convergence and complementarity of the main COCIT programs (Housing, Environmental Improvement, Production of domestic plans, practical and cultural Workshops and organizational training), allow these to be permanent and based on their results they may be replicable with their own adaptations in other settlements of the municipality or in other municipalities, making their sustainability desirable and qualifying for financial support. • On the one hand, we have managed to coordinate the participation of social, financial, technical and educational institutions, national and international, for the sustainable development of the mentioned programs, favoring interaction and social gains from the work done; and on the other hand, the permanent communication with the Tlacualoyan settlement and others that have participated in the programs is maintained due to the fact that the programs are both independent and complimentary.



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Gender and Social Inclusivity

• We've already mentioned that the main experience that detonated the process that we began was the EZLN uprising on January 1st 1994. The way the Zapatistas reclaimed the values of indigenous peoples, the dignity in their struggle and the inclusive way of carrying themselves, shed some light on how we should act and, surely, it was this transference which marked our work. • We've had the opportunity to participate in diverse encounters backed by partner civil associations and educational institutions (Casa y Ciudad, UACH). • The first of them was an exchange of experiences, in the year 2006, in the municipality of Teocelo, Veracruz where a group established and manages a composting center at the municipal level independently from the town hall, managing the service to be self-sustainable and turning a profit, making it impermeable to political successions. • This is, on the long run, the goal for our composting program. By this effort, the Honorable Town Hall of Tlapacoyan concerted in 2007 a visit to a landfill in the State of Mexico called BORDO PONIENTE DE XOCHIACA, where the waste from the metropolitan area of the then Federal District was concentrated, what stemmed from there was the Town Halls support to build the composting unit we manage today. • 2012 Morelos, 2013 in Tlapacoyan, 2014 in SLP, 2015 Papantla • The Autonomous University of Chapingo (UACH) has a work program called ENCUESTRO NACIONAL DE ESCUELAS CAMPESINAS (NATIONAL ENCOUNTER OF RURAL SCHOOLS), which consists of reuniting different civil associations from different states of the country to exchange knowledge based on their regions, whether political, technical, social or cultural. Even though COCIT is an URBAN group and not RURAL (the only kind that participates in these encounters), we've participated in the following dates in places: 2012, Chinameca, State of Morelos; in 2014, in the State of San Luis Potosí and in 2015 in Papantla, State of Veracruz. In the year 2013, COCIT was the seat for the encounter in Tlapacoyan, Veracruz. The exchange of ideas, frustrations, achievements and methods carried out by different organizations has enriched us significantly and we are sure we've caused an impact on our peers. The most important lesson that we've taken from these encounters is the recognition of the disparity of ideas and the respect that must be kept towards each and every one of the participants of any citizen's group. • In the year 2015, Casa y Ciudad arranged an encounter in Mexico City between civil organizations dedicated to the promotion and improvement of houses and the rehabilitation of public spaces, there we declared our intentions to participate in this UN-Dubai contest and in another program of housing funding by CONAVI with the participation of Casa y Ciudad. It should be noted that the area Casa y Ciudad works in is Mexico City and, yet, they have still decided to participate actively in our housing and training projects based on our achievements. • Since we've participated in encounters in which, honestly, we receive more ideological and technical contributions than we give; in the year 2005 the Town Hall of the Municipality of Tlapacoyan Veracruz invited us to give advice in four settlements of the municipality, for grass roots organizing and self-help housing construction driven by the Town Hall. • The objective of COCIT is, on the long run, for all settlements of the municipality to replicate the experiences that we've had in the housing programs, composting, and domestic production of organic plants for feeding, medicinal or ornamental purposes and with that, for all families to benefit directly and the regional environment would receive a break from polluting wastes. We have been replicating our experiences, however, it is something that has been done in each partner's spare time since there is no compensation and we require to solve first our families' subsistence, hence the pace is not as fast as we would like.

Innovative Initiative

• Since the EZLN uprising in Chiapas was the detonator of the actions carried out, their lecture and follow up were the way to go, demonstrating that it was the correct way. Above all, the basic principle that the free and sovereign participation of all the citizens involved in these development processes is fundamental to act consequently with what the majority democratically decides (Hence our motto: "LISTEN TO ALL TO ACHIEVE COMMON GOOD"), and once everyone is decided and actions begin, accountability on all levels is fundamental not only to maintain everyone's trust, but to consolidate the processes and, automatically prepare any further work. The patience and integrity of the leaders turned into a fundamental link to achieve the goals set out and these characteristics were strengthened by the permanent contact with the citizens involved and, we repeat, reporting permanently on any action or resourced executed. Lastly, we think it is necessary to mention that: truly listening to all participants is fundamental, because even in cases where at first they seem trivial, they end up truly contributing with the processes they get involved with.