Media trajectories

A brief introduction to the communication practices of housing movements in São Paulo and Lagos

iied

UNIÃO DOS MOVIMENTOS DE MORADIA SÃO PAULO

jei JUSTICE & EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES - NIGERIA community legal support initiative

About the authors

This publication was prepared by Camila Cociña (IIED researcher) and Alexandre Apsan Frediani (IIED principal researcher), based on the workshops held in São Paulo and Lagos in 2023 with members of UMM-SP and JEI respectively.

Acknowledgements

The content of this booklet is based on workshops that included the participation of Evaniza Rodrigues, Benedito Barbosa, Francisco Comarú, Talita Gonsales, Cecilia Bacha, Elaine Rosa, and João Paulo Rodrigues in São Paulo; and Andrew Maki, Temilade Sesan, Samuel Okechukwu, Bisola Akinmuyiwa, Michael Ogungbure, Jesuyon Adianu, Halimat Bakare, and members of the *Media4Change* team in Lagos. Additionally, the content draws on information compiled in "Media landscapes" reports produced by Francisco Comarú and Talita Gonsales (São Paulo), and Andrew Maki (Lagos).

Front cover photo: Participants of civic media labs in Ago Egun Bariga, Lagos. Credit: Sam Okechukwu
Back cover photo: São Paulo | Alexandre Apsan Frediani/IIED

Published by IIED, September 2024
Cociña, C and Frediani, AA (2024) Media trajectories: a brief introduction to the communication practices of housing movements in São Paulo and Lagos. IIED, London.

ISBN: 978-1-83759-102-2

www.iied.org/22521iied

Contents

Introduction 4

União dos Movimentos de Moradia, São Paulo (UMM-SP) 5

Justice & Empowerment Initiatives (JEI) in Lagos and the Nigerian Slum/Informal Settlement Federation 10

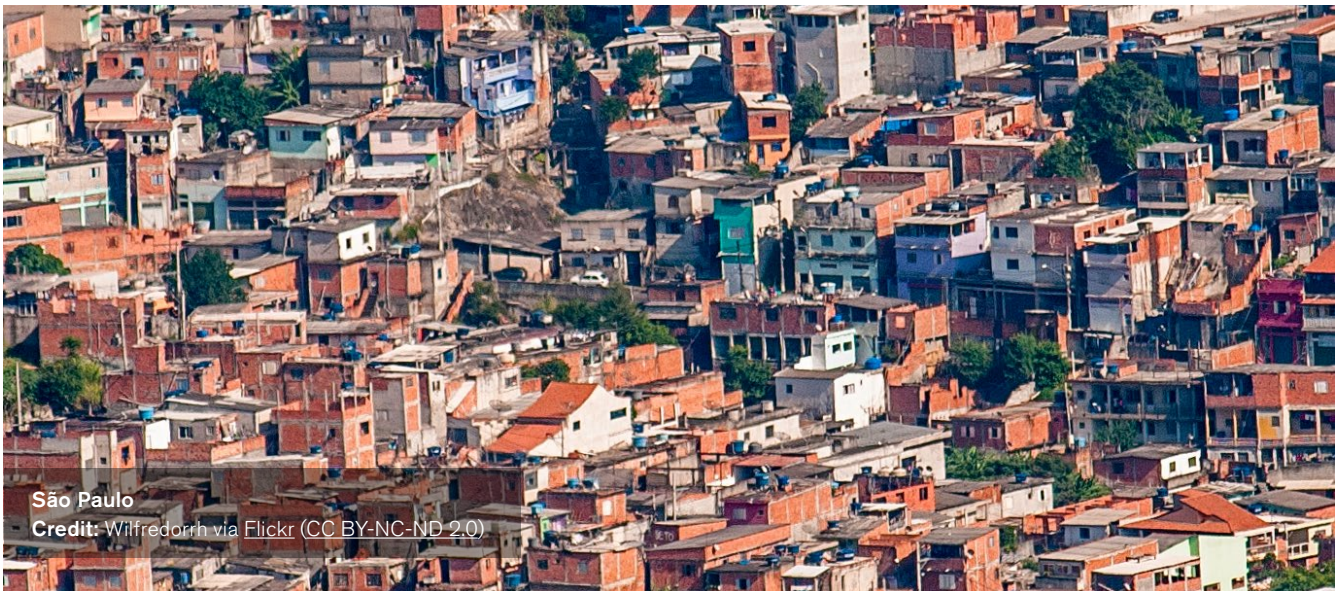
Moving forward 18

Introduction

'Civic media for housing rights: lessons from struggles against evictions in São Paulo and Lagos' is an action–research project that explores the role of communication practices used by grassroots groups to improve their capabilities to advance housing justice. Led by IIED, the project is addressing this topic in partnership with two housing organisations in the cities of São Paulo in Brazil and Lagos in Nigeria. União dos Movimentos de Moradia (UMM-SP) is an alliance of housing movements in greater São Paulo, and Justice & Empowerment Initiatives (JEI) is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Lagos, which works directly with the Nigerian Slum/Informal Settlement Federation. While different in size, history, scope and strategies, these two organisations and the movements they support share a common emphasis on communication practices as key to responding to rights violations and advancing the right to adequate housing.

As part of the project, these organisations have implemented a series of training workshops to strengthen grassroots communications capacities. Before designing and implementing the workshops (which we have called Civic Media Labs) we explored together how the role of communication has changed over the years for UMM-SP and JEI. To delve deeper into this question, we developed a timeline with each organisation, in which we identified two different trajectories: the main events related to the struggles of the housing movements in their respective countries; and the changes in the use of communication tools and tactics. From this, we identified different periods in which communication played distinctive and changing roles.

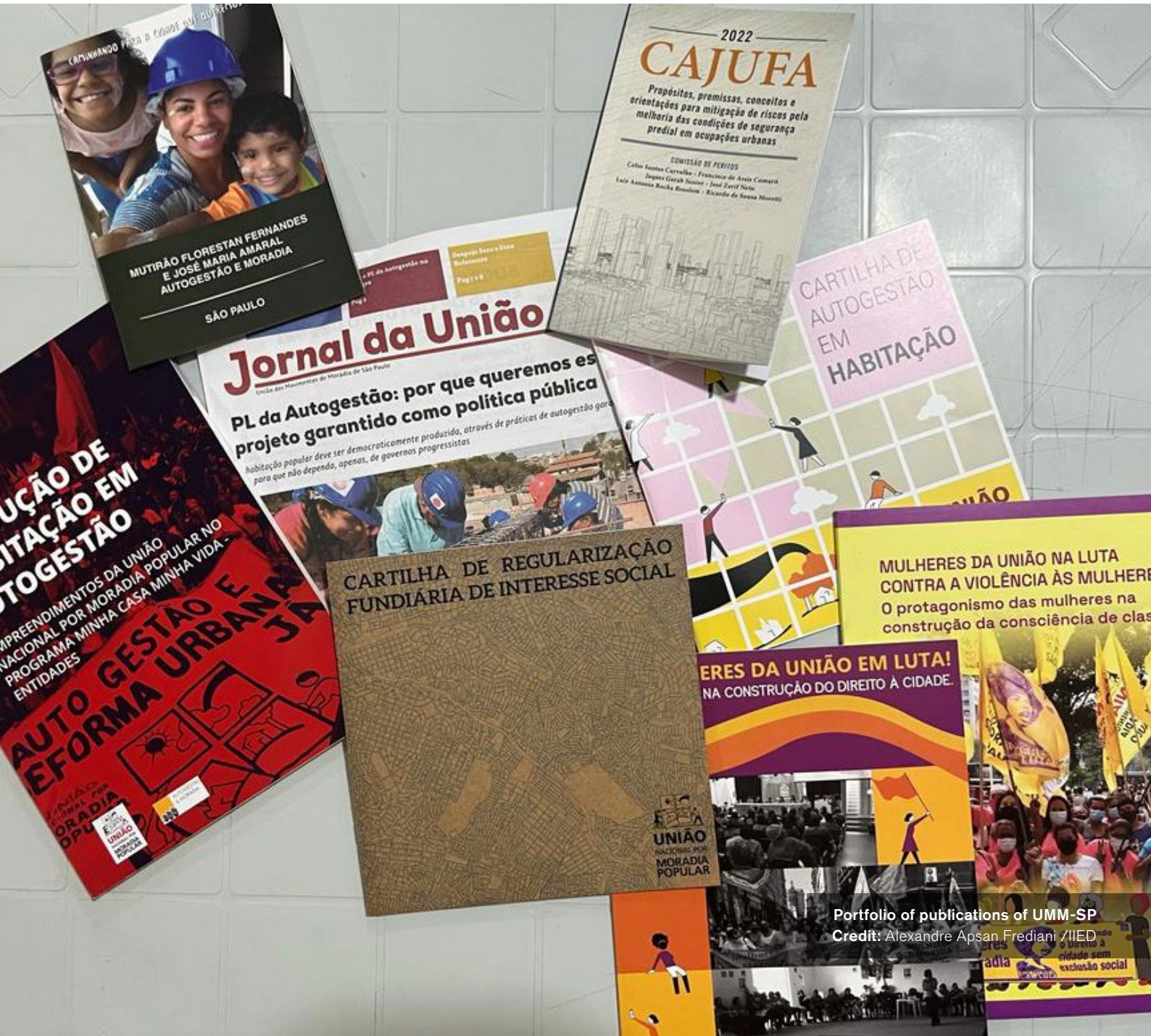
This case study collection presents a summary of both trajectories, as well as a review of the current communication practices of each organisation. It aims to describe the richness of these communication practices, their connections with broader processes, and illustrate the different functions they have carried out in housing struggles, thus providing insights for other housing movements about the centrality of communication practices in propelling social and political transformation towards more just housing systems.



São Paulo
Credit: Wilfredorrh via Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

União dos Movimentos de Moradia, São Paulo (UMM-SP)

UMM-SP was established in 1987 to consolidate and coordinate the efforts of several groups that were mobilising and producing housing through different innovative collective and self-managed initiatives within different regions of São Paulo. It is part of the União Nacional de Moradia Popular (UNMP), a national housing movement that coordinates initiatives from different parts of Brazil. UMM-SP's work currently focuses mainly on strengthening local housing mobilisation, on advancing and supporting processes of housing self-management (autogestão), on stopping evictions, and on advocating for policy change.



Portfolio of publications of UMM-SP
Credit: Alexandre Apsan Frediani /IIED

BOX 1: Two key concepts: *Autogestão* and *Mutirão*

There are two key forms of mobilisation that UMM-SP has been using for decades, which are captured in the Portuguese concepts of *Autogestão* and *Mutirão*:

Autogestão, which literally means 'self-management', refers to the community management of housing production.* The UNMP defines it as the process in which "it is the community organised in popular movements, associations and cooperatives that decides its own housing solutions, whether by building homes or by improving urban areas. In stages such as defining the land and the project, choosing the technical team, or selecting the construction methods, *autogestão* is also about the community itself having control over public resources and the work."

Mutirão refers to the collective mobilisation of mutual help in the process of housing production. *Mutirão* takes place through the establishment of groups during some of the self-managed housing construction processes. In these housing groups, future residents commit to investing time in activities related to the construction of housing units. These processes do not only reduce costs by future residents offering their free time but, more importantly, they are spaces for social mobilisation, and create a sense of belonging and a commitment towards the collective project.

* The term 'housing production' refers to the various aspects and stages associated with designing, building, repairing and managing housing.

Reflecting on their own trajectories, UMM-SP members decided to begin their UMM-SP timeline in 1987, when the movement was founded. Collectively, we identified six periods in which communication played distinctive roles for the movement:

- From its establishment, the main focus of UMM-SP's communications was ***internal communication (1987–1993)***. Efforts were made to establish channels of information flow within the nascent housing movement, through diverse means of communication (assemblies, word of mouth, flyers, newsletters). UMM-SP also interacted with a few mainstream newspapers, such as *Notícias Populares*, which, although not itself a progressive paper, gave space to more progressive ideas. These methods were used to promote the first rallies to Brasilia, in which the movement's members from different regions travelled to the capital to exert political pressure. Likewise, these methods were used to promote the social infrastructure for the first *mutirãos*, or collective/mutual housing groups, which would become crucial elements of the movement's functioning and identity. In 1993 UMM-SP published a book compiling the activities and achievements of the movement so far, which marked the first milestone of recognition of its own contribution to housing struggles.
- The second period was identified as one of ***persistence (1993–1997)***. While the government expanded programmes to support self-management, during this period there was a decrease in the number of new *mutirãos*. UMM-SP also witnessed the continuous criminalisation of the housing movement, which led the organisation to take a more proactive approach to finding ways of penetrating the mainstream media, and to adjust its narratives to contest these views.
- By 1997, a period of ***penetration and recognition (1997–2003)*** of the role of the housing movement had begun, and with it, a different approach to communications by UMM-SP. During this period, more journalists were approaching the movement, and a few newspaper articles featured UMM-SP struggles, particularly around the emergence of co-ordinated occupations of buildings and land in the city centre. This was also accompanied by a new generation of researchers and academics approaching the housing movement with renewed interest and respect.

- The arrival of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to the presidency of Brazil in 2003 heralded important changes for the trajectory of the movement, beginning a period we have identified as ***diffusion (2003–2013)***. Some of UMM-SP's key founding members began to work for the national government, steering a process of institutionalisation of self-management and addressing the movement's demands. UMM-SP's communication strategies became more focused on promoting participation of grassroots groups in the implementation of new policies. UMM-SP played a key role in developing a website which provided key information and explained legislation, as well as actively involving local leaders in public programmes — in other words "making policies public" ("*fazendo políticas ficarem públicas*"). But even during this period UMM-SP had to contest criminalising narratives, especially around the role of Lula's party in 'protecting' occupations. For example, a 2004 newspaper article claimed that "Workers' Party governments shelter invaders" ("*Governos petistas abrigam invazores*"). Likewise, their efforts focused on reclaiming the narrative of contested events, such as the occupations taking place simultaneously in ten states in 2007.

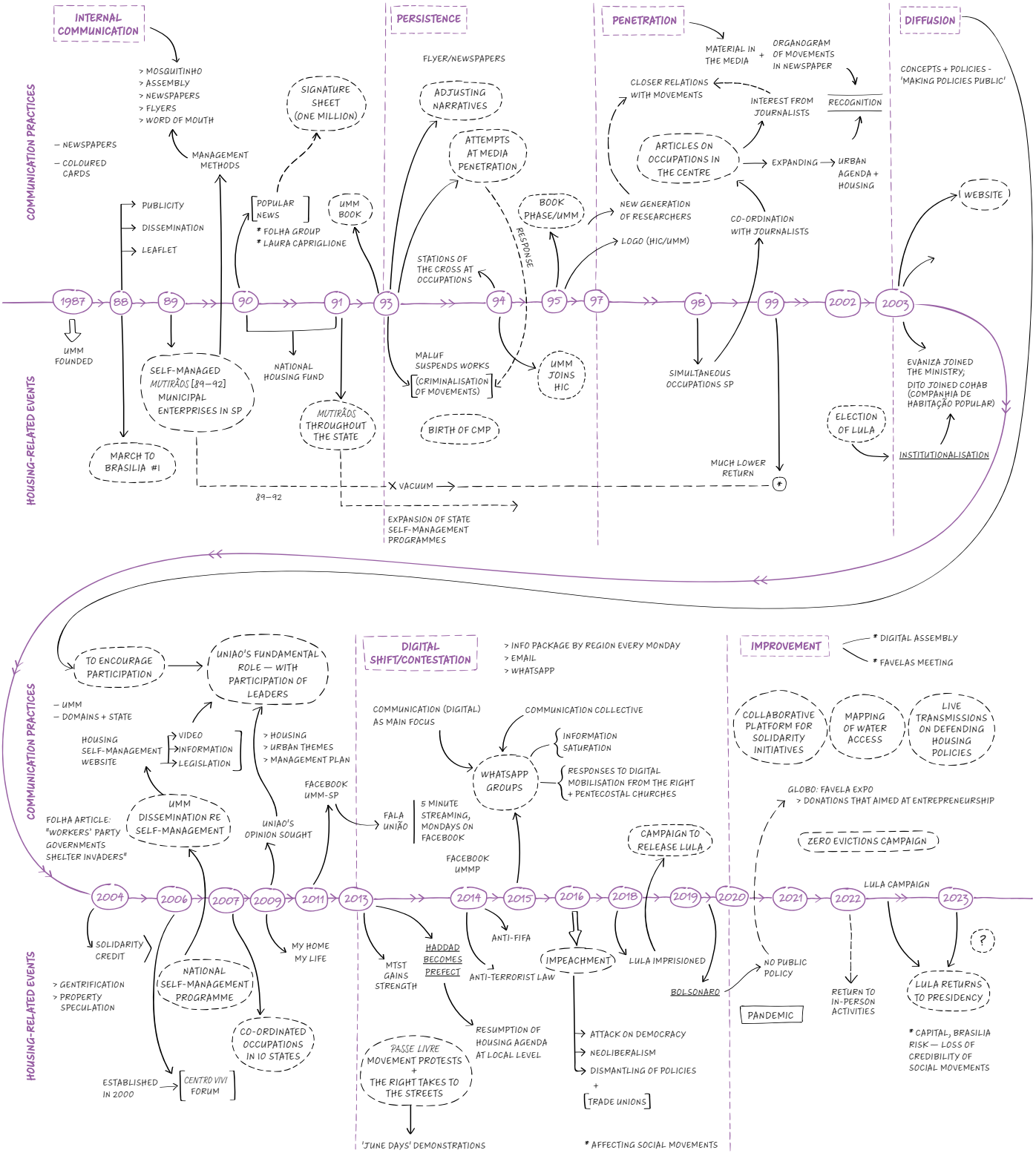
UMM-SP played a key role in developing a website which provided key information and explained legislation

- The year 2013 represented a key moment for Brazilian politics, because of the massive social mobilisations initiated that year and the political instability that followed. It also coincided with a process of profound change in the way social movements used technology. We describe this period as one of ***digital shift and contestation (2013–2020)***. On the one hand, it was marked by political controversy around events such as the impeachment of the president, Dilma Rousseff, and the subsequent right-wing governments of Michel Temer and Jair Bolsonaro, who cut most of the housing programmes initiated by Lula that addressed social movements demands. Meanwhile in the city of São Paulo, a Workers' Party mayor was in office between 2013 and 2017, opening up the possibility of more progressive housing programmes at the local level. At the same time, the massification of digital technologies led to a transition towards digital tools: WhatsApp groups became a means of internal coordination and diffusion of information; the institutional website was the main archive and official communication channel; and there were more active links with alternative media outlets and networks that were emerging alongside the ongoing contestation, such as Jornalistas Livres (a network of journalists set up to counter the narratives of the mainstream media) This digital shift created some challenges in relation to information overload and to the co-existence of old and new forms of communication within the movement.

Francisco Comarú and Benedito Barbosa at the office of UMM-SP
Credit: Camila Cociña/IIED

- With the arrival of COVID-19, and in the context of explicit opposition to Bolsonaro's government, UMM-SP entered into a period that can be described as ***improvement of digital practices (2020–)***, embracing more explicitly the need for digital capacities to coordinate UMM-SP's activities when in-person gatherings became impossible. In the context of the pandemic, for example, UMM-SP was a key player in organising a national coalition around the

Despejo Zero (Zero Evictions) campaign, which relied mainly on social media and digital platforms. Likewise, WhatsApp groups and social media platforms for mobilising and disseminating information became increasingly central to the movement's organisation, focusing on building a recognisable digital identity and on establishing a clear dialogue between online and offline practices of the movement and its members. Importantly, this has implied addressing the challenge of becoming a trusted source of information — in the face of the proliferation of fake news — and navigating the tensions between individual and collective demands and assertions that co-exist in digital media.



Based on this trajectory, UMM-SP developed a study at the beginning of 2023 to describe current media practices within the movement. This study highlighted UMM-SP's presence on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, and its consolidated structure of WhatsApp groups for internal communication and organisation. UMM-SP conducted a survey of 98 of its members from different regions of the city to understand how they access information about housing and how they interact with UMM-SP social media platforms. Interestingly, when asked which media they used to obtain information about housing, 84.7% said they obtained information through in-person meetings, activities and assemblies; this was followed by 61.2% who got information through WhatsApp, 53.1% through television and 49% through Facebook. In answer to the question about the main difficulties in getting information about housing, 55.1% indicated "identifying what is fake news" as the main challenge, which is coherent with the reliance on in-person meetings and official activities as a reliable source of information. Looking specifically at how the members got information about UMM-SP, 61.5% indicated that it was through Facebook, followed by Instagram (42.7%), and WhatsApp (38.5%). But when asked which UMM-SP channels they read, UMM-SP's printed newsletters, Facebook and WhatsApp were selected by 59–60% of the respondents. Overall, members indicated that the most important and interesting information they found in UMM-SP media related to housing policies.

The women and housing group from UMM-SP march during the International Women's Day demonstration in São Paulo
Credit: Alexandre Apsan Frediani/IIED

Justice & Empowerment Initiatives (JEI) in Lagos and the Nigerian Slum/ Informal Settlement Federation

JEI is a Nigerian NGO that supports the Nigerian Slum/Informal Settlement Federation (Federation) to empower marginalised communities to lead the changes that they would like to see in their own communities. The Nigerian Slum/Informal Settlement Federation is a national mass movement of residents of informal settlements that work together to improve the living conditions of the urban poor. As part of Slum Dwellers International (SDI), they have traditionally participated in a global network of slum dweller federations. JEI supports the work of the Federation through paralegal services, movement building, strategic advocacy, and supporting the Federation's media team through the *Media4Change* initiative.

Bisola Akinmuyiwa, Jesuyon Adianu, Halimat Bakare, Sam Okechukwu, Michael Ogungbure, members of *Media4Change*
Credit: Alexandre Apsan Frediani/IIED

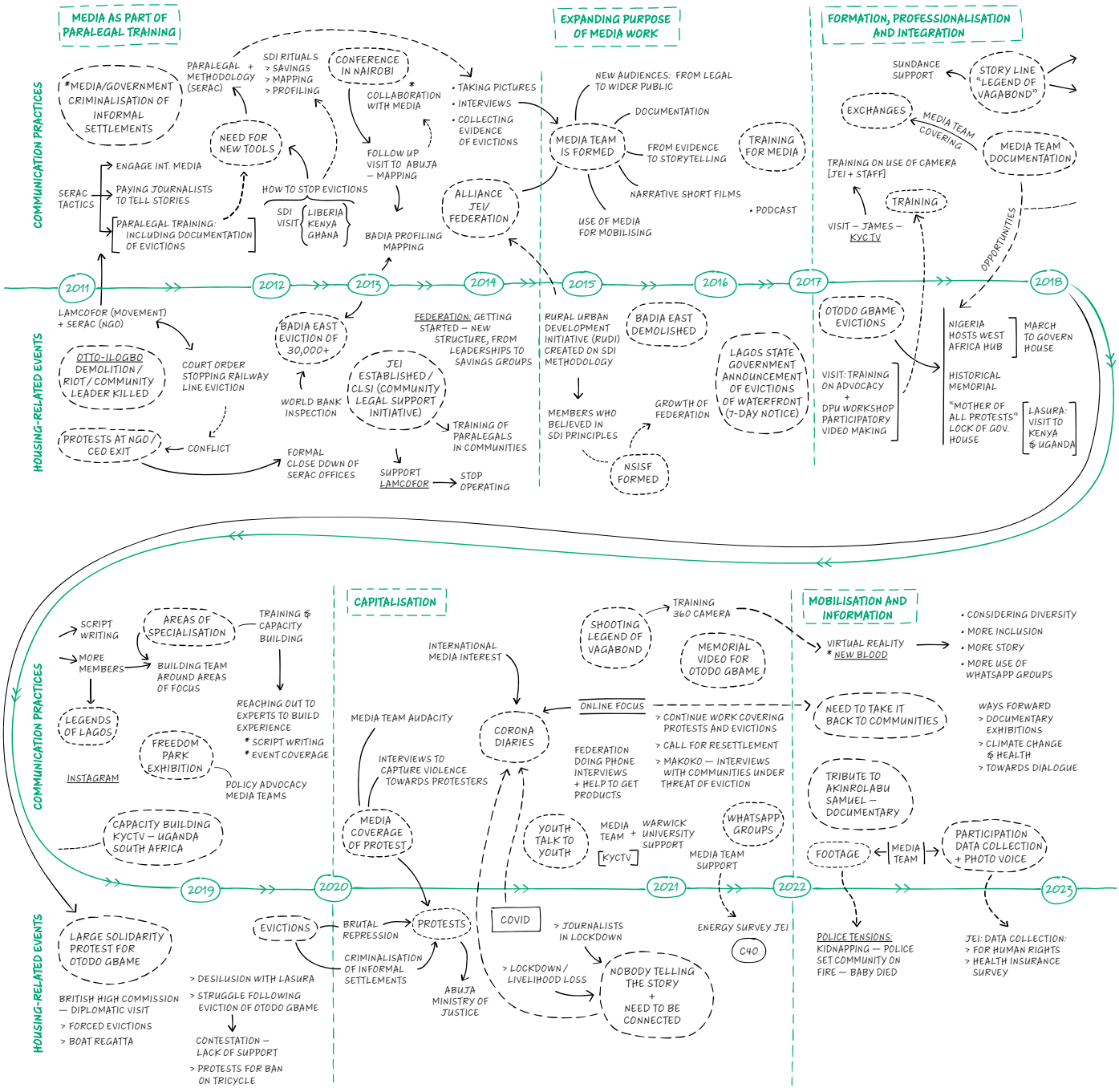
As with UMM-SP in São Paulo, members of JEI and the Nigerian Federation developed a timeline of their communication practices. Together, we identified 2011 as a starting point – a year marked, on the one hand, by large-scale eviction threats and mobilisations; and, on the other, by institutional changes in the NGO landscape that led to the creation of JEI. There were five distinct periods in relation to the role of communication:

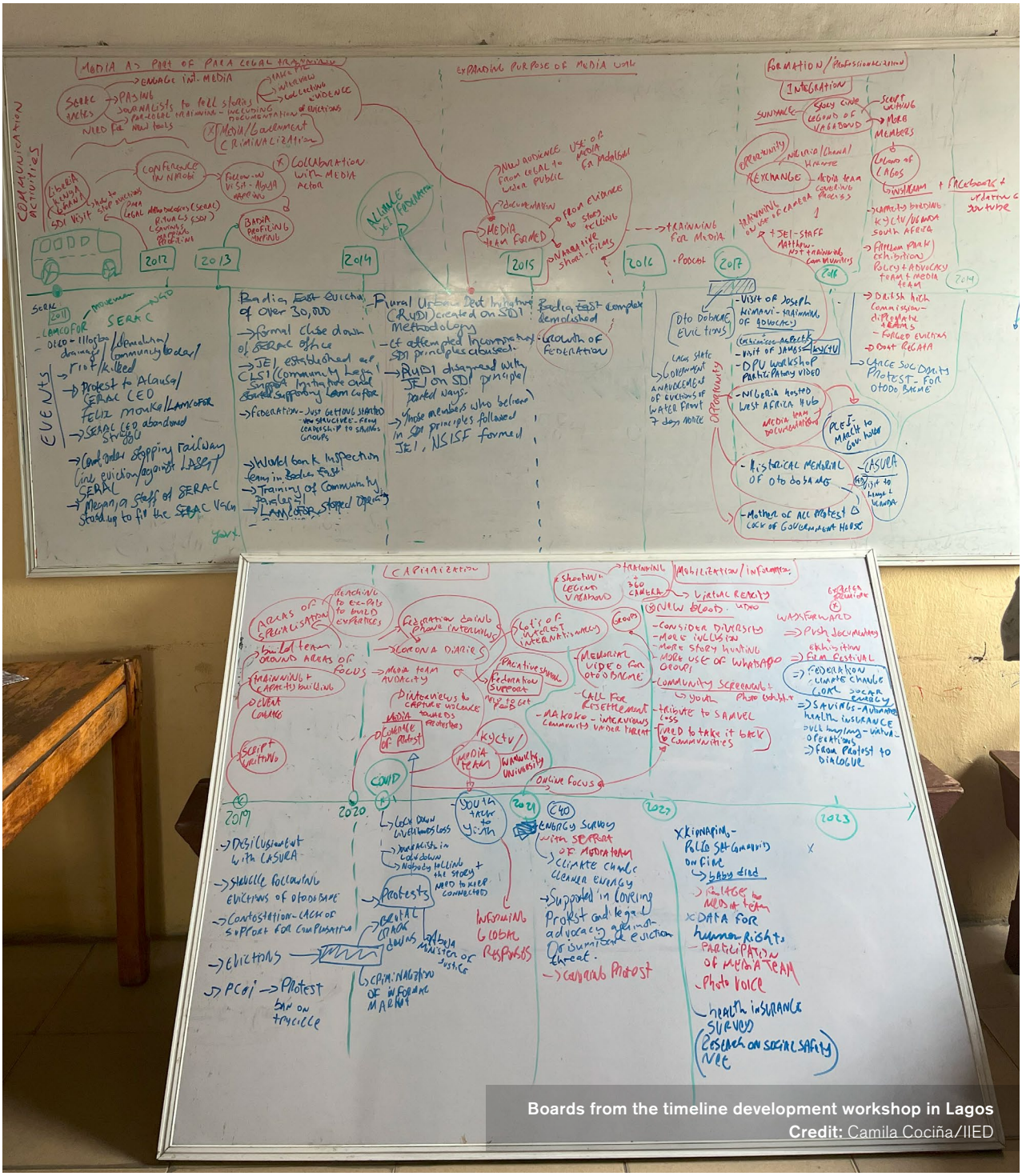
- During the early years of JEI and its work with the Federation, the main focus of its communications was to produce ***media as part of paralegal training (2011–2014)***. In the context of a hostile political and media landscape and criminalisation of informal settlements, during this period the Federation convened exchanges with members of SDI and implemented activities related to savings, profiling and mapping. Alongside these activities, with the support of JEI, Federation members began to conduct paralegal work to protect citizens against rights violations and stop evictions. It is in this context that the need for new tools to support paralegal work emerged to generate material that could be presented in courts. This led to the strategic use of different forms of locally produced media for collecting visual evidence, conducting interviews, and documenting from the ground the conditions before, during and after forced evictions.
- This early use of media tools opened up a process of ***expanding the purpose of media work (2014–2017)***. As the Federation continued to grow and strengthened its principles and links with SDI, a formal media team was established at the end of 2014. Alongside their documentation for paralegal work, this team began to target a wider audience, creating short films and storytelling narratives, and using media for mobilising. During this period JEI organised more formal media training opportunities. This took place within a context of increasing eviction threats. For example, in November 2016, the Lagos State government issued a seven-day eviction notice to waterfront communities of Otodo Gbame.
- A series of circumstances and opportunities led to a more consolidated period of ***formation, professionalisation and integration (2017–2019)*** of JEI's media work. In 2017, Nigeria hosted the SDI West Africa Hub meeting, which provided opportunities for formal training for the media team on media and advocacy. During this period, the Federation participated in visits and exchanges with international partners such as SDI Know Your City TV (KYCTV), and the Development Planning Unit (DPU) from University College London. Meanwhile, large protests and actions were taking place in solidarity with the evicted Otodo Gbame community, which gave visibility to the struggles of communities in informal settlements and provided opportunities for media-related work in the public arena. With these opportunities for exchange, capacity building and learning, the Federation's media team grew to 35 members, and began to develop more technical skills and to generate high-quality material around those mobilisations. In this period the team developed more output-oriented projects, such as the script for *The Legend of the Vagabond Queen of Lagos*, a social impact feature film supported by a grant from the Sundance Institute's Stories for Change Fund.
- The following period was one of ***capitalisation (2019–2022)*** of all the tools and skills acquired in previous years. As communities developed survival strategies in the face of COVID-19 restrictions, opposition to government agencies' eviction threats and violence continued through different forms of protest and organisation. Federation members used their communication skills to develop material for mobilisation throughout the pandemic, through phone interviews and the production of 'Corona Diaries', which attracted international interest and, in turn, mobilised support for the Federation to access food. Communication tools and technology were also used to document the violence taking place at protests, and to develop content such as the memorial videos of evicted Otodo Gbame communities, the shooting of *The Legend of the Vagabond*

As communities developed survival strategies in the face of COVID-19 restrictions, opposition to government agencies' eviction threats and violence continued through different forms of protest and organisation

Queen of Lagos, and to develop longer pieces such as the 25-minute film *If Walls Could Talk*. Exchanges with KYCTV and training continued, mainly through online platforms, as well as legal advocacy.

- Finally, the current period has been about ***mobilisation and information (2022–).*** With the return of more in-person activities, the media team at the Federation has been able to bring in new people, with more advanced skills, and new technology, such as a 360 camera, to produce media and create content with other organisations such as the Physically Challenged Empowerment Initiative (PCEI). The end of lockdowns also enabled community screenings to take place, which are crucial for linking the media work with residents on the ground. The media team has participated in data gathering and research, enabling the use of new information for media content on, for example, health and human rights. Media has been used internally to mobilise the Federation, for example through a tribute in 2022 to Akinrolabu Samuel, one of the founders of the Federation. It has also documented different forms of state violence and made footage available through online archives, and built alternative narratives about and by the communities.





Boards from the timeline development workshop in Lagos
Credit: Camila Cociña/IIED

The current methods used by the *Media4Change* team in each of its advocacy campaigns are shaped by many different factors — sometimes the result of a short action, and other times the result of intensive community actions with long periods of project planning and execution. Recognising the diversity and the uniqueness of each product, Table 1 (below), which was developed by JEI for a media landscape analysis in 2023, highlights JEI's five principal media practices with key examples: environmental portraiture with first-person narrative; still videos; short documentaries; press releases with online high-quality, freely downloadable videos and photos; and longform narrative films.

Table 1: *Media4Change's* main communication practices in Nigeria, produced by Andrew Maki, co-director of JEI, as part of an internal media landscape report of the Civic Media project

Media and communication practices	Key examples
Environmental portraiture with first-person narrative In the style of *Humans of New York*, these short media pieces consist of one or more photos and a written first-person narrative by the person pictured. They are often produced as part of a collection on a particular theme (eg inclusion of urban poor people living with disabilities (PLWDs), impacts of forced evictions, experiences of urban poor during the COVID-19 pandemic). They are quick to create and there is a low barrier to entry — anyone with a camera phone and basic photography and interview skills can make them. We've disseminated this kind of media in a variety of formats via social media and in-person activities. This media practice is also a great tool for skill development for media-makers as it forefronts storytelling over technical media equipment skills.	Presented in communities and exhibitions as part of the #InclusiveLagos campaign, and to broader public via Instagram: @humans.of.ph, @visages.de.cotonou, @legends.of.lagos. Examples: "I am known as Madam Short Knickers. I was one of the first settlers of this community…" (Ibi-Apu Polo community, Port Harcourt) "My name is Ibrahim and I live here in Makoko waterfront. I want Makoko to be a better place in the future…" (Makoko community, Lagos) "I am a trader and sell on the street…" (Yaba, Lagos) "Agbato is the neighbourhood where I was born. Since my childhood, I practice this activity which consists of smoking prawns…" (Agbato, Cotonou) "I come from a family of four and I'm the last born, and a student of Refine Brain Academy in JSS3..." (Elelenwo community, Port Harcourt)
Still videos This practice was pioneered during the COVID-19 lockdowns to communicate between communities and to keep people engaged and informed, and to report the experiences of the urban poor during the pandemic. The media took the format of a still photo accompanied by a radio-style audio interview (second person) or audio diary (first person) about the reality on the ground in one's own community. We chose this format for several practical reasons: because it required less data to transmit and to receive as compared to a video, and it required basic media skills and little post-production work. When aggregated as a collection and geolocated on a map, they presented a powerfully authentic and diverse 'voice' of urban poor residents. As a training tool, this media practice also focuses on producing quality audio and honing interview skills, both essential building blocks for videomaking.	#CoronaDiaries campaign disseminated via Twitter @justempower, through internal WhatsApp groups, and aggregated and mapped using a 'story map' on our website at www.justempower.org/coronadiaries, and also viewable individually as a channel on YouTube here. Examples: Homelessness + COVID-19 (Lagos) Nosemask as Avenue for Extortion (Port Harcourt) "Or are we not part of the plan?" (Lagos) "They redeem us from hunger" (Lagos) A Pandemic for the Poor Alone (Port Harcourt) "We're sitting on a keg of gunpowder" (Lagos) Physically Challenged, Hard Working (Lagos)

Media and communication practices	Key examples
Short documentaries These videos are typically 3–6 minutes long, and most often are issue-focused (eg advocating for justice for the forced eviction of Tarkwa Bay), or individual-focused, (eg a short portrait of a particular individual in our 'Legends of Lagos' series). These pieces include both interview footage and B-roll, and sometimes include title screens where additional information or data is presented. Sometimes the advocacy message is front-and-centre, with a specific call to action at the end, eg "Contact the Lagos State governor to demand an end to the forced eviction of Otodo Gbame." Other times we use a more subtle approach, for example by humanising urban poor individuals and sharing their everyday experiences to generate understanding through empathy (eg for PLWDs who struggle to navigate Lagos without any assistive infrastructure). The short docs are regularly screened in communities as part of meetings, shared via WhatsApp, and distributed online (primarily hosted on YouTube). The main audiences for our short docs are external — calling for action or trying to humanise the urban poor. However, they equally serve an internal purpose of building the community network through solidarity and celebrating 'our stories', or raising awareness of the realities of forced evictions and their long-term consequences.	Our main collection of short docs is hosted on our Media4Change YouTube account, while some older pieces are on our Vimeo account. Examples: Our Health Matters (2023) Faces of Otumara (2023) Tarkwa Bay Memorial (2022) Inaccessible Lagos: A 360 Degree Tour with Abbas Alhaji (2022) Displacement in Diobu: Forced Eviction of Port Harcourt's Urban Poor (2022) Our World Apart: A Story of Hope (2021) When Love is There (2021) Remember Us (2020) Konami Dream: See Me As Your Broda (2020) Changing Lanes (2019) Our Right to Education (2019) Our Lagos, Our Story (2018) #SaveTheWaterfronts: Spotlight on Fish Trading in Lagos Waterfronts (2017) Reality Check: Community Voices on World Bank Safeguard Review (2016) Sallah Message from Badia East Evictees (2015) Otto Ilogbo: A Community Under Siege (2014) Forced Eviction, Never Again (2013)

Media and communication practices	Key examples
Press releases and online, high-quality, freely downloadable videos and photos We use press releases to mobilise broader pressure and alert partners and allies (eg the UN special rapporteur on adequate housing) to urgently end forced evictions, and to interest traditional media outlets in covering such important stories, while challenging the official narrative about poor people being 'street urchins', 'criminals', etc. Since media outlets need photos and videos to 'sell' stories to their audiences and to verify facts — but may not actually be available to join a protest action or visit the site of an eviction quickly enough — we typically accompany press releases with collections of freely downloadable high-resolution frontline videos and photos hosted on Flickr, with a Creative Commons licence. For example, our Flickr album 'Otodo Gbame: 9 April 2017 Forced Eviction', comprised of 58 photos and 31 videos, has been viewed 774 times. As a result of these communications practices, we have had countless articles published by local and international news media outlets (eg "*Thousands displaced as police raze Lagos' Otodo Gbame*," Al Jazeera, 10 April 2017). While the frontline media content is usually generated by JEI staff and our core media team, it is sometimes produced by community members who may have had basic training in documentation of human rights violations from JEI, and in a few instances also by close professional photographers. We also use press releases to publicise the contact information of key people the traditional press should speak to, eg an evictee or a Federation leader, to create opportunities for their voices to be heard. Press releases are disseminated via email and social media and shared directly with our international networks (including Slum Dwellers International).	All press releases hosted on our website, photos and videos to accompany press releases available on our Flickr account. Examples: *Makoko Community Rejects Forced Enumeration & Demands Community-Led Regeneration Process* (8 May 2021, Lagos, Nigeria) *Nigerian Navy Acting on "Orders from Above" Forcibly Evicts Thousands from Okun Ayo & Tarkwa Bay Communities* (22 January 2020, Lagos, Nigeria) [see also Court Order dated 30 January 2020 restraining further evictions] *Global Movement of the Urban Poor Condemns Forced Eviction of Waterfront Residents in Cotonou; Calls for Urgent Engagement with Residents to Prevent Further Displacement* (27 August 2019, Cotonou, Benin Republic) [FRENCH] *Court Finds the Governor Ambode is Undermining Rule of Law & Principles of Constitutional Democracy After Thousands More Forcibly Driven from Otodo Gbame in Ruthless State-Sponsored Land Grab* (14 April 2017, Lagos, Nigeria) *Nigerian Slum / Informal Settlement Federation Calls for Tenure, Shelter, Livelihoods as Part of New Pro-Poor Urban Agenda in Lagos* (4 October 2016, Lagos, Nigeria) *Communities & Civil Society Partners Condemn Forced Evictions at Eagle Island and Decry Threat of Further Evictions Looming Over More than 60,000 in 17 Communities in Port Harcourt, Nigeria* (19 July 2016, Port Harcourt, Nigeria) (joint press statement with the Federation and CSOs) *Thousands of Evictees Suffer Homelessness & Loss of Livelihood After Ijora Badia Forced Evictions* (28 September 2015, Lagos, Nigeria) (joint statement with a Nigerian CSO) *World Human Rights Day: Lagos Slumdweller Federation Calls for Security of Tenure to Achieve "Human Rights 365" in Lagos* (13 December 2014, Lagos, Nigeria)

Media and communication practices	Key examples
Longform narrative films Recognising that sometimes the best way to inspire change is through more immersive storytelling, and that much of our media only reaches certain audiences, we've also invested several years in co-creating two longform narrative films. *The Legend of the Vagabond Queen of Lagos* is a character-driven film styled in the genre of African magical realism. *If Walls Could Talk* is a narrative piece that traces the journey of a poor PLWD who migrates to Lagos and faces extreme exclusion and hostility. Both films aim to target broader audiences, shifting perspectives about evictions and urban poverty, and opening the eyes about the kinds of rights violations and hardship faced by urban poor PLWDs in the megacity of Lagos. Both narrative films have served as powerful opportunities for team capacity building, with community media makers at the centre of storyboarding, script writing, all aspects of production and various aspects of post-production (from second unit cinematography to ADR/sound design and score participatory composition), working side-by-side with industry professionals and opening up new opportunities for career development in the film industry.	*Legend of the Vagabond Queen of Lagos* webpage: www.justempower.org/vagabondqueen *If Walls Could Talk* webpage is under development

Moving forward

The media trajectories of these two organisations showcase the centrality and diverse functions that communication practices have played in their struggles through time. We have developed a more detailed analysis of those functions in a working paper titled 'Collective communication practices and the struggles for housing justice. Early reflections from Lagos and São Paulo' (Frediani and Cociña, forthcoming in 2024), in which we discuss how wider communication landscapes intersect with such efforts.

We would like to conclude with an invitation to follow up on the experiences outlined in this case study collection by:

- **Calling on other social movements and grassroots organisations to revisit and interrogate their communication and media practices.** Often, when we ask housing organisations about their media activities, their first response tends to be that they are almost non-existent. But on taking a closer look, we can identify many practices that rely on communication engagements, both internal and external. Often these require very simple technologies (pamphlets, word-of-mouth, social media, etc) but sometimes they require more technical skills and resources. On closer inspection, we can also see how these practices have changed over time, and how much they tell us about both a movement's intent and external conditions and processes. Understanding them better can be a powerful tool for prioritising strategies in the struggle for housing justice.
- **Highlighting the central role of communication capabilities in justice questions in different sectors.** For researchers, policymakers and donors, this means approaching communication as a key development area that cuts across other social themes. For researchers, this is a call to explore in a more systematic way the linkages between media and the demands for justice in different sectors; and also to develop action–research initiatives that incorporate elements to strengthen communication capabilities of grassroots groups. For policymakers, this means paying attention to the ways in which unequal communication landscapes are shaping social demands, and focusing on strategies that create better enabling environments for collective communication practices to achieve their aims. And for donors, this means mainstreaming communication activities as a key component of development work, and not viewing communications as something that merely 'supports' institutional activity.

iied

Download more publications at iied.org/publications

International Institute for Environment and Development
44 Southampton Buildings, London, WC2A 1AP, UK
www.iied.org

@iied
www.facebook.com/theIIED

IIED publications may be shared and republished in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International Public License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). Under the terms of this licence, anyone can copy, distribute and display the material, providing that they credit the original source and don't use it for commercial purposes or make derivatives. Different licences may apply to some illustrative elements, in which instance the licence will be displayed alongside. IIED is happy to discuss any aspect of further usage. Get more information via www.iied.org/Creative-Commons

IIED is a charity registered in England, Charity No.800066 and in Scotland, OSCR Reg No.SC039864 and a company limited by guarantee registered in England No.2188452.

This publication is focused on two grassroots housing organisations in the cities of São Paulo in Brazil and Lagos in Nigeria. It explores how the role of communication has changed for these organisations over the years and how it has been used to improve their capabilities to advance housing justice. It also presents timelines for each organisation, identifying the main events related to the struggles of the housing movements in their respective countries and the changes in the use of communication tools and tactics. It aims to describe the richness of communication practices used and their connections with broader processes, and to illustrate the different functions they have carried out in housing struggles — thus providing insights for other housing movements about the centrality of communication practices in propelling social and political transformation towards more just housing systems.

Knowledge Products

Case study collection

September 2024

Urban; Communication

Keywords:
Housing, media, grassroots movement

Arts and Humanities Research Council

This work was supported by the the Arts and Humanities Research Council (grant number AH/W005980)