



What shapes good relationships between community organisations and local governments

Case studies from upgrading and housing improvement programmes in Greater Buenos Aires

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Working Paper

December 2014

Urban

Keywords:

Community organisations, housing and living conditions, local governments, upgrading, working in collaboration, governance

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their thanks to delegates of *Barrios* Hardoy and San Jorge (Inocencia, Susana, Irma and Noelia); also a neighbourhood promoter of Villa del Carmen (Adriana); members of the normalising committee (neighbourhood commission) of *Barrio Alem* (María del Carmen, Sergio, Olga and Eva); and national and local government officers who were willing to exchange their views with us. Also, to the IIED–AL team who helped to fill in information gaps and who questioned views regarding the long-term neighbourhood improvement processes described in this paper.

Produced by IIED's Human Settlements

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IIED–América Latina (IIED–AL) is an action-research centre based in Buenos Aires. Since its inception in the late 1970s, its focus has been on developing more accountable, effective and democratic urban governments capable of working with the urban poor and their organisations. This includes an action-research programme working with community organisations in informal settlements (see <http://www.iied-al.org.ar/> for more details). It also publishes the journal *Medio Ambiente y Urbanización* (see <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/0326-7857>).

Published by IIED, December 2014

Florencia Almansi, Ana Álvarez, Jorgelina Hardoy, Cecilia Monti and Guadalupe Sierra. 2014. *What shapes good relationships between community organisations and local governments: Case studies from upgrading and housing improvement programmes in Greater Buenos Aires*. IIED Working Paper. IIED, London.

<http://pubs.iied.org/10720IIED>

ISBN 978-1-78431-121-6

Printed on recycled paper with vegetable-based inks.

This paper discusses what creates or enhances a successful working relationship between community organisations and local governments in upgrading and housing improvement programmes, and its influence on the quality of the interventions. It focuses on four initiatives in Greater Buenos Aires: the National Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme in three informal settlements; the Housing Improvement Programme and the Micro-Credit Fund in two informal settlements; a neighbourhood commission's work on reconditioning a piped water network; and the advocacy work of a network of technical, social and grassroots organisations. Among the key factors for success is local government's capacity to design programmes that have flexibility, promote inclusion and transparency, and support community leadership both through neighbourhood organisations and committed individuals.

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Summary

In Argentina, the upgrading of informal settlements has become common practice among local governments, and this is often initiated or supported by national and provincial governments. Programmes to help fund housing improvements in informal settlements have also become common. This paper looks at four such interventions in Greater Buenos Aires, and has a particular interest in understanding the relationships between community organisations within each settlement and local government and how these influenced outcomes and the population's levels of satisfaction. It also discusses the role that intermediary organisations such as IIED–América Latina (IIED–AL) play in these partnerships and processes.

The four case studies analysed were:

- Upgrading programmes in three informal settlements (*Barrios Hardoy, La Paz and San Jorge*) supported by the National Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme (PROMEBA).
- Support for the improvement of existing houses through the Housing Improvement Programme (*Programa Mejor Vivir, PMV*) and the Micro-Credit Fund (*Fondo de Micro-Crédito, FMC*) in *Barrios Villa del Carmen and San Ginés*.
- The reconditioning of a piped water network, administered by a neighbourhood commission of neighbours in *Barrio Alem*.
- Ongoing advocacy work for public policies carried out by a network of technical, social and grassroots organisations in the Forum of Land, Infrastructure and Housing Organisations in the Province of Buenos Aires (FOTIVBA) and its impacts.

Reflections and lessons learnt

The participation of community organisations in housing and neighbourhood improvements and the strengthening of their relations with the local government pave the way for more inclusive and egalitarian programmes. It can facilitate governmental decision-making and the sustaining of such initiatives but does not guarantee that community needs will be addressed in the best possible way. It is the extent and quality of these relationships and the flexibility within programmes throughout the process that enables more inclusive and

equitable outcomes. In addition, the participation and strengthening of community organisations takes much longer than most interventions allow for.

The analysis of the four case studies suggests that three pre-conditions are necessary for the development of a good working relationship:

- A stakeholder to promote joint work and call for meetings. This can be the state, the neighbourhood organisation or a third party (for instance, an NGO).
- The stakeholders' willingness to participate in joint programmes and their firm conviction of the advantages.
- A need or the availability of resources that require or motivate stakeholders towards joint efforts.

In PROMEBA, all three pre-conditions were in place, with the municipal government acting as the convenor. When it stopped convening, the working committees and community organisations faded away.

All three pre-conditions were also in place in the housing improvement programme (PMV): IIED–AL was the convenor and also had resources, and it invited the municipality to take part and then promoted the creation of a neighbourhood commission for the joint management of the programme. With a change of government, the municipality was no longer willing to embark on joint work and the relationship was diluted, but IIED–AL and the neighbourhood promoters continued working together in jointly managing the programme.

For *Barrio Alem's* water network, IIED–AL convened the other stakeholders. A community organisation already existed and there was a need and the resources to address this.

For FOTIVBA, the convening stakeholder was a group of organisations that had bonds with national government, and each organisation had bonds with neighbourhood organisations and local governments. At all levels, there was a willingness to work jointly.

The organisational models developed within each neighbourhood and the working relationship established and negotiated with local authorities are subject to constant change. Understanding what hinders or favours different types of relationship modes can help overcome limitations. It can also help strengthen positive factors that contribute to more autonomous, horizontal, co-responsibility models of programme implementation.

The case studies suggest a range of elements that favour or hinder a good working relationship between community organisations and local governments.

The beneficial elements include:

- Regular meetings and working committees where different stakeholders come together and work together.
- Investing in the inclusion of more delegates (neighbours interested in collective welfare) who are capable of triggering the neighbourhood process.
- Actions that help build trust (for example, providing information on progress made, monitoring and accounts).
- Instruments for allocating benefits or compensation that are seen as fair by the neighbours, and criteria for providing support based on indicators agreed by consensus by all stakeholders.
- NGOs supporting the process that provide information and facilitate community participation.
- Development of capabilities by promoters, delegates or neighbourhood commission members.
- Sustaining ties with other organisations.
- Transfer of the social capital gained from one organisation to another.
- Possibility of changes within interventions (flexibility).
- Technical criteria that help overcome partisan political conflicts.

The detrimental elements include:

- Delays between the announcement of programmes and their actual commencement (this can be as long as two years) and delays in implementing construction schedules.
- Programmes with too many demands and technical requirements.
- Too many interests to reconcile.
- Participation restricted to reporting actions or measures to be taken.
- Interventions that exclude some and create resentment among neighbours.
- The population's deeply rooted distrust of the state at all levels.
- The need for an external person to take the convening role.
- The change of government post-elections and the change in priorities this brought.
- Processes focused on individual needs to the detriment of collective needs.

- Programmes that disregard pre-existing agreements.
- The differing views on how best to work of different government departments and other stakeholders participating in the execution of works.

Other relevant factors:

The scale and complexity of a programme: This influences the extent to which delegates, promoters or neighbourhood organisations can make it their own. More complex programmes often come with much longer implementation times than originally scheduled and delays in the provision of promised support – and this undermines participation and the bond between community organisations and local government.

Flexibility: Interventions that allow adjustments to programmes in response to changes in demands, resources and timing ensure better results.

Local government's approach and working modality: Here, what is critical is local government's capacity to design programmes that promote flexibility, inclusion and transparency, and supports community leadership. Governmental approaches range from classic clientelistic models to development models where the state seeks change through collaborative work with the community and its organisations. The municipal governments of San Fernando and Moreno have moved to the development model, although at times clientelistic practices re-appear and clash with more participatory interventions. In part, this is because not all local government departments share the same working modality.

Securing strong participation: The ad hoc community organisations that external programmes require neighbours to form do not usually develop into a neighbourhood organisation. External programmes often press for the formalisation of neighbourhood participation. This process is usually monitored and judged by the number of participating delegates/ neighbours. But this is not sufficient to assess community participation, or the continuity of community actions, permanence or degree of formality. The quality of leadership in each community should also be taken into consideration. In the cases analysed, we see the importance both of neighbourhood organisations and of committed individuals.

Each of these four additional factors contributes to developing community–government ties with different degrees of intensity and levels of mutual trust. These, in turn, determine the capacity of such relationships to cope in times of tension or conflict between stakeholders, and the possibility of developing more inclusive and egalitarian urban agendas.

1

Introduction

The large-scale urbanisation process that took place in and around Latin American cities during the 1950–1980 period introduced two key issues to the urban debate, namely poverty and public habitat, or housing, policies. Urbanisation on the outskirts of cities developed through mixed processes, planned in some cases and spontaneous or informal in others. In the following decades, the urban fabric was gradually consolidated and reorganised. In these processes, there were two main stakeholders: local governments and community organisations; and other stakeholders that were often involved (depending on local circumstances) included utilities, private enterprises and technical organisations (which include many NGOs).

In general, poverty in neighbourhoods undergoing processes of urban consolidation expose the inhabitants to critical environmental risks and poor housing conditions. These include exposure to floods, uncollected garbage, insecure tenure, overcrowding, housing deficits and lack of provision (or poor quality provision) of infrastructure and services. The organisational models developed within each neighbourhood and the working relationship developed and negotiated with the local authorities constantly change. The possibilities for overcoming these deficits often fluctuate – for instance, as a result of changes in local governments or in the relationship forged between some local referents and local politicians.

Nonetheless, there is often space for coordinated work between community organisations and local

governments. Or there are possibilities with other government levels, where different dynamics are in place that can foster more autonomous, horizontal co-responsibility models of decision-making and managing and implementing actions.

This paper explores the different ways in which community organisations relate to local governments in different habitat upgrading processes developed in the Greater Buenos Aires Area (GBA).¹ This includes a focus on the relationship between community organisations and local governments, drawing on the analysis of our case studies. Drawing on this analysis, we seek to identify the factors that limit or favour the relationship between local government and community organisations with regard to:

- the management of projects or programmes that seek to ensure or provide better access to housing services and solutions; and
- the generation of more inclusive local urban agendas to the benefit of the impoverished population, with the introduction of more autonomous, horizontal, associational and co-responsibility models for decision-making and management.

This research was jointly conducted by staff from the International Institute for Environment and Development–América Latina (IIED–AL)² and former government officials from San Fernando Municipality, with whom IIED–AL had worked on different projects implemented in neighbourhoods within the municipality. This brought

¹ Greater Buenos Aires (GBA) comprises the 24 municipalities surrounding the City of Buenos Aires which, together with the city, form Buenos Aires Metropolitan Region.

² The International Institute for Environment and Development–América Latina (IIED–AL) is an action-research centre based in Buenos Aires. Its beginnings and development are closely tied to IIED's Human Settlements Programme (currently, Human Settlements Group). Since its inception in the late 1970s, its focus has been on developing more accountable, effective and democratic urban governments capable of working with the urban poor and their organisations, issues that at the time were not self-evident. This includes an action-research programme that has been working for more than 25 years with community organisations in informal settlements. IIED–AL also focuses on generating networks of institutions and organisations working on issues related to housing, access to services and infrastructure, and comprehensive or multi-sectoral settlement development.

out the role played by the different stakeholders. The analysis is based on the teams' field experiences, different reports on the projects, and interviews and focus groups with neighbourhood/community organisation referents involved in specific projects, as well as government officers.³

The case studies were undertaken in municipalities where the idea of working together with community organisations is, to some extent, incorporated in the government agenda. In this context, IIED-AL was able to put in practice lessons learnt from more than 30 years of work in the analysis of urban problems. This included devising ways to support joint work with community organisations and local governments, aiming to strengthen communication among stakeholders and reduce deficiencies in housing and living conditions.

The four case studies are the following:

- The urban upgrading of slums and informal settlements, where the implementation of the National Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme (PROMEBA, by its initials in Spanish) is reviewed in two stages. Case study: PROMEBA I and PROMEBA II (in the neighbourhoods of Hardoy, La Paz and San Jorge).
- The improvement of existing houses through the Housing Improvement Programme (*Programa Mejor Vivir*, PMV) and the Micro-Credit Fund (*Fondo de Micro-Crédito*, FMC). Case study: PMV and FMC (Villa del Carmen and San Ginés neighbourhoods).
- The reconditioning of a piped water network, administered by a commission of neighbours. Case study: *Barrio Alem's* water network.
- The ongoing advocacy work for public policies carried out by a network of technical, social and grassroots organisations in the Forum of Land, Infrastructure and Housing Organisations in the Province of Buenos Aires (FOTIVBA) and its work with the PMV. Case study: FOTIVBA.

The first two case studies are in the Municipality of San Fernando and the third in the Municipality of Moreno; both municipalities are part of Greater Buenos Aires. The fourth case study concerns a network of organisations active throughout Greater Buenos Aires. Through these case studies, the dynamics of working jointly and the resulting relations are explored, looking into factors such as:

- the level of *complexity* of the urban intervention process proposed by the project or programme;
- the degree of *flexibility* of the intervention, which allows for changing strategies and actions (where the source of funds has particular influence);
- the *intervention model* proposed and preferred;
- the *government's agenda*; and
- the way *organisations* are established, their *leadership* and *capabilities*.

This results in different kinds of relationships between local governments and community organisations.

This study is based on the premise that the participation of community organisations and good working relationships with local governments favours good governmental decision-making and policy-making. It can also contribute to a wider distribution of urban benefits and to the sustainability of the changes introduced. It is also acknowledged that the participation and strengthening of community organisations often takes much longer than the time frame of programmes or interventions.

After this introductory section, Section 2 provides the context – urbanisation processes in and around Greater Buenos Aires and the roles of community organisations, intermediary organisations and local government in developing land for housing. Section 3 presents the four case studies and Section 4 reflects on the lessons learnt. This is followed by references and appendices to supplement, illustrate or facilitate understanding of this work.

³ IIED-AL was invited by IIED to prepare this paper as part of a series of working papers on how local governments work with community organisations, especially those formed by low-income groups and those who live in informal settlements.

2

Context

2.1 Urbanisation processes in the periphery of Buenos Aires

Greater Buenos Aires, currently with 9.91 million inhabitants (INDEC, 2010),⁴ has grown and expanded, influenced by different urbanisation processes. With regard to popular sectors – the focus of this work – there are basically four modalities of urban expansion in the Buenos Aires periphery, namely: popular plots; informal settlements (some supported by technical organisations); self-building plans driven by nongovernmental organisations; and social housing programmes launched by the state in different stages. These processes, each undergoing a gradual consolidation and merging, are led and promoted by different stakeholders at their inception and throughout their development.

The first of these modalities dates back to the 1940s, with the expansion of small urban centres throughout Greater Buenos Aires after the sub-division of large land areas into housing plots. These could be afforded by the working class, who were able to purchase them in instalments and gradually build their own houses. The roles of community development associations, senior citizen centres and neighbourhood clubs as social organisations were crucial for the urban consolidation process in this model and also in the subsequent incorporation of new organisations and neighbours. As these *popular plots* materialised and expanded, they merged with other parts of the city that were equally

in the process of expansion. Population densities in peripheral areas increased, generating demand for the planning and expansion of infrastructure, facilities and services.

These developments on the urban periphery were mostly self-managed, and local governments took on a prominent role in certain improvements, such as paved roads, lighting and in the procurement of school or health care equipment. There was a remarkable absence of state regulations and professional activity in this early stage of peripheral expansion.

With the expansion of the urban fabric, the land became a profitable source of investment for real estate developers. This was not only because of the shift from rural to urban land use but also because of the lack of regulations requiring supplementary works, such as water and sewerage services and pavements in the new plots. This situation continued until 1977, when regulations were enacted regarding the production of urban plots, with specifications for minimum plot dimensions, the layout of necessary infrastructure,⁵ the assignment to the state of spaces for circulation and public areas, and spaces reserved for facilities. One of the severest restrictions imposed by the law was that houses or apartment buildings had to be built above a certain established flood elevation in order to obtain approval. These regulations increased the cost of urban land production, and these higher costs were directly transferred to popular plot costs. Consequently, the lower-income population was gradually excluded from accessing popular plots.

⁴The City of Buenos Aires has a population of 2,890,151. The Buenos Aires Metropolitan Region has 13,806,866 inhabitants (INDEC, 2010).

⁵Executive Order No. 8912, Chapter IV, Infraestructura de servicios y equipamiento comunitario (Service infrastructure and community facilities), Section 62.

The second urbanisation model was the development of *informal settlements*, where social or neighbourhood organisations took on a prominent role in the model's inception. In part, this replicated the popular plot logic but took place on abandoned or vacant lands. In general, these processes displayed some degree of organisation and were often supported by NGOs during the consolidation process as well as by the municipal authorities. These informal settlements increased city expansion but with a shortage of basic neighbourhood infrastructure. As population pressure increases, these settlements are gradually being equipped with the required infrastructure through collective actions or processes arranged by technical NGOs.

NGOs also promote planned urban undertakings aimed at strengthening the capabilities of neighbours and neighbourhood organisations; these are *self-building plans*, which constitute the third modality of Greater Buenos Aires urban expansion. NGOs mostly work on plot plans with basic services, supporting and providing technical and social advice regarding self-building processes, the provision of infrastructure and services and the completion or improvement of existing houses. In these cases, the state arranges the necessary approvals and/or finances some actions. In some cases, the government and the community organisations work jointly on a social–habitat production model, which sometimes includes the participation of NGOs.

The fourth modality is *social housing programmes developed by the state*. This type of intervention implies a prominent role for the state through managing and financing the programme. This also involves the private landowners (who benefit from selling little-sought-after land) and construction companies that profit from such large-scale works. Note should also be taken of programmes executed since 2001 that include worker cooperatives, who are a new stakeholder in the creation of core housing units.

Since the 1990s, there has been an important change in habitat management. Cities took on a central role, as well as local governments, through policy decentralisation, although not always supported by the necessary technical and financial resources. The main concern here is the efficiency of cities and, within this framework, international organisations start viewing irregular settlements as a problem for governance and for urban efficiency.

Unlike the policies prevailing prior to the 1990s, the 'formalisation' of settlements became the government's response to informal settlements. This encouraged inhabitants to seek formal ownership of the land. For governments, this entailed the recognition that informal settlements could no longer be considered as social progress; they were simply the only kind of habitat that their inhabitants could obtain. Within this framework,

programmes such as PROMEBA and the PMV emerged, and there has been an increase in joint actions and collective work between the technical NGOs and neighbourhood organisations and the government.

This is a dynamic process, where the main interventions are targeted at land tenure regularisation processes and urban upgrading. It includes building new houses in order to relocate families currently settled on land that cannot be regularised; also the completion of infrastructure and improvements to existing houses.

2.2 Local governments in the Greater Buenos Aires Area

During the implementation of the different modalities reviewed in this paper, local governments undergo a restructuring of their roles from being mere 'administrators' of conventional public services to having to plan and manage the development of the city. This includes assigning priorities and dealing with issues such as health, education, safety and housing. Their challenge is to cope with a complexity that requires looking beyond local affairs and that includes other stakeholders, to reflect upon the city and overcome its problems.

The state reform process undergone at the beginning of the 1990s, coupled with the successive structural adjustment policies intended to allocate costs to sub-national levels, resulted in greater responsibilities for local governments and, hence, a redefinition of their own political and institutional mechanisms.

When local governments can take advantage of the decentralisation process, the new role assigned to them may lead to a city management model that adds flexibility to existing structures and also a higher capacity for reacting to the urgent and pressing needs of neighbours. This also leads to a constant review of their policies. However, the imbalance between new functions and available resources increases local governments' challenges, as they are expected to profit from their comparative advantages in terms of leadership and institutional capacity, while ensuring higher efficiency by means of strategic planning according to certain objectives and a more accountable local government.

In the case of Argentina, after the socioeconomic crisis in 2001 and the political–institutional management model initiated in 2003, there was a greater development of policies that established municipalities as key stakeholders in the execution of programmes and collaborative work as the main working modality,

promoting work with local communities and social organisations (Clemente and Girolami, 2006).

In some cases, these new dynamics of social and urban policies change responsibility for the transfer of resources from the federal government to the municipality. Municipalities thus start to move from assistance models to more integrated development. Three types of municipal function can be broadly differentiated, that is the assistance function, where municipalities administer and distribute national or provincial subsidies for health, education, housing and so on; the promotional function, where municipalities foster the organisation of demand and manage project financing and execution; and the development function, where municipalities take on the role of relating and coordinating the support from the federal government and other social service providers with the needs of marginalised groups (Navarro Arredondo, 2012).

During the transition from the assistance function to the development function, greater coordination with community organisations is necessary, to jointly identify the best solutions and make local development efforts more appropriate, effective and inclusive.

2.3 Community organisations in the Greater Buenos Aires Area

Examining the community organisations in the four case studies requires an understanding of how they developed and also a dynamic view, because organisational models change. Community organisations transform as they adapt to social changes, political transformations or changes in the programmes in which they are involved. The social practices of community organisations are not forged overnight; they consolidate through long development processes. Thus, the type, origin and composition of community organisations is closely linked to the development process in their neighbourhood, the politics at each point in time and the state's role (among other aspects).

At present, the following types of neighbourhood organisation can be identified: community development associations, neighbourhood councils, cooperatives, commissions of neighbours, working committees and institutional/organisational networks (among others).

Each community organisation displays a different degree of formality, different institutional and operating characteristics and different relations to its neighbourhood's urbanisation process. Community

development organisations, cooperatives and neighbourhood councils are more linked to processes related to the creation of popular plots, where these organisations are established to contribute to urban consolidation and the completion of needed neighbourhood infrastructure and facilities.

Another type of community organisation—commissions of neighbours— can be found in neighbourhoods where the settlement of its inhabitants was not planned: the so-called informal settlements of Greater Buenos Aires. These organisations require some degree of formal organisation to be able to address the neighbourhood urbanisation process and promote the provision of infrastructure works.

Working committees are another type of organisation whose formation may, to some extent, be driven by the state within the framework of urbanisation and habitat-related programmes. They are set up to execute a programme or with a view to overcoming a community problem. They may have legal recognition but this is not an essential requisite for their activities. Neighbours' recognition of such working committees is measured by the degree of participation at the time of their creation, as well as the degree of communication and validation of their performance during the execution of the programme.

The degree of formality of each community organisation varies; in general, community development associations, neighbourhood councils and cooperatives apply for and acquire their formal status, which enables them to take steps in the name of a group. By contrast, community organisations formed with a specific object or under a particular programme do not always require (or attain) formal status, even if they perform well and gain recognition for their activity. Formality does not guarantee genuine community participation and representation.

In these processes, other organisations have a key role, among them:

- NGOs, which take on the role of strengthening the technical capacity of the above-mentioned organisations, based on a strong commitment to citizen participation and their contribution to the social progress of neglected sectors; and
- civil society organisations, whose sphere of action extends beyond the territory of each neighbourhood, such as the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Church and sports clubs. These organisations contribute to the search for consensus in urbanisation and habitat improvement processes.

2.4 The role of intermediary organisations

Despite the many achievements of community or neighbourhood organisations and their implementation of innovative actions, there are limits to what they can accomplish. Individual actions (for example, housing improvements) or collective actions (for example, sewer and/or water network laying and management) are difficult to materialise without some degree of technical support. Several intermediary organisations have emerged to provide technical, financial or legal support. These organisations work with different goals, financing mechanisms, modalities and degrees of independence from the government, and differ in their interaction with community organisations and neighbours (Arrossi *et al.*, 1994:70); however, all of them seek to enhance community organisations' capacity to organise and work with other stakeholders in order to change habitat conditions.

These intermediary organisations often help to channel resources from the federal government or international cooperation agencies, and supplement them with the technical capacity to support and work on direct intervention programmes and actions. Since the late 1980s, there has been a shift in the way programmes that target deprived neighbourhoods are designed and implemented. This shift has been away from actions centrally planned by the federal government and towards actions conceived at the local level and involving many stakeholders, but mostly focused on the joint work with community organisations and, if possible, different local government departments. In this process of change, intermediary organisations have played a significant role in showing how to implement these more transparent and inclusive programmes, whose purpose is to work jointly with several stakeholders. The challenge for these institutions is two-fold: on the one hand, they should contribute to research, describing the complexities of habitat improvement processes and the interaction of inhabitants and governments in those processes; on the other hand, these organisations are strongly committed to overcoming different aspects of poverty, knowing that every change requires the building of trust among the parties and long-term work (Satterthwaite, 2009).

2.5 Relations between local governments and community organisations in habitat management programmes

In the course of popular habitat management programmes, a number of practices are implemented that, on the one hand, channel population demands and on the other, government responses to such demands. These may be very different from one neighbourhood or local government to another. There is no single way to manage these habitat programmes; this management may be exercised jointly or in isolation, include or exclude other private or technical actors, and rely or not rely on social framework strengthening instruments.

The different practices shape the way community organisations relate to local governments, and they become a further component of every neighbourhood/organisation's particular features as well as local government's capacity (and decision) to include and allow the participation of community organisations as part of a long-term political project.

Three broad modes of relationship can be identified: community organisations just as a resource distribution channel; community organisations that become acting entities through consultation mechanisms, the generation of proposals and policy implementation; and community organisations that assume a strategic role and determine the programme direction and priorities in collaboration with the public sector, and this often includes evaluation and monitoring exercises (Navarro Arredondo, 2012).

These relations fluctuate and go through different stages depending on the possibilities of each programme, community and local government interests and the context where such relations evolve (both locally and nationally).

2.6 Profile of case studies

Four cases were selected for an analysis of the types of relations developed between community organisations and local governments in housing/habitat improvement programmes. The cases differ according to the type of neighbourhood, project, source of financing, community organisation, leadership and participation.

The first three cases, PROMEBA I and II, the PMV and the FMC, and *Barrio Alem's* water network entail different urban interventions with a direct impact on housing and living conditions.

PROMEBA I and II have been implemented in San Jorge, La Paz and Hardoy settlements in the Municipality of San Fernando. *Barrio San Jorge* and *Barrio La Paz* have expanded through informal occupation of lands, while in *Barrio Hardoy*, there has been a planned social urbanisation process on land owned by the municipality.

The PMV and the FMC (in which IIED–AL participates) are developed in several other neighbourhoods of the Municipality of San Fernando. In this case, we have selected the experience of the neighbourhoods of Villa del Carmen and San Ginés, where the two programmes have been integrated and consolidated in the process.

The case study on reconditioning a piped water network is in *Barrio Alem*, in the Municipality of Moreno. A neighbours' organisation has been in charge of the maintenance and management of the water network and also a precarious sewer under a type of service modality known as 'independent system'. The arrival of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project and, subsequently, of the Focus Cities initiative (in Spanish, *Ciudades Focales*) contributed to strengthening community organisation capabilities.

All neighbourhoods are in the process of consolidation, and their neighbours feel a strong sense of fulfilment as they have undertaken various improvements with their own efforts, both individually and collectively for the whole neighbourhood. To varying degrees, interventions foster coordination between neighbourhood organisations and the government, as well as the participation of the beneficiaries in the projects.

The fourth case entails advocacy work on habitat public policies through a network of technical and grassroots organisations, of which IIED–AL is a member. This space, called *Foro de Organizaciones de Tierra y Vivienda de la Provincia de Buenos Aires*(FOTIVBA)(Forum of Land, Infrastructure and Housing Organisations in the Province of Buenos Aires) promotes a broader relationship with government representatives, including the executive branch of the provincial and national governments, and legislators. This advocacy work is built upon the daily practice of technical and grassroots organisations. This case analysis focuses on the dynamics established by the forum in the implementation of the PMV.

Table 1. Summary of the cases under analysis (excepting FOTIVBA)

	PROMEBA I AND II	PMV AND FMC	BARRIO ALEM'S WATER NETWORK
Neighbourhood	Hardoy, La Paz, San Jorge (Municipality of San Fernando)	Villa del Carmen, San Ginés (Municipality of San Fernando)	Alem (Municipality of Moreno)
Type of neighbourhood	Informal settlements	Deprived neighbourhoods Owner-occupied (families)	Deprived neighbourhoods Owner-occupied (families)
Composition	Informal occupation for 50 years on average, and planned social urbanisation	50 year-old popular plots	30 year-old popular plots
Intervention scale	Throughout the settlement, in public spaces and in houses, as appropriate; with resettlement of families	In households of each applicant family	Management of piped water network
Source of financing of the process under analysis	National government and credit facility from the Inter-American Development Bank	Multiple: national government, entrepreneurs, cooperation agency, neighbours by means of instalment collection	Multiple: national government, neighbours by means of rate collection, cooperation agency
Leadership in decision-making	Municipality	Neighbourhood working committees supported by IIED–AL	Commission of neighbours

3

Case studies

3.1 PROMEBA in San Fernando

3.1.1 Characteristics of the intervention process

This case study describes the implementation of PROMEBA in three neighbourhoods of the Municipality of San Fernando: San Jorge, Hardoy and La Paz. At the time of its implementation, these neighbourhoods were partially consolidated.

Barrio San Jorge was first established as an informal settlement in the 1960s. Occupation of the land took place in two stages. The first stage – ‘the old neighbourhood’ – was formed by families relocated from flood-prone zones and resulted in an overcrowded and precarious settlement with no formal street layout and infrastructure. The second stage – ‘the new neighbourhood’ – began to develop at the end of the 1970s and is mostly populated by families that were resettled by the government, who wanted to vacate areas required for public works. Even though it displays an orderly street layout and uniform plots, housing and services are highly precarious. (Almansi, Hardoy and Hardoy, 2010).

Barrio Hardoy originated in 1996 as a 7.5 ha planned settlement with regular city blocks and 250 plots granted to families relocated from *Barrio San Jorge*.

Relocation took place in response to the need to vacate private lands and was the result of the joint work of the community, the local government and IIED–AL (Almansi, Hardoy and Hardoy, 2010).⁶ The relocated families received a plot and they gradually resettled to the extent they were able to build their own houses. The site is just across the road from their previous homes.

Barrio La Paz is an informal settlement with passageways (rather than roads) and irregular plots that had never benefited from an urban development project; it was first established in 1960. A few years before the implementation of PROMEBA, neighbours raised the need to work on the neighbourhood urbanisation plan and sought the support of IIED–AL and the School of Architecture, Design and Urban Planning of the University of Buenos Aires (FADU–UBA, by its initials in Spanish). These neighbours were in part encouraged to act by seeing the process underway in *Barrio Hardoy* (which is adjacent to La Paz).

Initially, these neighbourhoods were deprived of basic infrastructure and services (piped water, sewers, electricity, paved roads and so on). As in several other neighbourhoods, services arrived gradually as a result of the steps and negotiations undertaken by several stakeholders, including strong community engagement and the work of technical organisations.⁷

⁶ For further information on IIED–AL’s work in low-income settlements in San Fernando, see Hardoy, Ana and Schusterman, R (1997); also Hardoy, Ana *et al.* (1991). Both can be downloaded at no charge from <http://eau.sagepub.com/>. See also Schusterman, Ricardo *et al.* (2001). This can be downloaded at no charge from <http://www.iied.org/pubs/pdf/full/9075IIED.pdf>.

⁷ For example, the water network and an alternative sewerage system were built by the community and IIED–AL using cooperative funds. The building of the network and the negotiations with the recently privatised water utility company coupled with the municipality’s support enabled the water network extension to *Barrio Hardoy*, *Barrio La Paz* and other nearby neighbourhoods. The private utility was, for the first time, extending water services to deprived neighbourhoods. See Schusterman *et al.* (2002).

BOX 1. MUNICIPALITY OF SAN FERNANDO

San Fernando is a municipality with 163,240 inhabitants (INDEC, 2010), developed on 23 km² of continental land that concentrates 98 per cent of the municipality's population in an area of 950 km². The continental sector is part of Greater Buenos Aires. Urbanisation of the municipality was historically from east to west, and a gradient in socioeconomic, educational and housing levels shows evidence of this. For example, levels of unsatisfied basic needs range from 3.7 per cent in the central area to 25.9 per cent in the west of the municipality.⁸

Informal urban developments (slums and informal settlements) exist within the city, and generally cause disruptions in the regular urban layout due to irregularities in street dimensions, the presence of narrow pedestrian alleys, de facto land occupation, precarious housing and inadequate provision for basic services. The local public policy in the past 12 years was targeted at urban integration. This has recently changed with the new administration.

Map 1: Location of Barrio San Jorge and Barrio Hardoy. Source: IIED – AL based on Google earth



PROMEBA is a programme currently implemented in many urban areas in the country and is funded by an Inter-American Development Bank loan and by the federal government. Its purpose is "... to improve the quality of life and contribute to urban and social inclusion of the poorest population sectors residing in slums and irregular settlements."⁹

The programme is organised by a National Coordination Unit (in Spanish, *Unidad de Coordinación Nacional*) and it operates on a decentralised basis through both provincial implementation units (*Unidades Ejecutoras Provinciales*) and municipal implementation

units (*Unidades Ejecutoras Municipales*). Its sphere of action comprises land tenure legalisation, provision of environmental infrastructure, equipment and sanitation, social capital increase, and strengthening of local governments' management and administrative capabilities.

Over the course of its 15 year-long implementation experience, PROMEBA has changed its scope, its eligibility criteria and its fund management. The management of PROMEBA I was the result of opening up the programme to Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area's municipalities¹⁰ rather than an initiative originating from

⁸ Data from 2010, Statistics and Census Unit, Municipality of San Fernando.

⁹ Source: www.promeba.org.ar.

¹⁰ At the time, PROMEBA was only being implemented in other parts of the country.



Barrio San Jorge just before the starting of Promeba.
Source: IIED – AL



Consolidation of Barrio Hardoy. Source: IIED – AL



View of Barrio La Paz. Source: IIED – AL



View of land and initial work in Barrio Hardoy.
Source: IIED – AL

within local government. In the Municipality of San Fernando, the preliminary work for the programme was undertaken between 2002 and 2003. It proposed a comprehensive intervention project for three adjoining neighbourhoods (San Jorge, Hardoy and La Paz), where upgrading and urbanisation work and interventions were already being carried out. As *Barrio San Jorge* failed to meet the eligibility criteria, it was excluded

from the programme (there was a restriction regarding land tenure regularisation on lands at risk of flooding). Nonetheless, this neighbourhood benefited in the end because the intervention work in *Barrio Hardoy* enabled the relocation of families from San Jorge, freeing up land for its future upgrading and decreasing overcrowding. The province of Buenos Aires was responsible for designing the project and calling for bids with the

Table 2. Summary of actions addressed by PROMEBA I and II

COMPONENT	PROMEBA I – <i>BARRIO HARDOY AND BARRIO LA PAZ</i>	PROMEBA II – <i>BARRIO SAN JORGE</i>
Urban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion and reconditioning of piped water, sewer and electricity networks ▪ New natural gas network ▪ Streets, sidewalks and public lighting ▪ Squares, parks ▪ Building of a multi-purpose room ▪ Building of basic housing units and completion of bathrooms and kitchens ▪ Opening of roads and relocation of families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reconstruction of the water and sewer networks ▪ Natural gas network and new electricity network ▪ Streets, pavements and public lighting ▪ Squares ▪ Reconstruction of a health centre ▪ Opening of roads and relocation of families
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Waste collection system ▪ Removal of waste dumps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Works undertaken but not completed: ▪ Waste collection system ▪ Removal of dumps ▪ Recovery and conditioning of the old Reconquista riverbank
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Activities aimed at enhancing community participation and regularising neighbourhood organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Activities aimed at enhancing community participation ▪ Coordination with a project specifically targeted at young people
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Land tenure regularisation in favour of neighbourhood occupants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposal of land tenure regularisation in favour of neighbourhood occupants

collaboration of, and provision of information by, the municipality. In this stage, PROMEBA's intervention work was carried out inside households and in public spaces. The province received funds from the national government and was responsible for its management and the inspection of works.

At the time of implementation of PROMEBA II, the Municipality of San Fernando had consolidated its urbanisation policy for precarious settlements and was the entity in charge of negotiating the programme directly with the national government. During PROMEBA II, the aim was to include *Barrio San Jorge* and expand the scope of the upgrading policy to an impoverished area of the municipality. The programme was thus developed for San Jorge, San Martín and Presidente Perón – three settlements located on the banks of the heavily polluted Reconquista River.¹¹

PROMEBA II's intervention work was different from PROMEBA I as it was conducted in more complex areas that comprised several neighbourhoods or settlements at a time. These settlements were also at different stages of consolidation. In addition, PROMEBA II only intervened in public areas (streets, pavements, trunk infrastructure and public spaces) and usually without undertaking household connections (for instance, to water). Anything related to housing improvements or new housing construction was managed through other national programmes. In this case, the municipality took responsibility for designing the intervention, for the bidding process and for supervising the work. The following table summarises the interventions proposed by each programme.

¹¹ This paper analyses the experience in *Barrio San Jorge*.

3.1.2 Local stakeholders

When PROMEBA I was initiated, there was a prior history of community organisations that had worked with the local government and organisations such as IIED–AL.

San Jorge has a particular history with regard to its relationship with external stakeholders. Initially, there was no community organisation; the few improvements made were managed through individual claims, generally with the intermediation of a priest from the Church of Antioch (Father Jorge) who, according to neighbours, ran the neighbourhood like a military regime.¹² There were also failed attempts to bring water to the *barrio* through the efforts of the local priest, a nearby factory and the army. These failed essentially because the community had not been involved and there was no continuity or technical viability. This generated a mistrust of external organisations (Almansi, Hardoy and Hardoy, 2010).¹³

When the neighbourhood upgrading process began in 1987, with IIED–AL as promoter, different spaces for activities and association emerged such as *Manos Unidas* (Hands United), which was formed by a group of women who started organising sewing workshops and activities with young people and children. They managed to purchase the Neighbourhood House (*Casa del Barrio*) and the House for Youth (*Casa del Joven*) to develop these activities; they were also responsible for the installation of the water network, an alternative sewage system and negotiations for land. In all these activities, IIED–AL contributed to strengthening community capacities for working as a community group and also with other stakeholders. In 1990, after the implementation of an agreement between the province, the municipality and IIED–AL, a comprehensive plan was devised with *Barrio San Jorge* community. A first step was to conduct a census to define who would be the beneficiaries of this plan. What followed were different actions and processes that paved the way for developing a comprehensive neighbourhood upgrading programme, including the possibility to finally achieve formal land tenure and regularise the neighbourhood.

Before the commencement of PROMEBA I, the following organisations existed:

Nuestra Tierra (Our Land) housing cooperative: A body of delegates was formed for the negotiation and management of land for the future *Barrio Hardoy*. The creation of a formal organisation was necessary to

receive land donations, and a cooperative was formed in 1991. All neighbours were members of the cooperative and there was an elected executive committee. The referents recall the steps taken (for example, the building of a housing materials bank) as a clear indication that they were already taking charge of the land assigned to them. After a phase of strenuous work and considerable participation, the cooperative suffered various conflicts and participation diminished;¹⁴ however, it continued to be an advisor because of the many agreements reached by consensus among the neighbours, and between the neighbours and the local government.

Barrio Hardoy sub-committee: Within the cooperative, a sub-committee of delegates was formed by families that were being relocated to *Barrio Hardoy*, to address all matters related to the *barrio*'s urbanisation process. For example, they had to define which inhabitants would move from San Jorge, and award the plots accordingly. To that end, the sub-committee resorted to the 1990 census conducted in the neighbourhood, also the testimony of neighbours and a raffle for the plots in the presence of a public notary. They faced two high-conflict situations with the local government. The first was the submission of written documentation certifying plot award in *Barrio Hardoy*, which took a long time. The second was the collective rejection of a municipal proposal to build housing on *Barrio Hardoy* land for people from other neighbourhoods. The rationale for this was that plots had been awarded to households who had not occupied them.¹⁵ A delegate recalls how "... we stood up before the municipality and, luckily, we were heard." The delegates also remember the 'massive nature' of the protest and the forceful measures taken at the time, such as picketing roads, to demand observance of the agreements that had previously been made.

In view of their role, the cooperative and sub-committee became key stakeholders in the development of PROMEBA I and II.

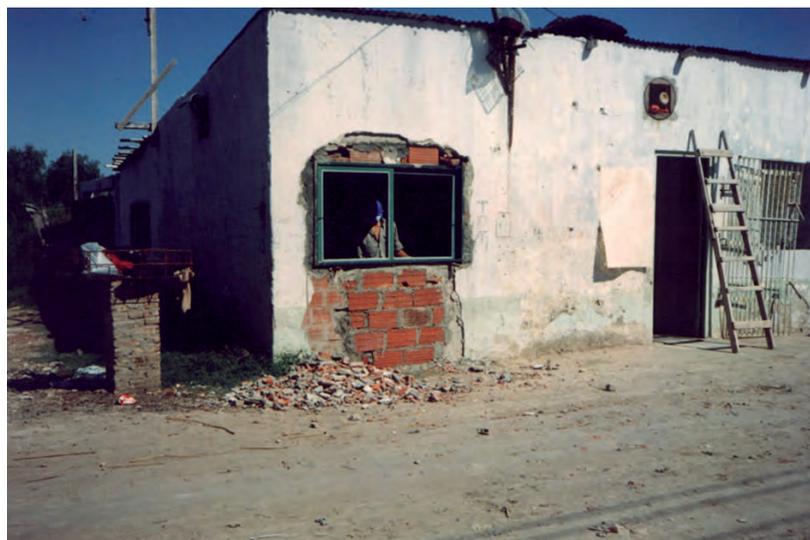
Barrio La Paz neighbourhood council: This was composed of a group of neighbours that sought to work on neighbourhood upgrading issues and community activities. However, when the municipality began to approach the neighbourhood, the neighbourhood council did not have much recognition from the population; indeed, it was sharply criticised. Its main referents did not support the local government, thus hindering the relationship and also work in the neighbourhood.

¹² PROMEBA I and II focus group promoters (19 March 2014).

¹³ The story of how these neighbourhoods gained access to water is summarised in Almansi *et al.* (2010).

¹⁴ At the time when PROMEBA I arrived, the cooperative was composed of a ten-member committee (mostly women) but with the active participation of only two women. The committee was chaired by a man. As time went by, and owing to conflicts that arose from the awarding of plots in *Barrio Hardoy*, the president of the cooperative stepped down. At the time when PROMEBA II was implemented, the composition of the executive committee had partially changed and it was chaired by a woman. Nonetheless, as was the case with PROMEBA I, actual member participation would often be reduced to two or three people.

¹⁵ It took time for the neighbours of *Barrio San Jorge* to occupy the land of *Barrio Hardoy* and build their homes; there was an agreement that shacks would not be built in *Barrio Hardoy*.



Working on the house of the Barrio. Source: IIED – AL

Raffle to assign plots to future residents of Barrio Hardoy. Source: IIED – AL

With the arrival of PROMEBA I:

Barrio Hardoy's body of delegates was formed in 2003. Even though a sub-committee had been created within the *Nuestra Tierra* cooperative to address matters regarding the urbanisation of *Barrio Hardoy*, it proved necessary to create a specific space that enabled the coordinated work and neighbourhood representation that the PROMEBA programme required. This is a function that the cooperative alone could not fulfil. The election of delegates was performed by city block. The purpose of the delegates was to support, coordinate with and be consulted by the municipality in matters related to the execution of PROMEBA. Subsequently, as representatives of their neighbourhood, they engaged in other community-related activities such as making arrangements for the Day of the Child and training workshops. This body of delegates was mostly composed of neighbours who already fulfilled a role in the former cooperative.

Barrio La Paz body of delegates: This was formed in 2003 with the same purpose as in *Barrio Hardoy*, where delegates were specifically elected to provide support to the programme execution. As in *Barrio Hardoy*, this group would have influence on other community-related activities.

To develop PROMEBA, working committees (*mesas barriales*) were formed in each neighbourhood, where the delegates, the municipality and the cooperative held regular meetings. IIED–AL participated in the working committees, fulfilling its dual role as PROMEBA's

field team,¹⁶ proposed by the municipality, and as an independent institution providing support to the comprehensive upgrading of the area.

During the last stage of the programme, a multi-neighbourhood space was created, which included the working committees from *Barrio Hardoy*, *Barrio La Paz* and the *Nuestra Tierra* cooperative. This space was the setting for the discussion concerning the assignment of 20 plots within *Barrio Hardoy* to *Barrio La Paz* families to enable urban upgrading (see text below and Box 3).

With the arrival of PROMEBA II:

Barrio San Jorge's body of delegates was formed in 2009. As with PROMEBA I, even though there was a cooperative, it proved necessary to create a space that enabled coordinated work and neighbourhood representation because the cooperative alone was not capable of fulfilling this role. This space was formed by delegates appointed by the neighbours, representing different neighbourhood sectors. Delegates had the same role as in PROMEBA I.

Afterwards, and with a view to increasing the participation of stakeholders involved in *Barrio San Jorge's* life, a network of organisations was formed with the participation of delegate representatives, the municipality and different institutions and organisations working in the neighbourhood (such as kindergartens, schools and schooling support centres). The purpose of this network was to keep communication channels open with regard to work progress, to promote solutions

¹⁶PROMEBA funds the hiring of a field team that becomes part of the Local Implementation Unit, thereby reinforcing the municipal team according to programme components. The team is composed of professionals from different disciplines including architects, social scientists, lawyers and environment specialists.



Initial meetings at Barrio La Paz to start Promeba I.
Source: IIED – AL



Closing of Promeba 1. Source: IIED – AL

and to coordinate actions that might be of interest to the participating institutions.

In both cases, the local government participated in the implementation of the programme. It also took on a proactive management role in the work with informal settlements in line with the provincial and national governments¹⁷. PROMEBA provided the municipality with the necessary financial resources to scale up the work performed so far through the Urban Upgrading and Land Reorganisation Unit (*Dirección*

de Reordenamiento Urbano – DRU) on settlements, namely relocation processes, upgrading and the improvement of neighbourhood infrastructure.

In terms of relevance to the local agenda, urban upgrading is one of the government's main public policies; the local government not only took charge of implementing PROMEBA but also participated by means of other programmes and resources in several informal settlements and deprived neighbourhoods, urbanising and building houses (see Box 2).

BOX 2. THE URBAN UPGRADING AND LAND REORGANISATION UNIT (DIRECCIÓN DE REORDENAMIENTO URBANO, DRU) WITHIN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN FERNANDO

The Urban Upgrading and Land Reorganisation Unit (*Dirección de Reordenamiento Urbano, DRU*) was created within the government secretariat by mid-2000, with an initial staff of six. Although originally created for the implementation of a housing programme, since its inception it has strengthened its role as the unit responsible for urban upgrading issues. It embarked on devising an agenda for potential urban intervention projects in the most deprived areas in the municipality. This agenda was built after an initial diagnosis and contact with the different neighbourhood organisations and informal settlement referents.

From 2005, DRU became part of a new special under-secretariat, in charge of not only the urban upgrading and habitat improvement processes but also the urban planning of the municipality. This process was boosted further as it gained support from other municipal departments that formerly regarded the growth of DRU with mistrust. This

repositioning of the unit subsequently resulted in DRU being moved to the Secretariat of Public Works and Services in 2008.

With the implementation of PROMEBA I, and especially during PROMEBA II, DRU engaged more personnel, involving a staff of 30 to address the different ongoing programmes. Many were implemented with funds from the national and provincial governments, including: the Federal Housing Programme (*Plan Federal de Viviendas*); the Urbanisation Sub-programme for Slums and Precarious Settlements (*Subprograma de Urbanización de Villas y Asentamientos Precarios*); the enlargement and building of houses undertaken by construction cooperatives; the PMV; the Prohabitat programme; arrangements for land tenure regularisation; and territorial work with referents and organisations.

Source: Ana Álvarez and Cecilia Monti, former directors of the Urban Upgrading and Land Reorganisation Unit of the Under-secretariat of Urban Planning, Land Development and Housing, San Fernando.

¹⁷ Mayor Osvaldo Amieiro, from the Justicialist Party, was elected and re-elected in 1995, 1999, 2003 and 2007. The preliminary arrangements for PROMEBA were made in the district in 2002, when he had already been in office for seven years.



Presentation workshop of Promeba II in Barrio San Jorge. Source: IIED – AL

The different implementation modalities of PROMEBA I and II had a direct impact on intervention.

During PROMEBA I:

- All changes and approvals required the involvement of Buenos Aires province and sometimes of the federal government. This hindered the possibility of prompt responses to problems.
- Programme beneficiaries called for prompt responses from the municipality, the 'visible face' of the programme, but many of these were not under its control.
- Community organisations that supported the execution of the programme regarded the delays and difficulties in solving work-related matters as an untenable situation for the neighbourhood, and this systematically affected participation levels and the neighbours' trust in the benefits of the programme.

During the implementation of PROMEBA II, the Undersecretariat of Urban Planning, Land Development and Housing (*Subsecretaría de Planeamiento Urbano, Tierras y Vivienda*) was given responsibility for the general coordination of the programme. Thus the municipality was responsible not only for devising comprehensive project proposals but also for the entire bidding process, hiring, and the receipt of funds for payments and work certification. As far as the

intervention work was concerned, this meant greater flexibility and a shorter time scale for decision-making and responses. However, this did not entail local independence in the management and administration of funds or in determining the works to be carried out because the national government remained the entity in charge of the control, supervision and approval of these aspects.

In PROMEBA II, there were many complementary works performed through different programmes and tenders, unlike in PROMEBA I. This required coordinating with different national offices and construction companies. The scope of intervention also required coordinating with different municipal departments to apply for permits and work approvals, also for the suspension or modification of, and connection to, existing networks and services in accordance with work progress, as well as safety controls and taking any steps related to land tenure regularisation. Although the urban upgrading process was a priority in the local political agenda, coordination between the different departments was not always efficient. This was for a range of reasons, including the lack of economic and human resources, different priorities for different government departments and the need to respond to daily demands. These complexities resulted in delays and, as in PROMEBA I, gradually undermined the neighbours' trust in the programme and affected participation levels.

3.1.3 Analysis of the relationship between the local government and community organisations

Enhancing the role of community organisations and inhabitants' participation was one of the most important issues promoted by PROMEBA. This is so much so that, at the stage of programme preparation, the municipality had to submit a document whereby the population granted its consent to the scope of intervention. In addition, throughout the intervention process, different ways were sought to reinforce neighbourhood organisation modalities.

In both stages of PROMEBA, the work relied on the same coordination mechanisms between the local government and community organisations – the creation of working committees, basically with the participation of the pre-existing neighbourhood organisation, the body of delegates appointed within the programme framework and the municipal team. In due course, other stakeholders related to programme implementation also took part in this space, including construction companies, other community institutions, representatives of other areas of local, national and provincial government, and service providers. IIED–AL participated throughout the execution of both stages.

Both in *Barrio La Paz* and *Barrio Hardoy*, the work was first carried out with the pre-existing organisations and then with the delegates. The first meetings in *Barrio Hardoy* were held only with representatives of *Nuestra Tierra* cooperative and *Barrio Hardoy's* sub-committee until delegates were appointed per city block, many of whom were sub-committee members. In *Barrio La Paz*, the first meetings were held with the neighbourhood council and, shortly afterwards, a new body of delegates was elected due to the lack of representativeness of the neighbourhood council and its political links with the opposition party – which created serious difficulties for coordinated work.

Initially, periodic meetings were held, sometimes more than once a week. It was a hectic stage, where the bond between the municipality and the community organisations was being forged and there was some degree of mistrust to overcome. Generally, these spaces were influenced by partisan political aspects and a deeply rooted distrust towards the state at any level, especially after the profound institutional crisis undergone by the country in 2001 and 2002.

An analysis of the relationship between the organisations and the government cannot overlook the influence of party politics, whether from the official

or the opposition parties. Amid pressures for the granting of some benefits, the local government's technical department in the Urban Upgrading and Land Reorganisation Unit (supported by PROMEBA), the delegates and IIED–AL based their work on the criteria discussed and agreed by consensus in the working committee. For example, the determining of criteria for awarding houses was based on a number of indicators, including seniority, compliance with regulations and overcrowding (see Box 3 and Box 4). Abiding by rules and regulations and addressing non-compliance issues is fundamentally at odds with the idea in informal settlements that 'anything and everything goes' and that 'there are no rules or laws'. This procedure set a good precedent. Nonetheless, much of the population still saw the state as arbitrary, non-democratic, cronyistic (politicians favouring their friends) and non-transparent, and this attitude was ever-present as was the questioning of delegates and even of IIED–AL staff.

In this regard, the delegates reflected upon particular episodes where, instead of finding out more information for themselves, they got carried away by rumours that impaired or even prevented any action. This was the case for the project to create a child care centre, proposed by neighbours and approved under PROMEBA I and that would be managed initially by IIED–AL (because the community organisation lacked the requisite legal and formal status to receive funds). As a result of the distrust generated by one delegate, the execution modality was changed and a number of bureaucratic difficulties eventually prevented the child care centre from being created. The delegates' reflections today are that: "*If we had not got carried away by rumours, we would have had this child care centre today*"; or "*...as a delegate I can find out more, make [sic] questions.*" When delegates proceed in this manner they feel reassured.¹⁸

In analysing what drives community participation, the delegates acknowledge that the initiative was always taken by an outside person, 'not by us'. In this regard, they believe this self-motivation is still lacking, that everyone is always waiting for somebody else to lend a hand, probably due to a lack of self-confidence.¹⁹ Regarding PROMEBA I, they say that they still feel the need to continue working together, that there are still matters to be addressed in the neighbourhood such as the cost of the municipal tax for street lighting, sweeping and cleaning.²⁰ With regard to PROMEBA II, they assert that the municipality abandoned them after the elections and the change in administration, but there are still matters pending so they should resume their joint work as delegates.²¹

¹⁸ Focus group with PROMEBA I and II delegates (19 March 2014), Inocencia and Susana, and cooperative members.

¹⁹ Focus group with PROMEBA I and II delegates (19 March 2014), Irma, PROMEBA II delegate.

²⁰ Focus group with PROMEBA I and II delegates (19 March 2014), Inocencia, PROMEBA I delegate.

²¹ Focus group with PROMEBA I and II delegates (19 March 2014), Irma and Noelia, PROMEBA II delegates.

BOX 3. JOINT WORK – COLLABORATION: THE SOLIDARITY FUND

One of the main accomplishments of the joint work between the delegates and the government in PROMEBA I was the development of the Solidarity Fund. This fund arose to address a number of issues and to reduce inequalities affecting residents of the Hardoy, San Jorge and La Paz neighbourhoods:

- instances of irregular plot occupation in Barrio Hardoy and the need to finish plot allocation to Barrio San Jorge's families;
- different benefits being received by each family receiving a plot, according to the neighbourhood;
- the effort of some families moving from the neighbourhood by virtue of a housing plan, and their contracted obligations as a result of this decision; and
- the efforts of families who started building their houses on their own before PROMEBA I arrived.

The criteria for awarding plots to families residing in San Jorge and relocating to Barrio Hardoy were collectively defined to include: families occupying private lands; plots subject to future urban development plans or public spaces; or plots to be allocated to second families (where households included children who had grown up and started their own families). The implementation of PROMEBA I incorporated another criterion – plot size – with a specification for the minimum dimensions required for subsequent upgrading. After the completion of the award process using the above-mentioned criteria, other parameters were included: a 20-plot quota was set aside for families to be relocated from Barrio La Paz; social security cases (that is, families displaying some vulnerability indicator); and families registered on the Housing Fund list. This fund (different from the Solidarity Fund) was a revolving fund that benefited second-family groups. It had seed funding from the municipality and was used to buy houses from residents within Barrio San Jorge who had to sell because of health problems or security reasons before the launching of PROMEBA II (once PROMEBA had been announced families were not allowed to sell rights to their plot or house to avoid speculation and endangering the upgrading process).

Other matters addressed by the programme included the definition of criteria on irregularity and failure to comply with pre-established criteria or rules. For instance, there was a different set of restrictions regarding the benefits received by families purchasing from the original awardees in Barrio Hardoy than for families that had been awarded a plot in Barrio

Hardoy but had sold or assigned their previous house in Barrio San Jorge to another family when this house had been slated for demolition.

The arrival of PROMEBA generated a certain 'inequity' for families who had started building their houses on their own in relation to residents who 'had done nothing' and would receive a core housing unit under PROMEBA (this programme was only applicable to plots where there was no construction in progress).

Such inequity was also noted in the fact that some families from Barrio La Paz had to move to a housing programme to enable the upgrading of their neighbourhood, as a result of which they contracted further economic obligations such as payment for their new house. By contrast, Barrio Hardoy awardees received a plot for free and even, in some cases, a core housing unit at no cost. In addition to the above instances of inequity, given the impossibility of including Barrio San Jorge in the PROMEBA I proposal, San Jorge's neighbours felt a sense of injustice and 'abandonment'.

Non-compliance categories were established in relation to their negative effect on the upgrading project. Each irregularity and extra benefit was assigned an amount payable. It was decided that the amounts collected by the fund would be allocated to improvements and/or actions in Barrio San Jorge and to the housing programme to which Barrio La Paz families would be relocated. Fines for non-compliance in Hardoy and La Paz were used to fund improvements in all three neighbourhoods, but especially in San Jorge.

The referents remember the participation of neighbours in commissions, where they discussed the criteria and the amounts to be paid in order to balance the benefits received by the different neighbourhoods and within the same neighbourhood.

A delegate stated that the idea was "... to compensate and, hence, help out Barrio San Jorge." The implementation of this project required moving forward and engaging in in-depth discussions on agreements, abiding by rules and regulations and honouring commitments. It required sustained efforts from the municipal team, the delegates, the cooperative and IIED-AL. The importance of the Solidarity Fund lies not so much in its implementation and revenues generated, as in having raised a debate on values such as co-responsibility, solidarity, justice and equity.

BOX 4. COORDINATION EXPERIENCE: RELOCATION AND IRREGULARITY CRITERIA AND STRATEGIES

One of the most outstanding aspects of PROMEBA II was the modality adopted for defining relocation priorities. Relocation was and still is a complex issue in view of the variables considered and its sensitivity.

In the announcement regarding the conditions for the execution of PROMEBA, it was stated that the programme beneficiaries would only be those Barrio San Jorge families who had been surveyed in the census conducted for diagnostic purposes (1990). This was meant to prevent a constant turnover and reduce real estate speculation. In addition, there was a Housing Fund register (see Box 3). Everything was reviewed together and working committees matched relocation criteria against irregularity criteria:

- houses to be demolished in order to open roads and for neighbourhood upgrading;
- regularity and irregularity criteria in relation to the neighbours who had abided by the agreement not to

sell their houses to third parties (not residing in the neighbourhood) after the diagnostic census; and

- Housing Fund criteria.

After several meetings, a consolidated list of criteria was drafted with different penalties according to the situation (Appendix 1 includes a table of irregularities, fines and penalties). This process ensured the observance of agreements and somehow rewarded compliance with rules established by the neighbours themselves.

As the process threatened many vested interests, it caused various conflicts. But it was sturdily defended by the working committee and thus managed to establish a penalty payment system and ensured the observance of rules at the time of actual relocation to the new housing units. However, the strategy lost momentum, first because PROMEBA II progressed very slowly and then because of a change in government.

During the process, it was apparent that there were neighbours who had a real commitment to community well-being and an integrated vision and who continued to take part in working committees even though their own interests had been met. These delegates were elected because they stand out as motivated neighbours who are interested in the general welfare. They bring drive, solidarity and eagerness so that the neighbourhood may progress. Their participation was ever present throughout the process and, despite moments of greater or lesser tension, they are the ones who created trust and forged a respectful relationship between the government and the neighbours. Some of them are called upon for party political work in their neighbourhood, and it is then that their capacity to differentiate between roles and preserve their independence, when necessary, is evident.

With regard to fluctuations in the number of delegates during programme execution in both PROMEBA I and PROMEBA II, delegate participation varied depending on the stage of the process, the impact of the works and interest in the issues under discussion. The working committee developed different strategies aimed at encouraging participation, for example, by holding periodic meetings where all residents were invited, expanding the working committee to include all neighbours willing to participate and not only the

delegates, and by summoning referent neighbours according to issues of interest. Nevertheless, participation levels remained low.

Throughout the process, the trend was towards a decrease in the number of delegates, from more than 20 to fewer than five. Why was this? There is no single answer, but a number of possible causes may be suggested.

First, there is the *complexity* of the processes. In its two stages, PROMEBA developed in situations fraught with conflict. This was linked to its scale and the issues addressed and the mere fact that differing interests converged: those pursued individually, by the community, the organisation, the government at different levels, political parties, the construction companies and intermediary organisations.

The level of *exposure* by the stakeholders directly involved in programme implementation to the neighbours is high; the scenario is dynamic, where the different stakeholders have greater or lesser prominence in relation to the interests at stake in each stage. This clearly affects the bond forged between the government and the organisations and determines the degree of intensity of the role played by each stakeholder in the working committees.

The degree of *flexibility* and adaptation within the programme is also a key factor: flexibility of the local government as executing entity, and the national government as financial entity and controlling body. One of the main components of the programme is construction works, whose implementation is quite rigid (bidding terms and conditions, budgets, approvals and so on), and that sets the pace for the social work required by the programme and the real needs of the neighbours. The community's interest also lies in the improvements brought about by the construction works and less in the social capital generated by the programme. There is usually friction between the pace and logic of the construction works and that of the more sensitive social work.

The municipality managed an interesting initiative that somehow complemented the rigidity of the construction works; this was the Strengthening Social and Human Capital Initiative (*Programa de Fortalecimiento de Capital Social y Humano*),²² which generated considerable neighbourhood participation and action. A group of neighbourhood promoters were formally engaged to work on developing different activities of interest to young people and children in the neighbourhood to improve employment and education conditions. These promoters subsequently became neighbourhood referents. With their collaboration, many community participation activities were implemented within the framework of PROMEBA II, such as all the intervention work on public spaces, including the painting of murals and various facilities, and mosaic designs, which were supplementary to the building work of the construction company.

The flexibility of the local government and the delegates to address unexpected situations is also important. For instance, in the course of PROMEBA I, one of the conflicts was the assignment of 20 plots in *Barrio Hardoy* to the neighbours of *Barrio La Paz*. Even though the municipality believed this was a fair course of action that contributed to the comprehensive upgrading process of the two neighbourhoods involved, in the eyes of the *Nuestra Tierra* cooperative (supported by IIED-AL) this prevented 20 *Barrio San Jorge* families from having access to what they had long fought for – a house or plot. After long negotiations, it was agreed that 20 plots would be assigned in exchange for a quota of 20 in a future housing project, thereby showing the capacity to engage in dialogue and reach agreement on a comprehensive urbanisation plan that would benefit the whole area.

Another relevant factor is *time*. Both PROMEBA I and II entailed long processes for developing and executing the programmes. Many of the issues discussed, which involved a high participation of delegates, were contentious. They could even bring them into conflict with their own neighbours or relatives. Not everyone has the necessary strength, capacity or willingness to be part of the process. Furthermore, in addition to this time-consuming process, the time frame of the programme is limited, with a set beginning and end. Access to cash flow and resources to sustain activities and interventions cease when the programme ends. The procurement of additional funds for work in the neighbourhood will depend on the context and the capacity of the local government and the other stakeholders to generate more funds.

It is also important to recognise the time that delegates devote to participation, which comes on top of their family and work obligations. There is an initial period of considerable expectation and interest and a need to know what the programme is about. But after the first few meetings, and as initial queries are answered, the delegates' interest decreases. Those who remain are, in general, neighbours with true community interest.

The level of fatigue suffered by delegates (which affects their participation) is high and became evident much sooner in PROMEBA II than in PROMEBA I. Although PROMEBA II was a two-year undertaking beginning in 2009, the work has still not been completed to date. As the delegates themselves acknowledge, "... *the delegates go away because the terms are not fulfilled or because once a particular problem of their concern has been solved, they stop participating.*"²³ Although the cooperative was a referent during the implementation of PROMEBA I and at the start of PROMEBA II, and together with IIED-AL and some local government members keeps a record of all agreements made to date, its participation decreased as the programme moved forward.

The lack of participation or interest after the completion of PROMEBA I is equally noteworthy (PROMEBA II is still not finished, as noted above). This might be accounted for by increased expectations among settlement inhabitants and, from this stance, it can be regarded as a positive thing. Neighbours probably no longer need to join others in the search for solutions for shared problems, partly because most of these have already been solved, and now the neighbours raise their claims individually – as users of different services – without any need to contact other neighbours, as is the case in other parts of the city.

²² The Strengthening Social and Human Capital Initiative is a credit line of PROMEBA intended to address and intervene on issues of interest and/or concern to the neighbourhood identified in the diagnosis, but that requires a more flexible mode of intervention compared to the work project.

²³ Focus group with PROMEBA I and II delegates (19 March 2014).

The question posed to the municipality is why, after going through a stage of intense joint work, the community organisation is not strengthened. However, it is also important to identify what remains in the neighbours' collective memory; how they will change their way of organising themselves to seek the answers they need; what they have effectively learnt and accomplished throughout this process.

When we analyse the relationship between the government and the neighbourhood organisations, we cannot consider only these two stakeholders. Both PROMEBAI and PROMEBA II included the participation of other stakeholders who were committed to the comprehensive upgrading process, who supported the programme and promoted the joint work between the local government and the organisations. Throughout the programme, the role of the Catholic Church and IIED-AL was fundamental to the municipality and the delegates.

The Church collaborated in various ways, such as through the provision of a physical space in the neighbourhood to meet and implement activities related to the programme. In addition, the Church (whose opinion is highly valued by neighbours) expressed its positive opinion about PROMEBA's objectives and the urban upgrading process carried out by the municipality, both in group meetings and in individual meetings with families, paving the way for the execution of agreements.

We also need to reflect on the role of IIED-AL. Drawing on the views of delegates from each neighbourhood, IIED-AL's contribution has been to act as a guarantor of trust and support to the neighbourhood during the implementation of PROMEBA. Delegates, organisations and neighbours noted how this provided them with ease of mind.²⁴ In the particular case of *Barrio San Jorge*, IIED-AL has had a prominent role in motivating and encouraging neighbours to act for the community organisation and to elect delegates and representatives, resulting in the creation of the cooperative.²⁵ This has enabled them to change their way of dealing with demands from within the neighbourhood and engaging with the local or sub-national governments, moving from a more passive and individual attitude to a joint, proactive and positive action.

The municipality has gradually incorporated the joint work with other stakeholders such as IIED-AL and the Church, especially into the division in charge of PROMEBA. This has forced them to defend this kind of work against other municipal divisions not so amenable to collaborative work. Incorporating the views of other

stakeholders may seem threatening and destabilising, especially in complex processes such as upgrading. The generation of trust is paramount.

Based on the above analysis, it is necessary to reconsider the concept of neighbourhood organisation in order to understand the type of bond developed between them and the local government. From the point of view of programme planning, requirements and expected results, what is expected is: a formal organisation with a legal base; the periodic renewal of members; clear and sustained goals; and the capacity to administer resources as a result of the intervention process. This view is not necessarily consistent with reality, at least in the PROMEBA experience in San Fernando, where no solid formal neighbourhood organisation resulted from the intervention. However, there remain individuals with the capacity to perceive collective needs. Even in the case of *Barrio San Jorge*, throughout PROMEBA II the cooperative – so active at other times – has experienced some degree of fatigue in its members and an inability to comply with a number of formalities, as stated in its Articles of Organisation.

3.2 Experiences from the Housing Improvement Programme and the Micro-Credit Fund

3.2.1 Characteristics of the intervention process

Barrios San Ginés and *Villa del Carmen* are neighbourhoods in the Municipality of San Fernando that grew in the 1960s with a regular street layout. Today, the houses have access to gas, water and sewers and there is street lighting. Most households have secure land or housing tenure (that is, a sales contract or title deed) or are in process of obtaining these from the municipality. The *barrios* are densely populated, with many cases of second families living on the same plot or in the same house. They are faced with high levels of informality in house construction, which also means overcrowded houses with poor indoor sanitation. The community organisations that currently respond to specific interests include senior citizen centres, community development associations and Church activities. There is no collective demand that brings neighbours together. The Housing Improvement

²⁴ Focus Group with PROMEBA I and II delegates (19 March 2014).

²⁵ Focus Group with PROMEBA I and II delegates (19 March 2014).

Programme (*Programa Mejor Vivir*, PMV) and the Micro-Credit Fund (*Fondo de Micro-Crédito*, FMC) have given rise to a new form of organisation tied to the resource base they provide. Both initiatives are implemented by IIED-AL as part of its Micro-Credit Programme²⁶ and they are mainly aimed at improving housing conditions. Despite the fact that each programme has different funding and impact levels, they complement each other.

3.2.2 The Housing Improvement Programme executed through organisations

The Housing Improvement Programme (PMV) is managed by the National Under-secretariat of Housing (*Subsecretaría de Vivienda del Ministerio de la Nación*, SSVN by its initials in Spanish). It seeks to reduce housing deficits by improving precarious houses on land sites that are either owned or acquired, and also to generate employment as improvements are undertaken by workers hired under formal employment. The priority is to target support to overcrowded houses with poor sanitation and/or with deteriorated or incomplete roofs,

masonry walls and various installations (electrical, sanitation and so on). Initially, the programme was executed through municipalities or provincial housing institutes but later, intermediate organisations participating in the Forum of Land, Infrastructure and Housing Organisations in the Province of Buenos Aires (FOTIVBA – see Section 3.4) were included in its execution.

Through FOTIVBA, of which IIED-AL is an active member, intermediary organisations propose interventions to the SSVN in the form of improvement packages to be executed through the organisations.²⁷ These are identified in this paper as PMV I, II, III and IV. Often, there is a delay of more than a year between approval and the start of implementation. The release of funds is carried out in stages according to the progress of construction works. Expenditures have to be accounted for on a monthly basis to the SSVN, including all papers showing compliance with tax laws.

Within the parameters of the programme, each organisation defines how the initiatives will be implemented—for instance, whether it will work with the

Map 2: Location of Barrios Villa del Carmen and San Gines and former location of Villa San Roque.



Source: IIED – AL based on Google earth

²⁶ The PMV is run in the following neighbourhoods in San Fernando: *Barrios* Ginés, Villa del Carmen, San José and Presidente Perón. The Micro-Credit Fund is implemented in *Barrios* San Jorge, Hardoy, San Ginés, Villa del Carmen, Presidente Perón, San Roque and now also in *Barrio* San José.

²⁷ The improvement packages include a list of potential improvement beneficiaries based on a household survey, according to the criteria established for each stage.

Map 3: Location of Barrios Villa del Carmen and San Gines and Barrio San Roque after its relocation.



Source: IIED – AL based on Google earth

local government, how it will engage the community, how the construction will be carried out, how the instalments will be repaid and how recovered funds will be used. IIED–AL, based on their working experience with the Municipality of San Fernando, preferred to interact with the local government from the start. This allowed the inclusion of an intervention within a more comprehensive integrated upgrading plan of the western area of the district, where different interventions could be coordinated and complemented.²⁸

It was jointly decided to implement the programme in two *barrios* for three reasons: first, both have a very high percentage of poor quality, overcrowded houses; second, there was a plan to expand the sewage network and families were expected to face difficulties in getting connected; and third, there was the need to bring benefits to these neighbourhoods since the municipality was arranging the total relocation of another informal settlement to a new complex of 228 houses²⁹ in the

area. Families in the two *barrios* felt it was unfair that they should be excluded from that housing project as they too were suffering from overcrowded conditions. They had also taken on responsibility for keeping an eye on the area where the new houses were to be built.³⁰ The municipality had received repeated requests from the neighbours demanding their inclusion in the new housing project,³¹ and this brought about mistrust and a strong sense of exclusion. The intervention with the PMV thus sought to help provide benefits to existing households and improve the social relationship with the various groups of neighbours living in the area.

Various stakeholders are involved in the implementation of the PMV: the municipal government, IIED–AL, neighbourhood promoters³², construction companies, neighbours and the beneficiaries of direct improvements. Their roles and relationships changed in the course of the implementation of the improvement packages.

²⁸ Interventions in the area include: CEDEC (Sports and Cultural Centre) No. 2; UDI (Child Development Fund); a new sewer; the 'Envi6n' Provincial Programme that targets youth; hydraulic works; re-paving of route 202, the main access to the neighbourhood; and a plan for the construction of 288 houses.

²⁹ This is a plan for the construction of 288 houses to relocate the slum located on one of the main access roads to the municipality, where the land tenure status prevented on-site upgrading. For the Municipality of San Fernando, the recovery of this area became a high-impact policy as it implied improving habitat conditions for these families as well as security conditions in the area.

³⁰ In practice, the land was informally occupied by five families who were evicted by the municipality to build the 228 houses and CEDEC No. 2. At the same time, the municipality managed land tenure regularisation with the Arraigo Programme and the Housing Institute of the Province of Buenos Aires.

³¹ There weren't enough houses or funds to satisfy the needs of the three *barrios*.

³² Promoters are neighbourhood residents who offer their services to undertake the programmes as volunteers.

At the onset of the programme in the two *barrios*, the group of neighbourhood promoters had not yet been formed; neither was there a neighbourhood working committee. The municipal government and IIED–AL started the initiative by working with a neighbourhood referent. At the time, it was agreed that programme beneficiaries would only be required to repay 50 per cent of the total intervention amount allocated to each house, in affordable fixed instalments without interest, with the other 50 per cent being a subsidy.³³ This agreement was reached after the initial objection by the population to the hiring of (small-sized) contractors to perform the improvements, on the grounds of increased costs. The hiring of labour under formal employment conditions was a requirement that had to be met under the PMV programme. The funds raised would be allocated to the Micro-Credit Fund (FMC), which was already underway in the neighbourhood. This provided small credits in the form of materials for the improvement of houses to neighbours who were not beneficiaries of the PMV.

In the first two stages (PMV I and II)³⁴, the municipal government proposed the list of beneficiaries, prioritising those families who had applied for a housing solution, and this consisted of families sharing accommodation. It also sought to balance benefits among neighbours of the *barrios* and those moving into the 228 new houses. The municipal government also played other roles in implementing the programme, including: providing the technical information required by the programme, such as the social demand survey; certifying the technical feasibility of service provision and the legal tenure of the plots of the houses to be improved; receiving and approving the work plans (reviewing special cases of exceptions to construction standards); obtaining the relevant exemptions from project notice fees; and conducting the technical inspection of the works.

IIED–AL was responsible for coordinating the project, preparing the building plans, estimating and budgeting the final cost of each intervention, as well as the hiring of labour and certifying the works, managing funds, administering the FMC (instalment allocation and repayment) and rendering accounts to the SSVN regarding the funds received and allocated. It was also in charge of coordinating all the parties involved (SSVN, municipality, contractors, community organisations, neighbourhood promoters and programme beneficiaries).

Initially, neighbourhood leaders who became promoters of the programme were only in charge of collecting the instalments upon completion of the improvement works. In the first stages of the improvement packages, where beneficiaries were proposed by the municipality, this gave rise to friction and stress. Promoters were not acquainted with the improvement beneficiaries, and in turn beneficiaries would frequently ignore the role and participation of promoters in the programme. When beneficiaries delayed the payment of instalments, promoters felt “... *it was impossible to restore in them the willingness to pay, since they had never understood the importance of repayment.*”³⁵ During the following stages, and using different strategies, this relationship gradually changed and the role of the promoters became increasingly important. Promoters became central to the programme operation and key in the selection of beneficiaries, building a new bond with the neighbours that resulted in a stronger commitment to the programme and its integration with the Micro-Credit Fund.

3.2.3 The Micro-Credit Fund

The Micro-Credit Fund (*Fondo de Micro-Crédito*, FMC) has been operating since 1990 and is an initiative through which IIED–AL has been supporting small-scale self-building among neighbourhoods of San Fernando. The fund was first implemented in 1990 in *Barrio San Jorge*, with the construction of a building yard and housing materials bank. This provided materials on credit and supported the self-building of houses in *Barrio Hardoy*. It also included provision for technical support and the enhancing of organisational capabilities. Subsequently, funds from the SSVN and private entrepreneurs joined the FMC, which allowed work to start in other neighbourhoods (Gómez *et al.*, 2007).

The development of the FMC is divided into two clearly differentiated stages. From 1990 to 2004, IIED–AL was in charge of providing the micro-credits direct to the families. Even though the programme fulfilled its main purpose of benefiting neighbourhood families, it was still necessary to stimulate local organisational capacities and strengthen the relationship between neighbours. In 2004, the FMC management was decentralised to neighbourhood funds, the working committees were organised, and the figure of the neighbourhood promoter emerged and then assumed a central role in the administration.³⁶

³³ The proportion is based on the fact that materials represent 50 per cent of the costs in any construction project and labour the other 50 per cent.

³⁴ See Table 3.

³⁵ Talk with Adriana Guardia, neighbourhood promoter of the fund as credits in the form of materials and of the PMV (26 March 2014).

³⁶ The first micro-credit promoters were residents of *Barrios Hardoy*, La Paz and San Jorge. These *barrios* were undergoing a full urbanisation process through PROMEBA I. The promoters started as neighbourhood delegates providing social support for the implementation of PROMEBA, and then continued with the management of the micro-credit programme with the social support of IIED–AL. Their work contributed to improving their neighbourhoods' housing and living conditions and helped to achieve other aspects not included in PROMEBA I.

Table 3. Summary of stages in the PMV and the FMC

	PMV I AND II	PMV III AND IV	FMC
Implementation period	2008–2010	July 2012, still in progress	2008, still in progress
Number of improvements	50	50	136
Uncollectible loans*	36 %	10%	6.6 %
Defaulted loans**	26%	0 %	11.8 %
Collectible loans ***	6 %	6 %	2.9 %
Performing loans	16 %	84 %	19.8 %
Repaid loans	16 %	0 %	58.8 %
Roles	Beneficiaries proposed by the municipality; IIED–AL coordinated and administered the funds; promoters provided social support	Joint preparation of the list of beneficiaries; promoters provide social support throughout all implementation stages	Promoters are in charge of the management of funds (they administer resources, select beneficiaries, talk with neighbours, handle communications); IIED–AL provides social support and coordinates the working committee)
Requirements	Be a house owner; have access to public services such as water and sewerage; be registered on the PMV list	Be a house owner; have access to public services such as water and sewerage; evidence of loan repayment capacity and responsibility; priority regarding the need for the agreed improvements	Live in the neighbourhood; be able to undertake the construction (have sufficient money or relative/neighbour experienced in brick-laying)
Coordination	FMC implemented simultaneously	FMC and PMV are undertaken jointly as part of the same programme	

* (they paid up to 10 payments MV and up to 4 payments of MC and stopped paying)

** (they paid between 10 and 24 payments MV and between 6 and 12 payments MC and stopped paying)

*** (during the last 6 months they paid at least 1 payment)

In 2008, the FMC reached *Barrios San Ginés* and *Villa del Carmen* and a first meeting with neighbours was held with the purpose of creating a group of neighbourhood promoters. The initiative aroused great interest and about 50 neighbours attended the meeting to learn about the proposal. Three volunteered to administer the fund. Two of them (Claudia and Graciela) had experience from previous work with the municipality, while the third (Adriana) was taking part in a community project for the first time. Together, they formed the neighbourhood promoters' group to undertake the PMV and started participating in the neighbourhood working committee with a team from the municipality and IIED–AL. When the implementation of the PMV started, it

fuelled the growth of the FMC with the repayment of instalments by PMV beneficiaries.

Families interested in obtaining a micro-credit starting approaching the neighbourhood office (initially the senior citizens' centre, and later Adriana's house), and neighbourhood promoters explained how the programme worked: the amount of money lent, the form of repayment, the delivery of materials through a housing materials bank and where instalments should be paid. The personal, informal and relaxed conversations offered by the promoters were key in ensuring repayment of the monthly instalments.

The promoters' work consolidated the FMC. When the PMV was launched, more than 50 micro-credits had already been granted (for amounts between US\$1,500 and US\$3,000³⁷), with a very satisfactory repayment rate. In cases of non-payment of an instalment, the beneficiary had to inform the working committee of the reason for the delay, and when the problem was finally solved they would resume payments. This allowed credit beneficiaries to sustain their trust and to secure their access to the programme. With good repayment records, it was possible to receive a new credit to further improve their homes. The programme's good results led to increased credit applications from adjacent neighbourhoods (*Barrio San Roque*) where later, a new FMC was created. The network of stakeholders was enlarged to include social workers from health care centres, referents from the senior citizen centre, religious organisations and so on, who also proposed beneficiaries in need of housing improvements. The programme also provided technical support for the improvements, so neighbours could obtain advice and collaboration regarding drawing up the plans and calculating what materials were required, among other things.

3.2.4 Joint development of the two programmes

As the promoters' bond with FMC beneficiaries grew stronger, the deficiencies in the implementation of the first stages of the PMV became evident. Under PMV I and II, the neighbour who had registered with the municipality was called to verify whether he/she was still interested in undertaking the improvements.³⁸ The house was then visited along with an architect to determine the relevant needs and the project was drafted. Two agreements, one at the commencement of the works and the other on completion, as well as the neighbour's consent to the improvements were signed. Even though promoters provided social support in the beginning, they played a more active role once the improvements had been done.

Once the works had been completed there was no further contact with programme beneficiaries other than for the repayments. No one knew whether the families had managed to continue improving their houses, if they still needed improvements or why they were late in the payment of instalments. In practice, beneficiaries failed to recognise neighbourhood promoters or IIED-AL as part of the process, and this seriously hindered repayments. Beneficiaries believed that the instalments

were being paid to the municipality and did not realise that non-payment acted directly against the interests of others in the neighbourhood who wanted a credit, and indirectly against themselves as they would not be able to get another loan; also, the neighbourhood would not improve.

Initially, PMV III used the same methodology, with the municipality selecting beneficiaries based on demands for improvements and with promoters facing conflicts with this modality. It was suggested that there be a change in how the programme was implemented in the period between the application for, and the release of, the funds. This coincided with changes introduced in the local government agenda, which meant that even though the municipality was still on the working committee, it ceased to have an active role.

The promoters became protagonists in the major decisions relating to implementation of the PMV, applying the same mode of operation used in the FMC to the successive PMV stages (PMV III and IV). Initially, beneficiaries were selected by the municipality in response to the need to offer solutions to overcrowded houses, although promoters saw this as a way to compensate neighbours for their demands for the 228-house programme. Thereafter, they decided to change the criteria to include aspects that secured both more efficient instalment repayments and the satisfaction of families' needs. *"We choose who is in need (housing necessity, health problems), who is going to pay (payment behaviour) and if it is deserved: this is how the working committee evaluates neighbour applicants."*³⁹ Even though these are perhaps subjective criteria, which a local government might find difficult to justify, they are valid in the hands of promoters.

In order to draft new application packages for funds to be submitted to the SSVN, promoters organised meetings with neighbours interested in the PMV. At two of the meetings, neighbours presented the papers required to pre-qualify. An application was then prepared for 50 improvements that met the programme requirements and was submitted to the SSVN. This was a turning point for promoters, since they felt they were protagonists of the process and gained respect from their neighbours.

It was also decided that the working committee (municipality, IIED-AL and promoters) would work on the repayment of instalments by beneficiaries of the first stages of the PMV (I and II). The municipality supported this initiative and promoters summoned non-paying neighbours to the municipal offices in order to discuss

³⁷ Equal to US\$ 375 and US\$ 750. The value was adjusted to reflect the increase in the cost of materials.

³⁸ A long period elapsed between the moment the beneficiaries' list was prepared and filed with the SSVN and the moment the intervention funds were received.

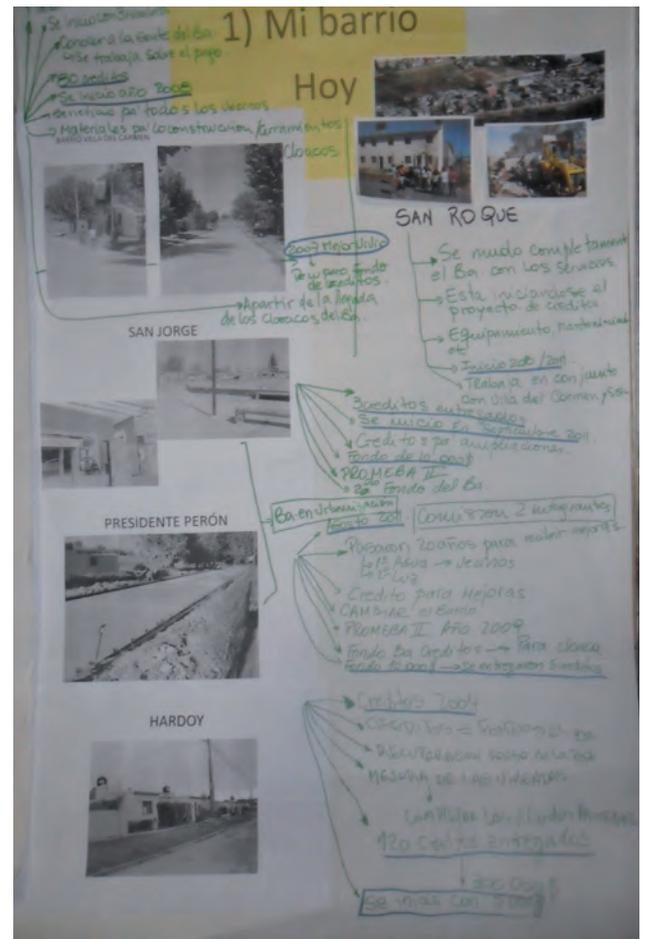
³⁹ Talk with Adriana Guardia (26 March 2014).



Meeting of promoters of micro-credits. Source: IIED – AL



Micro credit meeting. Source: IIED – AL



Sharing achievements. Source: IIED – AL

how they would resume payments for the improvements executed under the programme, highlighting the importance of the project for the community. Although the outcome fell short of expectations with regard to instalment repayments, the municipal effort aimed at strengthening the FMC and the role of promoters was highly valued.

Promoters thus took on the following responsibilities: administration of the funds recovered through instalments; granting of credits; designing the payment schedule with the beneficiaries' consent; delivering a payment chequebook; compiling all the beneficiaries' documentation required for the programme; determining programme beneficiaries jointly with the municipality and IIED-AL; and visiting the beneficiaries in advance to explain the programme to them, and also during the execution of the works and upon completion.

Changing the meeting place from the senior citizens' centre to a promoter's house (Adriana) allowed neighbours to drop in every day to consult about the programme, even at weekends when people have more leisure time. It also facilitated Adriana's work, who finally took on all the tasks as the others couldn't continue for lack of time.

After the funds for the execution of PMV III and IV had finally been received, a new government was elected in San Fernando, which decided not to participate in the working committee anymore and stepped aside,⁴⁰ leaving IIED-AL and the promoters to implement the improvements on their own.

⁴⁰ With the new government, urban upgrading of informal settlements and habitat improvement issues were gradually ignored in the public agenda and this put an end to ten years of joint work.

3.2.5 Analysis of the relationship between the local government and community organisations

Despite the different origins of the two programmes described above – one being a national programme, with certain formal requirements, while the other reaches the community through IIED–AL and is decentralised in the neighbourhoods – both gradually adapted to the particular context of each neighbourhood and its needs, and both were modified to overcome the obstacles faced during the implementation process.

The relationships between stakeholders also changed in line with changes in the political agenda and with the development of neighbourhood promoters' capacities. At first, the local government had a close relationship with IIED–AL and not with the promoters. But as promoters gained ground, they assumed a more central role that was supported by the government. Even though the local government's active presence on the working committee faded, the municipality continued to interact with the other two stakeholders; they were aware of the programmes' progress and supported the neighbourhood work in this area. Finally, in the last stage, with the change in municipal government following elections, the municipality ceased to participate in the programmes. Despite changes in the strength of the relationships between stakeholders, the programmes kept going because they were rooted in the community, took a long-term approach and received a flow of financial resources to sustain the activity.

The large number of housing improvements shows how the programmes have strengthened. So far, 263 improvements have been achieved with both programmes. Although they represent individual benefits, the extent of programme outreach and the large number of beneficiaries have broadened the scope of the interventions. This has generated investments of \$AR 2,500,000⁴¹ in the area and the enhancement and development of neighbourhood promoters' capacities. Without their personal growth and the recognition of their role by the local government and the community, the execution of these programmes would not have been possible. Another indicator of how the scope of these programmes has grown is the trust developed among neighbours, who rely on their own neighbourhood promoters and thus respond by repaying their loans. Sometimes, they even choose to save in the fund. Another point that reflects the strengthening

of the programmes and promoters is the possibility of reaching other neighbourhoods. The skills developed by promoters stimulated other funds in *Barrios San Roque* and *San José*. In turn, the FMC in *Barrios San Ginés* and *Villa del Carmen* was implemented, building on the experience of the FMC in *barrios* such as *San Jorge* and *Hardoy*. Neighbourhood promoters meet every year to share experiences. They have proved that it is possible for inexperienced people to build capacities as well as new collaborative networks, making use of the available human and technical resources.

The PMV and FMC experiences in *Barrios San Ginés* and *Villa del Carmen* shows how the previous joint work of IIED–AL and the municipal government had built trust and enabled implementation of these programmes, and how it was possible to adjust them during the implementation process. The kind of coordination between stakeholders was modified based on the lessons learnt in the course of programme execution. The major change was in the role of promoters, who became central in determining programme beneficiaries. The municipality, in permanent close contact with IIED–AL, supported the consolidation of the working committee, highlighting the collective spirit of the project. Here, the possibility of building on the lessons learnt and of revising the form of programme implementation is of fundamental importance.

During the process, the programme's flexibility allowed promoters to gradually become protagonists, taking on such a leading role that, in Adriana's opinion, the municipality's presence was no longer needed. Even though they value the various works carried out by the municipality, they consider that its participation in the working committee has become unnecessary. They feel strong enough to undertake the programme with the sole support of IIED–AL⁴². This proves the extent of programme appropriation. This is largely related to the type and scale of intervention of these programmes focused on delivering improvements to houses rather than neighbourhood infrastructure and public spaces, and where the role of the local government is less important. Continuity of the process is secured by IIED–AL and the promoters, each performing different functions and complementing each other, as well as by the continuous flow of funds that allows the programmes to keep running. Throughout the various stages of the PMV, the FMC sustained both the promoters' work and neighbours' interests.

⁴¹ It is difficult to estimate the amount in dollars since the exchange rate fluctuated between US\$ 1 = \$ARG 4 and US\$ 1 = \$ARG 10.

⁴² Talk with Adriana Guardia (26 March 2014).

3.3 Water network, Barrio Alem

3.3.1 Characteristics of the intervention process

This case study describes the experience in *Barrio Alem* (in the Municipality of Moreno), where a neighbourhood organisation is in charge of the management of the potable water supply and sewage services for more than 700 families.

Barrio Alem is a neighbourhood of 718 houses built in 1987–1988 under a housing project of the National Ministry of Social Development. It was undertaken by a mutual aid building society, whereby beneficiaries paid for houses in instalments. Houses had all the basic services in place, so the project included the construction of a water well, a storage tank and piped network, and a sewerage system with its own treatment plant. During the hyper-inflation of 1989, the building society went bankrupt. With the municipality's help and through various strategies, all the houses were eventually built. A normalisation committee was created to deal with all proceedings related to land tenure regularisation and to manage the water and sewerage network. However, to date the titling process has not been completed and the neighbours have to manage the water and sewage services.

The Municipality of Moreno in Greater Buenos Aires has more than 40 per cent of its municipal territory classified as rural. The spread of population and the particular form of its urbanisation process hinders the provision of networked services. Across the municipality, levels of coverage for water and sanitation services are low. Only 20 per cent of households are connected to a sewerage system (INDEC, 2010)⁴³ and slightly more than 30 per cent⁴⁴ to a water network run by the firm *Obras Sanitarias de la Provincia de Buenos Aires* (Province of Buenos Aires Water Utility).⁴⁵ About seven per cent of the municipal population is supplied by 21 independent systems, and these differ greatly in terms of the number and features of the individuals they serve and in their capacity to manage the network. These independent systems were excluded from the bidding terms and conditions during the privatisation of services in the

1990s, a situation that persisted when state-owned ABSA took over services in the area in 2006.

One of these independent systems excluded from the bidding terms and conditions was the water and sewerage network of *Barrio Alem*, even though the neighbourhood's sewage treatment plant was in effect included. The lack of maintenance of the treatment plant by the private company AGBA (*Aguas del Gran Buenos Aires*), which was never enforced by the regulatory authority despite repeated claims from the community, caused the complete abandonment of the plant and its gradual dismantling.

BOX 5. MUNICIPALITY OF MORENO

Moreno is situated in the west part of the AMBA and covers an area of 186 km². It is divided into six localities, with approximately 160 barrios and 452,505 inhabitants (INDEC, 2010).⁴⁶ Although Moreno's population registered a very significant inter-census growth (41 per cent (between 1980 and 1991) and 32 per cent (between 1991 and 2001), for the period 2001–2010 it dropped to 18.9 per cent. This rapid population growth resulted in a strong demand for housing and basic infrastructure that, given the lack of funds needed to face such claims, led to high levels of poor sanitation services. Since 1988, the municipal government has shown a strong commitment to urban planning, including a solution to land tenure issues, offering security of tenure to neighbours and developing programmes that address the issue. Furthermore, addressing poverty and unemployment became central to the programmes (Urquiza, 2009).⁴⁷

When the mutual aid society that was building the houses in *Barrio Alem* went bankrupt, a neighbourhood commission took on responsibility for water collection (achieved by drilling a deep well), for the storage and distribution of water via a neighbourhood network, and for the maintenance of the sewerage system. Over the years, the group of people responsible for this service changed or rotated, and in the process the community learned how to manage the water and sewerage

⁴³ National Housing and Population Census (2010). INDEC.

⁴⁴ Data compiled from Almansi *et al.* (2012). The last censuses do not have the data for houses with water supply disaggregated by municipality.

⁴⁵ *Aguas Bonaerenses SA* (ABSA) is a corporation where the provincial state owns 90 per cent of the capital and the other 10 per cent is owned by workers affiliated to ABSA's union. ABSA was awarded the concession for the water and sewage services in Moreno (and other municipalities in the area) in 2006 following the termination of the concession held by the private company AGBA (*Aguas del Gran Buenos Aires*). ABSA has been responsible for the management of the water and sanitation services since 2002 in all the area previously operated by AZURIX. It has 3.7 million users in 91 localities of the province of Buenos Aires.

⁴⁶ National Housing and Population Census (2010). INDEC.

⁴⁷ Urquiza, G (2009).

network and work with residents of the same or other neighbourhoods and with the local government.

The municipal government sometimes involved itself in neighbourhood matters and demanded the creation of several commissions of neighbours with strong ties to the municipal government. These committees lacked recognition from the community and performed poorly. On the other hand, the community organisation, which did have the neighbours' support, never managed to get the sustained support of the municipality to work on their two major issues of concern: titling and management of the water and sewerage network.

The lack of investment and the depletion of the water well, coupled with the expansion of the neighbourhood resulted in insufficient water supply. The dismantling of the treatment plant led to sewage effluents being directly discharged into an adjacent field, resulting in inadequate sanitation and constant drain obstructions.

3.3.2 The community organisation behind service management

Once the mutual aid society had gone bankrupt, a group of neighbours engaged in different neighbourhood issues assembled in order to monitor the process for land tenure regularisation. Two groups with different interests were nominated to integrate with the neighbourhood commission. The three residents that were finally elected had the most distant relationship with the municipality. They constituted a normalisation committee⁴⁸ that would be in charge of monitoring and completing the steps required to obtain the title deeds. At first, management of the network was left in the hands of one of the members of the normalisation committee and was managed separately; however, his performance was so poor that he was removed and the other two members, María de Carmen and Sergio, undertook the management of the water and sewerage network. They were later joined by other residents. In addition to service management, they started developing other activities with the community in general and youngsters in particular. Neither this committee nor any other committee that later took over the management of the water and sewerage network were trained to perform such a significant task for 718 families. This included the technical management of the network, the collection of tariffs, the administration of resources and communicating updates on project progress to the neighbours.

There were never enough funds for the commission to afford repairs, system upgrading and equipment amortisation. The systems would constantly go out of service due to pump breakdown, well depletion, failures in electrical installations or in power supply, clogged sewage drains, non-payment and so on. The community organisation responsible for the water and sewerage network did its best to overcome the problems and avoid being replaced by a new organisation as a result of residents' claims or mobilisations.

3.3.3 Training on water and sanitation management

Between 2003 and 2006, IIED–AL undertook a project on 'Building public–private–community partnerships for the provision of water and sanitation to informal settlements', financed by UNDP. The project proposed generating dialogue and better coordination between the communities in charge of managing water and/or sanitation networks and the local government. This was with a view to solving the problems faced by Moreno in the management of these systems. Periodic meetings were arranged with representatives of the 21 independent systems and municipal officials from different departments. At these meetings, a space was created where management experiences could be shared and training and awareness-raising activities could be developed, highlighting the importance of the water resource, its protection and responsible use, the health-related impacts and so on. The project was based on two major axes: a participatory diagnosis on the status of existing water and sanitation services in the municipality, and a strong awareness-raising campaign conducted through neighbourhood bulletins, contests, school activities and so on.⁴⁹

Members of the normalisation committee of *Barrio Alem* participated actively throughout the project. The committee showed great interest in the process and particularly in sharing experiences with other residents, "*realising they were not alone*",⁵⁰ and the possibility of interacting with different municipal departments (Pandiella, 2011). The fact of working with an intermediary organisation such as IIED–AL, and with funding from UNDP, gave them a certain prestige and recognition in the eyes of the local government.

⁴⁸ The normalising committee is an ad honorem committee approved by the National Institute of Mutual Associations/Unions and Social Economy (*Instituto Nacional de Asociativismo y Economía Social, INAES*), which requires the formation of a three-member committee to be able to perform the titling procedure.

⁴⁹ María de Carmen Bel, neighbour and leader of *Barrio Alem*. Personal communication, June 2004, UNDP project.

⁵⁰ Focus group with members of the neighbourhood commission (9 April 2014).

“It was positive because independent systems were finally heard. As we do things on our own, we had no contact at all with the other actors.”⁵¹

The normalising committee made a good diagnosis of the status of its existing water supply and sewerage system and worked with the community to raise awareness regarding water and sanitation issues. However, they were unable to overcome the technical and administrative barriers, which led to recurring crises. This, in turn, reduced both the willingness to pay and the extent of system maintenance. This led to many neighbours criticising how the network was being managed and justifying non-payment.

In 2008, during one of the crises, the neighbours met and proposed a new committee – self-assembled neighbours – to manage the service. However, the new committee had to deal with the same administrative difficulties faced by the previous normalisation committee, and when a new crisis arose (pump breakdown, poor use of funds and so on), the committee members were removed from office and in 2010, the former normalisation committee resumed its functions.

3.3.4 A new approach to management

IIED–AL started to execute the Focus Cities⁵² project in the Municipality of Moreno in 2006. This initiative was financed by Canada’s IDRC and drew on the lessons learned during the development of the project funded by UNDP, although with more ambitious objectives and deliverables. Broadly speaking, the project was aimed at identifying the main environmental problems affecting the poor population of the municipality and proposing solutions; and, more interestingly, it had the resources to implement some of the solutions proposed and set up a collaborative and multi-stakeholder work scheme.

The Focus Cities initiative required a participatory effort, which extended to all the neighbourhoods in the municipality. This centred on collaboration between the community and the local government to solve identified and prioritised environmental problems through a participatory process. The initiative included environmental mapping, the prioritisation of problems, preliminary project portfolio design, defining prioritisation and selection criteria, final project development, work execution, fund management, and monitoring and evaluation. All these activities demanded

a great effort in participation and the commitment of all the stakeholders involved.

The normalisation committee in charge of managing the *Barrio Alem* network saw the project as an opportunity to rebuild the wastewater treatment plant. A critical issue was the recurrent clogging of the sewers and drain network, which did not work properly without a treatment plant. As the group became involved in the project’s dynamics, they started to capitalise on a series of lessons learned, such as project design, defining criteria and priorities, consensus-building, and project monitoring and evaluation. They also realised that with the funds available to the Focus Cities initiative, it was impossible to finance a project the size of the wastewater treatment plant. They themselves had taken part in defining the criteria for project proposal evaluation, and eventually submitted a proposal for a water plant reconditioning project (Puelche II); however, in the middle of the Focus Cities process, the normalisation committee submitting the proposal for the project was replaced by the self-assembled neighbours committee (see above). Nonetheless, the group continued to participate in the Focus Cities initiative.

The Puelche II project envisaged the reconditioning of the water network, and included drilling a new water well, replacing the pump and introducing other technical improvements that would ensure water quantity and quality for the whole neighbourhood. The project also envisaged the introduction of improvements in service management administration, communication and transparency. Different neighbourhood organisations presented project drafts, and through a prioritisation matrix six projects were selected. One of them was the reconditioning of *Barrio Alem*’s water plant.

The Focus Cities experience resulted in significant growth of the group behind Puelche II. In 2010, when the normalisation committee resumed responsibility for the network, they added new community stakeholders and generated new management and administrative tools. Management tasks were entrusted to a coordinator (who initially worked ad honorem and later was paid for her work), a technician responsible for maintenance work and three payment collectors, all of them paid workers. At present, they generate a user register, issue nominative rate collection bills, prepare monthly income and expenditure reports and debtor lists, and hold regular meetings with the community.

With regard to the management side, the committee’s achievements include the repayment of debts owed to

⁵¹ See the report of the project ‘Training on how to build public–private–community partnerships for the provision of water and sanitation to informal settlements’. (IIED–AL / UNDP)

⁵² For more information on the project, see Almansi, F *et al.* (2011).

the electricity utility, an expanded paying-user register, increased trust among the neighbours, improved predictability with regard to expenditures, and a higher degree of transparency (Pandiella, 2011). At present, close to 400 families (more than half out of a total of 718 families) are paying. This is a high rate compared to what the utilities in this area generally achieve.⁵³



Meeting in Barrio Alem – participatory mapping.
Source: IIED – AL



Barrio Alem water work in progress. Source: IIED – AL

3.3.5 Analysis of the relationship between the local government and the community organisation

In Moreno, neighbours have long participated in community organisations – and sometimes, these are associated with NGOs and serviced plot development. It is through this participation that neighbours usually get involved in the neighbourhood's development

activities. Often, neighbourhood leaders also carry out political work for the local government and hold public posts in schools or health centres (Almansi *et al.*, 2011). One salient trait of this municipal government is the generation of a strong vertical political party structure, which works at territorial level in all neighbourhoods and with political brokers working within these.

The normalisation committee, the community organisation acknowledged today as the referent agency for the Puelche II project, has never participated in local political party work. In the view of its members, the municipality becomes visible in their neighbourhood only when they are called upon. “*They are in Moreno the capital town and we are here.*”⁵⁴ This has always been the case, save for a short period when the municipality showed the clear intention to support the community organisation in initiating the activities necessary to complete plot titling. However, due to the social and institutional crisis that broke out in 2001 and the subsequent reshuffle in the local government, this initiative was lost and nobody within the local government took it on again. Today, the plots still remain without titles. Save for this brief period, the community organisation had always had a distant relationship with the local government until the arrival of the projects led by IIED–AL. Some work was carried out jointly with the municipality’s social welfare section,⁵⁵ but those activities were unrelated to the management of the water and sewerage network.

First through the UNPD project and then through Focus Cities, the community organisation was able to approach different government departments that could help them with the management of the service, such as Public Works and Services and the Institute for Urban, Environmental and Regional Development (IDUAR), as well as the Health Department. However, this did not translate into a long-term relationship. Through the UNDP project, many awareness-raising activities were carried out for various municipal departments and community organisations. Later, the Focus Cities initiative gave rise to a series of meetings, workshops and spaces where the community organisations worked and met regularly with the municipality. The different projects selected were completed and, in the case of *Barrio Alem*, the whole water network was improved as was the management and maintenance of the service; but when the Focus Cities initiative ended, the municipality ceased to provide support in a systematic way.

At present, the community organisation of *Barrio Alem* maintains a direct link with specific technical personnel within the municipality, who help them when problems

⁵³ Payment rates are approximately 20 per cent for AGBA and AYSA.

⁵⁴ Focus group (9 April 2014).

⁵⁵ PAGV is a national programme of the National Ministry of Social Development aimed at strengthening and training community organisations.

arise; this support is highly valued but they know it is not enough.⁵⁶ The person helping them is the current Undersecretary of Public Works,⁵⁷ who recognises that he supports them not because the tasks fall under his competency (since they come under the public services department), but because of the relationship he has built with organisation members. This relationship between the *Barrio Alem* community organisation and the local government is not formal; rather, it builds on the trust generated by their common background and experience, and this trust-based relationship is invoked when problems and needs are encountered.

Barrio Alem's organisation believes that both the UNDP project and the Focus Cities initiative strengthened them and taught them how to work with the local government⁵⁸ and with other organisations and proposed new local management approaches. The flexibility of the model and its commitment to participation allowed the group to become involved right from the diagnostic stage through to the project development processes, including the monitoring of funds. The community organisation experienced many conflictive situations related to the defining of priorities, project selection, and project implementation times and modalities (Urquiza, 2009, Almansi *et al.*, 2011, Hardoy and Hardoy, 2014).⁵⁹ For example, it was part of a group of community organisations that rejected a project developed by the municipality because it failed to include community participation and was undertaken with no consultation with the rest of the project stakeholders, a component required for all projects, and because it was submitted too late.

The *Barrio Alem* normalising committee believes that they were punished by the municipality for not abiding by its criteria (that is, failing to support the projects submitted by the municipality) during the Focus Cities initiative. They even know that many others were told informally to vote for the municipal project, but they do not regret their course of action; rather, they believe that the confrontation has made them stronger.⁶⁰ They were able to develop other activities with the youth, such as organising film workshops, carrying out maintenance works in the neighbourhood square and supporting a neighbourhood sports club. Members of the committee continued to seek training on community and management subjects. For example, they took several courses on strengthening community organisation offered by the School of Social Work of the University of Buenos Aires; they even participated in a call for projects and won, receiving the funds to implement

their project. Today, they do a good administrative job and keep the neighbours informed about the financial situation by distributing monthly bulletins. They have also maintained contact with the various organisations that participated in the Focus Cities initiative.

However, they continue to be plagued by crises; for example, between 2010 and 2014 three pumps were ruined as a result of voltage drops in the power network. Yet, they have managed to overcome these problems, and in the latest event they were helped by the municipality, which approached the utility company.

In the last few months, the normalisation committee, which manages the water and sewerage network, decided on a transition and is supporting a new committee that will take over the management of the network. The motivation, commitment and desire for improvement of this group are outstanding. They want to keep on working for the community but they are tired of the day-to-day network management duties and would like to tackle other jobs, such as submitting projects to the municipality's participatory budgeting programme. Today, they are working with youth on the design of the local square.

A complex and ever-present issue is the question of who should finally take over the management of these independent water and sanitation systems. The municipality considers that it should be the utility company that covers the region, but it has proved difficult to get the company to provide the service even in areas where new pipes have been laid by the municipality.

After all their efforts, the *Barrio Alem* neighbourhood committee considers that the water network belongs to the neighbourhood, and that if they are to turn it over to a third party for management purposes, it must be with a contract and under certain conditions. For example, they are worried about the various attempts to use the neighbourhood's well to extend the network to surrounding neighbourhoods, because of the ensuing risks such as a decrease in the flow rate and well depletion. They feel that they have overcome many barriers and that they are managing the water network efficiently. On the other hand, they consider that running the sewerage system is beyond their capabilities and that the system cannot be managed properly without a treatment plant.

⁵⁶ Focus group (9 April 2014), remark by Sergio.

⁵⁷ Interview with Jorge Romero, Undersecretary of Public Works, Municipality of Moreno (9 April 2014).

⁵⁸ Focus group with members of the steering committee (9 April 2014).

⁵⁹ See Almansi *et al.* (2011); also Urquiza, G (2009); and Hardoy, A and Hardoy, J (2014).

⁶⁰ Focus group (9 April 2014).

3.4 FOTIVBA in the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area (AMBA)

3.4.1 Characteristics of the process

The Forum of Land, Infrastructure and Housing Organisations in the Province of Buenos Aires (FOTIVBA) constitutes a collective space formed by technical and community organisations in which IIED-AL⁶¹ is involved. It began in 2004 with a promoter group of 12 organisations and about a further 40 organisations distributed in zonal forums of the AMBA. Later, forum nodes were set up in other cities of the province.

The organisations participating in the forum work on housing improvement programmes in neighbourhoods or settlements that are in the process of consolidation in the western, southern and northern areas of Greater Buenos Aires. Most organisations have been working for more than ten years, implementing revolving micro-credit funds that enable families to improve their houses. The organisations' long work experience has allowed the forum to develop ties with neighbours and with neighbourhood organisations, and to learn from different relationship models between organisations and local governments.

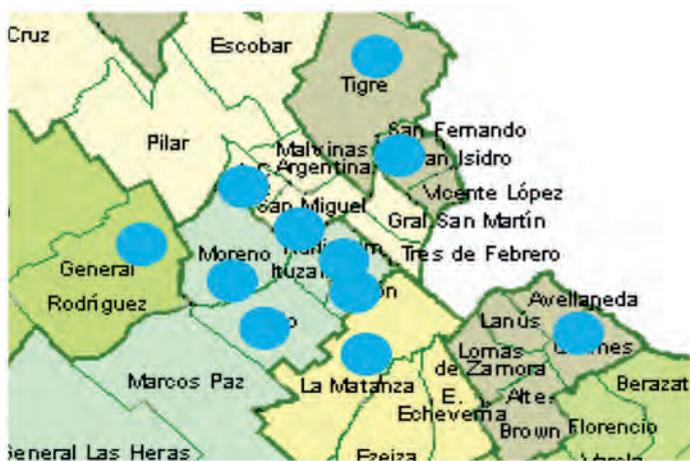
FOTIVBA's goal has always been the creation of a space for coordination between the public sector and civil society, seeking to influence habitat policies, secure the involvement of different stakeholders, and create mechanisms for supervising and collaborating in the development and implementation of habitat policies.

The forum works along three strategic lines of action:

- *The organisation of the social fabric* through the organisation of zonal workshops and forums where technical and community organisations participate and debate.
- *Legislative proposals:* Since 2007, the forum has been working with national and provincial deputies on different proposals aimed at securing access to fair habitat conditions (see Box 6).
- *The design and implementation of projects or programmes:* In March 2007, forum organisations started to work jointly with the National Undersecretariat of Housing (SSVN) for the redesign and implementation of the PMV, executed through organisations⁶⁴ (see Section 3.2). To date, 1,336 housing improvements have been accomplished in ten municipalities. The permanent dialogue between the forum and the SSVN facilitated the modification and adaptation of the management model previously adopted in the PMV, and the subsequent negotiation of the resources assigned to the organisations.

The relationship between the organisations and local government differs according to the line of action taken. In some cases, the organisations seek to influence and negotiate decision-making spaces. In other instances, the purpose is to directly intervene through the implementation of projects where historical tensions and conflicts need to be left aside, in order to move forward and not jeopardise access to financial resources. Initiatives within Buenos Aires are undertaken with different local governments, who vary in their approach. Some might offer more direct assistance whereas others might be more willing to engage with organisations and propose collaborative spaces.

Map 4: Municipalities where forum interventions are carried out



⁶¹ The organisations that form FOTIVBA are *Sagrada Familia, Vinso, San Cayetano, Isla Maciel, Habitar-Fadu, Madre Tierra, Fundación Vivienda Comunidad, IIED-AL, Kichari Huasi, Sedeca, Sercupo* and *Cels*.

BOX 6. LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS OF THE FORUM: MILESTONES

2007: The deficits faced by popular sectors, their demands regarding access to land and housing, and the beginning of a new urban reform movement in Argentina were analysed jointly with national deputies.

2008: National senators joined in the drafting of a national law for land tenure regularisation, enabling occupants who could prove their public, peaceful and permanent occupation of land prior to 2009 to become formal owners. This law was enacted one year later.

2009: A work agenda was initiated in collaboration with provincial deputies for the drafting of a law aimed at securing access to fair habitat conditions in the province of Buenos Aires; this mainly sought to regularise land tenure in informal settlements, respond to the urban housing demand and reduce the existing speculation on the value of land.⁶² The law was enacted in 2013 and incorporated new instruments never previously considered in Argentine legislation.⁶³

2013: Work was undertaken jointly with national legislators on the revision of the National Civil Code, aimed at including the concept of the social function of property, thus assigning civil responsibilities to private property.



Mobilisation of organisations to the provincial congress the day the law was approved. Source FOTIVBA

3.4.2 FOTIVBA's stakeholders in the implementation of the Housing Improvement Programme (PMV)

All organisations running the PMV are legally constituted organisations; this is a mandatory requirement for undertaking the management and execution of the programme. Five of the ten organisations that constitute the promoter group responsible for programme implementation since 2009 are technical organisations

and the other half are community organisations. The former show a greater capacity for programme execution. Of the 1,336 improvements undertaken, only 18 per cent were executed by community organisations.

Only two of the organisations in the promoter group work in collaboration with local governments in their intervention areas. One is *Sagrada Familia*, which coordinated with the Municipality of Tigre in the funding of the gas network expansion. The municipality funded the intermediary network and *Sagrada Familia*,

⁶² See law text in Información del congreso de la provincia de Buenos Aires. <http://www.hcdiputados-ba.gov.ar/refleg/114449.htm>.

⁶³ Innovative instruments proposed by the Habitat Law in Argentine legislation include: land assignment for social housing construction projects by new real estate developments; an additional 50 per cent increase in the real estate tax levied on vacant lots and a special contribution on houses or land with increased value as a result of works or zoning changes taking place in the municipality, in order to constitute a trust fund as a source of financial and technical assistance to upgrade popular habitat; the creation of a Plots with Services Programme and a Micro-Credit Programme to improve precarious housing conditions; the creation of the legal entity of the Urban Consortium to conduct land sub-division projects jointly between the state and the private sector (so far the state had not been allowed to invest in private land).

⁶⁴ The PMV is currently executed by municipalities, technical organisations, community organisations and worker cooperatives.



FOTIVBA meeting.
Source FOTIVBA



Zonal FOTIVBA meeting.
Source FOTIVBA

through the PMV, funded indoor house installations. The other organisation is IIED-AL, working in San Fernando. The rest of FOTIVBA's organisations have a more functional-operative relationship with local governments, associated with obtaining the different guarantees requested by the SSVN to approve interventions and funding, such as non-flood risk and land ownership certificates.

In addition to the differences regarding the extent of collaboration between local governments and organisations, each implementation has its own

particular features, influenced by neighbourhood conditions and the existing social framework. All the organisations work with neighbourhood referents, most of whom are women. Some are members of existing organisations and others are new neighbourhood promoters who acquired experience and skills in the course of the implementation process.

Furthermore, each organisation decides independently how the funds that are recovered from each housing improvement should be used. In some cases, funding is understood as a subsidy, while in others it is a soft

loan to be repaid over a maximum term of 20 years in fixed instalments, without interest. When loans have been repaid, the recovered funds are re-used to finance various community initiatives and are mostly allocated to pre-existing neighbourhood revolving micro-credit funds.

In all cases, both technical and community organisations take over the coordination of programme implementation, which includes the purchase of construction materials, auditing the works' progress and solving emerging conflicts.

There is a major difference in the working methods of organisations that collaborate with neighbours in the implementation of the PMV and those of municipalities, since the latter take an approach based mainly on technical criteria. The social aspect is the most important component included by organisations in the PMV. One of the purposes of the programme executed through the forum is the participation and organisation of beneficiaries throughout the whole life of the project.

3.4.3 Analysis of the relationship between FOTIVBA and local government

Unlike the other case studies, this one refers to a group of organisations operating in different municipalities, with different communities and local governments.

As explained above, there are only two organisations undertaking work together with local governments, each with different practices in different areas. At government level the leading actor is the SSVN, which is responsible for supervising programme progress.

In the case of FOTIVBA, the relationship between the government and the organisations takes place at different levels. There is collective action undertaken through the forum that relates to national and provincial government levels. There is also individual action by each organisation and the relationships they develop in their daily work with neighbourhood organisations and sometimes with local governments, which contribute to the forum's approach to housing issues. The result is a wider range of stakeholders and a changing set of partnerships.

The dynamics of the forum allow it to build on each organisation's work in the territory and also to reflect residents' housing needs. This has two benefits. First, it allows for a technical approach, including the social representation of direct beneficiaries and being able to influence policy-making; and second, the various

government levels channel resources through forum organisations, thus avoiding the political stress of being exposed to, and having to address, constant and unsatisfied demands.

At neighbourhood level, organisations' work is focused on increasing the number of voices and on involving promoters and organisations in defining the criteria that will decide who will benefit from the improvements, also what is to be done with the recovered investment. This allows for the appropriation of the programme by its beneficiaries and also stimulates them into becoming active and not reactive stakeholders. At the national level, people's trust in organisations, coupled with the organisations' outreach, secures a greater political impact and visibility for the programme.

For a national programme such as the PMV, working with isolated organisations becomes too complex and costly.⁶⁵ The forum is an asset for the national government as it includes the organisations in the implementation of the project. Also, the support offered by the forum to new community or technical organisations that want to join the process is key, as it is difficult for the SSVN to undertake the legal and financial management of the programme with organisations that have no formal references or recognition.

The on-going dialogue between the forum and the SSVN facilitated a revision and adjustment of the programme management model, which had initially been defined only for municipalities. The programme director recognised that the programme's success began with a more flexible management model, coupled with the understanding that each organisation implemented the programme with particular modalities. Today, the programme is implemented by NGOs, community-based organisations and cooperatives. The particular features of the different municipalities and settlements demand adjustments in the form of implementation. *"In populations with unsatisfied basic needs (UBN), direct contact with households and their specific needs is essential. This cannot be accomplished with a massive and impersonal approach."*⁶⁶

Since the forum first started to have an impact on the PMV in 2009, it has achieved the following programme modifications:

- Works previously restricted to building companies can be undertaken by small companies, contractors, cooperatives and so on, provided they are registered taxpayers and have formal paperwork with regard to social and health insurance.

⁶⁵ Interview with María Laura Rey, director of the PMV executed through organisations of the National Under-secretariat of Housing (20 March 2014).

- Specific housing improvements are no longer defined in terms of inflexible pre-determined typologies that later fail to match reality, but rather on the actual needs of each family group.
- The implementation of projects and programmes in neighbourhoods and settlements that don't have final title deeds is accepted provided they are in process of regularisation. In the programme director's view, this modification constitutes one of the major changes. In fact, even though residents of the neighbourhoods where the PMV is taking place are landowners, many cannot prove their ownership due to a certain degree of informality in their papers, although not in their tenure.

Relations between the national government and municipalities, and between organisations and municipalities are frequently affected by party politics. The director of the programme at the national level considers that the implementation of policies through organisations allows a greater national presence in areas where the mayor is not aligned with national politics. However, she believes it is always advantageous to work with mayors even when

the programme is implemented by an organisation. Nevertheless, some forum organisations do not work with local governments. When the organisation known as *Kichari Huasi* (KH) was consulted about its relationship with the local government, it stated that '*they were in conflict*' (political reasons) and thus decided not to interact with them. Consequently, KH stated that one of the major difficulties faced in the execution of the PMV was obtaining the documentation proving title to lands, which was required by the programme and that must be provided by the local government.

The relationship of trust that started to grow between FOTIVBA and the SSVN is also an asset. With every change in leadership of the SSVN, the relationship with each of the organisations had to be rebuilt. For the programme director, who has served in the SSVN for 35 years, this was a recurring problem that could gradually be overcome through the continuity of the urban policy and through the bond that developed with the forum. This allowed the relationship to grow gradually and also for the agreements to be maintained and largely complied with.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Interview with María Laura Rey, director of the PMV executed through organisations of the National Under-secretariat of Housing (20 March 2014).

⁶⁷ Interview with María Laura Rey, director of the PMV executed through organisations of the National Under-secretariat of Housing (20 March 2014).

4

Reflections and lessons learnt on contributing to a more inclusive and egalitarian urban agenda

This study is based on the premise that the participation of community organisations and the strengthening of their links with local government pave the way for the development of more inclusive and egalitarian programmes aimed at improving deprived sectors' habitat conditions. This also facilitates governmental decision-making and contributes to the sustainability of the changes introduced. It is also acknowledged that the participation and strengthening of community organisations takes much longer than programmes or interventions allow for.

The four case studies analysed above show different dynamics in coordination and in relations between community organisations and local/national government. These differences arise from a number of factors that include the level of *complexity* in the urban intervention, the degree of *flexibility* incorporated within such

interventions with a view to changing strategies and actions, and the *time frame* (all related to the intervention model or the programme's features). Other influential factors include the *government's agenda* and the way *neighbourhood organisations* are established and their *leadership and capabilities*. Each of these factors contributes to developing ties with different degrees of intensity and mutual trust; they also influence the capacity of interventions to cope with any tensions or conflicts between stakeholders.

Following the analysis, we conclude that in order to develop a good bond between the neighbourhood organisations and the local government, which would enable the development of more inclusive and egalitarian urban agendas, three pre-conditions are necessary:

- A stakeholder to promote the joint work and call for meetings; this can be the state, the neighbourhood organisation or a third stakeholder.
- The stakeholders' willingness to participate in a joint work environment and their firm conviction of the advantages.
- A resource or need capable of motivating or requiring stakeholders to joint efforts.

In the case of PROMEBBA, all three pre-conditions were in place. The municipality convened the community for the creation of a body of delegates. Although there was an existing community organisation and various works were underway, PROMEBBA was promoted by the local government. A working committee was formed with the participation of the government, delegates and other organisations.

When the local administration changed after the elections, so did the logic of the intervention, and this meant the closing of space for meetings and coordinated work. With no convening stakeholder, the basis for the working committee's work faded away. The body of delegates, created by the programme and the need for joint work, was unable to support itself. As a result, the community was deprived of this meeting space. Nonetheless, construction works continued without taking community needs into consideration.

In the case of the PMV, the convening entity was IIED-AL (who also managed the source of financing). It invited the municipality to take part and then to help promote the creation of a neighbourhood commission for the joint management of the programme. Thus, a commission was formed that also took charge of executing the FMC, and gradually consolidated and made adjustments to the programmes in accordance with the practices learnt. The three pre-conditions were also in place here: there was a convening stakeholder, motivation for joint work, and financial resources that could even be recovered with the repayments to the credit fund, and this added sustainability to the process.

With the change of government, the municipality was no longer willing to embark on joint work, and the relationship with the communities weakened. Nevertheless, IIED-AL and the neighbourhood promoters continued to work together and to jointly manage the programme. There was still a convening entity and the financial resources, and although one stakeholder (the local government) was not present, the programme continued to grow and develop.

In the case of the reconditioning of *Barrio Alem's* water network, IIED-AL was the stakeholder summoning the community for joint work, initially to execute the work supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and then for the Focus Cities initiative. Unlike the other case studies, a community

organisation already existed that could be summoned. Furthermore, it was a broader process, whereby organisations from different neighbourhoods were invited to work with the local government to find solutions to local environmental problems. It was the only case where the resource was not provided by the government (local or national) and, even though the three pre-conditions were in place, it was the resource itself (and *who* took decisions about it) that defined the intensity of the relationship between the government and the community organisations. Indeed, the government attempted to take over control of the funding and determine where the intervention work would be carried out. But the dynamics of the initiative and the rules and agreements drawn up by the stakeholders managed to counteract government attempts to do so. A balance of power was achieved with considerable coordination and consensus work. For *Barrio Alem's* organisation, this was a learning process that made it stronger.

In the case of FOTIVBA, the convening stakeholder was a group of organisations that coordinated with the national government and other entities in the execution and review of the PMV. The bond was thus forged on two different levels. On the one hand, there was the bond between the group of organisations and the national government; and on the other, the bond between each organisation and neighbourhood organisations and the local government. Each organisation's practical experience in implementing the programme enriched forum discussions, but there was no direct participation of beneficiary community organisations in this space. At all levels there was a clear willingness to work jointly, contributing to programme planning, design and review.

Below is a list of elements in the relationship between local governments and community organisations, which, in the cases under analysis, favoured or hindered the development of inclusive and egalitarian urban agendas.

Beneficial elements:

- Regular meetings.
- Working committees where different stakeholders are represented and converge.
- Investing in the inclusion of more delegates or neighbours interested in collective welfare and capable of triggering progress in the neighbourhood.
- Actions and information contributing to building trust (for example, providing information on progress, rendering accounts for the administration of resources, monitoring and so on).
- Instruments for allocating benefits or compensation, based on fairness and equity, as defined by the neighbours themselves.

- Allocation of benefits based on indicators agreed by consensus by all stakeholders.
- NGOs that support the process and that provide information and facilitate participation.
- Development of capabilities by promoters, delegates or neighbourhood commission members.
- Sustaining ties with other organisations.
- Transfer of the social capital gained from one organisation to another.
- Possibility of changes within interventions (flexibility) as a result of practices.
- Technical criteria that can help overcome partisan political conflicts.

Detrimental elements:

- Delays between the announcement of programmes and their actual commencement.
- Delays in fulfilling construction work schedules.
- Programme with too many demands and technical requirements.
- Too many interests to reconcile.
- Restricted participation – for instance, only reporting actions/measures to be taken.
- Highly sensitive issues to be addressed that do not ensure equitable benefits for everyone (that is, interventions causing inequity among neighbours).
- The population's deeply rooted distrust towards the state at all levels.
- The need for an external person to push and take the initiative to summon community organisations.
- The change in government after the elections and the change in priorities in the agenda this brought.
- Processes focused on individual needs to the detriment of collective needs
- Initiatives or actions that disregard pre-existing agreements.
- The differing views on how best to work of different government departments and other stakeholders participating in the execution of works.

The existence of a working relationship between community organisations and local governments, and collaborative work as a working modality in the programmes do not guarantee that community needs will be addressed in the best possible way. It is the extent and quality of this bond and the flexibility for adjustment throughout the process that enables a more inclusive and equitable urban agenda.

In theory, two factors should contribute to good results. The first is forging more horizontal relations with a higher level of participation in design and decision-making over issues affecting the community. The second is the commitment to joint work as the implementation modality (transcending programmes, government arrangements and organisations). However, these conditions are not always met. In the cases analysed above, it was clear how different factors related to particular features of the programmes, and how local governments and community organisations facilitated or hindered the relationship between governments and organisations and affected the outcomes of the implementation.

The factors related to programme features or the intervention model, such as the type and scale of intervention, its level of flexibility and the time required for its execution are central. The scale and complexity of a programme determine the extent to which delegates, promoters or neighbourhood organisations can make it their own. It is a very different proposition to implement PROMEBBA, a programme designed for the urban upgrading of an entire neighbourhood and requiring the relocation of an important number of families, than it is to implement programmes such as the PMV or the FMC, where intervention is at the individual house level, or the Focus Cities initiative in *Barrio Alem*, where very specific activities are carried out. In the latter cases, even if there is a long-term view that seeks upgrading for the whole neighbourhood, intervention work is limited.

The degree of flexibility is a key factor affecting the intensity of the bond between the organisations and the local government. An intervention with broad parameters for action that enables the adjustment of demands, resources and timetables ensures better results. PROMEBBA, unlike the other programmes, significantly reduces the possibility of reviewing the process; it is quite probable that the actions taken do not adequately match demand. Programme implementation time frames are also relevant; for example, PROMEBBA requires the neighbours' consent to start the intervention process. Therefore, the municipality had to organise a workshop to introduce the programme and seek the neighbours' consent. But there was a two-year gap between this workshop and the effective starting date of the PROMEBBA implementation. Obviously, the visible face of this delay is the municipality, even if the decision to start implementing the programme is not in its hands. The complexity of the intervention and some rigid aspects of the programme equally result in much longer implementation times than originally scheduled; and ownership titles are granted (at best) two or three years after completion of the works. This delay clearly undermines and affects participation and the bond between community organisations and the local government. By contrast, execution of the PMV, the FMC and the Focus Cities initiative was much faster

and results were achieved sooner, which strengthens community organisations.

With regard to the characteristics of local governments, the approach they propose in terms of their working modality with neighbourhood/community organisations and technical organisations is noteworthy, as this influences the bond generated. The different types of government approach range from a more *assistentialist/clientelistic* type (where the state is a provider and generally responds to neighbourhood demands presented by a political broker – see Figure 1) to a development type model (where the state seeks to effect changes through collaborative work with the community and its organisations). The San Fernando and Moreno governments tended towards a development approach that, depending on the political agenda and the type of intervention proposed, may imply progress or a setback. At times, old assistentialist and clientelistic practices emerge and clash with more participatory interventions. This is attributed, in part, to the fact that not all local government departments share the same working modality and, as a result, there is an overlapping of different styles.

However, there is a significant difference in the way each municipality works with the people and organisations within its boundaries. The Municipality of Moreno's mode of management is mostly based on political referents/brokers who work in health centres, soup kitchens, neighbourhood commissions and so on. In practice, this means that some community organisations' decisions might suit *government* decisions. The exception is the working approach developed by certain municipal departments such as social work and planning, or brought about by

external projects such as the Focus Cities initiative (see Figure 2). In the case of San Fernando Municipality, the experience of the Urban Upgrading and Land Reorganisation Unit is strongly related to a long-term vision of the type of approach they support, which includes the consolidation of multi-stakeholder teams and coordinated work with different local and neighbourhood stakeholders. This is a working dynamic that crosses all of their habitat improvement interventions. Within the municipality, it is the working approach used by this unit that tends to guide all the rest when they intervene at neighbourhood level (see Figure 3).

The intensity of the relationship between local government and the organisations in each of the four case studies was different, and each faced changes. During some stages of PROMEBA, when participation decreased and the working committee merely operated as a receiver of resources, the intensity of the relationship was low. But it picked up when the working committee generated proposals and worked on establishing relocation and irregularity criteria.

The intensity of the relationship was medium in the PMV, the FMC and in the management of *Barrio Alem's* water network; the neighbourhood referents and members of *Barrio Alem's* neighbourhood organisation all acted as project promoters and managers and could take part in decision-making regarding some aspects of the intervention. FOTIVBA was the only space with a high-intensity relationship because the organisations took decisions jointly with the public sector on the direction and priorities of some programmes and had direct influence over habitat policies.

Figure 1. Clientelistic model

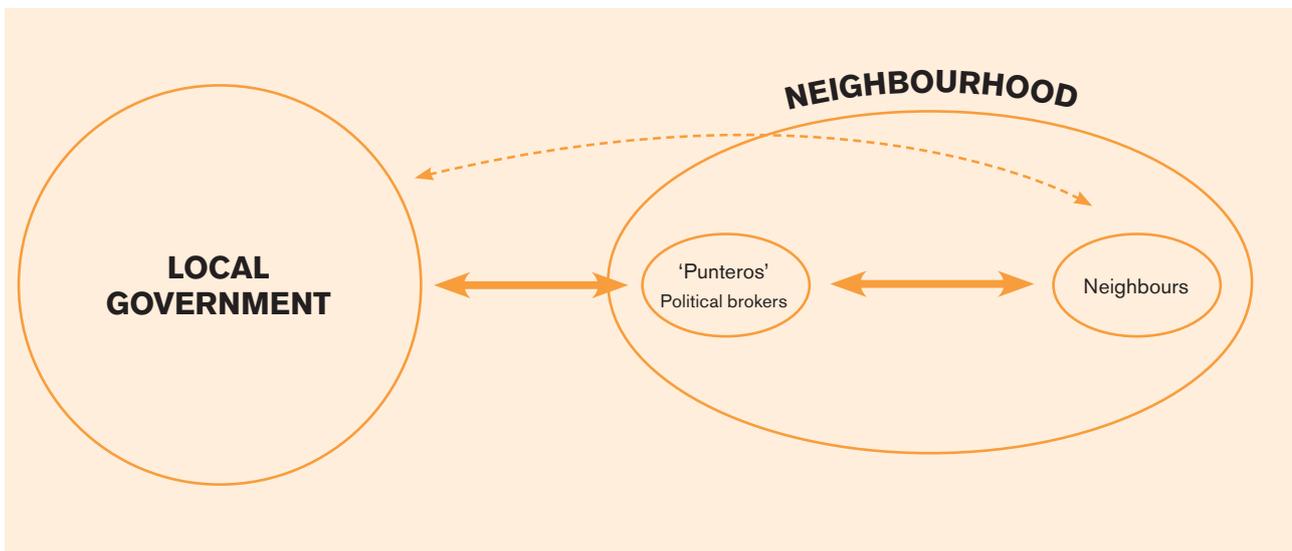


Figure 2. Moreno model

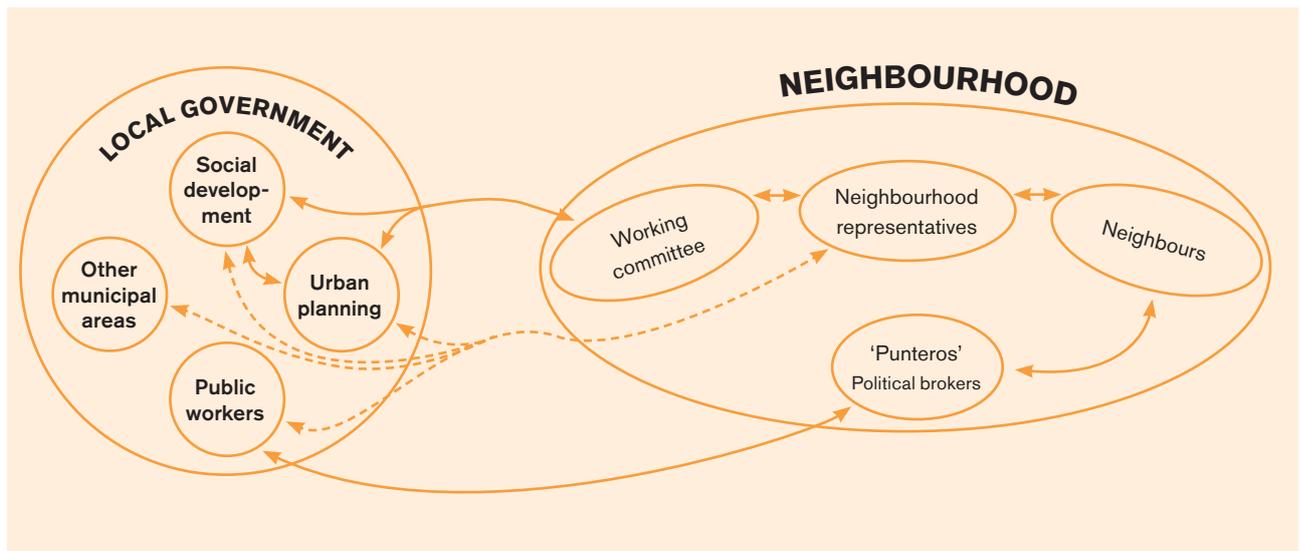
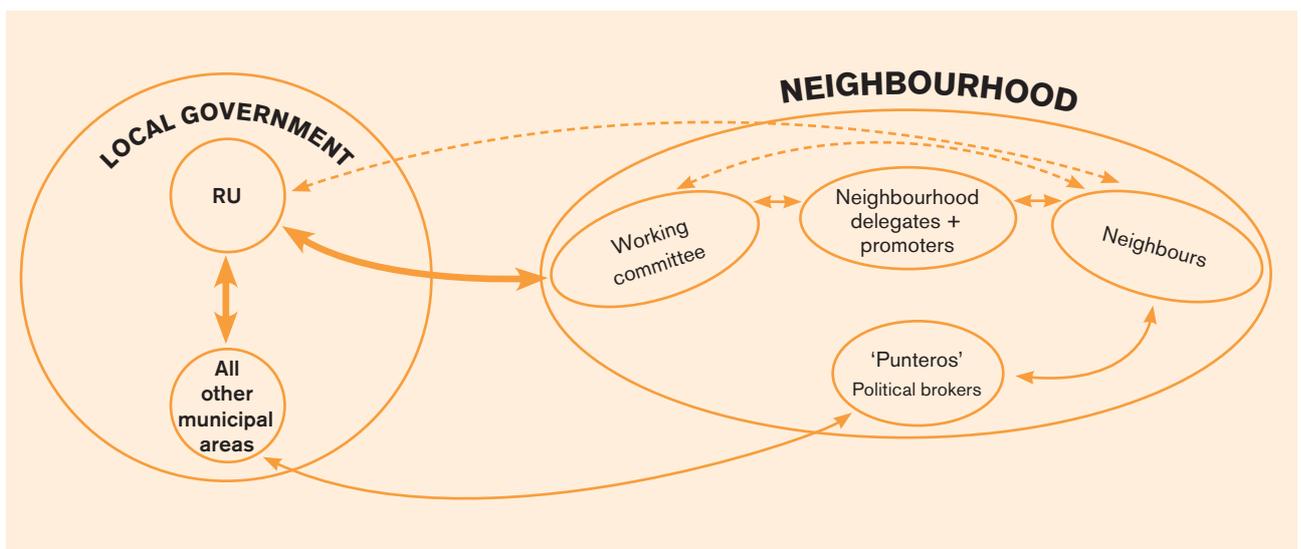


Figure 3. San Fernando model



The characteristics of organisations, their origin, function and the particular features of their members are also key factors that influence or enable a more inclusive and equitable agenda. One of the variables that facilitate participation is an organisation's degree of interest and a positive and proactive attitude. In the cases of the *Barrio Alem* water network, the PMV and the FMC, they worked on issues of interest to organisation members. In contrast, in the case of PROMEBBA, some of the issues addressed did not stimulate the interest of delegates, thus allowing other stakeholders to take decisions for them.

Ad hoc organisations, such as a body of delegates, in most cases do not develop into a neighbourhood organisation; this is because their formation was something that was 'imposed', not something

specifically sought. Many delegates were proposed by neighbours and accepted the position because of the small number of volunteers. This was the case in the PROMEBBA and PMV experiences but not in the case of *Barrio Alem*, where there was a pre-existing self-convened commission whose members are elected by the rest of the neighbours, not as individual delegates but as a commission, a collective body; this provides the entity with greater powers and the independence to act.

The above considerations lead us to consider whether the consolidation of pre-existing community organisations should be promoted, or whether the focus should also be placed on acknowledging and further encouraging individuals who are conscious of the common good, whose main drive is neighbourhood improvement regardless of the formation of a

community organisation. Programmes tend to enhance neighbourhood participation through organisations and tend to push towards their formalisation, and the number of participating delegates/neighbours is viewed as an indicator of success or failure of the programme. This goes counter to reality. For example, in PROMEBBA's working committees, the rise in participation was mostly related to specific issues that were of interest because of their relevance and not because of a real commitment to the comprehensive upgrading of the neighbourhood. Otherwise, continued participation in regular meetings was by a small group of neighbours, usually the same delegates who had sustained participation over the three-year process, or neighbours who were motivated to join.

The PMV also began with a large neighbourhood-wide meeting, where three neighbours were proposed as promoters. These are neighbours with a collective conscience, who capitalise on social learning and remain motivated. Through their work, they gain experience that enables them to participate in other projects implemented in the neighbourhood. This 'collective conscience' is linked to an interest in and commitment to the common good, a trait shared by most neighbours committed to participation, whether as delegates, promoters or members of a formal neighbourhood commission. It would seem, then, that it is not sufficient to merely assess community organisations by the continuity of their actions, or permanence and degree of formality; the kind of leadership in each community should also be taken into account. In the cases analysed, we see that committed neighbourhood organisations and committed individuals are just as valuable within a programme. It mostly depends on their capacity to engage positively with local organisations (and other stakeholders) and government's capacity to design programmes that promote flexibility, inclusion and transparency, and that support community leadership.

Individual capacities and the zeal for self-improvement strengthen this 'collective conscience'. In some cases, their eagerness to learn and improve impels them to participate in training courses or continue their education (that is, different courses to strengthen organisations, as in the case of members of *Barrio Alem's* normalising committee; or to complete interrupted secondary school studies, as in the case of Adriana).

We cannot ignore the influence the organisations may have on public policies. It may be a direct influence, as in the case of FOTIVBA, whose actions and links to the National Under-secretariat of Housing enabled the creation of a work space that incorporated changes to programmes such as the PMV. Or it may be an indirect influence, whereby the knowledge gained in a collaborative work programme experience reaches individuals with decision-making powers.

The above experiences also highlight the importance of the participation of other stakeholders committed to the goals of a given project or issue, and to a collaborative working modality. It is common for local government to wrongly perceive the other stakeholder as a 'menace' and not as a partner. Their openness to other views is a challenge, but it also complements and proves beneficial to the development of interventions and the strengthening of bonds. This has been the case with ILED-AL and its participation in the different processes under analysis, fulfilling a central role with its technical contribution and status as guarantor of trust between the neighbourhood and the local government. This was highlighted by interviews with neighbourhood referents and municipal officers. Inviting other stakeholders to participate is identified as a key element in the four case studies, and the transfer of the social capital acquired is crucial for sustained accomplishments and for moving towards a more inclusive urban development.

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Appendix 1

Irregularity criteria and sanctions reached by consensus by the working committee of PROMEBA II

IRREGULARITY	SANCTION	SANCTION
Occupation of empty spaces	Does not receive free titling	Does not qualify for the PMV
Purchase or change of complete plot without consulting <i>Nuestra Tierra</i> cooperative – after start of PROMEBA II (March 2009)	Does not receive free titling; If he has to relocate cannot receive a new house / needs to change with the <i>barrio</i>	Does not qualify for the PMV
Received a previous benefit in <i>Barrio Hardoy</i> and again occupied a plot in <i>Barrio San Jorge</i>	Sanction 1: US\$ 4,000	With payment of 50% can qualify for the PMV
Between 2006 and 2009, bought without consulting the cooperative and was not an historical resident of <i>Barrio San Jorge</i>	Sanction 2: US\$ 3,500	With payment of 50% can qualify for the PMV
Between 2006 and 2009, bought without consulting the cooperative and was an historical resident of <i>Barrio San Jorge</i>	Sanction 3: US\$ 3,000	With payment of 50% can qualify for the PMV
Between 2003 and 2006, bought or occupied a plot without consulting the cooperative and was not an historical resident of <i>Barrio San Jorge</i>	Sanction 4: US\$ 2,500	With payment of 50% can qualify for the PMV
Between 2003 and 2006, bought or occupied a plot without consulting the cooperative and was an historical resident of <i>Barrio San Jorge</i>	Sanction 5: US\$ 2,000	With payment of 50% can qualify for the PMV
Brought or exchanged half a plot from the possessor of the other half, failing to consult with the cooperative and after PROMEBA II started (March 2009)	Sanction 6: US\$ 2,000	With payment of 50% can qualify for the PMV
Debts: Cooperative Sewage network House Fund Credit Fund	They have to cancel debt to access benefit; 20% discount if paid in one instalment	

Acronyms

AMBA	Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area
DRU	<i>Dirección de Reordenamiento Urbano</i> (Urban Upgrading and Land Reorganisation Unit), which is within the Under-secretariat of Urban Planning, Land Development and Housing of the Municipality of San Fernando
FMC	<i>Fondo de Micro-Crédito</i> (Micro-Credit Fund)
FOTIVBA	<i>Foro de Organizaciones de Tierra, Infraestructura y Vivienda de la Provincia de Buenos Aires</i> (Forum of Land, Infrastructure and Housing Organisations in the Province of Buenos Aires)
GBA	Gran Buenos Aires (Greater Buenos Aires)
IIED-AL	International Institute for Environment and Development – América Latina
PMV	<i>Programa Mejor Vivir</i> (Housing Improvement Programme). PMV I, II, III and IV: different stages of PMV
PROMEBA	<i>El Programa Mejoramiento de Barrio</i> (Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme) of the national government
SSVN	<i>Subsecretaría de Vivienda del Ministerio de la Nación</i> (National Under-secretariat of Housing)
ABSA	<i>Aguas Bonaerenses SA</i> (Water and sanitation utility operating in Greater Buenos Aires area)

Notes

Some terms used in this paper

The term 'neighbour' is used for individuals living in the settlements where these programmes were being implemented – and is a direct translation of the Spanish term *vecino*.

The term 'referent' is used for a person engaged in community activities but who is not necessarily a community leader. A person committed to the improvement of their barrio, in many ways they are community leaders, but may not be fully recognized as one by everyone. They are different from political referent (referent político) who works as a political broker, for someone higher up.

'Promoters' are neighbourhood residents who offer their services to undertake programmes as volunteers.

Barrios/neighbourhoods mentioned in the text

Barrios Hardoy, La Paz, San Jorge, Villa del Carmen, San Ginés, San Martín and Presidente Perón in the Municipality of San Fernando. *Barrio* Alem in the Municipality of Moreno

This paper discusses what creates or enhances a successful working relationship between community organisations and local governments in upgrading and housing improvement programmes, and its influence on the quality of the interventions. It focuses on four initiatives in Greater Buenos Aires: the National Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme in three informal settlements; the Housing Improvement Programme and the Micro-Credit Fund in two informal settlements; a neighbourhood commission's work on reconditioning a piped water network; and the advocacy work of a network of technical, social and grassroots organisations. Among the key factors for success is local government's capacity to design programmes that have flexibility, promote inclusion and transparency, and support community leadership both through neighbourhood organisations and committed individuals.

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