

Poverty reduction in action: Participatory Planning in San Fernando, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Ricardo Schusterman, Florencia Almansi, Ana Hardoy,
Cecilia Monti and Gastón Urquiza

IIED Working Paper 6 on Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas

This is one of ten case studies that were part of an IIED research programme on “Urban Poverty Reduction Programmes: Lessons of Experience”. The research was undertaken with support from the UK Government’s Department for International Development/DFID (project number R6859) and from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The publications that are the result of this work are listed at the end of this paper.

The ten case studies demonstrate the important roles that local institutions have (or can have) in contributing to poverty reduction in urban areas. They show that:

- many aspects of poverty need to be addressed, including not only inadequate livelihoods, income levels and asset bases but also poor quality and often insecure housing, inadequate infrastructure and services, inadequate legal protection of poorer groups’ rights and “voicelessness and powerlessness” within political systems and bureaucratic structures;
- there are often positive multiplier linkages as actions to reduce one aspect of poverty can help reduce other aspects;
- there are many possible entry points for reducing poverty (including some for which little or no external funding is needed) and many kinds of local organizations or institutions can contribute to this;
- the form of the local institution that can reduce poverty varies with context; they can be community organizations, federations of community organizations, local NGOs, local foundations, municipal authorities or, on occasion, national government agencies or local offices of international agencies;
- one of the critical determinants of the success of poverty reduction initiatives is the quality of the relationship between “the poor” and the organizations or agencies that have resources or powers that can help address one or more of the deprivations that poorer groups suffer; and
- sustained poverty reduction requires city and municipal government agencies and political structures that are more effective, more accountable and more able to work with low-income groups and their community organizations.

International agencies need to develop or expand funding channels to support local institutions that can deliver for low-income or otherwise disadvantaged groups (including the organizations, associations and federations formed by these groups as well as local NGOs and local government agencies) while also remaining accountable to them. This should also support the capacity of these institutions to widen the scale and scope of poverty reduction programmes and recognize the fact that much poverty reduction depends on new attitudes and actions by local government institutions.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The authors are with the Community Action Team, IIED-America Latina, Buenos Aires. They can be contacted at: IIED-América Latina, Av. Gral. Paz 1180, (1429) Buenos Aires, Argentina; e-mail: iied-ac@sei.com.ar

Special thanks to Jessica Budds who translated the Spanish original into English and who helped edit the final document

CONTENTS

Summary

I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. BACKGROUND	1
a. The Programme of Support to Vulnerable Groups (PAGV)	1
b. San Fernando and the Neighbourhoods selected for the PAGV	3
c. Vulnerable Groups in the Selected Neighbourhoods	4
d. Actors involved in the Participatory Planning Process	5
e. Relationships between Actors	7
III. THE PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESSES	7
a. Stages of the Participatory Planning Process	8
b. Methodology	10
c. Difficulties encountered during the Participatory Planning Process	11
d. Opportunities arising from the Participatory Planning Process	13
IV. CONCLUSIONS	13

ANNEX 1: Description of Projects in the Neighbourhood Schemes in San Fernando

I. SENIOR CITIZENS	19
a. Recreational and Cultural Activities	19
b. Community Canteen	19
II. FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD	19
a. Training for Employment in Catering	19
b. Awareness-raising of (Family-related and Social) Concerns facing Female Heads of Household	20
c. Awareness-raising of Domestic Violence	20
d. Reproductive Health Education	20
e. Childcare Centre	21
III. YOUNG PEOPLE	22
a. Assistance with Schoolwork	22
b. Training of Young People to encourage the Prevention of Social Risks	22
c. Youth Club (for the development of creative, recreational and sporting activities) ..	23
d. Training in Construction Skills	23

IV. PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY	23
a. Disability Support Centre	23
b. Training in the Prevention and Early Detection of Disabilities among Infants	24
V. YOUNG PEOPLE AND FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD	25
a. Training in Computer Skills	25
VI. SENIOR CITIZENS AND FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD	25
a. Housing Improvements and/or Provision of Equipment	25
VII. SENIOR CITIZENS AND PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY	25
a. Training of Home Helps	25
VIII. ALL FOUR VULNERABLE GROUPS	26
a. Community Activity Centre	26
Table 1: Projects resulting from the Participatory Planning Process	17

PUBLICATIONS - THE CASE STUDIES AND OTHER BOOKS
AND PAPERS ON URBAN ISSUES

a. The Working Papers series on poverty reduction	27
b. Other publications from this research programme	28
c. Other publications on urban poverty	28
d. Urban publications with Earthscan	29
e. Other Working Papers series	30
f. Other IIED publications on urban issues	30

SUMMARY

This paper describes an initiative to support community-directed development projects in low-income neighbourhoods in San Fernando, one of the poorer, peripheral municipalities in Buenos Aires. This was part of a national programme for "vulnerable groups" in low-income areas which sought to facilitate access to social services, increase participation and promote transparency in the use of government resources at local level. Funding was available to support community initiatives that served the following groups:

- young people aged between 14 and 24;
- female-headed households caring for children;
- senior citizens; and
- people with a disability.

The initiative received a US\$ 38 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank and US\$ 22 million from the Argentine national government; it was managed by the National Department of Social Development. Five neighbourhoods were chosen with some 20,000 inhabitants. Each had been developed informally, largely through the efforts of the settlers, through self-help and collective efforts, on privately developed sub-divisions. Many households had incomes below the poverty line (with little prospect of improvement, given high unemployment rates) and high levels of overcrowding. A long history of top-down municipal action also meant considerable scepticism among many inhabitants as to whether their involvement in a participatory process would produce any change. A series of public workshops and meetings in each neighbourhood encouraged ten civil society organizations (three religious organizations, two community development societies, two senior citizen centres, two women's groups and one youth group) to develop projects. An Argentine NGO, IIED-América Latina was responsible for organizing these forums and workshops and for seeking to ensure collaboration and cooperation between the various groups. In doing so, IIED-América Latina drew on its long experience of supporting a community-driven development programme in Barrio San Jorge, a low-income informal settlement also in San Fernando. The participatory planning processes involved three stages:

- diagnosis: forums to identify the vulnerable groups and their problems;
- prioritization: forums and workshops to translate the problems identified into responses; and
- design of neighbourhood schemes, including the definition of projects and of the institutional structures needed to implement and manage them.

Positive Aspects

This created an opportunity for community organizations to identify their problems and develop responses to them. This is very different from the conventional "welfare-oriented", top-down social policies in which "recipients" play no role in defining needs and how these are to be addressed. Many projects were developed without modification by the municipal authorities. Since all groups were to get funding, the different community organizations did not view each other as competitors and collaborative links were established between them.

The programme set the conditions for bringing changes to the nature of the relationship between community organizations and the municipal authorities, although it remains to be seen whether these conditions are sustained. The involvement of the municipality as implementing agent for certain projects in this programme added new lines of work to its repertoire of social activities. Also, there was far more flexibility in the kinds of projects that received support, with a shift away from welfare-oriented delivery programmes and towards development projects.

Difficulties and Limitations

It proved difficult to get much participation from members of the vulnerable groups themselves. Existing community organizations within the neighbourhoods had not involved vulnerable groups, especially youth, women-headed households and people with disabilities. One of the greatest challenges of working with such "vulnerable" groups is to go beyond the implementation of projects and towards meeting their needs and involving these groups in the development and management of these projects - which is also a critical part of reducing their isolation and exclusion.

This initiative also faced the same limitation that confronts virtually all efforts to reduce poverty, namely the very limited capacity to generate employment and/or increase incomes.

It was difficult for many civil society organizations to meet the legal requirements necessary to receive official support, especially within a time frame that required rapid implementation. It was also difficult for such organizations to develop project proposals within the framework and criteria set by the programme. It takes time to develop the capacity to assess the feasibility of projects; all groups tend to prioritize projects on the basis of need rather than on their capacity to undertake the project.

In some instances, it was difficult to prevent the imposition of a professionally driven agenda on the community organizations, especially with regard to programmes for disabled people and their families. Community development societies that had been effective in each neighbourhood during the 1960s and 1970s in obtaining basic infrastructure and services had scaled down their role; most community organizations were weak and reliant on volunteers, many of whom lacked formal education. It takes time to develop the capacity of community organizations to work and to develop proposals in a participatory way. Few of those involved had taken part in a participatory process. The women's and youth groups were more able to develop their ideas into proposals.

Poverty reduction in action: participatory planning in San Fernando, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Ricardo Schusterman, Florencia Almansi, Ana Hardoy, Cecilia Monti and Gastón Urquiza

I. INTRODUCTION

IT IS RARE to see the ideas upheld by a non-governmental organization (NGO) being incorporated into government-led social programmes. This appears to be the case with some of the ideas of the Instituto Internacional de Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo (IIED-América Latina)⁽¹⁾ on poverty reduction initiatives and the Argentine Government's Programme of Support to Vulnerable Groups (PAGV). Both institutions promote strategies such as participatory planning, a cross-sectoral approach involving a range of actors, and giving financial support to community initiatives.⁽²⁾

This paper describes and analyzes the implementation of the participatory planning process (PPP) that constituted the first stage of the PAGV in the District of San Fernando in Greater Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The implementation of this programme in San Fernando proved to be a valuable experience for all the actors involved, as it laid the foundations of participatory management between government and civil society organizations through a participatory and decentralized process. However, the planning process has experienced some difficulties in involving vulnerable people and this has become the foremost challenge for the subsequent stage of the execution of projects within the PAGV.

This paper is divided into three sections: the first describes the context of the neighbourhoods and the situation of the actors involved in the PAGV prior to its implementation in San Fernando; the second analyzes the three participatory planning processes implemented in San Fernando; and the third draws conclusions, by way of reflection, on how both the design and implementation of social programmes and projects can be enhanced. The annex has details of all the different project components and a table showing the funding for each component.

II. BACKGROUND

a. The Programme of Support to Vulnerable Groups (PAGV)⁽³⁾

¹ IIED-América Latina is a non-profit institution registered in Argentina. It is a sister institution to the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) in London.

² Participatory planning and a cross-sectoral approach involving a range of actors within poverty reduction initiatives constitute some of the principles applied in the work of IIED-AL's Community Action Programme since its creation in 1987. The idea of funding community initiatives was driven within IIED-AL by the late Jorge E. Hardoy and David Satterthwaite, and this became the subject of the book by Arrossi, Silvina *et al.* (1994), *Funding Community Initiatives*, Earthscan, London.

³ This section was compiled by the PAGV staff.

THIS PROGRAMME, CREATED by Argentina's National Secretariat of Social Development, sought to contribute towards improving the living conditions of vulnerable groups⁽⁴⁾ and to reduce the social risks they face. Its purpose is to facilitate their access to social services through the implementation of an innovative management model which aims to strengthen social networks, increase community participation and promote transparency in the use of government resources at the local level.

Risk factors include the limited social capital available to vulnerable groups and their limited and difficult access to public social services (health, education, housing, social welfare, etc.). Social policies that target vulnerable groups as principal beneficiaries often fail to adequately address these deficiencies. Risk factors also include large (and growing) employment-related problems (including increasing job insecurity within many jobs and also rising rates of unemployment and underemployment).

The PAGV is directed towards the following vulnerable groups who live in poverty in large urban centres: young people between the ages of 14 and 24, female heads of household caring for children under the age of 14,⁽⁵⁾ senior citizens over the age of 60 who receive a monthly income of less than US\$ 140⁽⁶⁾ and people with a disability. It is also aimed at indigenous people in areas where such groups are concentrated.

The programme is financed by the National Secretariat of Social Development and the Inter-American Development Bank, with a total budget equivalent to US\$ 60 million to support activities over a period of four years. The programme intervention strategy entails the development of a participatory planning process that seeks to involve vulnerable groups within a community, both grassroots and professional civil society organizations, and local government authorities in the design of a set of projects that collectively form neighbourhood schemes. The schemes are based on the participatory diagnosis of needs identified and prioritized by the community, and are made up of projects which are interconnected in order to respond to these needs, as well as projects for institutional strengthening.

The PAGV can fund both direct interventions (including community infrastructure and services; housing improvements; recreational, sporting and cultural activities; support for community canteens; social integration and counselling services; and employment skills) as well as institutional strengthening through capacity-building in project management, administration and identification of funding sources. Capacity-building for local government consists of different modules to those that are offered to the other organizations. Thus, the schemes are the product of a decentralized set of activities that reflect the consensus of the community, reached through the planning process.

⁴ Vulnerable people are defined as those – individually or collectively – who lack access to the goods, resources and skills that are available in their social context or who suffer from the devaluation or loss of these or who are unable to use those that are available to them. Vulnerability translates into the permanent or temporary exclusion from sources of and basic rights to welfare (secure, paid work; education and skills; leisure time; security and provision of social services; economic assets; political citizenship; social integration; and ethnic and cultural identity).

⁵ The definition of “female head of household” refers to women who do not cohabit with any other income-earning adult and who care for at least one child under the age of 14.

⁶ (Here and throughout) Argentine pesos; one peso equals one US dollar.

The institutions that implement the neighbourhood schemes are both civil society organizations and local government authorities which, in this role, are responsible for the development of the projects and the administration of the materials and financial resources. The neighbourhood schemes are carried out within a time frame of two years, with continuous social and technical support provided by NGOs with capacity and experience in the design and management of social projects. The NGOs also assist in the preparation of the neighbourhood schemes and their projects, and support the executing organizations to ensure that the goals at the local level are reached. The PAGV also undertakes different monitoring and evaluation activities in addition to those in which the implementing institutions and community members are actively involved.

b. San Fernando and the Neighbourhoods selected for the PAGV

The District of San Fernando is located to the north of the city of Buenos Aires and includes an area of delta. Excluding the delta area, it constitutes the smallest municipality of the metropolitan region with a population of 143,000 inhabitants in 1991.⁽⁷⁾ The population within the Municipality of San Fernando is predominantly middle and lower-middle class, and the principal economic activities are small-scale production and service activities.

The criteria for a neighbourhood's inclusion within the PAGV included having between 500 and 2,000 families, being areas where people meeting the criteria of vulnerable groups were concentrated, and having high levels of unmet basic needs and unemployment. In addition, the neighbourhoods had to have a minimum standard of regularized land tenure such that the inhabitants were not at risk from eviction. Based on these criteria, the PAGV and the municipalities selected the neighbourhoods to be included within the programme. In San Fernando, the selected neighbourhoods were Santa Catalina, San Ginés, Villa del Carmen, Villa Hall and Don Mariano. Together, these neighbourhoods have a population of approximately 20,000 inhabitants. The Municipality of San Fernando allocated US\$ 1.7 million to the regularization of land tenure to ensure that households were able to be included in the programme.

The selected neighbourhoods present similarities in terms of their origins, patterns of development and present circumstances. All the selected neighbourhoods are residential areas. The majority of houses are simple one or two-storey brick constructions but there is also a small proportion of sub-standard, prefabricated shelters. Conversely, there are also a few high standard detached and semi-detached houses.

As in most of San Fernando, the five selected neighbourhoods are situated on low-lying and poorly drained land that is prone to flooding. Villa Hall was divided into plots and settled in the 1940s, Don Mariano, Villa del Carmen and San Ginés in the late 1950s, and Santa Catalina in the mid-1960s. These settlements were divided into plots after private companies had negotiated exemptions from the regulations that prevented the sub-division of land lying below the flood threshold. As several of these companies no longer exist, many of the families that settled in these neighbourhoods never managed to obtain their land title deeds.

The families that settled in these neighbourhoods consisted predominantly of industrial and

⁷ Argentina (1991) National Population and Housing Census.

unskilled workers. Many came originally from north-western Argentina and moved to Greater Buenos Aires with the flows of migrants during the mid-twentieth century. They found temporary accommodation in shelters borrowed from family or friends, or in boarding houses or tenements. At a time of widespread availability of work and social mobility, the offer of cheap plots and the possibility of spreading payments over several years was the initial solution to the migrants' housing needs.

A further reason for the settlement of these neighbourhoods was the expansion of public transport, in particular the rail network, which was essential for connecting the settlers with their workplaces. There is a railway station within walking distance of Don Mariano and Villa Hall, and within 10 minutes by bus from Santa Catalina. Furthermore, the construction of the northern access route to the Pan-American Highway led to the settlement of Virreyes and to the establishment of industries in the area.⁽⁸⁾ Villa del Carmen and San Ginés are a 10-minute walk from the highway, from where there are buses to most of northern Buenos Aires.

Accounts from original residents tell how the neighbourhoods developed principally through the initiatives and effort of the settlers who, individually and collectively in community development societies (*sociedades de fomento*), worked to improve their neighbourhood. One woman commented that "...the people did a lot, without waiting for things to be done for them...", referring to activities such as purchasing construction rubble to fill the foundations of their plots (in many cases more than two metres deep), constructing pavements and improving roads. With time, urban infrastructure and services such as road paving, gas, water and refuse collection started reaching the neighbourhoods.

Once the community development societies were formed and churches had been built, the next step was the building of primary schools (by the provincial government) and health centres (by the municipal government). Existing crèches are privately run, although the majority receive government funding, and fulfil most of the demand from the neighbourhoods. In contrast, however, there are no secondary schools and high-school children have to travel to other nearby neighbourhoods.

The situation of the people living in these neighbourhoods has got worse in recent years, with the intensification of structural adjustment policies and the recession that have affected Argentina. The rising social mobility of the 1950s and 1960s has been replaced by stagnation and subsequent decline in the following decades. As a result, different aspects of poverty are apparent in the neighbourhoods: homes with unsatisfied basic needs, overcrowding (many of the original owners' children and grandchildren live with them in the same house or plot) and insufficient income (in many cases being so low as to constitute destitution). These manifestations of poverty are set in a context of high unemployment, rising levels of violence and insecurity, and widespread scepticism about the possibility of change as a result of citizen participation. In such a context, young people, female heads of household, senior citizens and people with disabilities become particularly vulnerable.

⁸ Municipality of San Fernando (1998), *Breve Historia de San Fernando de la Buena Vista*.

c. Vulnerable Groups in the Selected Neighbourhoods⁽⁹⁾

At this point, it is necessary to clarify that the term “vulnerable group” does not imply that people at social risk are necessarily in groups. In the selected neighbourhoods, many people at risk neither form groups nor belong to community organizations. Thus, they get caught in a vicious circle of isolation, as not belonging to any social organization increases their vulnerability yet, at the same time, they do not participate in any organization precisely because they are vulnerable.

d. Actors involved in the Participatory Planning Process

A variety of civil society organizations participated in different activities of the participatory planning process. The ten organizations that submitted projects (not including the Municipality of San Fernando) comprised three religious institutions, two community development societies, two senior citizens’ centres, two women’s groups and one youth group. Other participants included two social and sports clubs, eight educational establishments, a further three religious groups, as well as several departments of the Municipality of San Fernando.

The ten civil society organizations share several common characteristics. The capacity that each organization has developed depends on the opportunities it has had to undertake community initiatives. The religious groups and the community development societies are the longest-standing organizations, having been established for between 35 and 40 years. The senior citizens’ centres were only created about five years ago for the purpose of distributing food supplements from government programmes. One of the women’s groups and the youth group were only formally established when the PAGV was implemented in San Fernando. There are noticeable differences between the longer-established organizations and the more recent ones that were formed primarily in response to government initiatives and programmes, in that the longer-standing organizations are much less dependent on external support.

The specific objectives of each civil society organization vary according to its nature, although all propose to undertake activities that contribute towards neighbourhood improvement. With regard to the resources that they manage, all civil society organizations function with volunteer workers, with only the religious organizations having some paid staff. The majority of these organizations operate within defined geographical boundaries, generally in the vicinity of their headquarters or in the areas where their members live.

For several civil society organizations, their existence is largely sustained by the actions of the leader, who assumes almost all of the decision-making responsibility while the rest of the executive members either nominally participate or passively accompany the management process.

According to the institutional questionnaire⁽¹⁰⁾ completed by each civil society organization, half of the organizations stated that their greatest difficulty was the lack of a proper headquarters.

⁹ This section could not be completed due to the fact that the results of the survey carried out by the PAGV had not been processed.

¹⁰ Devised by PAGV, 1998.

Other difficulties mentioned were the erratic nature of the accounts, a lack of participation by community residents, volunteers' lack of formal education, lack of resources, lack of formal organization and the poor definition of the organization's functions.

The civil society organizations also presented similarities according to the nature of organization. The community development societies scaled down their role and representation during the 1980s, by which time most urban services had reached the neighbourhoods where they were active. The senior citizens' clubs and centres promote an active social life for a significant number of older residents in the District through weekly gatherings, courses and excursions, and they also distribute food supplements from various government programmes.

The churches in the neighbourhoods undertake a large number of initiatives which, apart from religious activities, include community canteens, crèches, and recreational activities and sport for young people.

The Municipality of San Fernando (hereafter referred to as the Municipality) is responsible for implementing both its own social policies and those of provincial and national government. Since the return to democratic rule, San Fernando has had two different management models under the same political régime. From 1983 until 1995, the Municipality was under the charge of a single elected mayor who remained in office for almost three terms. He was notable for his autocratic nature. During his term of office, the municipal personnel consisted principally of local politicians with few staff with technical skills. His terms were also characterized by the implementation of welfare-based and paternalistic policies. In 1995, the mayor was removed from office due to charges of corruption and a new mayor was subsequently elected and took office.

In the present context of national decentralization, the current municipal management assumed a model that combines welfare-based policies with development-oriented ones. After restructuring its administration and putting its financial situation in order, the Municipality has recently been attempting to create opportunities for community participation through initiatives such as "Open Days for Municipal Consultation and Participation", "Community Collective Action Days" and the "Kids' Club". "Community Collective Action Days" are days designated by the municipal government for carrying out neighbourhood improvement tasks such as painting schools or cleaning up town squares. For these activities, the local government provides the materials and the community provides the labour. The "Kids' Club" is a recreational initiative for children aged between four and 12.

Alongside these initiatives, traditional policies are implemented, such as health care and food assistance. It is worth noting that, of the ten social schemes, programmes and projects underway in the three neighbourhood schemes when the PPP was initiated, half were based on food assistance.

The PPP received technical assistance from IIED-AL. IIED-AL's experience in San Fernando dates from 1987 when it began to support the Integrated Improvement Programme in Barrio San Jorge. This programme consisted of supporting different types of community initiatives, including housing improvements, access roads, land tenure, provision for water and sanitation and for child health and development. The aim of most of the assistance was to develop a

representative community organization.⁽¹¹⁾

The challenge for the implementation of the PAGV lay in how the goals would be achieved after five months of participatory planning and two years of neighbourhood scheme when these goals had taken more than ten years to achieve in Barrio San Jorge.

Of the lessons learned from the Barrio San Jorge experience, perhaps the most relevant is the need to achieve consensus in order to make best use of the resources of each actor involved. Also, for any initiative to progress, it is crucial to achieve local government participation along with that of the community.

In order to act as a supporting organization, the technical team from IIED-AL consisted of two professionals for each neighbourhood scheme – both of whom had previous experience working in San Fernando. Each team had one member of IIED-AL's Community Action Programme working almost exclusively on the PAGV, and a part-time field facilitator contracted for the project.

e. Relationships between Actors

The structure of the relationship between the Municipality and the civil society organizations that participated in the PPP took on a radial form, with the local government at the centre and the civil society organizations dispersed around it. All civil society organizations participated at some time in social programmes or initiatives implemented by the local government but failed to build relationships among themselves. Within the framework of these relationships, the municipal government was responsible for the provision of resources and the civil society organizations assumed the role of distributing these and acting as channels for the expression of residents' anxieties.

There were no formal agreements for cooperation between civil society organizations. In some cases, this was due to rivalry between leaders who supported different local politicians. The differences between the organizations are apparent in terms of their competing for resources and for getting commitment and collaboration from the residents.

The relationship between IIED-AL and the Municipality dates back to the end of the 1980s and IIED-AL's work in informal settlements within the Municipality. The Municipality's lack of awareness of IIED-AL's work may explain why the latter has not worked more regularly with the local government.

The Municipality's contact with the vulnerable people has largely been through government initiatives. Many older people with no income benefited from the "Asoma Plan" (food assistance), while some disabled people were helped in health care centres and special schools. The Municipal Youth Office started to expand its activities to include the age range set out by the PAGV. Female heads of household on low incomes with children also benefited from food

¹¹ For further details, see Schusterman, Ricardo and Ana Hardoy (1997), "Reconstructing social capital in a poor urban settlement: the Integrated Improvement Programme, Barrio San Jorge", *Environment & Urbanization* Vol 9, No 1, April, pages 91-119.

assistance (under initiatives such as the “Vida Plan” and the “Eva Perón Plan”).

III. THE PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESSES

PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESSES (PPPs) that were undertaken in three zones of San Fernando over five months (June to November) in 1999 had the following objectives:

- to formulate a diagnosis of the situation of vulnerable groups;
- to prioritize their problems and needs; and
- to identify actions that responded to these problems, and prepare projects and design the neighbourhood scheme.

The PPPs were carried out using two different activities, namely, workshops and interim meetings. The workshops consisted of six meetings with all those involved in the processes, whilst the interim meetings were gatherings with selected participants in order to explore in greater depth the themes dealt with in the preceding workshops. IIED-AL coordinated these meetings in its role as a supporting organization.

Levels of attendance at PPP meetings were similar across the three neighbourhood schemes. For the 18 workshops that were held, the average attendance was 29 people. Those who attended included a group that went to all the workshops (approximately 60 per cent), while the rest varied according to who had invited them and the place where the activity was held.

Most of the participants in the workshops and at the interim meetings were adult women, as tends to be the case when people are invited to participate in community meetings. However, the absence of men and younger people could be attributed to the fact that the meetings were held during working or school hours. The difficulty with holding such meetings outside working and school hours is that women would have been unable to attend; however, the hours chosen inhibited participation by men and young people.

a. Stages of the Participatory Planning Process

The level of participation of both the communities and local government fluctuated over the course of the PPPs. An analysis of the trend can be helped by dividing the process into three phases, with each phase containing two workshops.

The **initial phase** entailed work which would allow a diagnosis of the vulnerable groups in each neighbourhood. In line with the PAGV’s recommendation that community participation be channelled through institutions, the task of issuing invitations to the PPPs was delegated to the local civil society organizations.

The original summonses to the meetings were issued by the Municipality, which dispatched invitations to organizations and key contacts from the selected communities for the opening meeting of the PAGV in San Fernando. The intensity of the invitations was subsequently stepped up with the collaboration of local civil society organizations, by way of letters, leaflets and advertisements painted on walls in conjunction with the local residents, and by word of mouth at each workshop and interim meeting. In addition to the formal invitations, the dissemination was reinforced through the continuous presence of the field-based facilitators on

the ground.

At the start of the PPPs, a wide range of institutions and groups were represented at the meetings. This became an opportunity for the actors to become familiar with each other – both IIED-AL with local organizations, and local organizations with the programme. The initial attitude of the participants varied in accordance with the nature of the institution with which they were affiliated and the attitude of its leaders. Many neighbourhood leaders thought that, given the wide range of projects that the PAGV could potentially fund, this could be the way to turn some of their “dreams” (their own projects or those of their organization) into reality. Other institutions, such as those with an educational focus and some community development societies and church-based organizations, believed that the PPP would entail costs – in terms of contributions in the form of human resources – that would outweigh the potential benefits to them. This meant that they chose not to take part in the programme.

A further feature of the identification stage was the very limited presence of residents belonging to groups at social risk and organizations who address and have detailed knowledge of their needs and priorities. In effect, few neighbourhood organizations have young people among their active members and none of them undertake specific activities with female heads of household or disabled people. Similarly, most members of the senior citizens’ centres were receiving incomes of more than US\$ 140. The low level of representation of vulnerable groups suggested that the diagnosis needed to be more profound.

The **intermediate phase** formed the transition between the definition of problems and the proposal of solutions in the form of projects. At this stage, the identification of problems that had been formulated was verified and organizations were designated to work on the problems of particular vulnerable groups.

Two strategies were used to verify the diagnosis formulated in the previous phase, namely, extending invitations to encourage people at risk to attend the workshops, and confirming with groups that would not usually participate in formal activities that the problems identified accurately reflected their concerns. Contrary to expectation, the strategies confirmed the identification of problems that had already been drawn up.

Throughout the participatory planning process, the PAGV contracted a group of some ten women for each neighbourhood scheme to undertake work on the “baseline study” (a survey of the situation of the vulnerable people prior to the implementation of the projects)⁽¹²⁾. These women’s involvement in the survey allowed them to “discover” the precarious living conditions of many of their neighbours and also helped to refine the diagnosis.

At this stage, the participants were divided into working groups according to their interests. In general, the working groups consisted of members of institutions who were interested in working on a certain theme or people who were the intended beneficiaries. Thus, senior citizens’ issues were taken up by the groups with members of senior citizens’ centres, while themes relevant to female heads of household were chosen by members of women’s

¹² The contracting of women was possible through linking the PAGV with the Programme of Community Services of Argentina’s Ministry of Employment and Social Security. While the PAGV trained and supervised the women while they were carrying out the surveys, the Programme of Community Services gave them financial support.

organizations and/or community volunteers (*manzaneras*).⁽¹³⁾ The absence of local institutions working with disabled people led to this theme being adopted by members of the families of disabled people and care assistants from health care centres. Issues relating to young people were addressed by different types of institution within each neighbourhood scheme, alongside San Fernando's Municipal Youth Office.

The guidance notes set out by the PAGV⁽¹⁴⁾ were used for the selection and definition of the projects. The notes served as a reference framework to define the scope of activities that the programme could support. However, in some cases, its application hampered the generation of new proposals.

At this point, it became evident that it would be impossible for the PAGV to respond to all the problems defined in the identification stage, in particular to issues relating to the generation of employment, which had been identified as the cause of many of the problems faced by vulnerable groups.

The **final phase** of the participatory planning process focused on the definition both of projects to be implemented and of the institutions that would be responsible for implementing them. The projects prioritized in the three participatory planning processes presented similarities:

- for female heads of household, the priority was the creation or expansion of childcare centres;
- for senior citizens, the priority was the improvement of their houses and the construction of a headquarters;
- for young people, the priority was skills and training to improve their employment prospects, along with provision for leisure activities and sports; and
- for the group comprising disabled people and their families, the priority was access to information about their disability and possible alternative solutions, along with the provision of a home-help service.

During the final phase of the PPP, it was difficult to integrate members of the civil society organizations in the final definition and preparation of the project proposals. The requirement that projects had to be defined within a limited period, and the difficulty that their formulation entailed – especially for those who were not familiar with this project planning process – meant that this responsibility fell on IIED-AL, with limited participation from residents.

It was also necessary to speed up the civil society organizations' time frame for complying with the PAGV's various requirements, such as defining the person legally responsible for the project, registering with the tax revenue system and opening a bank account. The pressure this put upon civil society organizations, and their lack of experience in legal and commercial administration, contributed towards the rise of ill-feeling among the leaders which, in one case, led to an organization deserting its role as supporting organization and the cancellation of that project.

¹³ *Manzanera* is the name given to local women who volunteer to distribute food supplements to pregnant women and mothers with school-age children, within the framework of the "Vida Plan".

¹⁴ PAGV (1997), *Tipología de Actividades*, March.

b. Methodology

IIED-AL used a series of instructive resources to implement the PPPs. In order to improve levels of understanding, it was very useful to make participants realize that they plan constantly in their daily lives, although they do not realize it. In other words, they already possess experience of planning different actions even when they do not rationalize this process. Simplified vocabulary was used to accompany and explain technical concepts so that participants could understand the information that IIED-AL was trying to impart. In this way, for instance, “objective” was translated as “what we want to do” and “sustainability” as “how we are going to continue the project when the support from PAGV ends.”

The interim meetings turned out to be one of the most effective activities within the participatory planning process in San Fernando. The smaller number of participants gave rise to a greater level of exchange with the professional staff, which enabled the participants to reinforce their understanding of concepts and further their development of the project proposals. IIED-AL’s suggestion that each working group focus solely on issues relating to one particular vulnerable group (as agreed when the participants were divided into working groups according to their interests, following the initial workshops) also contributed to the success.

IIED-AL staff had to offer different forms of technical assistance in accordance with the specific requirements of each working group. The senior citizens’ groups required constant assistance from the professional staff to stimulate and accompany their work. With the groups working on disability issues, IIED-AL staff had to intervene in cases where the professionals from institutions specializing in disability issues failed to give residents adequate space for participation. In the case of groups dealing with issues relating to young people and female heads of household, the IIED-AL staff’s job was less involved, as the participants from these groups demonstrated a greater ability to work independently.

Annex 1 briefly describes the projects carried out within the three neighbourhood schemes in San Fernando, along with their respective budgets.

c. Difficulties encountered during the Participatory Planning Process

Few of the participants in the participatory planning process belonged to the four types of vulnerable group. This was partly due to difficulties in extending them the invitation to participate in the activities (either through ineffective dissemination methods or because the issues were not of interest to them). It was also partly due to difficulties on the part of the intended participants, such as the inability to attend activities during working or school hours and their low level of participation in neighbourhood organizations. Furthermore, the fact that very few people at risk attended the activities illustrates how poverty means that their priority is simply getting by, leaving little room for planning and participation in activities that do not bring immediate benefits. In view of the fact that vulnerable groups are usually supported through direct assistance, the proposal of a model of participatory management – in terms of the community participating not only in order to receive benefits but also to give opinions and propose projects – represented a challenge that few members of vulnerable groups seemed to have been able to grasp.

Difficulties in understanding the work proposed by the PAGV were experienced during the

planning process as a result of the lack of experience of the professional staff and residents in participatory planning of social projects. Few participants had ever taken part in a process to identify problems and design projects of the scope of those of the PPP. The PPPs and the issues being addressed were interpreted in different ways by supporting organizations. Those participants who had a better understanding of the work were members of institutions who had previous experience of planning (the Municipality and churches) or had previously participated in social initiatives (the community welfare monitors). Differences could also be observed between those who attended the PPP activities on a regular basis and those who attended infrequently. Of the working groups, the women's and youth groups managed to develop their ideas and proposals more fully, while the groups of senior citizens and disabled people had difficulty in getting to grips with the activities.

The development of each project component turned out to be a highly complex procedure. There was often confusion over the objectives of the project (**what** was to be done) and the way in which it was to be carried out (the **how** component). In this way, the PPP showed that the visualization of notions such as the objective or justification of a project required a capacity for analysis and abstraction on the part of the participants that they had been unable to fully attain.

The definition of projects was compromised by the participants' difficulty in visualizing the implications of each project proposed, and thus their difficulty in analyzing the feasibility of a proposal. For example, when proposing the construction of a building, they found it hard to visualize the complexities involved and the implied maintenance requirements and thus were unable to determine whether the organization would be in a position to carry out such a project. There was a clear tendency to prioritize projects solely on the basis of the vulnerable groups' **needs**, without a realistic assessment of the **feasibility** – especially in terms of institutional strengthening and the organization's capacity – of project implementation.

Several organizations did not feel ready to assume responsibility for the implementation of a project and preferred to delegate this task to the Municipality, hoping that the latter would incorporate both the work and the people who had undertaken it into the project implementation phase of the PPP.

The expectation that local government officials with decision-making powers would attend the workshops was not fulfilled. Municipality representatives consisted mainly of some of the directors of the Department of Social Development and professional staff from the Municipality's health care centres.

The availability of resources from the PAGV also led to conflicts within certain institutions and this became evident principally within the Municipality in the final stages of the PPP. The fact that the local Department for Social Development had been responsible for all stages of the PPP, with no involvement from other local government departments such as Health and Public Works, made the participation of these departments difficult when the implementation of the projects was being defined.

The proposal that local government participate with the civil society organizations as just "another" implementing institution was rejected by the Municipality. The Municipality defined its role as joint promoter of the PAGV together with the National Department of Social Development, arguing that the Municipality is the face of government for the local community.

This makes the municipal government the recipient of almost all the District residents' complaints, which puts it in a position that is incompatible with the proposal that it is to be treated equally with the other implementing institutions.

Some groups had difficulty integrating the inputs from professional staff and members of the community into the activities. The imposition of knowledge by professionals over that of residents was most evident in the case of working groups on issues of disability. Although this relationship varied greatly with the personalities and attitudes of both sets of actors as well as their experience of the issues, the irregular participation of professionals in the PPP hampered forms of participatory cooperation where the interaction of all those present was intended.

d. Opportunities arising from the Participatory Planning Process

The PPPs enabled the problems of vulnerable groups – many of which had never been given any attention – to be debated. It created an opportunity for community organizations to determine their priorities and to plan activities to address them. The PPPs opened up a new dimension in which different actors were able to interact. The likelihood that all the organizations participating in the PAGV would be allocated resources led to an unprecedented scenario in which competition between organizations was replaced by cooperation. In this way, the PPPs set the foundations for the strengthening of organizational collaboration through the linking of projects within each neighbourhood scheme.

The central role of the Municipality in the coordination of the projects, as an obligatory consultant to every community initiative, was not overplayed in the PPPs. Although the neighbourhood schemes had to be submitted for approval by the Municipality, many proposals were developed as projects, with no modifications by the municipal government.

IIED-AL's role as a "supporting organization" during the PPPs enabled it to develop closer links with the municipal government. At first, the Municipality showed signs that it considered its position was being threatened when it had to hand over the management of the PPPs to IIED-AL. However, as the Municipality began to realize that IIED-AL's role was that of a specialist NGO and that it did not intend to interfere in issues of governance, it was possible to start building a collaborative relationship directed towards supporting vulnerable groups.

The PPPs enabled several actors, such as the community volunteers of the "Vida Plan", to broaden their experience of community initiatives and also to initiate or consolidate the process of institutionalization.

The participants were able to determine the problems affecting vulnerable groups, as far as they had knowledge of them. The identification of the causes and consequences of each problem required a greater effort but this was also achieved in all the neighbourhood schemes.

The flexibility of the professional staff of the PAGV allowed the adaptation of the methodology to implement the PPPs. The programme proposal's original methodology was significantly reduced and simplified on the basis of observed possibilities for assistance and capacity to comprehend.

The Municipality's involvement as the implementing agent for certain projects, such as the

childcare centre or early infant stimulation and development project, added new lines of work to the municipal government's repertoire of social activities.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

THE DESCRIPTION AND analysis of the PPPs that were undertaken in San Fernando allow some conclusions to be reached that can be useful for social programmes aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion.

The PPPs showed that, given the needs and problems of people belonging to vulnerable groups, it is very difficult for such people to participate in planning processes that give rise to projects where benefits are not apparent in the short term.

Few of the organizations that participated during the course of the PPPs included members of vulnerable groups. With the exception of the organizations working with young people, no other organization has experience of working specifically with groups at social risk. In this way, vulnerable people have only been represented to a limited extent through the existing civil society organizations. In spite of this, the fact that members of local organizations are neighbours of people at risk or professional staff from institutions working with low-income communities has acted as a way of more accurately defining vulnerable people's needs and priorities.

One aspect that needs to be revised is that of the legal requirements which allow civil society organizations to carry out projects funded by government and multilateral banks. Even though these requirements seem to be adequate for ensuring control and transparency of management, they risk marginalizing civil society organizations that are not prepared to fulfil them. In such cases, the legal requirements can become a cause of exclusion of the very groups that the programme aims to include.

On the other hand, the experience of the PPPs also allows reflection on the management model proposed by the PAGV and how it has worked within the framework of local social policies. The participatory management model between the civil society organizations and the Municipality of San Fernando has presented an alternative to the radial form management model. The PPPs have opened up the possibility of establishing a network in which the civil society organizations will be able to form links with each other, achieve a more horizontal relationship with local government and make contact with other social groups. A network is precisely the structure that would be able to shape the continuity of a participatory management model that is able to sustain and foster community initiatives for the reduction of social risk.

In this sense, the PPPs have marked the start of a process that will continue for the next two years, through the implementation of projects and different capacity-building activities for the strengthening of the implementing organizations. The extent to which the participatory management model is consolidated and expanded will be observed during this period. The formation of a network of local organizations raises the challenge of overcoming the traditional lack of linkages between such organizations and, furthermore, implies the need to create activities that strengthen the links between the implementing agencies and their projects at the next stage. In this way, the programme's underlying principle that "...a neighbourhood scheme

is more than just a collection of projects” will be fulfilled.

In the various stages of PPPs to come, the question must be raised as to how vulnerable residents will be involved in the implementation of the projects. There appear to be two alternatives: either they are merely recipients of the benefits of the projects or they become members of the implementing organizations in the management of these and other projects. If the first alternative were to be realized, this would be a case of implementing a decentralized social policy from central government to a local organization (whether it be the local government or a civil society organization). The second alternative goes further, with the possibility of including the end-beneficiaries in the participatory management of a social programme and, in this way, starting to break the vicious circle of their exclusion and vulnerability.

In spite of the fact that the stage reached in the programme analyzed in this paper does not allow conclusions to be drawn about the impact of the PAGV on the people at risk in San Fernando, the programme’s value in focusing the attention of government and local organizations on more vulnerable groups should be emphasized. In addition, the programme has made a significant contribution to the implementation of government social policies at the local level through the implementation of participatory planning, a cross-sectoral approach involving a range of actors, and the allocation of resources for the implementation of community initiatives.

ANNEX 1: Description of Projects in the Neighbourhood Schemes in San Fernando

I. SENIOR CITIZENS

a. Recreational and Cultural Activities

Aim:

- To develop recreational activities for older people living within the zone covered by the Santa Catalina Neighbourhood Scheme in order to encourage them to meet together and socialize.

Activities:

- Handicrafts workshop: to make soft toys, cushions, lamps, home accessories, ornaments and paintings; one weekly session of two hours.
- Traditional Latin American dance classes: different dance styles (*chamamé*, waltz, *cumbia* and tango); one weekly class of two hours.
- Gym and yoga classes; two weekly sessions of one hour.

In addition to the above activities carried out within the neighbourhood scheme, there are also activities undertaken by the senior citizens themselves, which include the following:

- Games tournaments: board games and table tennis; one afternoon per week.
- Video screenings; two afternoons per month, over 18 months.
- Production of an informative newsletter about the activities being undertaken by the senior citizens; issued once every two months.

b. Community Canteen

Aim:

- To improve the nutritional status of senior citizens.

Activities:

- Alongside the provision of meals to senior citizens, this project aims to work towards creating opportunities for older people to meet together in order to allow them to better integrate with one another. Sessions on eating habits will also be held with the aim of helping to improve the quality of older people's diets and encouraging them to maintain a good nutritional status. This project will last for 18 months.

II. FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD

a. Training for Employment in Catering

Aim:

- To provide female heads of household from low-income areas within the area covered by the Santa Catalina Neighbourhood Scheme with the knowledge and skills in catering for institutions, in order for them to be able to earn an income from working in the childcare centres and canteens set up in the three neighbourhood schemes in San Fernando. The project also aims to increase female heads of households' opportunities to enter the formal labour market and thus their possibilities for generating an income in the areas covered by the neighbourhood schemes.

Activities:

- The training will comprise a course covering the theoretical and practical aspects of catering, to be carried out over 189 hours (21 weeks, with three weekly classes of three hours).

b. Awareness-raising of (Family-related and Social) Concerns facing Female Heads of Household

Aim:

- To provide outlets for information provision and to promote reflection on the issues, as well as counselling services that respond to female heads of households' needs with respect to family-related and social problems.

Activities:

- This project will run for 12 months and will seek to offer courses aimed at increasing knowledge and awareness of self-esteem, women's rights, strengthening of links with other people, and values and identity.

c. Awareness-raising of Domestic Violence

Aim:

- To raise the community's awareness of the problem of domestic violence, in order to strengthen the links between the family and the community. Also, to create opportunities for female heads of household to reflect on and be better equipped to deal with the issue of domestic violence, to allow them to question and change situations in which they are experiencing violence within the home, and to bring the issues into the open in the community context.

Activities:

- The project will run for a total of seven months. The first two months will be dedicated to awareness-raising, and to defining and planning activities. The proposed content for the sessions on reflection and on coping strategies arose from the workshops on participatory planning held for the PAGV. The women who participated in these workshops proposed the following themes:
 - awareness-raising of the problem of violence within the household and the community among residents of the neighbourhood;
 - sex education including sexually transmitted diseases;
 - exploring the relationship between the different factors involved in the problem of domestic violence and each one's significance;
 - changing violent relationships within households, in view of the fact that these were considered normal for a long time;
 - the various effects that violence has on people (physical, emotional, etc.);
 - feelings of guilt;
 - difficulties in expressing problems related to domestic violence, and opening up to others;
 - building self-esteem and self-worth;
 - legislation on domestic violence; and
 - resources and ongoing programmes that address this issue.

d. Reproductive Health Education

Aims:

- To promote responsible motherhood and avoid unwanted pregnancies which could have negative consequences (abortion, sterility, difficult births, death).
- To improve the quality of life of women of reproductive age through the provision of information and activities for effective family planning, thus helping to reduce the number of

unwanted and virtually abandoned children.

- To encourage women to follow the correct procedures during pregnancy and help to reduce the number of pregnancies occurring amongst teenagers and very young girls.
- To promote among women preventive actions with respect to their sexual and reproductive health, and help to reduce the number of women contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

Activities:

- The project aims to hold information workshops to encourage both women and men to adopt a responsible approach towards parenthood. The workshops will consist of eight sessions over a two-month period. Talks on this issue will be organized in conjunction with staff from the health centre, to be held in schools and at neighbourhood institutions. Subsequently, six workshops will be held, each lasting two months, with an interval of two months between each. The workshops will cover the following issues:
 - the distinction between sex and gender, and self-esteem;
 - learning about the male and female bodies, and the female reproductive system and how it works;
 - diseases afflicting the female reproductive system, and prevention and early detection of these;
 - different methods of contraception, and the advantages and disadvantages of each, and current legislation on contraception; and
 - sexually transmitted diseases (AIDS, Hepatitis B, syphilis, etc.) and methods for their prevention.

The workshops will be facilitated by a health professional, doctor or obstetrician and by a social worker using group methods.

The health centre offers pregnancy-related and gynaecological services, monitors pregnancies and carries out smear tests, and guarantees to see women who wish to receive these medical services.

e. Childcare Centre

Aim:

- To provide female heads of household who work or study with a childcare service that caters for a range of children's needs (nutrition, learning, recreation and help with school work).

Activities:

- The childcare centre in Santa Catalina will care for 60 children between the ages of one and four. It will be open from Monday to Friday from 8 am to 5 pm and will include two daily meals (lunch and tea). The service offered by the childcare centre will focus on looking after the children, meeting their health and nutritional needs, and stimulating their learning and development.

This project will comprise two components:

- Training the staff of the childcare centre; while the childcare centre is being built, 20 female heads of households will be trained as child carers. Of these, five will be chosen to work in the childcare centre.
- Running the childcare centre.

III. YOUNG PEOPLE

a. Assistance with Schoolwork

Aims:

- To help young people from low-income households to:
 - complete their primary and intermediary education, thus reducing the incidence of dropping out;
 - go back to primary and secondary education to increase their level of education;
 - improve their performance at school, thus reducing the frequency of having to repeat years; and
 - consider education as a valuable contribution both to personal development and to their subsequent performance in the labour market and role in the community.

Activities:

- The centre for assistance with schoolwork and youth development will offer extra classes of two hours, given by a teacher, that young people can attend at least twice a week. During each class, the teacher will focus on the more complex issues or those that present the most difficulty for the student in understanding the subject.

b. Training of Young People to encourage the Prevention of Social Risks

Aims:

- To train young people from the neighbourhoods selected for the scheme to act as promoters within their own communities, in order to contribute to the social integration of other young people and to promote the values of solidarity and participation.
- To create opportunities for young people to meet, think about and recognize issues that affect them in order to contribute to the prevention of social risks, promote contact and reduce exclusion and discrimination among young people.

Activities:

- The project proposes to train 40 young people in each neighbourhood (i.e. a total of 120 young people within the three neighbourhood schemes selected for the PAGV) and give them the skills to act as promoters within their own communities.

The training will comprise three modules structured as follows: the first module will consist of four months of theory; the second will consist of community work, by implementing a project that the promoters design themselves; and the third module will be a further two months of theoretical and practical training.

Once this first ten-month stage is completed, it is hoped that the course will be repeated with the new promoters acting as coordinators in the training and promotional activities for other young people.

The content of the training courses will be as follows:

- youth and citizenship: the rights and obligations of all citizens, youth rights, etc.;
- issues affecting young people: drug abuse; sexually transmitted diseases (AIDS, syphilis, etc.) and other diseases affecting young people in particular; gender issues and identity; responsible parenthood; domestic violence and other forms of violence;
- techniques and dynamics for group work; and
- tools for social planning: community identification of issues, time planning, implementation and evaluation.

c. Youth Club (for the development of creative, recreational and sporting activities)

Aims:

- To create spaces and activities that encourage a worthy use of free time.
- To promote participation, integration and training of young people.
- To strengthen young people's level of organization and their active participation in neighbourhood institutions.

Activities:

- The Youth Club is a place for recreation, self-expression and training of young people that proposes to run different sporting, artistic and recreational activities that encourage young people to express themselves and reflect on their own reality. The activities to be carried out include communication workshops; performing arts; plastic arts; social activities (drinking *maté*, playing the guitar, singing and dancing); sports and football for both young men women. The project will last for 18 months and will offer the activities described above on a weekly basis, in addition to cultural and leisure outings and competitions.

d. Training in Construction Skills

Aims:

- To provide young men and women from the three neighbourhood schemes in Santa Catalina, Villa Hall and Don Mariano, and San Ginés and El Carmen with the skills and knowledge of construction work in general, in order that they can earn a temporary income by providing labour in the construction work that will be carried out within the framework of the PAGV projects in the area.
- To increase the opportunities for young men and women aged between 14 and 24 in the three neighbourhood schemes to enter the construction industry and derive an income therefrom.

Activities:

- The course will comprise a variety of training styles. Workshops on the theoretical aspects will be given by trainers. Practical sessions will be carried out on the construction sites of the facilities being built under the three neighbourhood schemes, with training being given by the people in charge of the construction works.

The project will last six months and the trainees will receive the equivalent of half a training grant during the five months that they carry out the practical training.

The theoretical modules will comprise 12 four-hour sessions, given once a week, on the following elements: basic concepts of reading and interpreting plans, and basic rules and standards of working; care of tools; basic construction materials and how to handle them; mixing and laying cement; external and internal walls; roofs; plastering; sub-floors and floor slabs; floors and floorings; planning construction work and calculating the quantities of materials; basic electrics; basic gas installation; basic plumbing and drainage.

IV. PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

a. Disability Support Centre (Centre for information and advice to people with a disability and members of their families, and awareness-raising about disability issues within the community)

Aim:

- To improve access to information and to services for people with disabilities as a strategy that

contributes towards improving the quality of life of this group.

Activities:

- The first stage of the project proposes to carry out training workshops for those who have joined a committee of interested persons, focusing on the following issues:
 - disability as a social problem;
 - conceptualization: “deficiency”, “disability” and “handicap”;
 - different types of disability;
 - scale and dimensions of the problem in Argentina, Latin America and internationally;
 - social impact: influence of disability on the family and in social contexts;
 - possible measures: prevention, rehabilitation and comparison of opportunities on a worldwide scale;
 - full integration;
 - historical framework of rehabilitation in Argentina;
 - the role of the state and of NGOs;
 - employment, welfare and social legislation at the national, provincial and municipal levels; and
 - social obligations and responsibility.

This training will be carried out in weekly workshops of four hours each over a period of three months. Sessions responding to specific issues will take place once a week for four hours.

A second component will involve:

- awareness-raising of disability issues within the community, and will be implemented through a series of monthly meetings over a period of 15 months.

b. Training in the Prevention and Early Detection of Disabilities among Infants

Aims:

- To promote the stimulation of infants from an early age in order to prevent and detect early on any developmental abnormalities and disabilities among infants from birth to the age of four.
- To encourage mothers to recognize neurological development as part of their child’s general health, thus enabling disorders to be detected at an early stage, and consequently improve the possibility of access to rehabilitation services for infants with a disability.

Activities:

- The project proposes to hold information workshops and practical sessions to train women from the neighbourhoods in the prevention and early detection of disabilities and infant stimulation techniques. This training will be carried out in modules of ten workshops each, once a week for two hours, with 25 women trainees per module. The project will consist of six modules.

The workshops that comprise these modules will be divided into two parts. The first will outline normal infant development at different ages, for example, levels of progress that should be expected in terms of coordination, language etc., as well as situations of risk that can lead to developmental abnormalities, and carrying out an assessment of “volunteer” babies. The second part will explain the different techniques for infant stimulation involving the family, and how to make toys for stimulating infants in the home.

V. YOUNG PEOPLE AND FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD

a. Training in Computer Skills

Aim:

- To provide young men and women and female heads of household in the areas covered by the three neighbourhood schemes with knowledge and skills in computing, thus increasing employment and general opportunities for these groups.

Activities:

- Twelve computing courses will be carried out in each of the three neighbourhood schemes (a total of 36 courses) with ten participants per course. The project will thus benefit 360 young people and female heads of household. Each course will comprise three hours of introduction to computing, six hours of Windows '98, and seven and a half hours each for both Word and Excel.

VI. SENIOR CITIZENS AND FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD

a. Housing Improvements and/or Provision of Equipment

Aim:

- To improve the housing conditions of senior citizens and female heads of household on low incomes in the area covered by the neighbourhood scheme in Santa Catalina.

Activities:

- The project aims to improve and/or equip the housing of senior citizens and female heads of household on low incomes in the neighbourhood scheme in Santa Catalina. The housing improvements consist of installing services, and repairing, completing or expanding dwellings according to the priorities set by the occupants and the project implementers. Subsidies of up to US\$ 1,200 and technical assistance for carrying out the works will be given. Property titles are required in order for the improvements to be carried out. The provision of equipment refers to the provision of basic appliances to improve living conditions, such as refrigerators, heaters and fans.

VII. SENIOR CITIZENS AND PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

a. Training of Home Helps

Aim:

- To train people as home-based care assistants for senior citizens and people with a disability.

Activities:

- The project will train 35 people and will consist of three phases:
 - Theoretical training (three months): to cover current issues relating to disability, gerontology, geriatrics, rehabilitation, chronic and terminal illnesses, daily activities, special care, psychology, prevention and recreation.
 - Practical training (four months): observation and institutional and home-based practical work.
 - Work experience (one year): four funded places are available and will be filled by four trainees selected from those who completed the training course.

VIII. ALL FOUR VULNERABLE GROUPS

a. Community Activity Centre (also applies to projects “Expansion of Community Centre” and “Construction of a Hall for Various Uses”)

Aim:

- To create facilities for the social integration of all four vulnerable groups.

Activities:

- The building will be the location for other projects of the PAGV (recreational and cultural activities for senior citizens, training workshops organized by female heads of households, the childcare centre), of some of the other workshops for people with a disability and their families, as well as for many of the activities organized by the youth groups, and of future community projects.