Dignified Housing

Submitted By: Construyendo Comunidades Integrales A.C.



Organization Profile

Organization Name: Construyendo Comunidades Integrales A.C

Organization Type: Foundation and philanthropy

Website: https://construyendo.org/

Practice Details

Country(ies): Mexico

City(ies): Sonora, State of Mexico, Jalisco, Mexico City, Morelos, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Veracruz, Quintana Roo, Puebla, Hidalgo, Querétaro

Start Year: 2008

Ongoing: Yes

End Year: N/A

Main Adequate Housing Components:



Housing Thematic Areas:

Social Housing

Housing Rights & Social Inclusion

Relevant SDGs:



UN-HABITAT

Problem & Context

In Mexico, millions of people still face difficulties accessing decent housing, especially in rural and indigenous communities, where the housing gap and lack of basic infrastructure limit their development. More than 9 million people live in precarious housing, without services and with structural risks, which exacerbates inequality and social exclusion. Current public policies do not reach the most vulnerable populations. Faced with this, the Construyendo initiative proposes a comprehensive, participatory, and sustainable model aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Its approach combines the construction of homes, schools, and community spaces, the active participation of volunteers, community empowerment, and strategic alliances with diverse sectors. This model stands out for its low cost, scalability, and cultural adaptability, offering a replicable solution that not only addresses basic needs but also strengthens the social fabric and the sense of belonging.

Solution Developed

The Construyendo practice addresses the housing gap by building safe housing and decent community spaces in marginalized rural and urban areas. Its collaborative model includes beneficiary families from the design to the execution of the project, promoting ownership and sustainability. Volunteers from universities, companies, and civil society are mobilized, strengthening social cohesion and citizen participation. Communities are selected based on technical and social criteria (PANEL Methodology), and construction days bring together trained volunteers with beneficiary families. The main objectives of the practice are: guaranteeing access to decent housing, reducing structural risks, improving quality of life, encouraging community participation, and promoting multisectoral alliances. Its innovative approaches include the use of adapted construction technology (Covintec system), the solidarity model with mass volunteering, and inclusive community management, which empowers families through practical training, ensuring social impact and sustainability.

Implementation

Building Integral Communities is an initiative that comprehensively coordinates housing projects and community spaces in vulnerable communities. It is responsible for the design, planning, resource mobilization, volunteer training, and execution of works. The project involves multiple actors: corporate, academic, and family volunteers who donate time and skills; beneficiary families who actively participate in the construction, strengthening their sense of belonging; local governments that support with permits and logistics; and private companies and schools that contribute financial resources and encourage volunteering among their members. Implementation takes place in four phases: 1) Diagnosis and planning, where needs and beneficiary families are identified; 2) Resource management and alliances, to secure financing, materials, and volunteers; 3) Construction, through community events and mass volunteer work; and 4) Training and closure, with self-construction workshops and formal

delivery. The model is supported by financial, material, and human resources. Funding comes from donations, private companies, public and international funds, and fundraising campaigns. Volunteer labor allows for cost reduction and expanded program reach. Partnerships with companies, NGOs, governments, and universities have been key to ensuring efficient, sustainable, replicable, and high-impact implementation.

Enablers & Obstacles

The Building Integral Communities model is based on the active participation of beneficiary families, who are involved in planning and construction, ensuring ownership and sustainability. Thanks to multisectoral partnerships with businesses, universities, and local governments, more than 67,000 volunteers were mobilized, strengthening social cohesion and co-responsibility. Local authorities provided institutional support by facilitating procedures and permits. The approach incorporates social and educational innovation through university and corporate volunteering, which favors replicability. The construction technology used reduces costs, improves resistance to earthquakes and hurricanes, accelerates construction times by 40%, and offers high thermal and acoustic performance. Furthermore, it complies with Mexican regulations, guaranteeing its viability for large-scale, sustainable social housing programs.

Results & Impact

The Building Integral Communities initiative has achieved a significant impact in marginalized communities in Mexico, with the construction of more than 2,238 homes and 267 educational and community spaces, benefiting more than 50,000 people. More than 67,000 volunteers were mobilized, strengthening social cohesion and generating social capital through community participation. The results are overwhelming: 100% of families gained access to decent housing and regularized their property rights; 88% overcame housing poverty; 82% improved their economic situation; 54% report greater well-being; and 57% report improvements in their health. The main challenges were financial constraints, logistical difficulties in remote areas, and adverse weather conditions, which were resolved through strategic partnerships, solidarity-based transportation, and adequate materials. The impacts on low-income households have been transformative: families who lived in overcrowded conditions and at risk of structural damage now have safe, functional, and decent spaces, with significant benefits for women and children. In the long term, the project has generated greater social cohesion, citizen participation, and community organization; it has boosted the local economy through local purchases; and it has reduced the environmental footprint by using local materials and sustainable techniques.

Replication & Scale Up

In different states of Mexico (Guerrero, Jalisco, Morelos, Quintana Roo, Querétaro, Sonora, CDMX, State of Mexico, Oaxaca and Puebla, Veracruz and Hidalgo) the same model was replicated for several marginalized areas.

PANEL methodology (Planning, Analysis, Needs, Execution, and Achievement), massive voluntary participation, strategic alliances, adaptable and low-cost design. The practice can be scaled through: Expansion of public-private partnerships that secure economic financing, Use of the PANEL methodology, which facilitates orderly and replicable implementation in any vulnerable community in the country. Thanks to this model, it is possible to reduce costs and execution times by up to 40%, which increases the feasibility of scaling the practice nationally and even regionally in Latin America.

Policy Uptake

This housing practice has informed or been partially integrated into policy discussions, strategies, or pilot-level policy instruments.

The Covintec system has official certifications that attest to its safety and seismic resistance, allowing it to be integrated into institutional projects. Construyendo is currently implementing it with support from local governments, universities, and companies and is seeking to expand its use to state and federal programs to address the housing shortage with rapid, safe, and sustainable solutions.

Lessons & Takeaways

Optimize the logistics and transportation of Covintec panels, as they require planned routes for remote areas. Increase public policy impact by generating evidence and regulatory instruments that integrate innovative technologies into social housing programs. Diversify financing sources to ensure sustainability and large-scale scalability.