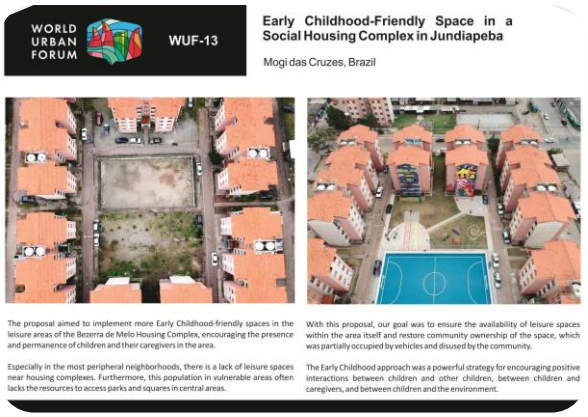
Early Childhood Friendly Space in Social Housing Complex

Submitted By: Mogi das Cruzes City Hall



Organization Profile

Organization Name: Mogi das Cruzes City Hall

Organization Type: Subnational government; Foundation and philanthropy

Website:
https://www.mogidascruzes.sp.gov.br/

Practice Details

Country(ies): Brazil

City(ies): Mogi das Cruzes

Start Year: 2022 **Ongoing:** Yes **End Year:** N/A

Main Adequate Housing Components:



Housing Thematic Areas:

- Social Housing
- Housing Rights & Social Inclusion
- Housing, Land & Spatial Planning

Relevant SDGs:



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Problem & Context

Located in the Jundiapeba District, home to approximately 80,000 residents, the Bezerra de Melo Housing Complex was built in the late 1990s and houses 520 housing units arranged in five-story blocks, with leisure areas located in the center of the blocks.

The area occupied by the housing complex is a highly socially vulnerable area, and the community faces numerous problems such as unemployment, lack of security, and the presence of drugs.

The housing complex has always presented precarious living conditions in the apartments. Over the years, some improvements were made to the complex, but gradually, the leisure areas were being occupied as parking areas. Furthermore, the existing sports courts were in poor condition.

The main problem with these leisure areas is that they were not welcoming spaces for children and caregivers, lacking the necessary infrastructure to encourage their presence.

Solution Developed

The proposal aimed to implement more Early Childhood-friendly spaces in the leisure areas of the Bezerra de Melo Housing Complex, encouraging the presence and permanence of children and their caregivers in the area.

Early childhood, the period from pregnancy to six years of age, is a window of opportunity for child development. Promoting welcoming, safe, comfortable spaces that connect with nature is essential to contributing to children's social, emotional, and physical development.

Especially in the most peripheral neighborhoods, there is a lack of leisure spaces near housing complexes. Furthermore, this population in vulnerable areas often lacks the resources to access parks and squares in central areas.

With this proposal, our goal was to ensure the availability of leisure spaces within the area itself and restore community ownership of the space, which was partially occupied by vehicles and disused by the community.

The Early Childhood approach was a powerful strategy for encouraging positive interactions between children and other children, between children and caregivers, and between children and the environment.

Implementation

The proposal was implemented with support from the Van Leer Foundation through the Urban95 initiative, which promotes urban development from the perspective of 95 cm, the average height of a 3-year-old child.

The initiative involved municipal technicians from the Departments of Housing, Urbanism, Public Works, Social Assistance, and Strategic Planning, who oversaw the process of consultation, diagnosis, proposal development, and project execution.

It also involved the participation of local leaders who assisted in the community engagement process, and the IKONE Institute, which developed the project and managed the construction.

Actions began in September 2022 with community engagement and listening to children. The project was developed in October 2022. Construction was completed in April 2023, when the space was handed over to the community.

The proposal included artistic painting of the facades of the housing blocks, revitalization of the sports courts, and the implementation of early childhood-friendly spaces created based on requests from children and the community. The implementation also included active community participation in the final painting phase.

Funding for the implementation of the proposal came from the Van Leer Foundation, through a contract with the IKONE Institute. The Mogi das Cruzes City Hall contributed human resources through the municipal technical teams that oversaw the first phase of implementation.

Enablers & Obstacles

The main drivers and facilitators were community leaders and children, who became advocates for the proposal and disseminators of information.

The biggest obstacles were the lack of credibility in the actual implementation of the proposals, the improper use of the space as a parking lot, and the lack of security at the site.

To ensure community engagement and credibility in the proposal, efforts were made to ensure a constant government presence in the area, constantly informing and inviting the community to participate in the initiatives.

Regarding the inappropriate occupation of the space, the proposal's approach sought to demonstrate the benefits of returning the space to the public, especially children who lacked adequate open spaces to play.

Regarding the lack of security, the approach was to encourage an increase in the presence of children and caregivers in the open space, which contributes to an increased sense of security.

Results & Impact

The implementation of Early Childhood-Friendly Spaces in Social Housing Complexes is a Social Urbanism initiative. Intervening in public spaces in an intersectoral manner, valuing the community's ownership of this space, is essential to guaranteeing the right to urban space and the city.

The proposed initiative restored approximately 4,090 m2 of open space, which was once again used by children and their families. After implementation, residents significantly increased their appropriation of the space, and there was an increase in the number of children and caregivers in the area.

The government's efforts, which began in the open-air recreational areas, eventually expanded to the buildings within the complex and the surrounding area.

The municipality established a presence in the region with the implementation of Escola Viva, a large school facility with a swimming pool, indoor sports court, auditorium, library, laboratories, art, music, and dance rooms, as well as numerous outdoor spaces dedicated to learning.

The municipality is currently performing maintenance on the painting of the buildings within the housing complex.

Replication & Scale Up

The municipality has already replicated this practice in the Jardim Aeroporto community, the CDHU Jefferson da Silva Housing Complex, and the Novo Horizonte Residential Community. Currently, a partnership with the FEMSA Foundation is underway to implement a play area in the CDHU Cezar de Souza Housing Complex.

Among the factors that allowed for successful replication is the existence of idle and deteriorated public open spaces close to these housing complexes, and enhancing their use with the implementation of Early Childhood-friendly spaces.

This practice can gain scale and expand based on the identification of free public spaces in other vulnerable territories that do not yet have Early Childhood-friendly spaces close to housing complex.

Policy Uptake

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

The first highlight are the partnerships between the municipality and foundations that support early childhood initiatives. Mogi das Cruzes has established partnerships with the Van Leer Foundation through the Urban95 initiative, the Maria Cecília Souto Vidigal Foundation, and the FEMSA Foundation through the LAPIS (Friendly Places for Early Childhood) initiative.

To institutionalize these processes and make public policy even more sustainable, we included child listening and children's participation in projects within municipal legislation, in the Municipal Plan for Early Childhood.

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Lessons & Takeaways

What we think could be improved is the number of people engaged from the beginning of the actions – in the listening and diagnosis phase.

The greater the number of residents, the greater the number of people who will develop a sense of community belonging and will contribute to the care and maintenance of these common spaces in the housing complexes, which contributes to the improvement of social relations in the community.

In addition, this sense of belonging is also reflected in the care that the resident has for their own housing unit.