Urban Resilience and Reivtalization Program: ProMorar Recife

Submitted By: Municipality of Recife



Organization Profile

Organization Name: Municipality of Recife

Organization Type: Subnational government

Website: https://www2.recife.pe.gov.br/

Practice Details

Country(ies): Brazil

City(ies): Recife

Start Year: 2023 **Ongoing:** Yes **End Year:** N/A

Main Adequate Housing Components:



Housing Thematic Areas:

- Housing & Informality
- Housing Rights & Social Inclusion
- Housing & Climate Adaptation
- Housing, Land & Spatial Planning

Relevant SDGs:



UN-HABITAT

Problem & Context

Recife, Brazil's 9th most populous capital, faces acute socioenvironmental vulnerability. Around 53% of its 1.6 million residents live in 546 informal settlements (CIS) located in floodplains, tidal zones, and hillsides, areas highly exposed to floods and landslides. In May 2022, record rainfall caused 4,000 people to lose their homes and affected 17% of the city's territory. Rapid urbanization and weak land use policies deepened territorial inequality. Existing housing policies focused on peripheral units, failing to integrate risk reduction, climate adaptation, and social inclusion. These policy gaps left the poorest communities disproportionately exposed to climate change impacts, demanding an integrated, resilient, and inclusive urban transformation approach.

Solution Developed

ProMorar Recife is Brazil's largest urban resilience program, designed to transform high-risk informal settlements into safe, inclusive, and sustainable territories. The program integrates housing, sanitation, drainage, slope stabilization, and green infrastructure through community co-creation and participatory planning. Its primary beneficiaries are Black and Brown children in early childhood and their caregivers, who live in the city's most vulnerable areas - those most exposed to floods, landslides, and poverty.

Social participation is embedded at every stage, with specific mechanisms for engaging women and children in design, implementation, and monitoring. The program's objectives are the integrated urbanization of up to 40 Communities of Social Interest, the reduction of at least 40% of flooding in the Tejipió River Basin, and the testing of innovative housing and risk management policies and technologies. By prioritizing life, territory, and equity, the initiative redefines urban housing policy as a tool for climate justice and childhood protection.

Implementation

ProMorar Recife has three components: (i) Integrated Urbanization; (ii) Resilient Infrastructure; (iii) Innovation in Housing Policy and Climate Risk Management. The planning phase (2021-2023) included feasibility studies, environmental+social frameworks, and extensive community consultations. Implementation began in 2023 with the creation of the PMO and the first integrated urbanization works. Led by the Municipality of Recife, the program is funded by a US$260 million IDB loan and US$65 million in local counterpart funds, mobilizing government departments, NGOs, community associations, universities, and private contractors. Under the first component, actions include water and sewage networks, drainage, paving, public facilities, leisure areas, housing improvements, land regularization, and relocation of families at risk. The second component develops macro-drainage with floodable parks and hillside protection works. The Innovation component implements a Climate Risk Monitoring System, a new Urban Control Platform, and pilots Housing First and Social Rent Vouchers.

Participation is a cornerstone: residents co-create design guidelines, join works and resettlement committees, attend public consultations, and some are hired for construction. A Children's Committee contributes to all stages, and initiatives like Women's Community Protection and Civil Defense, Children-led Protection Groups, and Safe Paths for Women promote gender equality and community safety.

Enablers & Obstacles

Key enablers included strong political commitment from the Municipality of Recife, the establishment of the Program Management Office (GGP) to coordinate all sectors, and active community engagement through participatory planning. Support from the Inter-American Development Bank and alignment with national policies on housing and climate resilience ensured financial and technical stability. The integration of gender, diversity, and childhood perspectives was also a major driver of social legitimacy.

Main obstacles involved the complex coordination across multiple municipal departments, bureaucratic procedures for contracting and licensing, and capacity gaps in managing innovative approaches and data systems. These were addressed through interdepartmental task forces, continuous capacity building, and adaptive management processes that allowed the program to remain participatory, transparent, and technically sound.

Results & Impact

ProMorar Recife has already improved living conditions for over 3,000 low-income families through integrated urban upgrading, housing improvements, and social inclusion initiatives. 712 households were protected from high-risk slopes and 160 from recurrent flooding, marking strong progress toward safer settlements for marginalized groups. Urban interventions have provided 1,600 families with access to new or renovated public facilities—health centers, daycare units, and community spaces—and 940 families benefited from land regularization, securing tenure in previously informal areas.

The majority of participating households are headed by Black women, and a significant share include Black children living in areas historically marked by inequality and environmental risk. These interventions, combined with gender- and diversity-focused actions, have the potential to address structural inequities and advance long-term climate justice, supporting the transformation of Recife's most vulnerable territories into safer and more inclusive communities.

Beyond physical works, ProMorar fosters social inclusion, gender equality, and community resilience, while driving local economic revitalization and environmental recovery, establishing a replicable model for inclusive and climate-resilient urban development in Brazil.

Replication & Scale Up

The Federal Government, inspired by Recife's experience, created ProMorar Brasil, led by the Ministry of Cities in partnership with the IDB. The national program builds on Recife's model of integrated urban upgrading and resilience. Successful replication depends on strong institutional coordination, medium to long-term financing, inter-municipal technical cooperation, and maintaining participatory and diversity-sensitive approaches that adapt interventions to local contexts and climate risks.

ProMorar Recife is implemented by the Program Management Office (GGP) in partnership with all municipal secretariats to ensure shared learning and institutional integration. This collaborative structure allows each phase to strengthen the City's long-term capacity. The goal is for methodologies—especially participatory decision-making models and integrated planning tools—to become permanent public policy frameworks adopted across municipal departments after the program's completion.

Policy Uptake

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

ProMorar Recife has been partially integrated into the City's housing and climate resilience strategies and has informed national initiatives such as ProMorar Brasil. Several of its policies and instruments—like participatory governance models, climate risk management systems, and innovative housing programs—are currently in pilot implementation. Full integration will require consolidating these methodologies within Recife's permanent housing and urban planning frameworks.

Lessons & Takeaways

In hindsight, ProMorar Recife could have benefited from earlier alignment among municipal departments. Greater access to peer learning from programs of similar scale and objectives could have improved design and delivery. Strengthening data integration and institutionalization mechanisms remains key to ensuring continuity and scaling of results beyond the program's term.