



Djunta-mó (“join hands”)

Enabling citizens to organise themselves

Citi-Habitat, Cape Verde

David Sogge



CENTRO DE INVESTIGAÇÃO E TECNOLOGIA
INTERMEDIÁRIA PARA O HABITAT
ONG SEM FINS LUCRATIVOS

ONE WORLD
ACTION
FOR A JUST AND EQUAL WORLD



Like people elsewhere in Africa, Cape Verdeans have long relied on their own resources – labour, money, ingenuity and social bonds – to build their communities and their livelihoods. Unlike some political leaderships elsewhere in Africa, public authorities in independent Cape Verde have paid attention to citizens and their needs. Yet a challenge for Cape Verdeans remains: How can they catalyse more effective public action by the authorities, and among themselves?

These pages report on one organisation’s efforts to promote public action through community associations in Cape Verde’s capital city, Praia, and in villages nearby.

“The Fortunate Isles”

An archipelago of nine inhabited islands in the Atlantic Ocean, Cape Verde is home to over 470 thousand resident citizens. Located in the same arid latitudes as the West African Sahel, its rainfall is sporadic and water supply meagre. Farming and fishing generally provide too little to live on. Since the 19th century, Cape Verdeans

have left the islands. Many were pushed by famines and colonial forced labour practices and many more were pulled by needs to make a decent living. Today a diaspora of about 450 thousand people lives mainly in the USA and Western Europe. Money and goods they send home have been an economic lifeblood for families and for the nation as a whole, accounting for more than official aid and far more than receipts from the country’s merchandise exports and tourism.

Cape Verde’s economy, in other words, pivots entirely on its people. Since independence from Portugal in 1975, ordinary citizens and their public authorities have gone about improving their private and public domains largely by relying on themselves. Foreign aid has also been important, particularly for food and public investment. Results have been impressive, though major challenges of poverty, decent jobs and inequality remain. (See boxed data on following page.)

	Cape Verde	Sub-Saharan Africa
Human Development Index		
1985	.593	
1990	.625	
1995	.677	
2003	.721	.515
Poverty		
<i>Below poverty line (including "very poor")</i>		
1989	30%	48%
2002	37%	50%
<i>Below "very poor" poverty line</i>		
1989	14%	
2002	29%	
GDP per capita (US \$ PPP)		
2002	\$5000	\$1790
Under-5 Mortality (per 1000)		
1970	123	231
1990	60	180
2002	38	174
Fertility: annual reduction rate 1990–2002	3.5%	1.1%
Life Expectancy in years		
1975	57.5	45.2
1985	61.8	
2002	71.2	46.3
Annual Population Growth rate 1975–2003	2%	2.7%
Adult Literacy		
1975	<40%	
1990	64%	50%
2003	76%	63%
Urban population		
1975	21 %	21%
2002	55 %	35%
Telephones per 1000 persons		
1990 (landlines)	24	5
2002 (landlines)	155	15
2003 (cellphones)	113	39

Sources: UNDP; Government of Cape Verde, Ministry of Finance and Planning; World Bank Development Research Group; UNICEF

Responses

In contrast to experiences elsewhere, Cape Verde's governmental leadership has never distanced itself from the people. Government has tried to provide basic public goods, even after a conservative opposition party was voted into power in 1991, and voted out again in 2001. That is, the state began pursuing an anti-poverty agenda decades before the foreign aid system, late in the 1990s adopted it as their own.

Since 2001, government has mounted a National Poverty Alleviation Programme and allocated additional resources putting fresh emphasis on:

- **Health and education**, including pre-school, primary and vocational education, primary and preventive health measures, and housing improvement;
- **Social protection** reform and expansion, especially toward retired people and citizens facing health risks;
- **Jobs**. State provision of employment, mainly in public works projects, has been a crucial safety net for very poor people in the countryside. Upgraded since 2001 to take fuller advantage of its developmental potentials, the programme begins to resemble successful jobs-as-a-right programmes seen in places like India.

Government has also changed its structure and ways of working, the better to respond to local conditions. Local town and district governments now have more responsibilities for public goods and services. More tasks have been passed to private businesses. And local NGOs and community organisations are engaged, sometimes contractually, to provide health, education and other social services, labour mobilisation and animation/intermediation services for citizens.

At community level, in what might be termed 'vernacular' civil society, people have coped with hard circumstances through their own institutions. Many have practiced mutual aid through labour exchange – *junta mo* ("join hands") – for such chores as clearing land or building houses. They used micro-credit long before it became a vogue in the aid industry.

Rotating savings and credit arrangements are common among market women. Several dozen savings schemes have become formal organizations. Cape Verdeans have also developed informal insurance schemes that pool funds to pay out death benefits, including funeral expenses, to next-of-kin.

More visible for outsiders are the formal manifestations of civil society: sport and cultural groups, churches and associations of business and professional people. There are today about 150 service delivery or issue-promotion NGOs – though local analyses suggest that perhaps only a third of these actually function. Most active NGOs draw on subsidies from foreign agencies or from government contracts. Active or dormant, formal civil organizations number around 600 – which together with the myriad vernacular groupings and linkages of support from the Cape Verdean diaspora abroad add up to a many-layered social fabric.

Challenges

Today that social fabric's resilience is being tested. Amidst positive developments after 30 years of independence – many more people can read and write, enjoy better nutrition and health – income inequality has grown worse. Thus poverty has increased in a relative sense. There is also continuing social exclusion. Young people and women are unable to find decent work. Elderly people and African immigrants can face second-class social status. These trends suggest future scenario of a society composed of "insiders and "outsiders", with resulting social tensions.

Cape Verde's government is pushed and pulled in various directions. Mainly from the outside, powerful interests, including International Financial Institutions, push it toward a society in which access to a decent standard of living depends on one's purchasing power – a society that is with deep social divisions. Yet from the inside it faces pressures – born of political tradition, the intimate scale of society, and voter expectations – to develop a more inclusive society. Currently the government is still capable of responding politically to both the non-poor

and the poor and to constitutional imperatives to keep open a robust political space where ideas and interests can compete.

Using domestic and foreign funds, government has mounted programmes that offer citizens and their organisations opportunities to combat poverty and exclusion. As long as the political space remains open and informed, there are possibilities for organized citizens to press for public goods and services on a broad and fair basis; to advance the idea that jobs should be a matter of right; to bring decision-making closer to local levels. State engagement with them may also harbour risks for citizens' organisations where the entrepreneurial logic of contracting may displace a logic of democracy.

Encouraging the *autonomous* strengths of citizens associated for emancipatory purposes therefore remains a challenge. Citi-Habitat illustrates how an NGO can meet this challenge.



Citi-Habitat



In the first fifteen years of independence, rapid economic and social advances raised expectations that could not be met within a confined political space. The party/state monopoly over associative life began to dissolve in the late 1980s and had disappeared entirely by January 1991 with the advent of competitive party politics. In 1988, a group of 13 Cape Verdeans professionals, active as technicians in various spheres of development, registered Citi-Habitat as Cape Verde's first NGO under terms of the country's 1987 Associations Law – itself a forerunner of laws adopted years later elsewhere in Africa.

At first the new NGO promoted alternative technologies and materials for construction and energy. It addressed problems with good alternative technical know-how, research and experimentation. But Citi-Habitat soon found that it would also have to tackle problems at their social, economic and political roots. Hence during the 1990s it became a broad-spectrum NGO working across an array of technical, economic and social fields with aims of all-round improvement of citizens' living standards and

sense of self-worth. To achieve these, citizens make claims to the public goods and services they are entitled to. But they must also build up and apply their own capacities and other assets. Citi-Habitat has developed a repertoire of activities, assembled in several interwoven programmes, to promote the provision of public goods through citizenship and to promote self-reliance through micro-finance.

Principles

Citi-Habitat takes its approaches from a close acquaintance with grassroots realities. Material poverty is clearly an obstacle, but many norms and attitudes in public and community life also get in the way of respecting people's own capacities and promoting their talents. Citi-Habitat observes that norms and attitudes of paternalism have been internalised by many of the poor themselves. These foster feelings of helplessness and passivity.

To combat these attitudes, Citi-Habitat pursues an action/learning methodology in community development derived from experiences elsewhere

in Africa and in South Asia, mainly in regard to public goods like water and sanitation. It has five key points of emphasis under the acronym SARAR:

Self-esteem (groups and persons gain in capacity through self-confidence);

Associative Strengths (the formation of groups adds to collective strengths);

Resourcefulness (individuals and groups solve problems through creativity);

Action Planning (groups have to plan to carry out actions to solve problems);

Responsibility (groups must really act on plans and thus validate results).

Sub-objectives and approaches

The SARAR principles are combined in Citi-Habitat's three-sided commitment to *education, organisation and participation*. It translates this concretely into a mix of services in four main clusters:



Organisation-building

Acting alone, citizens can become subjects of personal patronage. At worst they will be ignored altogether. For citizens' claims to gain force and direction, and to be honoured publicly, community-based organisations and their networks are indispensable. Citi-Habitat encourages processes of organisation-building through coaching and training. These enable community associations to get started, formalise themselves, plan activities and develop means to learning from other community associations.

Awareness-raising and training

Among the poor, illiteracy and ignorance of basic public health issues can be widespread. Despite government-led advances in reducing illiteracy and boosting public awareness of threats to health, gaps in provision remain. Citi-Habitat provides training and public awareness services directly or helps other institutions provide them. Better understanding and skills reinforce other Citi-Habitat activities, such as for improved water management for gardening and soil conservation. Such activities also help draw poor people out of social isolation and reinforce a sense of community.

Credit provision

Excluded from formal employment, many poor people make ends meet through informal trade. Lack of affordable credit can be a major obstacle to full participation. Citi-Habitat provides small scale credit, mainly to women, identified with the help of community associations.

Brokerage

Public sector bodies have since 2001 boosted spending on labour-intensive public works, pre-school and primary education, health care, drinking water, vocational training, drip irrigation, house rehabilitation and other kinds of public goods and services. To be really effective, these government-funded efforts need to engage with communities. Yet many public sector bodies lack the staff and experience to connect well at local levels. Citi-Habitat bridges these kinds of gaps. It helps broker what governmental or international bodies offer and

what community organisations seek in subsidies or public services. Citi-Habitat premises a great deal of its work on the efficacy of close engagement between public sector and international bodies on the one hand and community-based organisations on the other.

Social priorities

Its programming may be broad-gauged, but Citi-Habitat nevertheless pursues certain emphases. In its main Community Development Programmes, it has focused efforts in three ways:

Priority social categories

Among the wider category of the poor, women and youth have particular priority. Women who head households figure prominently. In some settings, priority rests also on children, handicapped people and the elderly.

Priority geographies

Citi-Habitat confines its work to Santiago, the largest and most populated island in the archipelago. Its community development programmes cover both urban and rural communities in two southeastern districts. Within these, Citi-Habitat's main programme has concentrated on eleven communities. In the district of Praia these range from the extensive urban neighbourhood of Ponta d'Água and five smaller urban neighbourhoods (Pensamento, Latada/São Pedro, Bela Vista, Calabaceira and Eugenio Lima Trás) to rural villages in the far peripheries of Praia: João Varela, São Martinho Pequeno. In the neighbouring district of São Domingos: Fontes Almeida, João Garrido and Ribeirão Chiqueiro. Together these communities are home to about 38 thousand people.

Priority levels in the public sector

Citi-Habitat has devoted special attention to building relationships at local government levels, especially leaderships of district councils and the district-level delegates of national ministries of health, agriculture & environment, water and so forth.



Conclusions

Well-grounded in technical and socio-political realities of its chosen urban and rural terrains, Citi-Habitat has been able to design a system of principles, objectives and methods responding to those realities. Situating itself as an intermediary, it seeks to catalyse initiatives of the poor and to help seize opportunities afforded by the state. Citi-Habitat's designs pivot not on confrontation (though loud protest is never wholly excluded) but on something all too infrequent in Africa – public, transparent reciprocity between government and citizens. Programming is designed to meet a broad range of needs, and thus aims to be inclusive of most residents of poor communities. Yet it is designed to retain a focus guided by priorities for women and young people as informed by people themselves, organised in community associations. How Citi-Habitat translates its objectives into plans and concrete actions is the subject of the following section.

Citi-Habitat's work in practice



How Citi-Habitat actually translates its objectives into concrete activities is the key to its effectiveness. Here are some of the high points of its programming in practice.

Resources

From premises it built for itself on the edge of a low-income neighbourhood, Citi-Habitat has operated from the capital city, Praia, since the early 1990s. Its building, including a classroom/library, is fully occupied. Other basic equipment, including a small number of all-terrain vehicles, is modest and well-maintained. Funding for its distinct programmes and core costs as of 2005 came from non-governmental agencies including One World Action, Solidarité Socialiste (Belgium), and from official aid agencies such as those of Portugal and Austria.

The heart of Citi-Habitat's resources is its staff. As of late 2005, it employed some 19 persons. Five *Animadores* (field workers), two of them women, staffed its main community development programme. Office and logistical support personnel backed up all operations

including financial administration. Given the micro-lending roles it plays in most of its programmes, the organisation has developed particularly strong financial control systems. Overall leadership was with Citi-Habitat's President, Augusto Elisio Rodrigues, a founding member of the organisation. Since 2001 he has been an elected (independent) member of the Municipal Council of Praia.

Planning

For Citi-Habitat, planning is an inter-active process involving staff inside and collaborating bodies outside. The plans of community associations themselves are important starting-points. Associations formulate their objectives and activity plans on the basis of reviews of existing activities, local surveys and diagnoses of problems and their awareness of potential assistance from public sector programmes.

Meetings of association Boards, as informed from time to time by meetings open to members of the community, are key moments for plans to crystallize. Citi-Habitat staff

accompany these community-level planning processes, particularly in early years when associations are finding their feet.

Every year Citi-Habitat staff prepare their workplans. They look back on performance in the preceding period and forward to what can and should be done in the year ahead, as indicated by the associations, public authorities at local levels and other institutions such as the national anti-poverty and vocational training authorities or Unicef, which remains active in support of health activities frequently made priorities by community associations.

Though mindful of the initiatives of official bodies and donors, Citi-Habitat seeks to orient its plans according to grassroots priorities. That orientation lowers risks of paternalistic control-from-above – a not uncommon source of misunderstandings and resentments dogging relationships between intermediary NGOs and their community-based “partners” elsewhere. Self-steering at local levels is an important objective for everyone. Citi-Habitat is today therefore deliberately stepping back from direct involvement in the internal affairs of older and well-managed community associations.

Activities

Citi-Habitat pursues a wide range of activities, sometimes as a direct provider, sometimes as a go-between. Highlighted here are community development activities carried out through 2005, in four key clusters.

Organisation-building

Prior to mounting practical activities, Citi-Habitat pays attention to the quality of organisations at community level. Citi-Habitat begins its efforts with an unforced, “leading from behind” approach. It lets active community members take initiative before presenting itself. Awareness of its services often passes by word of mouth to communities adjacent to places where it is already active. This reflects Citi-Habitat strategy to expand naturally, spreading like ‘drop of oil’.

Its main work involves guiding and encouraging small groups of active residents to create formal associations with broad memberships across

entire neighbourhoods. The process usually involves attracting interest in a concrete public good (as described below under ‘Community Projects’) with a pay-off for anyone wishing to join in: clean water close at hand, a pre-school for the toddlers and so forth. Once underway, such modest but tangible activities in turn attract more people, thus building social momentum.

Citi-Habitat offers coaching and training for local leaderships in several dimensions of associational life:

- Drawing up formal statutes and legalise the association;
- Internal management, including election of officers, roles of sub-committees, leadership, financial control and accounting to members;
- Relations with community members, local (self-) assessment of needs, animation and communication;
- Relations with public sector bodies; this includes making technically sound and budgeted proposals and helping amplify local citizens’ voices;
- Management of public service projects, ranging from soil erosion prevention to running pre-schools.

Beyond formal community development associations, Citi-Habitat seeks to encourage other kinds of associational life. This includes special committees such as those linking parents with primary schools attended by their children, and ‘vernacular’ groups such as funeral (insurance) societies, football clubs and traditional percussion/singing groups known as *Batukadeiras*. In these informal groupings, most members and leaders are women.

2003 saw the emergence of *Red’Animar*, an umbrella body comprising 14 community associations linked with Citi-Habitat. Set up to promote social solidarity, citizen activism and better access to public authorities, it organises visits among member associations. One of *Red’Animar*’s first steps was to take an inventory of associations’ progress and performance, and to resolve jointly to tackle shortcomings identified. It has in the meantime structured itself to enable mutual learning within

the socio-cultural, economic and agricultural/ environmental sectors. Citi-Habitat has helped identify premises in Praia that could be remodelled to provide offices and a training centre for Red'Animar. Once settled, this federation of associations will be better poised to make solid contributions to citizen activism.

Another successful initiative was Radio Ponta d'Água – Cape Verde's first low-wattage radio station for public service broadcasting. After learning about community radio experiences from others in Lusophone Africa, activists from the Ponta D'Água community, assisted by Citi-Habitat and a Portuguese NGO, prepared the ground. Radio Ponta d'Água went on air in September 2003, operating from premises of the community association. It currently broadcasts 12 hours a day to listening audiences within a 50 km radius – that is, the entire island of Santiago, home to more than half the country's population. Programming includes education, entertainment and news, and a weekly programme about community associational life in which Citi-Habitat affiliates are frequently featured. Welcomed by public officials and community members alike, this



radio station constitutes fresh new 'public infrastructure' through which a robust political space for citizens can further develop.

Awareness-Raising and Training

Citi-Habitat translates its educational objectives into a variety of activities targeting both the public at large, to promote awareness, and certain kinds of people, to promote know-how.

In the interest of public awareness of poorly-understood issues such as reproductive health, breastfeeding, sexually transmitted diseases (particularly HIV-AIDS), drug and alcohol abuse, Citi-Habitat facilitates presentations at neighbourhood level by officials and NGO educators. In the year ending March 2004, for example, community groups linked with Citi-Habitat hosted some 36 public presentations. Up to 2005, these sessions had directly reached an estimated 3500 persons.

In some cases these specialised agencies mount 'train-the-trainer' courses in order to multiply awareness. Community associations help spread the word, and organise venues; increasingly associations are themselves taking public awareness initiatives. Supplementing this are educational programmes broadcast on Radio Ponta d'Água.

For know-how relevant to community livelihoods, Citi-Habitat staff themselves provide specialised courses for interested persons, especially women. Topics include basic literacy, cooking, tailoring and hydroponic gardening. For more specialised technical matters, such as drip irrigation systems, training is done by public sector specialists.

To enable young people to get on a path to decent jobs, Citi-Habitat facilitates access to vocational training. Working with community associations, it brokered placements and government subsidies for selected secondary students from poorer households to get formal training in electricity, construction, office/secretarial work and other vocations. In 2003 more than 200 students and in 2005 about 100 students entered these courses.

Credit

In consultation with community associations, Citi-Habitat manages modest programmes of micro-lending, chiefly for women in petty commerce. Loans are generally around €450, with low interest, repayable in 10 to 12 months. Most first-time borrowers are given basic training in money management. Citi-Habitat staff together with community associations monitor their progress as entrepreneurs.

Facilitation of community projects

Citi-Habitat has been increasingly active on behalf of its affiliated community-based organisations to broker infrastructure projects, services, short-term employment and subsidies provided by government or foreign agencies. To take advantage of such opportunities, associations need to fulfil legal and organisational criteria, learn how to bring in technical expertise, negotiate terms and then fulfil terms according to a contract. This means bridging divides between associations, decision-makers and technicians. Such scanning, liaison, brokerage and back-up services – in a word, ‘facilitation’ – account for a good part of Citi-Habitat’s time and effectiveness.

Among the kinds of projects for which Citi-Habitat has helped facilitate community involvement are:

- Construction of seven multipurpose community centres (*polivalenti*, widely-welcomed in neighbourhoods since independence), five pre-schools with playgrounds, six health posts, 14 public water fountains, and so forth. These building projects absorb local unskilled and skilled labour.
- Repair and improvement of about 120 dilapidated, unhealthy houses. Under Operation Hope, a new government subsidy programme launched in mid-2005, such micro-projects (which also absorb paid and unpaid local labour) are gaining momentum across the country.
- Creation of soil retention, irrigated gardening and water management infrastructure in the countryside. Up to 2005 these efforts had

produced 32 anti-erosion ‘dikes’, close to 5000 smaller water-channelling walls, and the planting of tens of thousands of acacia trees. Under technical supervision the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment, these projects provided several hundred poor people with many months of paid employment each year.

- Community road improvement, clean-up and beautification campaigns. An average of 30 neighbourhood campaigns are held yearly.

In terms of technique and delivery, these projects may be straightforward. But they can be problematic in terms of social and inter-organisational relations. In the past, some officials have mounted projects without community consultation or preparation for follow-up care, maintenance and management. Results include ‘hardware’ that sits unused or even deteriorates because the ‘software’, the structured involvement and imparting of skills to local people, was neglected. Citi-Habitat activities address this and other phases of the project cycle.

Conclusions

Citi-Habitat’s activities appear to take a diverse number of forms given the diversity of problems and potentials addressed in both rural and urban settings. Yet their key mainsprings are few: enabling citizens to organise themselves; to gain awareness, skills and other assets such as credit; and to participate in relevant and desired public action in ways that respect citizen capacities. Citi-Habitat does not force the pace, thereby allowing its SARAR community development principles to do their work. These stress people’s own capacities for choosing, planning and taking responsibility. In its promotion of a federation of community associations, and Cape Verde’s first community radio, Citi-Habitat has also shown that it can innovate while at the same time staying the course in communities over many years.

Effects and outcomes



A full account of the impact of Citi-Habitat on the lives of individuals and communities isn't possible at present. That is because so many benefits of the activities – from the vocational training and credit received to new water facilities to organisation-building know-how – are still in gestation. Some things, such as the effects of improved public awareness (of health risks, for example) on actual behaviour have not been measured. Yet some effects can be estimated. This section offers a synopsis through 2005.

Organisation- and Institution-building

Eleven community associations – seven more than in 2001 – have constituted themselves and several other embryonic groups are moving toward full legal status. By their own reckoning, the eleven had total membership of about 1600 people. Women make up nearly half of all members. In at least four associations, women hold leading elected positions. Reinforcement of many less formal community committees and

the 'vernacular' groups is an additional result. In them, an estimated 4400 people participate, most of them women.

The growth of associational life is affecting formal political life. In the Municipality of Praia, political representation is shifting from a city-wide (centralised) to centred-centred (decentralised) system. This reflects growing citizen power – an outcome that was certainly encouraged by the presence of community associations, a major focus of Citi-Habitat efforts since the mid-1990s.

Challenges remain. Activity levels depend a host of factors, from the dynamism of group leaders to the importance residents attach to joint activities; clean-up and beautification campaigns mobilize more people than do meetings about the details of budgets.

Associations can show weaknesses, especially after start-up enthusiasms wane. Responsibilities can become concentrated in the hands of a few. Leaders can falter in their communication with members. Financial self-reliance can be weak, as many feel they cannot afford to pay membership fees. These are shortcomings

detected in by association members themselves in 2004. That critical self-assessment was carried out by an important new organisational innovation, Red'Animar, the federation of associations linked with Citi-Habitat. Self-criticism and reflection are themselves signs of maturing leadership and of capacities for learning from experience, a refusal to blame others, and a will to tackle problems together.

Awareness-raising and training

While actual changes in lives and livelihoods are not systematically known, the quantitative record of involvement in educational activities suggests the scale of potential impact. Up through 2005 Citi-Habitat had facilitated or contributed to the following:

- Greater public awareness of risks associated with unprotected sex, breast milk substitutes, alcohol and drug abuse;
- Many scores of community residents trained to communicate these kinds of messages, and further knowledge, such as about nutrition and gardening, in their neighbourhoods;
- Improved abilities to read and write for as many as 100 persons, most of them women;
- Community residents, including about 25 young people, trained in aspects of community radio;
- More than 300 young people will have undergone formal vocational training courses intended to slot them into available jobs; plausibly, some 172 in the 2003 cohort of trainees are as of 2006 are in regular formal employment.

Credit

Under its main community development programme through March 2005, Citi-Habitat provided 130 small loans on easy terms. These have enabled at least 55 persons, almost all women, to stabilise and improve their household incomes through petty trading. Default has been very low, 1 or 2 percent per year; therefore Citi-Habitat's loan capital continues to rotate well, but over the longer run will erode unless replenished.



Community projects

Through its two main community development programmes, Citi-Habitat's facilitation of public goods and services projects supported by Cape Verdean government agencies and some foreign donors have had the following effects:

Better Processes about Public Goods

By bringing organised residents into contact with government decision-makers and technicians, Citi-Habitat has helped improve chances that projects match local needs and wishes. Efficiency and equity in project design and management have almost certainly been improved. Citi-Habitat insistence on consultation and on targeting the poor (especially poor women) is increasingly respected, since it is backed by citizens who are organised. Better delivery of public goods may thus strengthen grounds for reciprocity between citizens and officials. In the longer run that may boost citizen willingness to pay fees and taxes, which would make public service delivery more sustainable.

Leveraging resources for improved access

Apart from improving processes, Citi-Habitat programmes have drawn public investment into communities in larger quantities and a more rapid pace than would have otherwise been

possible. Because of high levels of trust at work in wide networks of contacts across various levels, its brokerage can successfully 'leverage' resources that have begun to improve public access to social services such as:

- drinking water and public washing facilities;
- primary health care services, mainly based in multi-purpose community centres;
- pre-school and primary school services, including safe & supervised playgrounds and school lunches;
- space for public gatherings, social care for the elderly and handicapped people;
- television and computers with Internet linkages.

Additionally, it has facilitated other government-supported efforts that have improved the reach and quality of:

- irrigation and other agrarian technologies for better income and nutrition;
- environmental protection, ranging from soil and water retention to rubbish removal to prevention of pollution by small livestock.

These projects have generated months of employment every year for many hundreds of

poor people, and for local business contractors. That practice has reinforced a strong and vital Cape Verdean norm that jobs are too important to be left to market forces alone; they are a public imperative, approaching the status of a right, in the fight against poverty.

Conclusions

Citi-Habitat is achieving many of its objectives in better access to public goods and services and in stronger citizen action. Directly and indirectly, women are major actors and beneficiaries of the processes it has helped put in motion. Its most pronounced effects have been:

- stronger associations of residents of poor communities in both urban and rural settings; and
- better processes whereby organised citizens can actively to participate in and benefit from programmes supported by others, chiefly the government.

In these ways Citi-Habitat is helping give new meaning to old Cape Verdean practices like *djunta-mó* ("join hands") that have a lot to offer in an atomised, increasingly competitive society.



One World Action

Our Vision

A Just and Equal World, where there is no necessity for One World Action

Our Mission

To create the power and opportunity for the poorest citizens to transform their own lives; and to challenge the international policies that make and keep people poor

Our Values

We work with partners, South and North, in ways that respect different perspectives and build on the strengths of diversity; we believe strongly in gender equity and full participation of women in all development processes; we seek to put into practice the principles of good governance and democracy in our own organisation and behaviours.

Citi-Habitat

Citi-Habitat is the first legally registered national non-governmental organisation established in Cape Verde. Founded in November 1988, the organisation was established by 13 technicians (eight Cape Verdeans and five expatriates) with different training backgrounds united by a common field experience in grassroots development. In 1994, the Ministry of Justice recognised Citi-Habitat as a “public interest institution”.

Community Awareness and Participatory Education form the backbone of Citi-Habitat’s work. The starting point for the Participatory Community Development Programme was addressing community issues as part of a coherent strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion. The three themes “Education, Organisation, and Participation” form the guiding principles of the intervention methodologies which aim at achieving the organization’s intended goals: Human, harmonious, Sustainable, and self-sustained development with a special focus on gender issues and youth.

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Photographs by Kate Ashton and Andy Rutherford



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