The urban upgrading project in La Vega, Caracas provides an example of how selective improvements that are linked together by a broader vision that is founded on the realities of a locale, can reshape the quality of life in a neighborhood.

The La Vega Barrio in Caracas, Venezuela is one of the largest, oldest, sprawling informal settlements in the city. Established in 1903 the Barrio experienced a population explosion over the past 40 years and by 2007 was home to over 140,000 people. The quality of housing in the La Vega Barrio ranges significantly from recently constructed shanty structures to more substantial units with masonry walls. Few formal streets run through La Vega, and the farther away a family's unit is from these primary streets, the worse off the living conditions are. Municipal infrastructure is non-existent, and public spaces, plazas, or playgrounds are limited.

1.1 KEY INTERVENTIONS

The urban upgrading project in the neighborhood of San Rafael Unido began in 1999 and despite several starts and stops continues to date. One year prior, La Vega was chosen by the Venezuelan government as a larger试验 site for upgrading and design methodology. San Rafael Unido, a challenging neighborhood site on 62 hectares of steeply sloping land. The architects and urban designers undertook a comprehensive study to understand the existing fabric of the neighborhood. The project was also started at this time as the examination of the urban façade, but funding was cut off and it had to wait until 2000 when construction once again resumed.

Despite the issues posed the project’s objective was to have more than 320 stair flights per flight, consistent opportunities were created at the most informal, non-governed public spaces throughout the neighborhood. Additional urban features included urban streets, pathways, public plazas. A small integrated network of drainage canals and small public space. Staircases were designed with a common layout, each staircase was to be 10 feet wide with a 5.0 feet drainage canal, open whenever possible for easy maintenance. By prescribing that staircases had to be more than 320 stairs per flight, consistent opportunities were created at the most informal, non-governed public spaces throughout the neighborhood. The quality of life in a neighborhood.

1.2 MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Design for the project consisted of many sub-projects. Thirty (30) pedestrian paths and stairs, three (3) new urban circulation systems (several roads) and two (2) community centers and the development of several streets. The first set of initial improvements were made during the late-2000's with the construction of several staircases and small, integrated public spaces.

A community center was also started at this time as the examination of the urban façade, but funding was cut off and it had to wait until 2000 when construction once again resumed. 26

1.3 GOVERNANCE

From the outset the upgrading in La Vega has substantial emphasis on community participation. The project formed a significant number of community members in areas of community administration and the technical aspects of implementation, and also established mechanisms for the community to effectively monitor and evaluate the work completed. Local social management groups were established to participate in all aspects of decision making from design to implementation. It is apparent that this initial work has been successful in the hands of the leaders trained by the project have continued to work with local committees and to petition the local governments that reside take pride in the improvements made to their neighborhood and continue to encourage the process as it evolves.

CONCLUSION

The urban upgrading project in La Vega, Caracas provides an example of how selective improvements that are linked together by a broader vision that is founded on the realities of a locale, can reshape the quality of life in a neighborhood.

The decision making number and size of informal settlements around the world, there is a lot to be learned from this incremental, yet visionary strategy that lays the foundations for future improvement through the upgrading of critical infrastructures that support environmental, social, and economic vibrance.
CARACAS
The urban upgrading project in La Vega, Caracas provides an example of how selective improvements that are linked together by a broader vision, founded on the realities of a locale, can reshape the quality of life in a neighborhood. This upgrading included many sub-projects such as pedestrian paths, new roadways, schools, community centers, and the development of the urban facade. Given the increasing number and size of informal settlements around the world, there is a lot to be learned from this incremental, yet visionary strategy that sets the foundations for future improvement through the upgrading of critical infrastructures that support environmental, social, and economic vibrance.

CARACAS, Venezuela

Upgrading included construction of 30 pedestrian paths and stairways
3 new vehicular roadways, a primary school
2 community centers and the development of the urban facade

Received accolades from both the local and international community
Strong, active community participation

Demonstrates exceptional resourcefulness working on limited means but not compromising aesthetic or spatial improvements.
Unique approach to merging old and new urban fabric

Demontreches

COORDINATES
10°30'N 66°55'WE
AREA
433 km²
(167.2 sq mi)
POPULATION
5,905,463
DENSITY
1,431.5/km² 
(3,707.6/sq mi)
GDP (Ethiopia)
$391.3 billion
URBAN POPULATION (Ethiopia)
93.3%

Sources:
1 - Flickr Creative Commons - Oriana Eliçabe
2 - Flickr Creative Commons - Ariel López
5 - 6 - www.holcimfoundation.org

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