

South Africa: "Active Box" – An informal traders hub and food gardening project in Galeshewe

Background

With an urbanisation rate of over 67 per cent, the majority of South Africa's population lives in urban areas. The high levels of poverty, (youth) unemployment, violence and crime are amongst the main development challenges of South African cities. According to UN-Habitat report on cities, South African cities are the most unequal worldwide. These challenges are compounded by the segregating legacies of apartheid spatial planning, pushing the vulnerable and poor residents to the underdeveloped outskirts of cities, often without access to basic infrastructure and equal social and economic opportunities.

Project Intervention

Through a co-design process, this project developed and introduced an Informal Traders Hub in an open-air arena along the road that connects Galeshewe to the Kimberly town centre, to contribute to the activation of the space and provide female traders a safe and vibrant space for their businesses. The Hub is implemented within the "SPRINT" initiative ([Safer Places: Resilient Institutions and Neighborhoods Together](#)) as part of the bilateral "Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention" programme. It contributes to a more liveable, resilient, safe and economically thriving Galeshewe, a fragile township located on the peripheries of the city. The hub was developed with a special consideration of the gender-specific needs of the female traders and provides infrastructure such as trader's shelters, electrical connection, water and storage facilities, urban furniture, and Wi-Fi hotspots on a non-motorised transport route. Innovative, gender-sensitive, and crime preventive designs are



39.5 million

people live in urban areas

51

per cent or more of the urban population lives in the six largest cities: Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Ethekwini, Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Tshwane

implemented to improve the safety and accessibility of public spaces. Furthermore, the use of locally made clay bricks, in combination with used shipping containers and indigenous vegetation surrounding the hub, contributes to cooling mechanisms to counter the urban heating effect.

Results

At the Informal Traders Hub, female street traders from the area now have a safe public space where they can sell their goods to contribute to the livelihood of themselves and their families. The Hub was set up from recycled shipping containers, referred to as the Active Box: a small

multifunctional community building that offers a variety of services and provides surveillance by a janitor and a local Neighbourhood Watch Group to improve safety. For the connecting walls between the containers, builders used the traditional technique of clay construction. Clay walls keep the rooms cool in summer and warm in winter. Clay has a primary energy requirement that is 85 per cent lower than cement. The clay brick construction work was mainly carried out by young people from Galeshewe who were taught the local and sustainable techniques in several workshops. This also helped them to use and spread their newly acquired skills to improve their employment opportunities. Some of the young people aim to set up small cooperatives to offer the skillset to maintain other clay brick houses in the area as part of local heritage preservation. Through their engagements the Galeshewe Youth Network has become an important player within the project to contribute to its sustainability. The organisation will assist with activation processes and have developed a "Heritage Route" with the local tourism office.

The Parks and Recreation Department has also developed a local food garden at the nearby Community Hall to showcase alternative vertical and rooftop gardening and irrigation which gave way to a community food garden project. It includes already 50 households and a local

school in coordination with the department of agriculture.

Implementation Partners

The **Sol Plaatje Local Municipality (SPM)** is both implementer and beneficiary of the project. This takes place through the support of the *Strategy Economic Development Unit*, the *Community and Social Development Unit* and the *Park and Recreation Unit*. Further municipal Stakeholders were also involved in the project.

Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) as the main implementing body supported the project through its expertise in architecture, community facilitation, project management, and co-design processes with the community.

Financing

The project implementation took place from March 2022 to November 2023. BMZ provided EUR 100.000 through the GIZ sector project "Cities".

There was an additional contribution of EUR 20.000 through the BMZ-funded GIZ "Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention (VCP)" programme, with a contribution of EUR 15.000 from the SPM for an additional container with the abolition facilities and beautification of the space.

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