

**Project / Initiative: The Urban Community Support Programme K'CIDADE**

[http://www.akdn.org/portugal\\_home.asp](http://www.akdn.org/portugal_home.asp)

**Summary:** The AKDN, through the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, has been engaged in the conservation of historic cities in Cairo and Delhi. The Aga Khan Planning and Building Services has experience in the built environment in urban areas, including housing design and construction. In 2004, the AKF Board approved an urban development programme in Portugal. The first urban programme of AKF and the first implemented in Europe (UCSP). The programme was built on the findings of academic specialists in a report commissioned by AKF to investigate in more depth European urban development and social exclusion in Lisbon. In Portugal, 20% of the population of 10.6 million is living in poverty, including 970,000 in urban areas. Following these findings, small teams were deployed in 2 neighbourhoods to work with populations of re-housed communities in newly built high rise accommodation in the Municipalities of Lisbon and Sintra (both part of the Greater Metropolitan Area of Lisbon). When UCSP was launched in partnership with the government in 2004/5, it could be argued that it was organised and structured to act in the space illustrated in **Diagram A**. This was a space alongside other government and European Commission funded programmes. This method of operation is a traditional response within the current welfare parameters in Europe of state support to the most vulnerable. This is a top down mechanism and usually leads to the provision and expectation of services and reinforces a dependency culture. Since 2008, UCSP has attempted to realign itself into the space shown in **Diagram B**. This created a shift in emphasis to strengthening civil society, linking to professional associations, faith communities, enhancing social networks and social capital and reinforcing self-reliance.



Brought to the fore was a deeper focus and attention to immigrants, particularly African communities, who live for the most part in Greater Lisbon. Also, it became apparent that there are a number of root causes of social and economic exclusion that have a particular resonance to immigrant communities – Portuguese language, literacy, preparedness for school, job skills, self esteem and confidence, and a lack of social networks. At the same time the programme moved outside the original fixed geographical boundaries, expanding to new areas and working horizontally outside the geographic territories to include cross cutting approaches in schools, church organisations, immigrant associations, ECD centres, and small community Mosques. The first change was the increase in the number of beneficiaries rising from 9,000 in 2007 to 23,000 in 2009. Also, the coverage of immigrants and ethnic minorities has risen from 10 percent to over 50 percent.

The programme became re-organised around four broad thematic areas: *families in the community; education and children; lifelong learning and employment; and citizenship and civil society*. To support local organisations, a shift was made from generic training courses that were more prescriptive in nature to a capacity building approach with more flexibility in an attempt to listen to and address the needs of the diverse civic groups and allow them to develop on their own. New initiatives were started on household budget management, debt, food and nutrition, and supporting children's learning in schools. A number of pilot activities started in two local schools in 2007 and over the following two years this was expanded to 10 schools. In the area of literacy, a new methodology has been designed and tested with encouraging results, through a partnership with the leading psychology university in Lisbon (ISPA) and will be made available by the Ministry of Education to all primary schools in Portugal through a handbook and CD-ROM. The programme was reorganised around a more flexible structure to respond to needs and opportunities in surrounding geographical locations. UCSP is no longer restricted to its own rented spaces and is using schools, libraries and other civic centres for training and community organisation, not only making better use of public facilities when they are under-used, but also becoming more accessible and visible to the wider public.

In summary, UCSP is working with existing and forming new associations and self-interest groups (around schools, ECD centres, immigrant associations, parent groups, professional associations, and faith congregations) that provide the driving element for change as *intermediary organisations*. This inter-locking arrangement potentially secures for people a stronger and more sustainable position to attain opportunities within society and at the same time would provide Government agencies with intermediaries to “sub-contract” services to help address issues around health, education, immigration status, skills training.

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