LOCAL PROJECT CHALLENGE 2020: Accelerating the SDGs

SUSTAINABLE FAVELA NETWORK
RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

Project Overview:

Favelas—Rio de Janeiro’s generation-old informal settlements—represent an opportunity for sustainable development outside traditional formal models. By building on the numerous qualities of favelas themselves, working towards a sustainable approach to development in favelas, based on their assets, they can be a positive reference for the city, to be seen as examples to follow, setting norms of sustainability in the context of resilience, a sense of community, etc. We believe in a new standard of urbanism, where favelas develop in a sustainable fashion, increasingly transforming into resilient, solutions-based places through the strengthening of sustainable initiatives that are already growing more common in Rio’s favelas.

The Sustainable Favela Network (SFN) is a grassroots network to recognize, strengthen, and multiply sustainability initiatives across Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, ultimately realizing the potential of favelas as part of a sustainable urban future. Mapped in 2017 and launched in November of 2018 after months of initial exchanges, the Network became a reality in 2019, with numerous meetings, exchanges, campaigns, and actions. Essentially, the SFN engages organizers in knowledge exchanges and supports the development of their projects into replicable models, based in Rio but in conversation with groups around the world.

Through this program, we have produced an award-winning short film showcasing sustainable qualities of favelas, mapped the projects included in the network, promoted two series of exchanges between initiatives, organized network-wide capacity-building sessions, and implemented 7 Working Groups (polder, water and sewerage, waste, education, income generation/skills, and gardens). The Working Groups began their activities in June 2019 and ended the year with clear proposals for 2020.

The SFN is based in the view of favelas as sources of solutions, including for human sustainability, centered on the concept of Asset-Based Community Development.

What We Do:

- Map socio-environmental initiatives in Rio’s favelas
- Outreaches materials giving visibility to initiatives and events from Network members
- Exchanges within communities, between community initiatives and the general public
- Collective action events (matchmaking) pooling volunteers to develop community projects
- Knowledge circles and capacity-building events between protagonists in the Network
- Working groups on seven themes coordinate activities and meet monthly
- Demonstration projects in the Network’s seven thematic areas
- Network meet-ups, and participation and organization of local and international forums
- Tools and methodologies to empower and strengthen community groups are studied, developed and shared
- Courses and technical support offered by and for SFN members
- Advocacy for public policies that secure the full and sustainable development of favelas

How the SFN Dialogues with the SDGs:

While the SFN works in dialogue with nearly every Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), to varying degrees, the SDG that most informs and is most strengthened by the SFN is SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities. Every single target in SDG 11 is relevant to the SFN:

- 11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums
- 11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons
- 11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries
- 11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage
- 11.5 By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses related to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations
- 11.6 By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management
- 11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

4 Other SDG Targets that Inform and Illustrate Our Work:

- 2.4 By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extremeweather, bio-diversity loss and other disasters and that promote food security and逆food insecurity
- 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development
- 7.2 By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix
- 12.5 By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation in at least one-third of all activities

Learn more about how the SFN relates to each SDG at www.sfnnetwork.org

Community Engagement: The idea for the Network came about when we produced the short-film Favelas as a Sustainable Model, which portrayed initiatives dealing with environmental sustainability and social resilience in Rio’s favelas. Realizing these initiatives were all doing great work but were not in contact with each other, in 2017, we carried out an extensive mapping of sustainable initiatives in the favelas of Rio’s Metropolitan Region, inviting projects and interested individuals to sign up. In 2018, we hosted visits and exchanges between select long-running initiatives, documented in the Weaving the Sustainable Favela Network short-film. We also hosted the Network’s in-person launch, emboldening over 130 community organizers. Throughout 2019 we are hosting community-based knowledge transfer exchanges open to the public. We also host regular working group meetings along the themes of sanitation, water and sewerage, gardens, income generation, cultural preservation, solar energy, and environmental education. And the 2nd Sustainable Favela Network Grand Gathering, expected to be the largest Network event thus far, is set to happen the November. Meanwhile, we have also interviewed dozens of grassroots initiatives to have their profiles published on our community news website RioDeNet.

The SFN’s 2019 Year in Numbers:

- In 2019, 467 people participated in Sustainable Favelas network activities
- Since 2018, 825 people have been involved in Sustainable Favelas activities

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PARTNERS: FOMONA COLLEGE, URBAN EDUCATION BILBAO, URBAN NETWORK, MAHAREBE PRODUCTIONS, AND MANY OTHERS
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11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

27 MEETINGS AMONG THE NETWORK’S 7 WORKING GROUPS

5 SFN community exchanges in three zones of the city: Santa Teresa (South Zone), Campo de Ourique (West Zone), and Pavuna and Manguinhos (North Zone) involving 293 people from 142 initiatives and 68 communities, with an average of 72 participants per exchange, visiting 11 community projects and 5 capacity-building circles
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FIRST SUSTAINABLE FAVELA NETWORK COLLECTIVE ACTION IN THE CAMORIN QUIMBIO

On Saturday morning, August 10, 69 Sustainable Favela Network participants gathered at the Camorim Quimbio (ACOQCA), in Jacarepaguá, in the West Zone, ready to get their hands dirty. Quimbios are communities which can trace their beginnings to times of slavery and whose ancestors occupied the same lands during those times, they are akin to indigenous settlements and work to preserve their traditional ways of life. Rio de Janeiro has at least four quimbios within its boundaries.

ACOQCA had been severely impacted by the intense rains that pounded Rio in early 2018. The rains swept through the community garden, causing an invasive and thick growth of tall grass throughout the whole area, including in the quimbio’s archaeological site. This site, despite numerous attempts, had proven itself undesirable without a significant intervention. Since April, quimbio members had been unable to use the space to host their customary public and community events.

The day’s capacity-building circles—a characteristic of all SFN exchanges—centered on fundraising techniques, one of the themes identified as a priority among Network members. In a circle, participants with experience in fundraising for community projects shared practical resources, strategy suggestions, and general guidance to increase participants’ confidence in seeking funding.

Beyond the impact on the territory and opportunities for mutual learning, the day created tangible bridges of solidarity. Members felt that ACOQCA’s work was “essential for the recovery of our ancestors’ history” and “very inspiring.” Everyone indicated that they wanted to continue strengthening the quimbio and creating partnerships. As Almeida says, “Working alone, we remain silent, but together, our voices are much louder.”

Learn more at camorim.favelasupportfavelas.org | Get to know the SFN’s Exchanges: exchanges.favelasupportfavelas.org

SUSTAINABLE FAVELA NETWORK ANNUAL MEET-UP 2019

On Saturday, November 9, 126 favela community organizers and technical allies from all over Rio de Janeiro gathered for the 2nd Annual Meet-Up of the Sustainable Favela Network at Ecocasa Silvestre in Santo Amaro. It was a unique opportunity, bringing together a network of social and environmental justice initiatives from Rio’s favelas in one place for intense exchange and learning. The day’s activities gave members a chance to reflect, get involved, and connect, taking advantage of the experiences of groups from numerous city favelas. The activities were designed and planned by the Network’s seven working groups.

Inspired by the Solid Waste Working Group, event organizers set up a swap table where participants could leave goods they no longer wanted and take whatever interested them: the SFN Income Generation Working Group had an artisanal craft area for network members to display and sell their sustainable products, and an anonymous table with paper and pens invited participants to share their hopes and fears in seeking sustainability initiatives in their communities. Some members traded reusable water bottles, t-shirts, and backpacks. Others sold homemade soap and works of art. Still others posted notes to the activity boards, expressing they had almost given up because “of distrust from others” or “lack of support,” but had pushed on because they found “strength from [their] communities,” “support from where they least expected it,” and because of the SFN itself. “When we see the network growing, we know that we are not alone,” wrote one member.

Representatives from each working group presented their group’s various initiatives, as well as the initial achievements of the working groups this year and their hopes for the future. Following these presentations, each group facilitated deeper discussion circles on the challenges and potential of socio-environmental work within each action area.

There was also an opportunity to reflect on the five Network exchanges that took place in 2019 with the launch of the video, “Realizing the Sustainable Favela Network 2019,” produced by filmmaker Luzia de Andrade. Verdinha Gomes Martins da Silva, President of the Kennedy Brothers Community Center, spoke of the need to value favela-based solutions and the positive aspects of communities that are so often overlooked by the media. Luis Casanova from the Green Roof Favela project in the Parque Arara community invited everyone to “green favelas from above, through green roofs; it brings life, food, beauty, and hope.” Finally, Regina Tócky reminded everyone to “think collaboratively, and to hold onto each other’s hands, and knowledge.”

Find out more or check out our videos: meetings.favelasupportfavelas.org

Our 2019 Partners and Exchange Hosts

FUNDERS
HINRICH BÖLL INSTITUTE (BRAZIL)
CHAPTER

PARTNERS
POMONA COLLEGE, UNHABITAT BRAZIL, URBAN CIRCUIT,
MARRÁRE PRODUCTIONS, AND MANY OTHERS

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