

Submissions

1. Background

Un Techo para mi País (UTPMP) is a Latin American non-profit organization that mobilizes youth volunteers to eradicate the extreme poverty that affects more than 70 million people in the region. We work together with Latin America's most marginalized populations, constructing transitional homes and implementing social inclusion programs to empower slum-dwellers with tools to improve their quality of life.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life of impoverished families through transitional houses and social inclusion programs in a joint effort between university volunteers and the slum-dwellers. Additionally, we want to denounce the precarious reality of the slums where millions of people live, involving the entire society in the task of constructing a Latin America that is more united and inclusive, without the injustice of poverty.

Un Techo para mi País was founded in Chile in 1997 by a group of university students who, along with Felipe Berríos del Solar S.J., were appalled by the country's deplorable slum conditions and felt pulled to take an active role in denouncing extreme poverty. Berríos exemplifies the definition of a social entrepreneur as one who pioneers innovations to benefit humanity without regard for a lack of resources. Twelve years ago, at the height of Chile's so-called "economic miracle", he became especially frustrated with society's rhetoric that emphasized the record economic growth while ignoring the thousands of Chileans who continued living in slums in deplorable conditions. With a group of university students, he went into these impoverished neighborhoods and built 350 transitional homes for families living in sub-standard housing (made of waste materials, with dirt floors and lacking basic services such as water, electricity and sewage). Without even knowing it, they gave birth to a project that today calls on the entire society to confront the injustices of poverty of almost 200 million Latin Americans.

From this venture, Un Techo para mi País (UTPMP) was born (in Chile under the name of Un Techo para Chile); assuming today the goals of eradicating all slums in Chile and being present in all Latin America by 2010. Currently, we work in 15 countries of the continent: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. Our central office in Chile coordinates the efforts of the local offices, which share basic goals and methods while adapting the project to the particular challenges of poverty in each country.

2. Description of the initiative or project

Latin America has more than 194 million people (36.5% of the population) living in poverty; out of which 71 million live in extreme poverty with less than US \$1 per day¹. Poverty is the root of the problem UTPMP addresses: the high vulnerability of slum-dwellers as a result of social exclusion. In addition to facing appalling living conditions, slum-dwellers are excluded from formal systems of housing, education, health, employment and governance, and lack the skills and tools necessary to achieve social inclusion. Alleviating poverty in today's society must go beyond material inequity to address social and economic inequality; it must empower the people. They must realize they can solve their problems with their own hands with the appropriate tools. This can be achieved by offering opportunities that develop their abilities, competences and access to information and networks.

¹ ECLAC 2007

We address the concerns of slum-dwellers when we start working with them through the first phase of our intervention model, the construction of transitional housing². This initial action frees these slum-dwellers from the overwhelming preoccupation of personal and familial safety. From this basic level of comfort, they can focus time and effort on more nuanced forms of social rehabilitation rather than mere survival. The first step is carefully orchestrated to include and engage the recipient family who helps to build as well as to finance their new house. Following this initial exchange our volunteers continue to visit the families of the slums to construct a more elaborate structure of trust, setting the bases for our future intervention with them through our second phase: Social Inclusion³. This previous investment in these communities allows our Social Inclusion projects to truly reach these vulnerable people as we take on a role of co-workers as opposed to distant benefactor.

Our objective is to achieve a Latin America free of extreme poverty, where youth are committed to confronting the challenges of their countries and where all families have decent housing and real opportunities to improve their quality of life. To do this, we want to truly involve different actors of the society into it, while forming the future leaders of the continent with a strong social conscience, who will have a more humanitarian and integral view of the world after their experience in UTPMP.

Our target beneficiaries are slum-dwellers from the 15 countries we are currently working in, who tend to be the most vulnerable families from each country due to the social exclusion they face, having extremely precarious levels of income, education, health and housing. We work with all slum-dwellers, regardless of their age, religion, gender or race. Some specific groups are more benefited in some specific programs like children in tutoring, and in some countries due to their stronger indigenous component, more indigenous people are benefited from housing and programs, but we do not discriminate any one. We define slums as eight or more families illegally occupying land and lacking at least one of three basic services: water, electricity or sewage.

Our volunteers are also considered as beneficiaries of our work, as we want to form young university students into committed citizens who will eventually lead their countries in the private or public sectors with an integral, strong, social and humanitarian conscience.

Regarding the investment of human resources in the project, UTPMP is led by young professionals and university students across the continent. We have historically mobilized more than 200, 000 volunteers and we are currently working with more than 300 hired individuals (most of which started out as volunteers in their respective countries) and more than 5,000 volunteers working permanently, week by week in the implementation of our social inclusion programs. To achieve this we have spent over US\$40 million dollars, with a budget of US\$15 million for 2009.

UTPMP uses a three-stage method to achieve long-term, sustainable change in the social structure. The first phase mobilizes youth volunteers for the large-scale construction of transitional houses, allowing impoverished families to have a private, decent and protected shelter; a space for family union and a sense of property. Through the construction process we develop bonds and generate trust within the community, allowing more permanent collaboration in the future. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes adequate housing, along with food and clothing, as a basic requirement for a minimum standard of living. However, an estimated 924 million people (31.6% of the world's urban population) lived in slums in 2001⁴,

² Low-cost (US\$1,500 in average from 15 countries), 18m², wooden basic mobile houses.

³ Social Inclusion is incentivized through concrete social training plans led by volunteers in areas such as education, healthcare, economic development, microfinance, vocational training, legal aid, and cultural and recreational education, all of which are organized around our weekly COM in the Community Centers.

⁴ United Nations, "The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements" (2003).

slums that are usually characterized by poor housing and dire conditions, as evidenced by their inclusion in the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals.

The second phase implements social inclusion through concrete social training plans led by volunteers in areas such as education, healthcare, economic development, microfinance, trade skill training, legal aid, and culture and recreational education. Through these plans the organization generates strategies designed to decrease residents' social vulnerability and offer tools to empower the community. The social inclusion programs are organized around Community Organizing Meetings, a formal space of community organization, where a specific and permanent group of community representatives and UTPMP volunteers meet weekly to discuss community issues, possible solutions, projects and activities for their slums.

In the final phase, UTPMP helps slum-dwellers develop their own sustainable community with strong social capital, bonds between neighbors and links to external networks. The goal is for residents to unify as a community and work together for the common good, organizing and participating directly as well as democratically electing representatives to lead the process. The community must determine its own priorities, examine problems, brainstorm solutions and develop concrete goals and methods to achieve them. Because sustainable communities stem from the ideas of the residents in each location, this phase will naturally vary between countries. However, where permitted by governmental housing policies, it may include the construction of definitive brick and mortar housing; such is the case in Chile, where UTPMP has coordinated efforts of technical organizations (architects, engineers), government, community, and legal areas of operation to construct definitive neighborhoods, with the program "from the slum to the neighborhood."

UTPMP's highest achievement is our geographic expansion to 15 countries in 8 years. Regarding outputs, to date we have constructed 42,000 transitional houses benefiting 180,000 people through the help of 200,000 volunteers. Additionally, 51,000 people in 8 countries are benefiting from Social Inclusion Programs, staffed by 5,000 permanent volunteers; and in Chile during 2009 we built 1,500 brick and mortar affordable houses, and have 160 new neighborhoods in development (for 9,000 families). The evidence of these can be seen in the photographs attached.

Additionally, we are making significant social and cultural contributions in Latin America. Our social contributions stem from the empowerment of slum residents. Rather than simply giving houses to families, we involve them in every step of the process, leading them to become more involved in their own future and giving them hope for a long-term change. UTPMP's social impact is thus long-lasting because it empowers families to break the cycle of poverty instead of simply focusing on short-term poverty reduction. Culturally, UTPMP contributes to a restructuring of values in the Latin American society, bringing social issues to the forefront. Extreme poverty is sadly common in the region, but such poverty is difficult for many people to even imagine and therefore tends to remain out of the collective conscience of society. We combat this cultural invisibility of the poorest sectors by taking young professionals and university students, often from affluent sectors of the society, and opening their eyes to the harsh realities of poverty, thus ensuring that tomorrow's leaders will be more aware of the poverty and inequality that is always present but often overlooked. At the same time, the organization equips the poorest sectors of society to participate in the community and the political sector, making their voices heard in the greater society. By connecting these two often-divided sectors of society, UTPMP breaks down social barriers, stereotypes and divisions that have historically led to inequality and polarization.

The strongest lesson we have learned is about the importance of measuring impact. By being an organization that was created by young people who pretended to help a specific group of individuals, without imagining they were creating an Institution of the current magnitude, historic documentation and registration were not priorities. The most important thing was to work along the poorest families, to support them, listen and help them. This is still our focus, but valuing the importance of measuring, registering, and evaluating the impact of our work with the poorest sectors of society, along with those with more opportunities. Today we are implementing a study on the impact of the transitional house on the lives of slum-dwellers, with the world wide recognized professor Paul Gertler (UC Berkeley).

The best practices of our project can be summarized in two issues: Massive youth participation in eradicating poverty of the region and the participation of the beneficiaries (slum-dwellers) in the design, implementation and evaluation of our programs. Young people are making history in Latin America. We are thousands of young professionals and volunteers committed with those living in extreme poverty conditions and we are not willing to keep waiting for their situation to change. We will not allow for poverty to keep being part of our landscapes, we will not allow for society to be used to have “poor people”. We are here working with our university titles, our knowledge, contacts, networks and time because we believe in the strength and capacity of slum-dwellers, who need opportunities and tools to overcome their poverty situation. Our intervention model has risen from their needs, from listening and working side by side with them, which assures the grass roots component of our work is honest and real.

3. Main partners

- Inter-American Development Bank –Multilateral Investment Fund (IDB/MIF): UTPMP’s major international supporter is the Inter-American Development Bank/ Multilateral Investment Fund. From 2005 to 2011, UTPMP is working with a non-refundable technical cooperation agreement for the amount of USD 7,000,000 (USD 3,500,000 contributed by the MIF and 3,500,000 by UTPMP). The objective of this agreement is to facilitate the economic integration of poor populations living in marginalized regions within six countries of intervention (Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, México, Peru and Uruguay). To accomplish this, the agreement focuses on (i) supporting the transference of UTPMP’s methodology implemented in Chile⁵ to the other countries, (ii) strengthening the Institution in these new countries, and (iii) improving the technical capacity of the activities in these countries. The MIF supports resources to: (i) implement and disseminate UTPMP’s project in the six countries of the agreement, and train volunteers, (ii) conduct pilot tests and develop methodologies that insert families from shanty towns into the productive sector (vocational training and microcredits), (iii) implement social inclusion programs (community organizing/development, vocational training and microcredits) and (iv) monitoring the programs and the publication of their results.

- CAFAmerica: UTPMP is currently in the process of applying for 501(c)(3) status in the United States. In the meantime, we partner with CAFAmerica, a 501(c)(3) public charity that allows U.S. donors to make tax-deductible gifts directly to foreign nonprofits, as well as assuring that UTPMP complies with all of the legal and financial requirements for non-profit organizations in the U.S.

- Local alliances: Every local office as well as our headquarters is permanently developing partnerships with private corporations, governments, other NGOs, Universities, Individuals and grant making Institutions that assure funding for similar and complementary projects

⁵ The agreement is based on the success of Un Techo para Chile, and the likelihood of its replication throughout Latin America.

In addition to fundraising and material donations, some companies contribute pro bono services to UTPMP. Such partners include Young & Rubicam (advertising and public relations), Simpson Thatcher & Bartlett (legal services), and Deloitte (financial auditing, which guarantees transparency and efficiency while meeting the International Financial Reporting Standards).

4. Impact

To date, we have constructed 40,000 transitional houses benefiting 180,000 people through the help of 200,000 volunteers. 51,000 people in 8 countries are benefiting from Social Inclusion Programs, staffed by 5,000 permanent volunteers.

Our adequate housing program provides a number of key benefits to slum residents. First, the simple fact of having walls and a roof protects them from the ravages of the environment, such as rain and cold, while water, sanitation and non-dirt floors protect against parasitic infestations and infections. In addition, housing provides security and a defense against crime, which in turn allows the household to accumulate assets; time formerly used protecting assets can be used for more productive activities. Furthermore, reduced illness, better security and a place to study may prevent children from dropping out of school. The houses also create a space for family union and sense of property, providing families with a source of dignity and pride within the community.

Finally, they benefit the entire community, not only the direct recipients; neighbors benefit from a cleaner environment, reduced crime, and being the neighbors of beneficiaries who feel better about themselves and therefore are better citizens

In order to test the effectiveness of our transitional housing program and gain information to inform program design, UTPMP is working with researchers from the University of California, Berkeley and the World Bank in the implementation of an experimental impact evaluation. The study seeks to evaluate the effect of transitional housing on health and welfare of the target population, as well as potential spill-over effects on the informal settlement community at large.

The evaluation is currently taking place in three separate countries: El Salvador, Peru and Uruguay. To date, the baseline data and housing construction has been completed in El Salvador and Uruguay. The study sample includes roughly 800 randomly assigned treatment households, 800 internal and 800 external control households.

This impact evaluation will provide some of the first rigorous empirical evidence on the effects of low-cost housing on the living conditions, health and welfare of the extreme poor. The study will provide key evidence for informing governments, NGOs and donors whether such programs should be considered cost-effective strategies for fighting poverty. To our knowledge, it constitutes the first randomized experiment to assess the impact of housing in informal settlements in the developing world.

Our Social Inclusion programs are also being closely monitored and evaluated by external consulting firms, studies that will allow us to have transparent and updated information about our international results, as well as to control the processes and implement innovation.

5. Sustainability

UTPMP's intervention aims for a sustainable change in slums by empowering families and communities into being the leading actors of their own development and growth.

One of UTPMP's key elements is the ability of involving all actors in society. The private sector contributes with the necessary resources and alliances through its corporate social responsibility plans. At the same time, young students from the entire continent volunteer in our plans while

universities support our work through research. Local and state governments are also involved from fieldwork to allocation of subsidies.

Through these alliances, UTPMP has made it possible for families in slums to be heard, something that usually does not occur due to the lack of opportunities they have. This dialogue and communication between settlers and society's actors have resulted in the creation of public policies according to the people's real needs. In Chile, our non relief integrating intervention model that puts slum-dwellers in the center of our work influenced the national public housing policy. This policy today allows families to participate in all steps of the process from choosing the land to the house model, materials, neighbors, etc. This process is the real proof of sustainability in the constant work that we develop.

This has been achieved because the core of our programs' sustainability is the strengthening of community organization and leadership by increasing settlers' participation in community activities and linking them with formal external networks⁶.

Through community meetings, settlers communicate and discuss their needs and problems searching for a possible solution. Residents lead the meetings and the activities that rise from them, thereby becoming the main actors of the design and implementation of the project. Through the results of these meetings, activities and Community Assemblies⁷, complemented by social inclusion plans, the slum-dwellers living in permanent learned hopelessness begin to believe in themselves and in the strength of community participation and organization. They begin to behave as active and more educated citizens who know their rights, their problems and possible solutions.

The communities will finally have a space for permanent dialogue, and will have been given the responsibility and tools to continue working to make their voices heard. Our experience in Chile guarantees this continuity. After years of interaction with slums we have seen them grow towards organization, participation, and integration. They are currently leading their social transformation from informal slums to sustainable neighborhoods of brick and mortar homes. In other words, the sustainability of the project is assured precisely by the sustainability that will be generated within the communities. Once this population is organized and has the necessary abilities to keep leading this process of change, sustainable communities will eventually emerge. The emergence of such communities is made possible because of citizens who have developed the capacity to define, plan and implement communal objectives and projects; the self understanding and a community identity developed through the project; and links to external networks that allow greater integration, mobility and reduction of social vulnerability. The community will develop ownership from this project because it represents a concrete chance to access to the opportunities any citizen should have access to, but from which they have been alienated.

6. Transferability and upscaling

In 1997 UTPMP existed exclusively in Chile. In 2001 it began expanding internationally, and in just 8 years has expanded to 15 countries in Latin America. Our expansion model focuses on first establishing a presence in each country, despite the lack of financial and human resources. Our goal is to expand to all Latin America by 2010. We enter each country by establishing a small office with very low funding that immediately starts gathering volunteers and forming connections with local Institutions to begin constructing transitional homes. After establishing presence, UTPMP works to strengthen local teams and expand in order to construct transitional

⁶ Formal external Networks: Central, Regional and Central Governments; private companies; schools; hospitals; universities; other Institutions

⁷ Community Assemblies: Massive meetings with all the slum-dwellers of the community to decide and inform relevant community issues

houses on a larger scale, as well as to begin implementing the later phases with the long-term goal of generating the massive impact and success we have achieved in South America and especially in Chile. Our current expansion focus is on Central America; in the next three years we hope to further the massive construction of transitional houses in the region and expand social inclusion programs in El Salvador and Costa Rica.

The major foreseeable barriers we will face in this process, we have already confronted in our initial international expansion, stemming primarily from differences among the countries. For example, we must deal with differences in volunteer culture, government regulations and housing policies, and physical elements such as the climate. The landscape of poverty also varies greatly in Latin America; we will need to confront issues such as mafias in El Salvador, violence in Guatemala and corruption in Paraguay. However, these barriers are not insurmountable if we recognize the differences and remain flexible to adapt our basic model to the particular needs of each country.

7. Innovation

UTPMP's innovation stems from its model that arose from working directly, day by day with the slum-dwellers. Rather than simply giving houses to families, UTPMP involves them in every step of the process, leading them to become involved in their own future and giving them hope for a long-term change. On phase II, they take active roles in leading community meetings and monitoring the development programs we implement through our volunteers. UTPMP's social impact is long-lasting because it empowers families to break the cycle of poverty by being protagonists of their change, instead of simply focusing on short-term poverty reduction.

Another innovative aspect is Berríos' passion for bringing together often-divided sectors of society. Our volunteer programs combat the cultural invisibility of the poorest sectors by involving young professionals and university students often from affluent backgrounds with the harsh reality of poverty, thus ensuring that tomorrow's leaders will be more aware of the inequality that is often overlooked. By connecting these two sectors of society, we break down social barriers, stereotypes and divisions that have historically led to polarization and inequity.

These two innovative factors mean that our methods value results over speed, generating steady progress to address the root cause of social exclusion. While other charitable organizations send in power tools to build houses in a matter of hours for impoverished families, this approach addresses only the material effects of poverty while ignoring its root cause. Instead, we bring in a group of 6 to 8 volunteers to spend full days with the families, eating and sleeping with them, building trust and personal relationships in addition to the physical construction of the home. We work slowly but meticulously at each stage to ensure that the impoverished people become their own agents of change while building networks with volunteers.

Our innovation has been recognized by several experts in the field. Mauricio Rodríguez, an independent consultant for UTPMP's project funded by IDB/MIF, lists several ways in which UTPMP contributes to the development of a "new type" of NGO. UTPMP is unique because it focuses on comprehensive development rather than simply overcoming material poverty. Rodríguez also points to our youth-based composition, our existence as a "South-South" organization (meaning that we are based in the Southern Hemisphere and give to the Southern Hemisphere, whereas the majority of similar organizations are based in the Northern Hemisphere), and our financial support from businesses, which promotes the development of social responsibility in the commercial sector.

8. Recognition of the initiative

Tv Interviews

O Globo - Brasil: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4Sr8sYZsHk>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KjE3a8ld-A>

Caracol TV – Colombia: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-JYmjphj1I&feature=channel>
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyLq9heCqrY&feature=channel_page

Newspaper and web articles

11 August 2009 “Impulso baires” – Argentina. Jóvenes mejoran condiciones de vida de miles de personas en América Latina. Link:

<http://www.impulsobaires.com.ar/nota.php?id=76557>

9 August 2009 “Ultima Hora” – Paraguay. “Nos hemos acostumbrado a que la pobreza sea parte del paisaje”. Link: <http://www.ultimahora.com/notas/245115-Nos-hemos-acostumbrado-a-que-la-pobreza-sea-parte-del-paisaje>

8 August 2009 “Andina (Agencia de noticias peruana)” –Perú. Asociación ‘Un Techo Para Mi País’ ha construido casi tres mil casas en Perú.

Link: <http://www.andina.com.pe/Espanol/Noticia.aspx?id=7PtPT0+Y2pk=>

7 August 2009 “El Espectador” – Uruguay. Colecta multitudinaria. Link:

http://www.espectador.com/1v4_contenido.php?id=158789&sts=1

8 July 2009 **Diario las Américas. Más de 200 millones de latinoamericanos sin vivienda.**

Link: <http://diariolasamericas.com/news.php?nid=82782&clave=a%3A1%3A{i%3A0%3Bs%3A8%3A%22un+techo%22%3B}>

15 June 2009 “La Nación” – Costa Rica. Cinco meses después del terremoto. Link:

http://www.nacion.com/In_ee/2009/junio/15/pais1995680.html

25 May 2009 “El Debate”- Argentina. Nuevas viviendas en el Barrio La Ilusión de Zárate.

Link: <http://www.eldebate.com.ar/despliegue.php?idnoticia=15767&idseccion=25>

21 March 2009 “El Periódico”- Guatemala. Arquitectos de sueños que se convierten en realidad.

Link: <http://www.elperiodico.com.gt/es/20090321/pais/95437>

27 January 2009 “Portal Aprendiz” – Brasil. Universitários constroem casas populares. Link:

<http://aprendiz.uol.com.br/content/kewiwothes.mmp>