



FACT SHEET

# Participatory interventions to revamp community spaces

January 2025



The recently renovated communal house in La Campanera community is a meeting point for social, educational, and recreational activities that promote social cohesion, participation, and access to opportunities. © UNHCR / Franklyn Ruiz

The “Revive tu espacio. Transformando comunidades” initiative by UNHCR promotes the recovery of public spaces through low-cost, small-scale, quick-to-implement, and high-impact interventions.

This approach aims to revamp spaces in communities affected by historical violence, transforming them into welcoming, integrative, sustainable, and safe.

The participatory approach reflects the interests, values, and culture of the local population, fostering the spaces to acquire new meanings.



## Why is it relevant in the current context of El Salvador?

Historically, in El Salvador, high levels of violence and crime deeply affected social cohesion and left a deep scar on the urban landscape. In the current context, there are opportunities to revitalize public spaces by involving the community in their planning, design, and execution. Spaces that were abandoned or used for criminal activities are now accessible by communities for positive activities that encourage their engagement and participation.

Community participation in the recovery of these spaces is also an opportunity to build skills, promote employment opportunities, and strengthen the local economy. These actions help to transform places with negative connotations into areas of opportunity that reflect the resilience of the communities.

This process helps these spaces acquire positive meanings, fostering a sense of security and belonging to the environment. The symbolic recovery of public space lays the foundation for integration and peaceful coexistence, which are essential for consolidating peace.



## How does UNHCR implement participatory interventions for space recovery?

In El Salvador, UNHCR works alongside communities historically affected by violence to strengthen their protection, engagement, and peaceful coexistence.

The recovery of collective spaces within communities builds trust and creates protective areas where people, particularly those in greater vulnerability, can participate and fully integrate. Through consultations with various groups based on their needs, UNHCR identifies the spaces for intervention, ensuring community involvement throughout the entire process to facilitate their long-term sustainability.

As a result of participatory assessments in 2023, UNHCR restructured these interventions in 2024 to combine space recovery, the promotion of peaceful coexistence, and economic development, all with a cross-cutting focus on climate action.

The pilot project was implemented in the communities of La Campanera, Santa Lucía, Las Margaritas, and Tutunichapa I, where neighbours identified the spaces they wished to re-signify. Through participatory processes, they outlined improvements and actions to intervene these spaces.



Girls from La Campanera collaborate in painting a mural.  
© UNHCR / Juliana Paz



Neighbours in Tutunichapa transform the access stairs to their communal space.  
© UNHCR / Marielos Rosales

## Key areas of work

- **Recovery of urban public spaces:** Small-scale catalytic interventions in communities historically affected by violence.
- **Rebuilding social cohesion and strengthening communities:** Promotion of social cohesion and engagement in activities within the recovered spaces.
- **Climate adaptation of the urban environment:** Recovery of public spaces for adaptation and mitigation of climate impacts, improvement of life quality, and promotion of sustainable and resilient urban development.
- **Sustainable livelihoods and economic development:** Improvement of infrastructure, reduction of inequality, and creation of a favorable environment for economic revitalization at the community level. These initiatives enhance living conditions for residents and lay the foundations for sustainable economic development.

## Types of spaces and interventions

- Sports courts
- Recreational/play areas
- Recovery of green spaces
- Outdoor gyms
- Community houses
- Improvement of solid waste management
- Murals and facade painting
- Community entrepreneurship
- Recovery of access stairs to communities
- Solar-powered lighting

## Prioritized communities

- La Campanera, Soyapango
- Las Margaritas, Soyapango
- Tutunichapa I, San Salvador
- Santa Lucía, Mejicanos

## Working together:

- **Community:** A key actor in all stages of intervention to ensure they address their needs and priorities.
- **Ministry of Justice and Public Security:** Leads the social intervention process in La Campanera and other communities.
- **Ministry of Housing:** Guides the process of property legalization, construction permits, and technical supervision, while promoting access to services. In La Campanera, it granted the municipality a plot of land on lease for the community house.
- **Municipal Mayor's Office of San Salvador Este:** Supports the territorial work to ensure its sustainability.
- **World Vision:** Implements, in partnership with UNHCR, activities focused on community strengthening, communication with the community, livelihoods, and peaceful coexistence.
- **UN-Habitat:** A partner in piloting integrated responses.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is grateful for the support in 2025 of:



Private donors: España con ACNUR

### Contact:

Paulo Lugoboni, Oficial Asociado de Protección Comunitaria,  
lugoboni@unhcr.org

Franklyn Ruiz, Oficial Asociado de Reportes,  
ruizdiaz@unhcr.org