



TUC PROFILE NO. 10

# ALLIANCE FOR THE RESIDENCIAL EDGAR GAYOSO, TERESINA, BRAZIL

March 2024

TERESINA

# About TUC Urban Lab Profiles

TUC Profiles is a series of short reports developed as part of the Transformative Urban Coalitions (TUC) project. They disseminate insights into the existing challenges and opportunities to address cross-cutting urban sustainability transformation and development issues through inclusive climate action in five cities in Latin America.

The first edition, TUC City Profiles, presented each city and the contextual factors that may enable or hinder urban sustainability transformations. This second edition, TUC Urban Lab Profiles, showcases the progress achieved by project partners and members of the labs in each of these cities since 2021.

Urban Labs (ULs) are the core approach of TUC. They consist of regular gatherings of a diverse range of stakeholders who collaborate and exchange knowledge to collectively co-create innovative solutions for complex urban challenges in a way that is participatory, cross-sectoral and inclusive. While UL approaches have gained global attention, there is still limited information on their implementation. These reports aim to fill a gap in practical knowledge about living labs. The series illustrates how ULs contribute to more climate-friendly and socially just communities and cities.

The following short report was co-produced by UL members, local as well as international project staff and researchers. It provides a summary of the steps taken, challenges encountered and key achievements to date by the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso, the UL established in Teresina, Brazil, with support of TUC. It concludes with lessons learned for catalysing transformative change towards sustainability.

This TUC Urban Lab Profile was developed by the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) in collaboration with the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), the Brazil office of the World Resources Institute (WRI Brasil) and the participants of the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso. It draws on original data from ethnographic observations and interviews carried out between 2021 and 2023, as well as critical reflections on the experiences of all people involved.

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Cover image: Participatory mapping exercise in Residencial Edgar Gayoso, March 2022. © Paulo Sérgio / WRI Brasil

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Green backyards workshop in Residencial Edgar Gayoso in October 2023. © Paulo Sérgio / WRI Brasil

# The Urban Lab: Alliance for Residencial Edgar Gayoso

## UL context

A TUC Urban Lab (UL) was established in Teresina, the capital of the state of Piauí in north-eastern Brazil, specifically focusing on Residencial Edgar Gayoso (Figure 1). Locally, the UL is known as the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso (*Aliança pelo Residencial Edgar Gayoso*).

prioritizing cheaper peripheral land over areas with existing infrastructure. Consequently, the community lacks adequate access to public facilities and services, green and recreational spaces, public transport and job and income opportunities.

Situated in the northern fringes of the city, Residencial Edgar Gayoso comprises approximately 460 houses that were built under the social housing programme *Minha Casa, Minha Vida*<sup>1</sup> (My House, My Life, MCMV) in 2015. While the MCMV programme has delivered over 6 million housing units in Brazil since its inception, it has also faced severe criticism regarding planning, design and product quality. The construction of Residencial Edgar Gayoso followed the sprawling pattern of housing development fostered by the MCMV programme,

A community-led census conducted in 2023 showed that around 1,300 people live in the Residencial Edgar Gayoso. Most households are headed by women, some of whom are single mothers and work within the informal economy. Among the heads of household, 9 per cent has a physical or cognitive disability and 26 per cent has a chronic illness (*Aliança pelo Residencial Edgar Gayoso and Alianças para Transformação Urbana*, 2023) (see also **Box 1**, page 7).

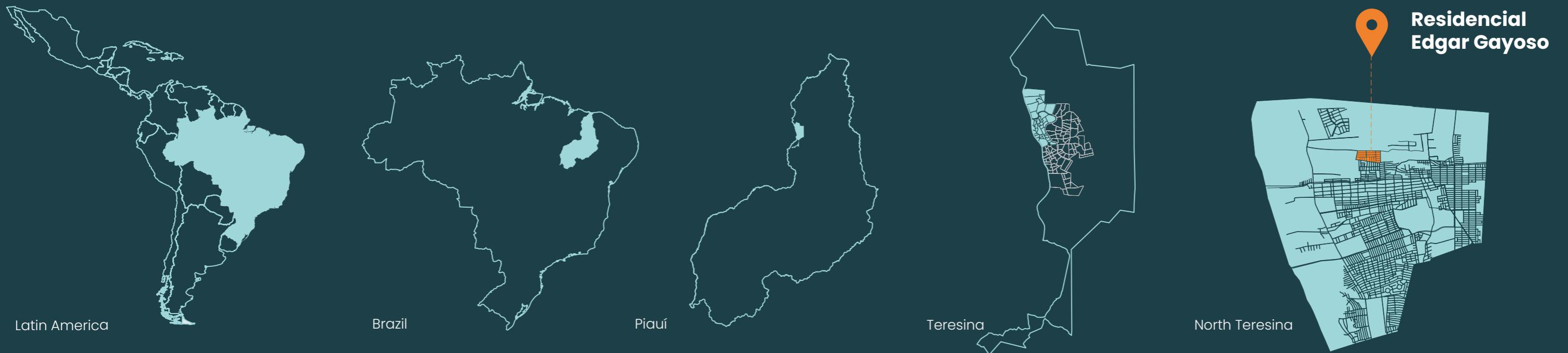


FIGURE 1: LOCATION OF RESIDENCIAL EDGAR GAYOSO IN TERESINA, BRAZIL. © WRI BRASIL AND UNU-EHS WITH DATA FROM IGBE (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATISTICA)

<sup>1</sup> The MCMV programme is a nationwide social housing programme in Brazil that was launched in 2009. The programme aims to provide affordable housing for low-income families and address housing deficits in the country. After a restructuring hiatus during 2021–22, the programme resumed in January 2023 under the mandate of the Ministry of Cities (Ministério das Cidades, 2023).

Teresina is extremely prone to climate change impacts (Turmena et al. 2022). The city is known for its hot weather, with temperatures surpassing 32 degrees Celsius for up to 340 days annually. It also often suffers from intense storms and floods during the first months of the year. Additionally, Teresina grapples with an average per capita income below the national average, a significant reliance on federal welfare programmes and notable gender inequality and violence (Menezes, 2022). These socioeconomic factors compound vulnerabilities to climate change among Teresina's residents, including those in Residencial Edgar Gayoso.

Teresina hosts several projects focused on climate change such as Viver+ Teresina, funded by the French Development Agency, and UrbanShift, funded by the Global Environment Facility. The Viver+ Teresina project entails an investment package for the construction of sustainable urban infrastructure, while UrbanShift is promoting integrated metropolitan planning, including supporting the elaboration of Teresina's

first climate action plan. However, none of these projects cover the Residencial Edgar Gayoso.

Situated 17 km away from Teresina's city centre, the relatively new community of Edgar Gayoso struggles with a lack of social cohesion, pervasive scepticism and a distrust of outsiders. Due to the absence of prior urban development projects and the lack of pre-existing participatory structures or procedures to build upon, TUC's UL was newly established in Residencial Edgar Gayoso (Roll et al. 2024).

Since its creation in 2021, the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso has evolved into a transformative coalition engaging residents, municipal government, civil society organizations, academia and other local stakeholders to address all these challenges in a more integrated manner. Facilitated and led by WRI Brasil, TUC's implementing partner in Brazil, the UL holds regular meetings, with the inaugural session convened in December 2021 (Figure 2, page 9).



## BOX 1

### The community-led census in Residencial Edgar Gayoso

In March 2023, WRI Brasil, UNU-EHS and UL members carried out a pioneering project – a community census led by the residents of Edgar Gayoso, with support from local researchers. Approximately 10 residents and 15 local researchers were involved in data collection. The collaborative effort aimed to bridge data gaps concerning the Residencial Edgar Gayoso and inform the development of UL initiatives.

The last national demographic census in 2010 preceded the construction of the housing complex, rendering its data obsolete. Furthermore, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 national census was postponed to 2022, leaving the UL coalition, particularly in its early stages, reliant on outdated information. The lack of up-to-date and disaggregated data poses a major obstacle to adequate urban planning. Therefore, it was decided to adopt a community research approach, relying on citizen science to address and close data gaps.

Survey results yielded a more accurate depiction of the community's profile. Notably, 87 per cent of the Edgar Gayoso residents identified as brown or black, while 58 per cent adhered to the Catholic faith. Women led 66 per cent of households, highlighting the pivotal roles they play in these families. Only 39 per cent of these women declared themselves single, indicating a nuanced family dynamic where

women often assume responsibility despite the presence of men. One plausible explanation for this dynamic is rooted in the housing programme behind Residencial Edgar Gayoso—the *Minha Casa, Minha Vida*. This policy prioritizes single women with children for housing allocation and, when families comprise both a man and a woman, the property deed is registered in the woman's name.

Beyond filling data gaps, this survey served to raise awareness of the local context and strengthen community engagement strategies. It empowered the community by providing a deeper understanding of their territory and facilitated avenues for negotiating local improvements, including through the UL.

**Alessandra Sousa**, a resident of Edgar Gayoso involved in data collection, underscored the census's role in understanding the situation of the people in the neighbourhood and identifying areas that need improvements, so that residents can actively pursue them. She emphasized: "It was important for us [both residents and researchers] to interact, get to know each other and unite, because we can only achieve improvements by coming together." Furthermore, Alessandra highlighted the census's significance in acquainting people with the UL, noting that many in the neighbourhood had been unaware of the project until then.

## Operation of the UL

Between the start of TUC in late 2021 and 2023, 14 UL meetings were held in Teresina, usually once a month in 2022 and once every two months in 2023. Attendance varied greatly, ranging from 15 to 30 UL members at each meeting, with individuals joining by invitation from WRI Brasil or fellow participants. Originally, the place of meetings alternated between Residencial Edgar Gayoso and the centre of Teresina. In 2023, the WRI Brasil team together with UL members decided to hold meetings exclusively in the Residencial Edgar Gayoso, preferably in the evenings, to broaden the participation of residents. Evolving participation patterns among UL members can be at least partly explained by the changing format and location of UL meetings throughout the last two years.

Over half of UL members belong to the public sector, with significant representation by the municipal government of Teresina. Initially, this representation was largely through the team of Teresina's Agenda 2030, a programme under the Municipal Department of Planning. More recently, it has expanded to include representatives from other municipal departments such as social service and environment. Over time, changes in municipal and state government have also influenced the entry and exit of representatives from public institutions in the UL.

Academic involvement primarily centres on professors and students from the Federal University of Piauí (UFPI) located in Teresina. UFPI professors engage as UL members, contributing without directly presenting research findings. Yet, their opinions are respected within the group – reflecting Brazilian cultural norms around professors from Federal Universities.

Edgar Gayoso residents have shown intermittent involvement in UL meetings, also linked to changes in leadership within the residents' association in early 2023. Although men traditionally assume leadership roles in these associations, women have increasingly become more active in UL meetings and on-site activities (Box 2, page 11).

The third sector, comprising organized civil society and the private sector, is the smallest group within the UL. Regarding organized civil society, the Bar Association of Brazil – Piauí (*Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil – Piauí, OAB-PI*) and the City Group for Urbanization Studies (*Cidade Grupo de Estudos em Urbanização*)

have been participating since 2022. OAB-PI aids in institutional articulation, *Cidade* assists in specific UL actions.

Despite their initial involvement in UL meetings, some representatives of the local private sector have been participating more passively lately. Specifically, the role of *Águas de Teresina* (the local water supply company) and *Piauí-Conectado* (a public-private programme aimed at improving internet services) has been limited to supporting on-site interventions with donations and providing technical advice when requested.

The *Coopcata 3R's* cooperative and the start-up *É de Sol Compostagem* both joined the UL in 2023 and their presence has grown over time. This is largely due to their contract with WRI Brasil to educate and train Edgar Gayoso residents on recycling and composting. *Coopcata 3R's* organizes recycling workshops, highlighting the importance of proper treatment of waste and the opportunity for income generation within the community through recycling various products. Similarly, *É de Sol Compostagem* coordinates community workshops focused on organic waste composting in Residencial Edgar Gayoso.

Initial UL meetings in 2022 followed a structured agenda set by WRI Brasil, which employed varied strategies and tools to encourage participants to collectively work towards set goals every month. Mock-newspaper headlines, active listening, world café and SWOT analyses helped UL members to get to know each other and share their visions for Residencial Edgar Gayoso. In parallel, comprehensive technical and community assessments of the area were conducted to generate information for UL discussions and contributing to the consensus-building and co-designing of strategic interventions.

In late 2022, the UL agreed on a strategic plan of activities for 2023. Once the priority projects had been defined, which would be implemented from 2023 onwards, different Working Groups (WGs) were established: WG Community Space, WG Employment & Income, WG Public Areas, and WG Public Policies. In 2023, each of these groups led different UL initiatives to implement the strategic plan. These groups typically set their own weekly meeting schedules, sometimes online, and other specific activities.

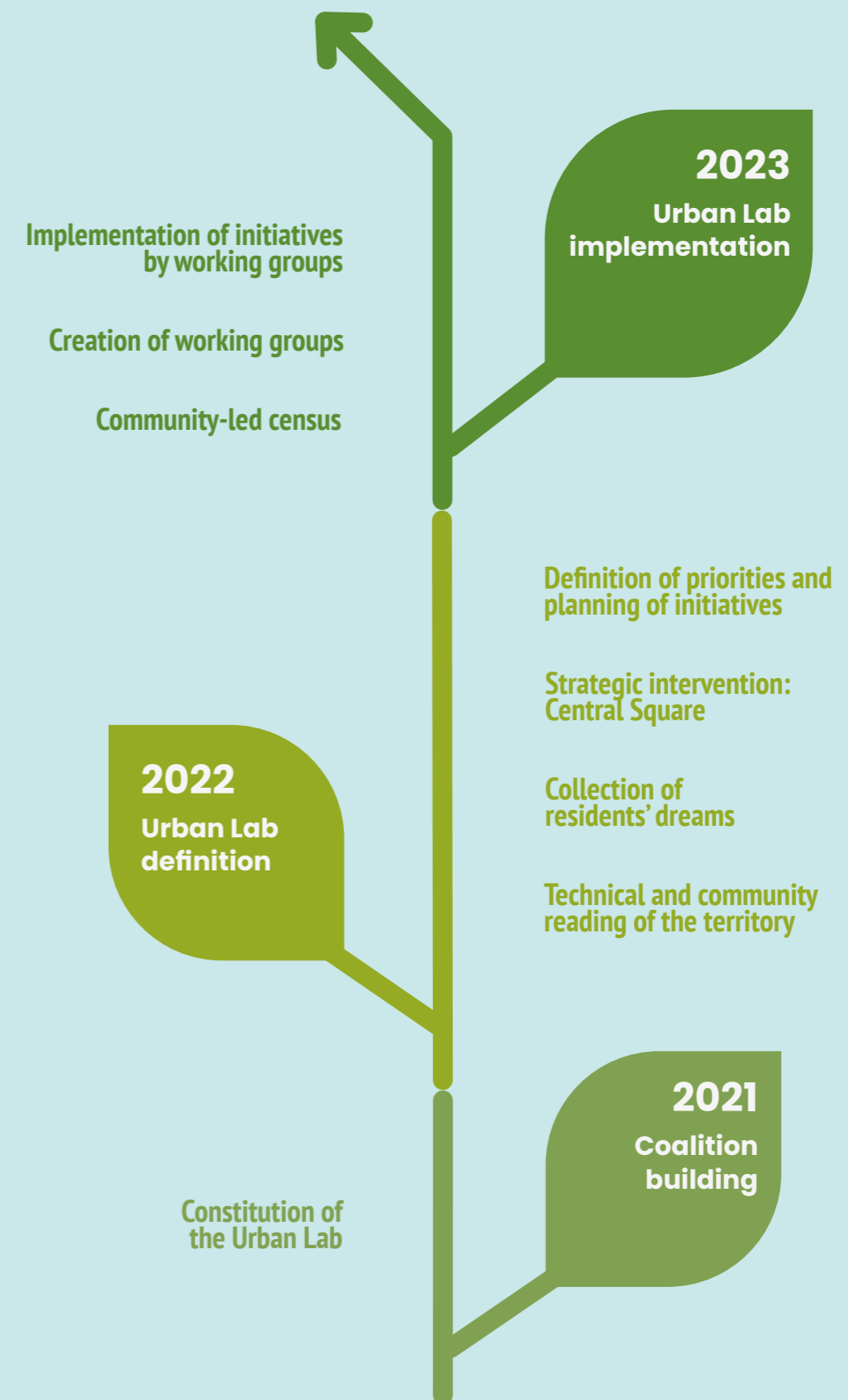


FIGURE 2: URBAN LAB TIMELINE, INCLUDING KEY PHASES AND ACTIVITIES



## UL initiatives

ULs serve as fertile ground for collaboratively developing and testing innovative solutions aimed at tackling intricate urban challenges. To develop solutions tailored to the local context, a fundamental step involves understanding the needs and aspirations of the people grappling with these challenges in the territory on a daily basis. One of the strategies adopted by WRI Brasil to achieve this understanding was the collection of residents' dreams for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso. For this, ballot boxes were distributed across local businesses in April 2022, providing residents with the opportunity to share their ideas, aspirations and desires for their neighbourhood. This method not only facilitated the identification of community priorities but also expanded UL engagement beyond residents already actively participating in the meetings.

The prevalent theme among the collected dreams was recreation, so that became the focus of the first strategic intervention collaboratively designed and executed by the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso and the community. This first intervention took the form of *mutirão*<sup>2</sup>, a Brazilian expression for a specific type of community-driven initiative, where a group of people comes together to work on a common

task or project. In fact, two *mutirões* were organized in August and October 2022 to carry out the expansion of an avenue's central bed to establish Edgar Gayoso's Central Square, which included the creation of an outdoor gym, a playground, benches, tables, waste bins, and the integration of vegetation (WRI Brasil, 2022). These activities promoted cooperation and mutual support among all participants, fostering solidarity and community spirit among UL members and residents.

Aligned with the aspirations of the community and following deliberation within the UL, by the close of 2022, the UL agreed to work on two priority projects for Residencial Edgar Gayoso during 2023. These included the construction of a larger community space for the neighbourhood and the establishment of an employment and income generation programme for the residents. Complementary proposals were strategically grouped under the overarching categories of public policies and public areas, encompassing activities such as political advocacy, public space improvements and urban afforestation. These are being implemented by the different working groups in various areas within the neighbourhood, as depicted in **Figure 3** (Page 12).

<sup>2</sup> The concept emphasizes collaboration and shared responsibility, and it is often used to describe activities like community clean-ups, neighbourhood improvement projects, or any endeavour where individuals unite to achieve a common goal for the benefit of the community.

## BOX 2

### Female participation in the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso

Initially, collaborating with respected community leaders, or gatekeepers, helped to mobilize residents for UL initiatives. However, the dynamics of neighbourhood leadership changed over time and the residents' perceptions of these leaders' involvement in the UL became somewhat shrouded in mistrust. At the same time, as traditional leaders stepped back, new female leaders emerged and started to participate more actively in UL activities.

Although women have been actively involved in UL activities since the introduction of TUC in Teresina, their roles have evolved. Early engagement from women living in Residencial Edgar Gayoso centred on food arrangements and hands-on tasks during on-site UL interventions, often alongside their children. However, a significant shift occurred in women's participation in 2023, coinciding with the shift of UL meetings to Edgar Gayoso.

Dedicated efforts were undertaken by WRI Brasil to promote female participation in meetings and activities. This not only included holding meetings in the neighbourhood and outside of business hours but also preparing special spaces to receive children during the meetings, so that their mothers could participate. Furthermore, promoting roundtable discussions between women within the community was key to mobilize and empower female participation in UL discussions.

The transformation is palpable – women who were once reserved started to actively engage in meetings, voicing their opinions confidently and taking ownership over decisions about what goes on in their neighbourhood. This change in demeanour is self-perceived, including by **Antônia Pereira**, an Edgar Gayoso resident, who in late 2023 expressed being “delighted with the project and feeling more engaged than ever.” This shift extends beyond meetings, with women increasingly involved in diverse UL-supported activities such as recycling and composting workshops and the women-led, autonomous Sunday Fair at Residencial Edgar Gayoso.

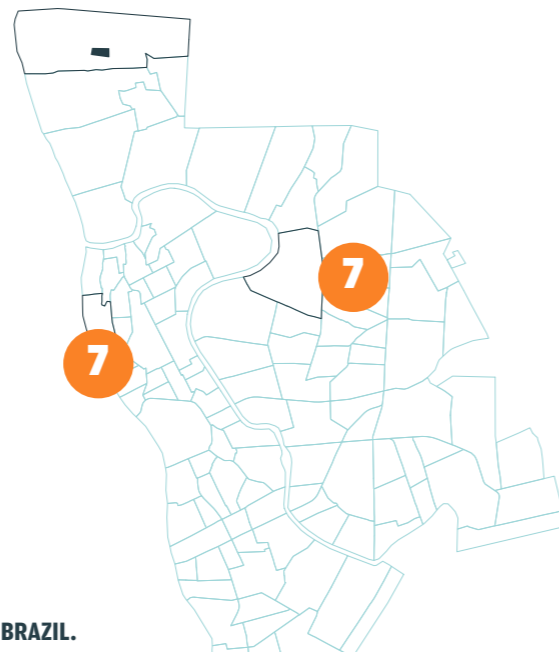
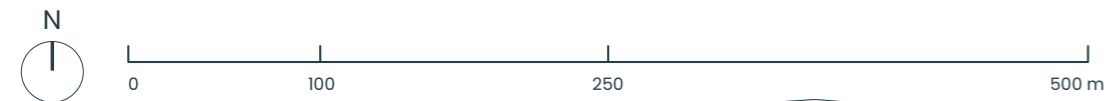
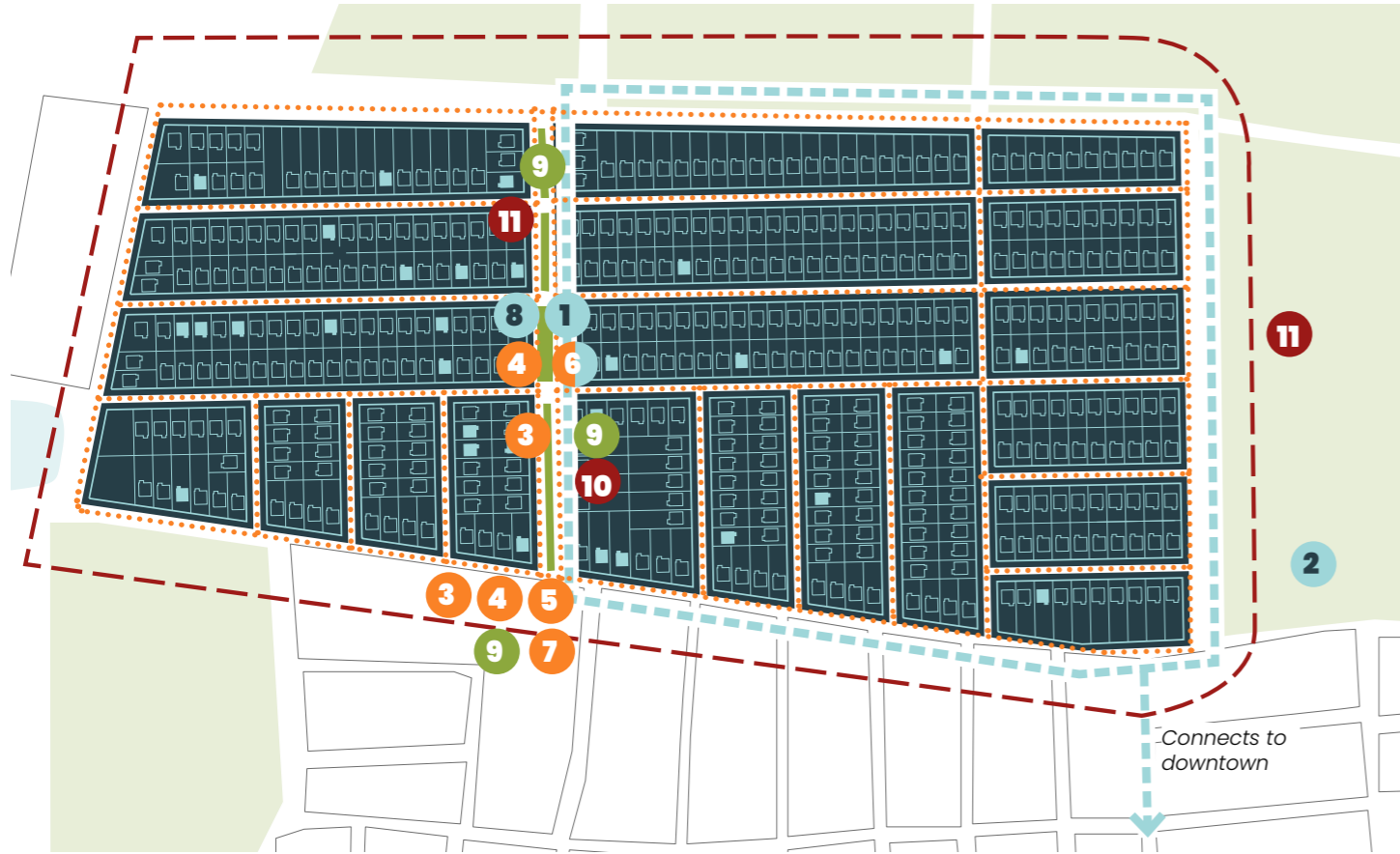
The robust presence of women in UL meetings and their increasing leadership is a standout characteristic of the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso, transcending community representation. This prevalence of female involvement echoes across various sectors represented in the UL, spanning public authorities, academia and civil society organizations. It also aligns with broader trends observed in Brazilian ULs, as highlighted by Amorim, Menezes and Fernandes (2022).



Top image:  
Bioconstruction Workshop in Residencial Edgar Gayoso, October 2023.  
© Eduardo Sousa

Bottom image:  
Fair at the Year-End Celebration of the Urban Lab in Edgar Gayoso's Central Square in December 2023.  
© Paulo Sérgio / WRI Brasil

- Physical transformation
- Awareness-raising
- Data generation
- Public services



Note: The recycling and composting workshops took place in Teresina's Bioparque Zoobotânico, Coopcata 3R's and in Residencial Edgar Gayoso

FIGURE 3: MAP OF UL INITIATIVES IN RESIDENCIAL EDGAR GAYOSO, TERESINA, BRAZIL. © WRI BRASIL AND UNU-EHS.

	Initiatives	Lead implementing organizations
<b>Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso</b>	1 Collaborative design and construction of the Central Square	Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso
	Community-led census	Residents
<b>WG Community Space</b>	2 Collaborative design and construction of the community space	Cidade Floresta; UFPI; SEMCASPI; Coopcata 3R's
	3 Workshops for bioconstruction in adobe	Residents
<b>WG Employment and Income</b>	Mapping local businesses and services	Residents
	4 Support for the women-led Sunday Fair and economic inclusion of the vendors at UL events, including the year-end celebration	Residents
	5 Training and professional insertion activities	Wall Ferraz Foundation
	6 Implementation of the Green Backyards initiative, including workshops on growing vegetable gardens and fruit trees in backyards	SEMAM; Agenda Teresina 2030; Residents
	Community tree planting	SEMAM; Agenda Teresina 2030; Residents
<b>WG Public Areas</b>	7 Recycling and composting workshops	Coopcata 3R's; É de Sol Compostagem
	8 Improvements of the Central Square	Residents
	Project to implement eco-efficient paving on the bus route	Agenda Teresina 2030
	Project to implement universal accessibility measures on sidewalks and intersections	UFPI; SAAD Norte
<b>WG Public Policies</b>	9 Coordination of the Citizenship Festival	CESU; SEMCASPI; OAB-PI; Agenda Teresina 2030
	10 Affective mapping	CESU
	11 Water quality analysis	Agenda Teresina 2030



## BOX 3

## The cornerstone of the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso: The community space



Presentation of the community centre project to the residents of Edgar Gayoso in August 2023. © Bruno Fellin

The goal of creating working groups was to organize UL members around all these initiatives. Members with engineering and architecture backgrounds joined the **WG Community Space** to help deliver the project along with residents (**Box 3**). This includes students that participate in a university outreach programme, led by a professor from the Architecture School at UFPI, and highlights the importance of partnerships with academia and other research institutions.

The **WG Employment & Income** intends to develop and implement a plan for training and professional insertion activities for Edgar Gayoso residents in partnership with the Wall Ferraz Foundation. Workshops will prioritize vocational training in areas of interest to the community after mapping the already existing local businesses and services within the neighbourhood. These initiatives are also linked to the project of the community space, which is expected to host such trainings once it is completed.

The **WG Public Areas** focuses on the improvement of public spaces through greening initiatives, waste management and eco-efficient street paving. One notable example is the Green Backyards initiative which promotes the growth of home gardens by encouraging the planting of fruit trees in individuals' backyards all over the Residencial Edgar Gayoso. This WG also coordinates workshops focused on community gardening and sustainable waste management with a local waste pickers' cooperative and a composting start-up. Additionally, the WG Public Areas has also continued work on the Central

Square, adding a wooden pergola and artistic murals while also taking charge of playground maintenance.

The **WG Public Policies** collects evidence and provides guidance to localize and improve public policies and services. For instance, in June 2023, the WG Public Policies organized the Citizenship Festival (*Festival da Cidadania*) featuring a range of services, including vaccination against COVID-19, issuance of identity documents, preparation of resumes, recreational activities for children, a roundtable discussion with women addressing domestic violence, and other initiatives such as planting fruit trees in backyards. As reported by the participants in this activity, the event was a turning point for increasing the active participation of residents in UL activities.

The activities of all WGs are interconnected and mutually support each other. Also, the UL continues to convene full-group meetings, albeit less frequently, to ensure a cohesive strategic alignment among the WGs. The UL adopts an integrated strategy to develop initiatives that address both the community's immediate concerns and the challenges posed by the climate crisis. For instance, the focus on composting and waste recycling serves a dual purpose by potentially generating income for the community and fostering values centred on product reuse and urban resilience. This approach harmonizes the community's basic needs with broader sustainability goals, encouraging environmentally friendly and climate-conscious practices.

The planned community space encompasses a wide array of facilities, including a community centre complemented by public squares, playgrounds, sports courts, vocational and environmental education spaces, a venue for community events and fairs, a community garden, a recycling point, and an agroforest. The project embodies a commitment to sustainability and integrates various climate-conscious practices by implementing nature-based solutions like bioconstruction in adobe, rainwater harvesting and the use of natural ventilation systems to foster a harmonious relationship with nature.

The executive project for the community space will be developed by UFPI with funds from the Viver+ Teresina municipal programme in 2024. While construction funds have yet to be defined, the management and operation of the community space are planned to be carried out by the Municipal Department of Citizenship, Social Assistance and Integrated Policies (SEMCASPI), as part of the federal programme *Serviço de Convivência e Fortalecimento de Vínculos* (Service of Conviviality and Strengthening of Bonds, SCFV).

Discussions within the UL about this space reveal multifaceted concerns regarding its utilization, especially among the residents of Edgar Gayoso. A primary concern raised is public safety, emphasizing the need for surveillance. In Brazil, the risk of public facilities becoming sites for illicit activities, notably drug trafficking, looms large in the absence of adequate public oversight. **Antônia Pereira**, an Edgar Gayoso resident, stresses: "The municipal government must take responsibility for the preservation of this space, ensuring safety and cleanliness."

Moreover, there is a desire for the space to be inclusive, accessible to the entire community, not just limited to UL members. **Lucas Henrique Nascimento**, another resident, emphasizes: "Everyone should feel comfortable visiting the community space. It must be within reach of the whole community."

Several residents highlight the importance to cultivate a collective sense of ownership and responsibility for the space's upkeep. **Anaelma Reis**, echoing this sentiment, warns: "We need to raise awareness among all residents. It's crucial that people of all ages understand that this space is a shared asset that everyone must safeguard."



Presentation of the community centre project to the residents of Edgar Gayoso, August 2023. © Bruno Fellin



Green backyards workshop in Residencial Edgar Gayoso, October 2023. © Paulo Sérgio / WRI Brasil

# Challenges and Key Achievements from the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso

After two years in operation, the challenges and key achievements of the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso provide valuable lessons for sustaining ongoing activities, accelerating broader transformations in Teresina and guiding similar efforts elsewhere:

## 1. ASSEMBLING A TRANSFORMATIVE COALITION FOR PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

The UL approach has been instrumental in addressing challenges associated with the MCMV program in Residencial Edgar Gayoso. Its remote location, lack of social cohesion and absence of prior urban development projects initially posed trust and mobilization challenges. Since 2021, the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso, with the assistance of WRI Brasil, has actively tackled these issues, nurturing a more interconnected and engaged community over time.

Until early 2023, WRI Brasil played a dominant role within the UL, convening participants, setting meeting agendas, steering discussions and orchestrating activities. This approach was deemed necessary due to the innovative and experimental nature of the UL process along with the existing challenges in Residencial Edgar Gayoso. However, it created a perceived hierarchy among UL members, who viewed the project as solely belonging to WRI Brasil. Also, during this period, some UL meetings were held online because of WRI Brasil's inability to travel to Teresina, particularly due to restrictions

regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite their convenience, online UL meetings proved ineffective for the Edgar Gayoso residents because the majority does not have internet access. These sessions also witnessed low engagement from other UL members.

A noticeable shift occurred in mid-2023 as the UL transitioned to implementation. WRI Brasil's management approach evolved by inviting UL members to co-create meeting agendas, having them form working groups for decentralized decision-making, and redistributing some responsibilities among UL members to execute activities in the territory. Moreover, the decision to hold evening meetings in person at Residencial Edgar Gayoso and WRI Brasil's increased presence on the ground, including through local consultants, were instrumental for building bonds with the residents and increasing trust among the community. It also contributed to more participation of working community leaders and fostered community ownership over UL processes.



Both WRI Brasil and UL members noticed the need for consistency. Their returning presence through different activities eventually convinced residents and the municipal government of the UL's relevance. The emphasis on engagement and flexibility, placing individual and community needs at the centre of project definition and implementation, also contributed to building trust.

Once the working groups were formed and tangible projects and goals defined, tasks were delegated in UL meetings so that UL members could organize themselves in an increasingly autonomous way. While decentralization generally increased engagement in UL activities, certain working groups still rely heavily on WRI Brasil to organize meetings and develop activities. Furthermore, key tasks associated with UL initiatives, including the design of the community space and coordination with the municipal government, are either outsourced to organizations not previously involved in the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso or led by WRI Brasil. Empowering UL members to take over these responsibilities is key to ensure the sustainability of local transformation processes and outcomes beyond TUC.

The community-led census conducted in Residencial Edgar Gayoso in 2023, with support from UNU-EHS and WRI Brasil, is a great example

of community empowerment. It filled crucial gaps in local data, disseminated the project and promoted community ownership over UL initiatives. The Green Backyards initiative and the waste management workshops are also good examples. Although initially promoted by WRI Brasil, they operate as partnerships between UL members and the community. Certain residents have proactively begun applying the knowledge gained through UL initiatives and leveraging their newly established network of contacts to collaboratively address local problems, independently of WRI Brasil's direct action. One example of this self-driven engagement is Lucas Nascimento's initiative to collect organic waste from neighbours, composting it in his own backyard and responsibly delivering already separated recyclable waste to *Coopcata 3R's*.

**LESSON: The UL approach has been instrumental in overcoming challenges associated with the MCMV programme in Residencial Edgar Gayoso, fostering community empowerment and sustainable local transformation. Establishing commitment within new local networks requires fundamental steps such as building trust, defining tangible goals, decentralizing decision-making, making individuals accountable and ensuring accessible meeting formats.**

## 2. BUILDING CONNECTIONS AND RAISING AWARENESS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

The Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso has fostered connections and mutual trust between distinct segments of society that historically had limited interaction, namely Edgar Gayoso residents and local universities as well as municipal public administration and organized civil society. However, despite these achievements, maintaining the residents' interest and active participation, especially in UL meetings, continues to present challenges. Their engagement tends to be motivated by immediate local needs rather than tackling climate change.

While UL members generally have come to acknowledge the project's link to climate action, many residents still struggle to connect local challenges with the distant issue of climate change. The residents' attention is, understandably, primarily directed towards the urgency of tackling extreme

poverty, food insecurity, poor water quality and domestic violence. This emphasis on unsatisfied critical basic needs still hinders their consideration of climate and environmental concerns.

Different tools have been used within the UL to address this disconnect, raise awareness for environmental and climate-related issues and integrate them within local perspectives. A noteworthy example is an educational card game that was developed by a local researcher and used in UL meetings in late 2022 to introduce climate change concepts and explain their interactions with local challenges, as well as propose nature-based solutions for Residencial Edgar Gayoso. Since then, the card game has been further developed and is currently being finalized to be made available as an open access TUC tool.



Solid waste management training in Residencial Edgar Gayoso, November 2023. © Eduardo Sousa



More recently, as a result of the Green Backyards initiative and the waste management workshops, Edgar Gayoso residents increasingly find ways to connect to climate action. Both of these initiatives have a strong environmental and climate component, while involving the community in practical activities that bring more direct benefits to their daily lives.

While the UL's potential to transform perceptions and attitudes towards climate change is still unfolding, it has already made a substantial impact on individuals who were previously acquainted with climate change, particularly within Teresina's municipal public administration. The introduction of TUC strengthened emerging discussions on the topic, raising awareness of the urgency to tackle the climate crisis. Moreover, the UL has emphasized the importance of collaboration, bringing various areas of municipal government to the climate debate and vice versa.

Throughout 2023, the Municipal Department of Environment amplified its involvement in UL activities, notably within the WG Public Areas. Conversely, the Municipal Department of Planning's Agenda Teresina 2030 team adopted a more passive role due to

changes in the team, work overload and prioritization of other demands.

The collective engagement of various departments as well as representatives from other internationally funded projects like Viver+ Teresina in the UL marks a positive governance shift. This engagement draws more government representatives and other societal sectors into climate-related discussions and decisions at the local level. Additionally, this engagement hints at a prospective transformation in organizational culture and individual mindsets among city officials, reflecting a more inclusive approach to climate governance and integrated urban planning.

**LESSON:** The development of mutual trust and awareness of climate change within the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso is a precondition for tailoring climate discussions to the local context and emphasizing practical connections between pressing local needs and climate action. Promoting stronger engagement and collaboration is pivotal for achieving transformative changes across practical, political and personal spheres.

### 3. LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITIES TO BROADEN THE IMPACT OF THE UL

Over the last two years, the journey to establish the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso has been arduous and marked by various challenges. Nevertheless, a transformation is underway and the dedicated efforts of everyone involved are starting to bear fruit. The strategic use of social media platforms like Instagram<sup>3</sup> has played a crucial role in sharing success stories. Moving forward, attention turns to exploring opportunities for sustaining and scaling UL achievements.

One significant opportunity involves addressing the limited engagement of organized civil society and the private sector in the UL. This challenge is likely linked to the insufficient economic, legal and political support provided to initiatives led by these sectors in Teresina. Moreover, Teresina still lacks a robust innovation ecosystem that is typically more favourable to UL-type approaches. While this represents a challenging backdrop for the UL, it also positions the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar

Gayoso as an attractive alternative for instigating transformative change.

If institutionalized, the UL's participatory governance model, which entails the co-creation of solutions with the community, holds the potential to empower new community leadership and transform policy design. This proposition does not advocate for a rigid definition of the UL format as a fixed institution. Instead, it suggests integrating the new ways of working and collaboration between the municipal government, residents and other sectors into mainstream practices to achieve more inclusive, innovative and sustained results. The Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso serves as a living testimony to the effectiveness of the UL approach in addressing common criticisms related to social housing programmes like MCMV, such as a lack of community engagement, social and economic segregation, infrastructure issues and environmental concerns.

The limited engagement of academia in the UL prompts reflection. While UFPI professors and students are actively involved, the absence of participation from other local universities and research centres is evident. Engaging diverse academic institutions and groups, particularly those with relevant expertise for the UL priority projects as well as other initiatives, could contribute to the sustainability and scaling of UL innovations within and beyond the city.

Another key issue is that UL participation predominantly relies on individual involvement. This dependence on individuals leaves UL activities vulnerable to territorial conflicts and places a disproportionate burden on women in the community. Moreover, changes in government representation, partly due to elections and related tensions, could impact UL dynamics. Addressing these challenges is crucial for institutionalizing UL processes and outcomes and reducing dependency on WRI Brasil and other TUC partners. This requires an institutional commitment of participating organizations, especially the municipal government.

Furthermore, acknowledging and celebrating successful community-driven initiatives can foster a sense of pride and motivation for continued engagement, especially of residents. For example, the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso ended 2023 with a celebration fair, which not only recognized the achievements of the group, but also helped to disseminate them within the community. Going forward, further financial and non-financial

resources are needed to ensure continued and informed participation by community representations in urban decision-making, and to empower residents to take a more active role in addressing local challenges.

Strategically cultivating partnerships with other local projects such as Viver+ Teresina presents an opportunity for the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso to diversify its access to resources and expertise, while increasing autonomy and resilience. Such collaborations can reduce the lab's dependency on any single external organization and amplify the impact of UL initiatives.

With municipal elections upcoming, the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso could also seek support that might otherwise be challenging to attain, including land plots or permissions for the community space. Additionally, engaging different academic institutions, the private sector and other relevant local actors could further enhance the reach and effectiveness of the lab.

**LESSON: Triggering systemic transformation requires a shift from individual-centric participation to broader institutional involvement within the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso. Moreover, institutionalization through diverse organizational strategies coupled with strategic partnerships is essential.**





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## ABOUT





# Transformative Urban Coalitions

Transformative Urban Coalitions (TUC) is implemented by the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), the World Resources Institute (WRI) together with its national offices in Brazil and Mexico, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) together with IIED – América Latina in Argentina, and the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), with support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action under its International Climate Initiative (IKI).

TUC seeks to shift the sustainability trajectory of cities towards zero carbon emissions by 2050 by altering the deeper social, technological and political structures and systems that are currently reinforcing high-carbon, resource-intensive urbanization. To achieve this goal, TUC facilitates the establishment of transformative urban coalitions in five Latin American cities to develop new strategies for addressing local challenges in urban development and inequality while at the same time reducing carbon emissions.

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