

Asuncion
Green City
of the Americas
Pathways to Sustainability



BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED ON THE

PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABILITY

ECOLOGICAL RESERVE'S CLEANING BRIGADE

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AS A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION

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BANCO SAN MIGUEL ECOLOGICAL RESERVE



FACING THE CHALLENGE

“Banco San Miguel y Bahía de Asunción” Ecological Reserve is the city’s largest green area. Spreading over 300 hectares, this unique ecosystem is recognized worldwide as a conservation site for shore and migratory birds.

However, the reserve has also a growing number of irregular dumpsites and is home to numerous families living in vulnerable conditions. Waste management has become both a social and environmental challenge in the area.



COMMITTED COMMUNITY

The community was first approached through a series of meetings with neighborhood commissions and local associations, where the idea of forming a cleaning brigade was first presented. A total of **50 members of the community signed up for the selection process.**

The cleaning brigade's main goal was proper waste removal in two main areas within the reserve: the **"Playa del Sol" beach** and the **"Caacupemí" neighborhood.** To promote a substantial and sustainable environmental impact, the brigade would have to be made up of leaders that could influence their neighbors into changing their habits.




SELECTION PROCESS

One of the tools devised for the selection process was a survey to determine whether the applicants met the criteria to be part of the cleaning brigade: **health, age and education** were important factors, because of what the work required, but their **role within the community** was key as well, due to the importance of selecting influential leaders.

After the process, which included interviews and visits to their houses, a total of **10 members of the community were selected and hired** to form the "**Banco San Miguel**" Cleaning Brigade.

This group is made up of **6 women and 4 men**, with an average age of **22 to 23 years old**.





"At the beginning, this group was a cleaning brigade. But today, they are agents of change, multiplying that change to impact the environment."

JORGE HRASTE

BRIGADE'S LEAD CONSULTANT AND COACH



WOMEN LEADING THE WAY

The intention in creating this brigade was not only to establish a mere cleaning crew, but a dynamic, empathetic group with the hability to change habits and minds. During the selection process it became evident that, within the community, **leadership with regards to organization and cooperation to achieve goals was mostly exercised by women.** For the brigade to succeed and this community dynamic to work, women should hold a main role as organizers.

Erika Zuchini became the brigade's coordinator. At only 27, her work leading other groups, like the youth association, gave her sufficient experience.



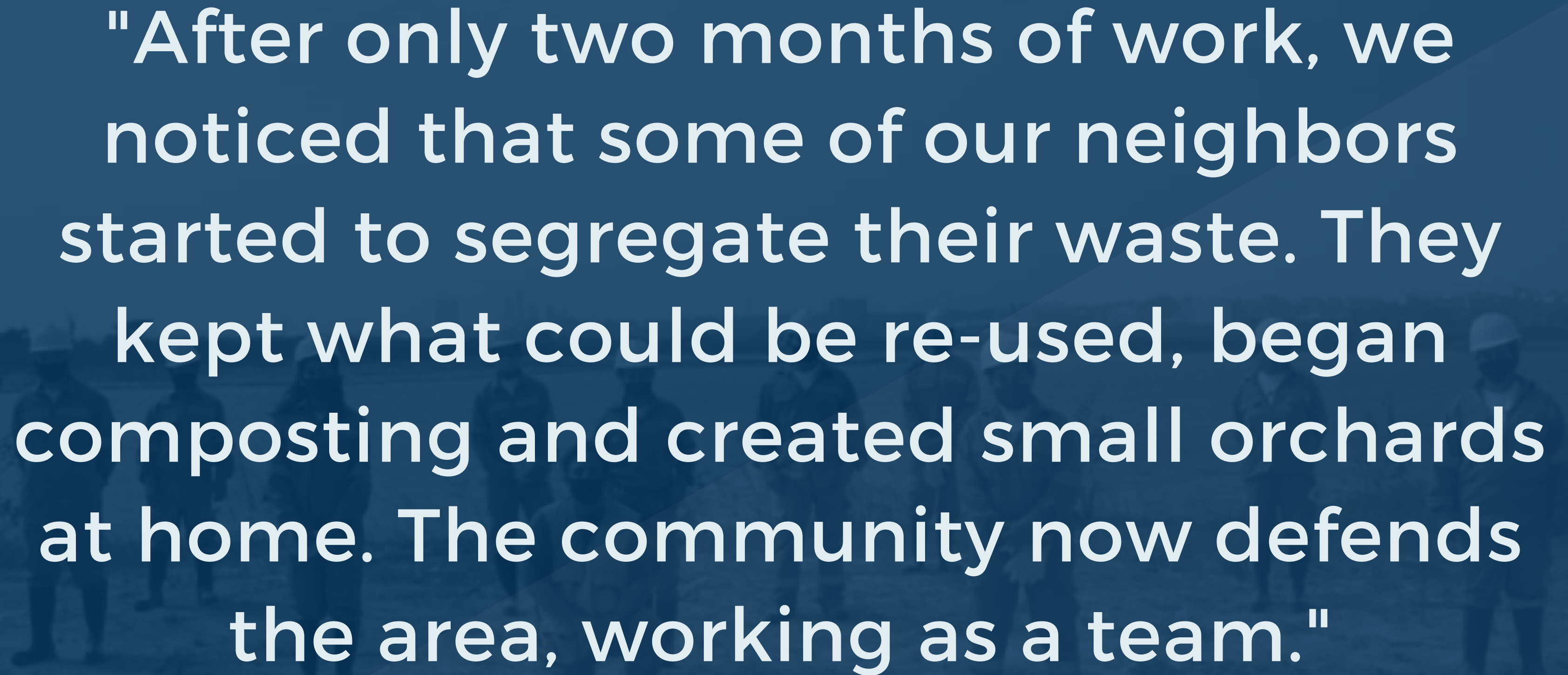
STRENGTHENING CAPABILITIES

After the selection and hiring process, the members of the newly formed "Banco San Miguel" Cleaning Brigade began their training, focusing on:

- **Best practices in waste management.**
- **Work safety and security.**
- **Biodiversity conservation.**

The brigade received all the necessary equipment to begin their work, including **uniforms and gloves**, as well as tools like **helmets, rakes and wheelbarrows**. Special **containers for larger pieces of waste and debris** were placed along the grounds, and their contents taken out by the Municipality of Asunción's trucks.





"After only two months of work, we noticed that some of our neighbors started to segregate their waste. They kept what could be re-used, began composting and created small orchards at home. The community now defends the area, working as a team."

ERIKA ZUCHINI

CLEANING BRIGADE'S COORDINATOR AND LEADER OF
THE YOUTH ASSOCIATION



SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT: A LOOK TOWARDS THE FUTURE

The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, together with the Municipality of Asunción, led the efforts in creating the cleaning brigade, within the framework of the "Asunción Sustentable" project.

After a fire made considerable damages to the reserve, the members of the brigade were the first on scene, initially leading the efforts to put out the fire and then assisting the firefighters. Seeing their professionalism, the Municipality created two new training sessions for them and the community: **fire prevention** and **environmental monitoring**, in order to also be able to provide these services later on.





"Playa del sol" beach before.



"Playa del sol" beach after the cleaning
brigade began their duties.



"Today, this community is key in the efforts to achieve a socioeconomic and environmental balance in the reserve."

IVO BRUN

DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
MUNICIPALITY OF ASUNCIÓN



MOVING FORWARD

NEW PROJECTS FOR THE BRIGADE

The cleaning brigade's effectiveness has led to new initiatives seeking to further their impact on their community and the environment. Two micro-projects are under implementation, striving to contribute in improving the living situation for two families in highly vulnerable conditions.

These micro-projects seek to promote good practices in waste management and assist them in cleaning up their lots. The goal is to reconvert their houses, creating an appropriate environment for their families to live in harmony with their surroundings and the community.



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Motenondeha
Ministerio del
AMBIENTE Y DESARROLLO
SOSTENIBLE



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GOBIERNO NACIONAL

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