

Chapter 3

Evaluation, Inclusion and Democracy in Latin America: Experiences and Lessons Learned

The Case of Santa Teresa (Chile)

Fernanda Arriaza

Abstract

The participatory evaluation presented here proved to be a profoundly human process: from the commitment to placing people at the centre and allowing their narrative to determine the impact of the community work, to the entirely voluntary nature of the involvement of all those who took part. Those who participated were convinced that it was a necessary step to take. This chapter reports the findings of the evaluation of the “Working Groups” (Mesas de Trabajo), an intervention mechanism used by the organisation TECHO as a means of contributing to the search for solutions to the main social problems affecting informal settlements or low-income neighbourhoods in Latin America. Given the importance of the Working Groups, an evaluation was designed to examine their strengths and weaknesses. The main finding of this participatory evaluation was the mechanism’s high capacity to manage and implement projects, achieving its proposed objectives. Furthermore, its effectiveness was a significant source of legitimacy within the community regarding the work it carried out, reinforcing the standing of its members and, in particular, that of its leader.

Keywords

Working Group, community organisation, participation, leadership, volunteering.

Citation

Arriaza, F. (2026). “Evaluation, inclusion and democracy in Latin America: experiences and lessons learned. The case of Santa Teresa (Chile)”. (S. Tapella, trans.). In Rodríguez Bilella, P. & Tapella, E. (Eds.), *Evaluation, democracy and transformation: experiences of participatory evaluation in Latin America*. Vientosur.

The institutional context

Since the mid-1990s, Chile has had a robust monitoring and evaluation system that collects and generates information on the performance of public programmes and institutions, with a view to supporting decision-making on the allocation and use of public resources (Ministerio de Hacienda, 2023). The consolidation of this system has been the result of its institutionalisation through three milestone events:

- In 1997, the first *ex post* evaluations of Government Programmes were conducted;
- In 2003, the regulations established by Ministerial Decree No. 1,177 of the Ministry of Finance were approved, granting the Budget Directorate (Dirección de Presupuestos, DIPRES) the authority to carry out evaluations of social programmes, productive development programmes, and institutional development programmes included in the budgets of public services; and finally
- In 2021, by means of Decree No. 2,068, the *Regulations for the operation of the evaluation system for public programmes and institutions* were approved, as established in Article 52 of Legislative Decree No. 1,263 (Organic Law Decree on Finance Administration of the State).

The decree in question is resolute in its pursuit of results and from its very first article it mandates that annual evaluations be carried out of social programmes, productive development programmes, and institutional development programmes included

in public service budgets. In line with the above, it establishes six evaluation lines:

- *Government Programme Evaluation*, which must consider the following dimensions: justification of the programme, design, key aspects of its organisation and management, and results and performance analysed against the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, quality and economy.
- *Programme Impact Evaluation*: through the application of different analytical models, intermediate and final results will be evaluated on the basis of experimental and quasi-experimental, prospective and retrospective methodologies.
- *Institutional Expenditure Evaluation*: the effectiveness and efficiency of the institution's expenditure in the provision of goods and services will be evaluated, in line with its strategic objectives.
- *Focused Scope Evaluation*: specific aspects of programmes relating to design and/or implementation will be analysed, as well as all other aspects necessary to determine the correct use of public resources.
- *Sectoral Evaluation*: seeks to identify the programme offer relevant to the area of public policy, as well as to analyse and evaluate the design and performance of the programmes and initiatives that form part of said offer.
- *Expenditure Review*: will examine the effective implementation of programmes and the management of institutions and/or expenditure execution mechanisms used by those institutions.

The programmes to be evaluated are determined by a *Ministerial Decree* (Ministry of Finance), following a selection process based on proposals put forward by various actors on an inter-ministerial committee comprising representatives from the Ministries of Economy, Development and Tourism, of Social Development and Family, and of Finance, via the aforementioned DIPRES, which is also the body responsible for chairing the committee. This body facilitates alignment with the National Evaluation and Productivity Commission (Comisión Nacional de Evaluación y Productividad, CNEP), which is responsible for promoting the evaluation of public policies and collaborating in the strengthening the evaluation system of the state. In addition, the National Congress may add or recommend new evaluations during the passage of the Budget Law.

During 2023, 16 evaluations were completed across 4 *ex post* evaluation lines (Ministerio de Hacienda, 2023): 8 Government Programme Evaluations; 5 Focused Scope Evaluations; 1 Sectoral Evaluation; and 2 Impact Evaluations.

In line with the strengthening of evaluation and monitoring in Chile, it is public knowledge that the Centre for Learning in Evaluation and Results for Latin America and the Caribbean (CLEAR-LAC) began operating in the country in 2024, based at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. The Centre has the backing of the Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI), the support of the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group (IEG), and the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme.

The scenarios described above —both in the public and private spheres— highlight the pivotal importance of evaluation in the country. However, this does not automatically permeate civil society organisations. On analysing the context, one might infer that evaluation capacities tend to be concentrated in small groups of experts whose services carry high costs, which prove inaccessible to many organisations that direct their resources towards intervention work in communities.

The experience under evaluation

TECHO is an organisation made up of young volunteers and residents of informal settlements in Latin America. Through joint action, they work to overcome the situation of poverty in which millions of people live. Operating in 18 countries across the region, since 1997 TECHO has built over 140,000 emergency homes and mobilised 1.5 million volunteers.

TECHO's work in Latin America focuses on fostering connections on the ground between communities and young volunteers in informal settlements (*tugurios, villas, favelas* or *campamentos*), which are organised through the Working Group mechanism. This constitutes a regular working space where volunteers and community members meet to discuss, reflect, and reach decisions on the community's interests, in order to manage collective initiatives that contribute to the settlement's wellbeing and strengthen community

capacities (TECHO, 2016). In this regard, TECHO–Chile, in its conceptual and methodological framework for the Working Group, defines it as follows:

formal and democratic meeting spaces led by settlement leaders and young volunteers. These meetings promote community organisation to develop initiatives that address local issues, fostering supportive and inclusive ways of relating to others and a commitment to playing an active role in social change. The Working Group constitutes a micro-social space for training in rights and democratic skills (participation, listening to others, carrying out joint projects, transparency, etc.) which seeks to expand and be replicated in other spaces of civic engagement, exerting influence on the global level through local organisation. (TECHO, 2016, p. 16)

By 2018, this initiative had been developed in 438 communities across the 18 countries where TECHO operated, with a total of 173 communities in Chile, 46 of which were in the Metropolitan Region and 22 in informal settlements.

Working Groups are also spaces for popular education and training, for decision-making and community coordination. The former, because those involved build knowledge through the sharing and complementarity of the ideas and worldviews that each person or group brings — that is, everyone both learns and teaches something, in a permanent and dialectical process. The latter, because that learning gives rise to ideas that must be planned, implemented, and evaluated, which requires collective decision-making involving different sectors and groups within the community.

In TECHO's more than 20 years of experience working alongside communities, the Working Groups have given rise to various housing, community infrastructure, education, employment, and community development projects. These were generally evaluated by means of qualitative or quantitative instruments measuring the satisfaction and degree of efficiency of the projects implemented in the communities. However, those evaluations focused on the projects rather than on the Working Groups themselves, leaving unexamined the functioning of this intervention space which, as noted above, involves participation and the co-construction of solutions. Considering its extensive regional reach and its value as a catalyst for transformation, it was highly relevant to carry out an evaluation in a horizontal and co-responsible manner, consistent with the purpose, logic, and practice of the Working Group.

Given that the Working Group is the core unit of TECHO's work, the evaluation findings were intended to serve the purpose of improving key aspects of the intervention by adopting a broad analytical process for reflecting on how the intervention work is carried out. In this regard, the present chapter takes the Working Group as its object of study, through the case of Santa Teresa, an informal settlement in the municipality (*comuna*) of San Bernardo, in the Metropolitan Region of Chile.

Case Study: Campamento Santa Teresa

Campamento Santa Teresa is located in the municipality of San Bernardo, in the southern area of Santiago. Based on data from the 2017 Census, San Bernardo is recognised as one of Chile's most populous municipalities, with 301,313 inhabitants. In terms of its socioeconomic characteristics, the municipality has an income poverty rate of 9.2%, while the multidimensional poverty rate stands at 22%, according to the Report on Municipal Poverty Estimates (*Informe de Estimaciones Comunes de Pobreza*), based on data from the 2015 Casen survey by the Ministry of Social Development (2018).

The site on which this community stands was formerly a bus terminal, which, after falling into disuse and becoming an informal dumping ground, began to be cleaned up by a group of families who settled there between 2010 and 2012. The community comprises 52 families organised through a steering committee made up of three people (treasurer, secretary, and president). The steering committee meets periodically and reports its activities to the community Assembly (25 families with regular participation). In terms of its organisational structure, the Working Group functioned as a space for strengthening the steering committee's work and for integration with the Assembly; it was made up on a stable basis of the president, secretary, treasurer, residents who regularly attended activities, and TECHO volunteers, meeting periodically at the community's meeting room and working on a range of projects.

The main characteristics of the community's living conditions relate to the absence of paved access roads and partial access to basic services. Key figures illustrating the situation of the settlement are reflected in the diagnostic survey, a tool that TECHO administers every two years in the community. In 2016, the overcrowding rate stood at 33%, the unemployment rate reached 60%, and 80% of adults had not completed their formal education.

With regard to the normative and legal conditions, the land was held under an informal rental arrangement based on a verbal agreement with the landowner, which ran for two years from 2017 to 2019, with the possibility of purchase by the families currently living there.

Between 2017 and 2018, the projects carried out in collaboration with TECHO numbered 22, covering activities in education, vocational training, environmental improvements, and the regularisation of the legal situation. Some examples of activities included: remedial education, preparation for external examinations, a self-managed football workshop, training of residents as classroom assistants to run an educational space called *Techo para Aprender* (roof for learning), an outing to *Cirque du Soleil*, improvements to the community meeting room, participatory neighbourhood design with *Construye Solar* (Build Solar), a tour of the San Francisco neighbourhood, the signing of a letter of commitment between the steering committee and the housing development department for the evaluation of a housing project, and support in negotiating the land purchase price with the landowner.

The evaluation process

In order to gain a thorough understanding of the Working Group's work, it was necessary to evaluate how its processes, projects, and objectives had unfolded. It was decided to carry out a participatory evaluation, as this allows for an in-depth understanding of the reality of the communities, strengthens the role and identity of each of the stakeholders involved, and generates new approaches to information gathering. At the same time, it is considered an intervention process in its own right, given its capacity to foster integration among those involved, thus constituting an approach consistent with the methodological strategies developed within the Working Group.

Participatory evaluations provide information that makes it possible to guide decisions, improve processes, and generate lessons for management. The participatory approach entails a series of benefits associated with the democratisation of certain spaces and the development of a holistic vision. As proposed in the handbook *Seguimiento y evaluación participativos basados en los resultados* (Coupal, 2000), participatory evaluation is an intervention within the community that:

- Strengthens the capacity of all stakeholders involved to reflect, analyse, propose solutions, and take action.
- Learns, readjusts, and acts by taking proactive corrective measures in order to achieve results, add or remove activities, or change strategy.

- Is accountable at all levels: to the collective, the organisation, and those responsible for the implementation and funding of the project.
- Makes it possible to recognise and celebrate successes, while drawing out lessons and opportunities for improvement.

In this way, participatory evaluation is an ideal process on account of the correspondence that exists between this approach, the evaluation process, the objectives of the Working Group and the mission of TECHO.

Specifically, the evaluation process was divided into four phases:

- 1. Training and design:** during this stage, training was received from Foceval (2015–2018) and, alongside this, the evaluation matrix was designed.
- 2. Information gathering:** carried out through the use of four instruments.
- 3. Systematisation and analysis.**
- 4. Validation of information within the community:** through an open invitation to residents of the settlement, the main findings of the process were presented in consolidated form.

Evaluation design

The first phase involved forming an evaluation team and focusing on what was expected to be evaluated. For this purpose, the organisation was represented by a group of members of the Santa Teresa steering committee

—numbering between three and five participants—whom TECHO relied upon to coordinate and carry out the activities of the Working Group. They were joined by volunteers and employed staff, thus constituting the evaluation team², which agreed to designate the Working Group as the object of evaluation.

The involvement of the Santa Teresa participants came about on a voluntary basis, as a consequence of their close working relationship with the TECHO team, who proposed that they take part in a process through which, in a participatory manner and by involving more community members, they could learn about the results of the work that had been carried out to date. This prospect became even more significant given the steering committee's interest in increasing the participation of residents in activities aimed at improving the settlement, and in highlighting the work that the group had been doing in the community.

This initiative was made possible through the support of the Foceval project (2015–2018) of the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval). This project aimed to strengthen the role of evaluation in decision-making

²The team involved in developing the participatory evaluation project was as follows: María Jesús Silva (Director, Social Research Centre – TECHO Internacional); Fernanda Arriaza (Director of Community Management – TECHO Internacional); Catalina González (Regional Director, Metropolitan Region – TECHO Chile); Matthias Casasco (Housing Solutions Project Manager – TECHO Chile); Valeria Paz Lazo (Evaluation and Diagnostics Coordinator, Social Research Centre – TECHO Chile); Amalia Llebul (President of the Working Group – Santa Teresa, San Bernardo, Chile); Juan Carlos Sanz (Foceval Evaluator); Esteban Tapella (Foceval Evaluator); Javier Araneda (Foceval Young Evaluator).

and policy steering through capacity building in the region. For TECHO, the collaboration with Foceval enabled the development of a participatory evaluation process of a high technical standard, characterised by the incorporation of training sessions and knowledge exchange, and critical reflection among civil society organisations.

Throughout this process, the Foceval facilitators organised various workshops and field visits aimed at providing training in evaluation content and at designing an evaluation plan suited to the needs of the institutions that took part in these spaces. As a product of these workshops, and using participatory approaches and methodologies, the evaluation team—in cooperation with the Foceval facilitators—produced an *Evaluation Matrix for the Santa Teresa settlement*, as a descriptive and exploratory tool designed to understand the central aspects of the Working Group. The matrix brought together the evaluation questions, the criteria governing those questions, the objectives to be evaluated, the potential use of the results, and the indicators that would enable the measurement of the questions and their dimensions. It is important to note that the matrix was designed by the evaluation team and subsequently validated by participants at the Working Group.

The matrix comprised six criteria:

- **Effectiveness:** establishes the degree to which the Working Group fulfilled the projects proposed by the community—that is, whether it is an effective working instrument—.

- *Relevance*: establishes whether the Working Group responds to the needs or problems of the community.
- *Learning*: characterises the conditions that influence the functioning of the Working Group.
- *Participation*: describes the roles and degrees of participation involved.
- *Sustainability*: identifies forms of collaboration embedded within the community.
- *Impact*: seeks to establish the effects generated by the intervention.

Thus, for each evaluation criterion a question was formulated, which were central to the development of the information collection instruments:

- Which projects were carried out through the Working Group?
- How are the needs addressed by the intervention prioritised?
- What characteristics and conditions influence the functioning of the Working Group?
- What has the participation process in the Working Group been like?
- What co-management capacities did the Working Group generate within the community?
- What contribution did the Working Group make to the community?

Information gathering tools

Four tools were developed for data collection which, using a participatory approach, were designed to be applied in the context of the settlement and to facilitate the participation of as many people as possible involved in the Working Group, thereby broadening the range of responses and opinions that could emerge from the data collection process. The four tools developed were as follows:

1. Board Game: Defining the Working Group

The purpose of this tool is to elaborate a definition of the Working Group that arises from the participants themselves, offering as a prompt a set of words that may or may not be associated with the concept. Discussion based on a range of words facilitates reflection and the prioritisation of what is most relevant. The activity progresses from the individual level to the collective construction of a single definition of the Working Group, which must be agreed upon and shared by the members of the mechanism under evaluation (the Working Group). The activity opens up space for debate and reflection, creating tension — and seeking consensus — around the main perceptions of what each person understands and incorporates regarding the Working Group.

2. Timeline

The purpose of this tool is to arrange a sequence of events or milestones on a given topic in order to visualise clearly the chronological relationship between them. Events and dates must be identified in the chronological order (start and finish dates) in which they occurred, drawing on individual and collective memory to reconstruct a story seen from different angles, facilitating the prioritisation of the most significant events. The activity is enriched by having a broad set of games and pedagogical materials that encourage the participants' creativity, so that they can integrate the most significant events through photographs, drawings, and/or messages, making it possible to observe changes, trajectories, and the influx and outflow of families in the settlement.

3. Board Game: Horse Race

Through the playful representation of a horse race, depicted on a board game, a group of community members and volunteers are invited to share their views on a series of statements that prompt participants to reflect on the functioning, achievements, and challenges of the Working Group. First, participants are divided into different groups according to their interests and roles in the community, then they move around a board with different squares on which they land, according to the number indicated by the dice. The squares are in six different colours representing

the six criteria on which the evaluation questions in the matrix are based. When a player lands on a given square, the game facilitator reads a card of that colour and the participants debate the question or statement written on the selected card. In this way, the game and the dialogues that arise around the cards yield a range of information relating to the 6 evaluation questions.

4. In-Depth Interviews

In order to complement and support the information gathered through the activities described above, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with two key community actors: a resident and the president of the steering committee. This approach sought to reach data saturation by creating a space of trust in which they could freely express their views.

Field application of the tools

The fieldwork was carried out between September and October 2018 through periodic work by the members of the evaluation team, respecting the activity schedule established in advance by the community. To implement each of the activities, pilot tests were conducted, validations were carried out with key stakeholders, implementation guidelines were drawn up, facilitators were trained, and residents were invited door-to-door.

Tool	Number of participants	Roles
<i>Defining the Working Group</i>	6	Steering committee and volunteers
<i>Timeline</i>	30	Residents and volunteers
<i>Horse race</i>	20	Residents, steering committee and volunteers
<i>In-depth interview</i>	2	Resident and president of the steering committee

Table 1. (Source: Author’s own elaboration)

Systematisation and validation

The information gathered through the use of these tools was transcribed and systematised in order to facilitate its analysis.

Finally, two information validation sessions were held, using the game *Experts Meeting*. This involved participants using a board with the options ‘AGREE’, ‘DISAGREE’ and ‘UNCERTAIN’ to indicate whether or not they accepted a series of statements capturing the main findings and conclusions of the data collection and analysis processes.

The first session was held with two volunteers from TECHO (a man and a woman) who accompanied the Working Group, which made it possible both to capture their impressions of the results of the process and to test the methodology of the game.

The community validation was carried out through a Working Group gathering, which brought together 16 people who, in four groups, went through the same exercise and subsequently reached collective conclusions.

Main findings

Effectiveness

Based on the information gathered, it can be concluded that the vast majority of the projects carried out by the Working Group were completed with a high degree of achievement of the proposed objectives. The high regard in which residents hold the projects that have been implemented —and their recognition of the significant contribution these have made to the settlement— has contributed to the legitimisation of the Working Group’s work, and in particular of the president of the steering committee, to whom these achievements are attributed.

On the other hand, while a high level of effectiveness is acknowledged in the development of projects, these have been predominantly infrastructure-related (for example, the construction of a community meeting room, erection of a perimeter fence, waste collection

management, and maintenance of septic tanks), with little attention given to other types of project (development of skills and capacities in management, teamwork, and leadership), which are perceived as undervalued and as weak points by the steering committee and the Working Group, and are not regarded as priorities by residents.

Relevance

From the perspective of the settlement's members, the Working Group's work has revolved around their main problems and needs (security and improvements to living conditions), and similarly the initiatives and projects it has managed have contributed significantly to improving living conditions. Even though there has been no direct participation in the full process of each project, the projects have proved relevant, which lends legitimacy to the Working Group's capacity to identify the community's principal problems and prioritise them in projects and activities.

While the relevance of the Working Group is evident (given that it responds to community needs), difficulties arise when these achievements are attributed solely to the steering committee leader, since this generates a perception of dependence on her management and renders invisible the work of others who might be involved. Moreover, because projects related to building capacities within the community have not been prioritised, the relevance of the Working Group

on this point is called into question: while the projects have contributed substantially to improving the quality of life of the settlement (needs expressed by residents), the other aspect has not been developed—which constitutes a significant shortcoming in the community—.

Learning

It can be concluded that, on the one hand, if residents do not know what the Working Group is, this means they do not understand it as an open space in which they can participate, nor do they know its objective or what takes place within it. Consequently, the lack of information about this space directly influences the low level of resident participation.

On the other hand, the fact that the president of the steering committee is rated highly in terms of the implementation and relevance of the projects she leads within the settlement, yet is rated poorly in terms of her interpersonal relations, affects the functioning of the Working Group: a leadership style that is inhibiting is also one that constrains participation, resulting, for example, in not all residents feeling part of the projects decided upon within the community, since this type of leadership (among other things) means there is no space for deliberation through which to reach consensus.

With regard to this evaluation criterion, it can be inferred that the good relationship between the volunteers and

the community steering committee has had a positive influence on both parties' motivation to work together and be active in the pursuit of shared objectives. The good relationship also extends to residents and volunteers, with the former being grateful for and pleased by the active participation of the young people. This contributes to residents' motivation to cooperate in the pursuit of shared objectives.

Finally, regarding the decision-making process that has been established within the Working Group — whereby volunteers and the president make decisions and the rest of the steering committee board validates them — it can be said that although this is an efficient mechanism that in some instances positively influences the functioning of the Working Group by enabling rapid progress in decision-making, it is not a mechanism that generates sustainability, in the sense that it does not allow the other members of the steering committee to develop this kind of skills.

Participation

It was observed that, while the interventions and/or projects carried out are relevant to the community, it is important to highlight that decisions continue to be made by the steering committee together with the volunteers in the Working Group. A representative decision-making process is therefore identified, but one that does not involve the direct participation of residents.

It was in fact observed that there is no clarity regarding who should participate in the Working Group, which is perceived by the community as a space for the exclusive participation of the steering committee. While this perception generates dissatisfaction on the part of the president, no direct efforts to involve more residents have been observed. It should also be noted that, while the Working Group is declared by TECHO to be an open space, it is not clear in what way the volunteers and the organisation seek to make it effectively so.

Finally, by concentrating decision-making within the Working Group since the Assembly began calling on more residents to participate, a tension emerged between two organisational models: one that operates under the logic of direct participation in the Assembly, and another that operates under a logic of representation, whereby the Working Group is the decision-making body in order to be more efficient and to avoid conflict in the Assembly. Residents thus delegate to the steering committee the responsibility of representing their interests —which has been possible thanks to the Working Group's current ability to identify the settlement's genuine priorities—.

Sustainability

This criterion relates to the co-management capacities that the Working Group has generated within the community, and thus to whether it can be defined as a space moving towards sustainability. In the

first instance, the existence of certain activities self-managed by the community should contribute to progress towards a greater level of autonomy, although we see that these are generally activities arising from basic needs or emergencies (fires, water cuts, heavy rain, etc.). On the other hand, having networks beyond TECHO for the achievement of its objectives is a positive element and a necessary condition for developing collaborative working skills and advancing towards a *sustainable community*. However, there are also projects which, although arising from needs identified by the community, do not involve community participation at every stage, and therefore do not generate learning or leave established capacities within the community.

Furthermore, while collective spaces are created to communicate the decisions taken by the group (Assemblies) and to involve other settlement residents in the implementation of initiatives, these spaces have a purely informational character, which prevents any substantial progress towards sustainability. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that without TECHO's presence the Working Group would cease to exist, and the decision-making space — in which the leader applies her learning in project management — would be lost. Consequently, while the effectiveness and relevance of the Working Group are evident, these criteria are not sustained by community self-management in the pursuit of objectives, which points to inadequate development of the Working Group in terms of the sustainability criterion — and reveals the harm that would be caused to the community should the president step down from her role, given that self-

management capacities are not distributed among other members.

Impact

In terms of impact, it is important to distinguish two dimensions of this criterion: the development of housing and habitat initiatives, and the strengthening of community capacities. With regard to the former, efforts have been well focused and directed towards improving the settlement's infrastructure conditions; as residents themselves attest, the community has improved during this recent period, which is also associated with the president's management. This is recognised by some residents, who feel safer and more settled and demonstrate a sense of belonging — reflecting a positive impact of the housing and habitat initiatives on the community—. However, with regard to the second aspect (strengthening of community capacities), some dimensions of the impact have been enhanced while others have been insufficiently developed. For example, networking and a sense of belonging have advanced, whereas organisation and participation have not been developed in a consistent manner.

The institution's role in the settlement is having positive effects and generating conditions that enable the community to advance in the achievement of its objectives, given that achievements can serve as motivational catalysts for the beneficiaries of projects,

who also witness the benefits that organisation around shared goals brings. Despite this, the community's residents do not feel themselves to be the protagonists of that impact, seeing others as the main actors in those effects.

Validation of information

The evaluation team convened and ran two workshop-format sessions, aimed at community leaders and residents, in order to report back the principal conclusions of the process. The objective was for the groups that had participated at different stages and moments in the process to recognise the information, feel that it reflected their experience, and thereby validate it.

The attendees endorsed both the information relating to the Working Group and the coordination space for the actions carried out by TECHO with the steering committee. Specifically in regard to the problems concerning the physical condition of the settlement, as opposed to those relating to communication and interpersonal relations. They also highlighted that the Assemblies should take on a greater role, as they are the community's main space for participation.

Another key finding validated in this session was the role of the president as the anchor of the Working Group: without her direct involvement, projects in the settlement could not progress. At the same time,

participants acknowledged that, while the Working Group was a space of trust and cordiality that facilitated the development of actions for the benefit of the settlement, this interpersonal dynamic was concentrated within the steering committee and did not extend to the wider community, preventing other people from being incorporated.

Finally, participants highlighted that, while the Working Group had contributed to improving the community's living conditions, there were communication and interpersonal problems that had not been addressed.

Final reflections

Through a participatory evaluation approach that reflects different voices on the work of the Working Group, the aim is to strengthen the community's self-management capacities —recognising that evaluation, far from being an isolated process, makes a contribution to the institution, its beneficiaries, and the intervention itself, which is based on collaborative, rigorous, and deliberate work—.

In line with this, an important challenge is identified: transforming the role of settlement residents from recipients or beneficiaries to active subjects with rights. It is necessary, however, to contextualise the lack of participation on a different scale and to investigate its

structural causes in order to understand the extent of the community problem being identified: the national reality in terms of participation. According to SERVEL, in the 2017 Presidential, Parliamentary, and Regional Councillors' elections, 53.3% of the population did not vote. In the San Bernardo municipality this figure is higher, reaching 57.3%. In addition, according to CASEN (2015), at the national level 73.5% of the population does not participate in any organisation or group (religious, neighbours' associations, sports clubs, and other associations). These figures show that the lack of participation in the settlement has deeper structural roots and is explained by national-level phenomena. This points to the need to focus determined efforts on promoting participation, given that one of TECHO's aims is to foster community development.

The process described in this chapter, in addition to being carried out in Chile, was also conducted between 2018 and 2019 in four other settlements in Mexico, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Ecuador. With varying levels of participation from residents, the evaluation teams were made up of Working Group leaders (approximately 5–8 people) and volunteers and staff from the respective TECHO offices. The factor that stimulated community interest was common to all: increasing resident participation by highlighting the community's work and potential through organisation.

With the direct support of Foceval in the evaluation process at the Santa Teresa settlement in Chile, it was decided that the team from TECHO's international office—which provided guidance to the country

offices on community intervention— would extend its advisory role to the territorial teams in Mexico, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Ecuador, generating a form of parallelism between the activities being promoted in those countries and those being developed in Chile.

The participants who remained consistent members of the evaluation teams across the five countries were the volunteers and staff from the TECHO offices. With regard to community representatives, their participation varied across the different stages: they were most actively involved in information collection and community validation, partially involved in capacity building and design, and not involved at all in systematisation and analysis. As for the first two stages, their principal role was in discussions about the object of evaluation and in problem-framing to construct the guiding questions for the process. Moreover, while their role was more consultative, they were key in validating the different information collection instruments designed for gathering data from different community actors.

The evaluation experience described in this chapter was carried out on the basis of exploratory and immersive work developed alongside people who are on the front line of community organisation. According to Shahra Razavi (2007, cited in Faur, 2014), community organisations are one of the key care-providing entities, alongside the state, the family and the market. Community care thus emerges spontaneously, yet in a coordinated manner, as an entity that works to fill gaps in access to multiple services.

One of the common factors characterising those who represented their territories on the evaluation teams (both in Chile and in the other four countries mentioned) was that the majority were women. In the cases of Chile and Uruguay, the representatives were all women, and in the other three countries women were always the predominant group. These leaders carried out daily actions to improve their territories, consolidating a relationship with the community that was tied not only to a sense of belonging but was also reinforced by the urgency of improving, among many other demands, living conditions—through the mobilisation of residents in the development of entirely voluntary actions—.

As has been described throughout this account, it was a profoundly human process: from the commitment to placing people at the centre and allowing their narrative to determine the impact of the Working Group, to the agreement by which both the technical teams and residents from all the countries were involved on a wholly voluntary basis.

These characteristics meant that those who participated were convinced of the value of implementing and applying participatory evaluation, but at the same time this was subject to their work and personal commitments and to external factors that may have interfered with the organisational dynamic: such as the COVID-19 pandemic that affected the world in 2020,

and the turnover and changes of TECHO collaborators who participated in the respective processes. These conditions prevented the institutionalisation of the methodology for evaluating the results and impact of the organisation's work.

Furthermore, in keeping with TECHO's ethos of driving its projects through the efforts of young volunteers with limited on-the-ground experience, it was necessary for the professionals responsible for coordinating community intervention in each country to be involved in the evaluation process for a significant amount of time—which was on occasion hampered by highly dynamic and demanding work schedules—. This in turn caused the planning of evaluation activities to be postponed or displaced, extending the time required to obtain results beyond what was expected and creating the impression that the process was overly lengthy.

Finally, and no less importantly, another factor that prevented the institutionalisation of participatory evaluation is the level of priority that civil society organisations tend to assign to evaluation—something observable from the simplest action, such as not including it as part of project management, through to more political decisions, such as not allocating human and financial resources to build an organisational culture around committed participation, cross-cutting accountability, and continuous improvement.

References

- Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile (2022). *Decreto 2068, Reglamento para el Funcionamiento del Sistema de Evaluación de Programas e Instituciones Públicas*. Artículo 52°, Decreto Ley N° 1.263. <https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1175203>
- Faur, E. (2014). *El cuidado infantil en el siglo XXI: Mujeres malabaristas en una sociedad desigual*. Siglo XXI.
- Faur, E. (2018). *¿Cuidar o Educar? Hacia una pedagogía del cuidado*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328031630>
- Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (2017). *Censo de Población y Vivienda 2017* Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional. <http://reportescomunales.bcn.cl/2017/index.php/SanBernardo/Poblaci%C3%B3n>
- Ministerio de Desarrollo Social (2018a). *Informe de estimaciones comunales de pobreza, con datos de Casen 2015*.
- Ministerio de Desarrollo Social (2018b). *Redes y cohesión social. Síntesis de resultados de Encuesta Casen 2015*. https://observatorio.ministeriodesarrollosocial.gob.cl/storage/docs/casen/2015/CASEN_2015_Resultados_Redes_Cohesion_Social.pdf
- Ministerio de Hacienda: Departamento de Evaluación, Transparencia y Productividad Fiscal (2023). *Resultados Evaluaciones 2023*. https://www.dipres.gob.cl/598/articles-316391_doc_pdf.pdf
- Razavi, S. (2007). The political and social economy of care in a development context: Conceptual issues, research questions and policy options. *Gender and Development*, Paper No. 3. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.
- TECHO. Modelo de Trabajo. <https://www.techo.org/modelo-de-trabajo/>
- TECHO (2016). *Modelo de Intervención*.
- TECHO (2016). *Marco conceptual y metodológico Mesa de Trabajo*.