

Target population: Vulnerable older people living in the community

Mission: To improve the quality of life and integration of older people in a village or neighbourhood by helping them create, renew, develop and maintain social ties.

Funding: Authorities, Canton de Vaud and Leenaards Foundation (supports social and public health projects, as well as scientific and cultural projects in Vaud and Geneva cantons)

Context

Laussane's is a city in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. It is the capital and biggest city of the canton of Vaud, with a population of 146,372 (the fourth largest city in Switzerland) of which 16.5% are 65 years or older.

The Neighbourhood Solidarity concept was developed by Pro Senectute Vaud (largest professional organization serving the elderly) and the Leenaards Foundation as a local project in 2003 in Lausanne. The programme was gradually rolled out to several other neighbourhoods and towns of Vaud. Quartiers Solidaires essentially seeks to help isolated older people gain or remain in control of their daily life through an improved integration of formal networks (such as home care organisations) with the local informal networks (neighbours, families). The programme is an instrument for social intervention that encourages residents, especially the older ones, to influence their own environment by organising projects themselves according to their needs, resources and desires.

Quartiers Solidaires' goals are to:

- Allow inhabitants to be authors and actors of their own projects
- Facilitate the integration and social participation of older people in their neighbourhood
- Develop senior power of action
- Prevent isolation and fragility
- Promote home support
- Improve older people's health

Quartiers Solidaires employs an innovative methodology for supporting community projects that is based on a 12-year experience, accumulated through 17 projects in 13 cities with promising results in the canton of Vaud in Switzerland.

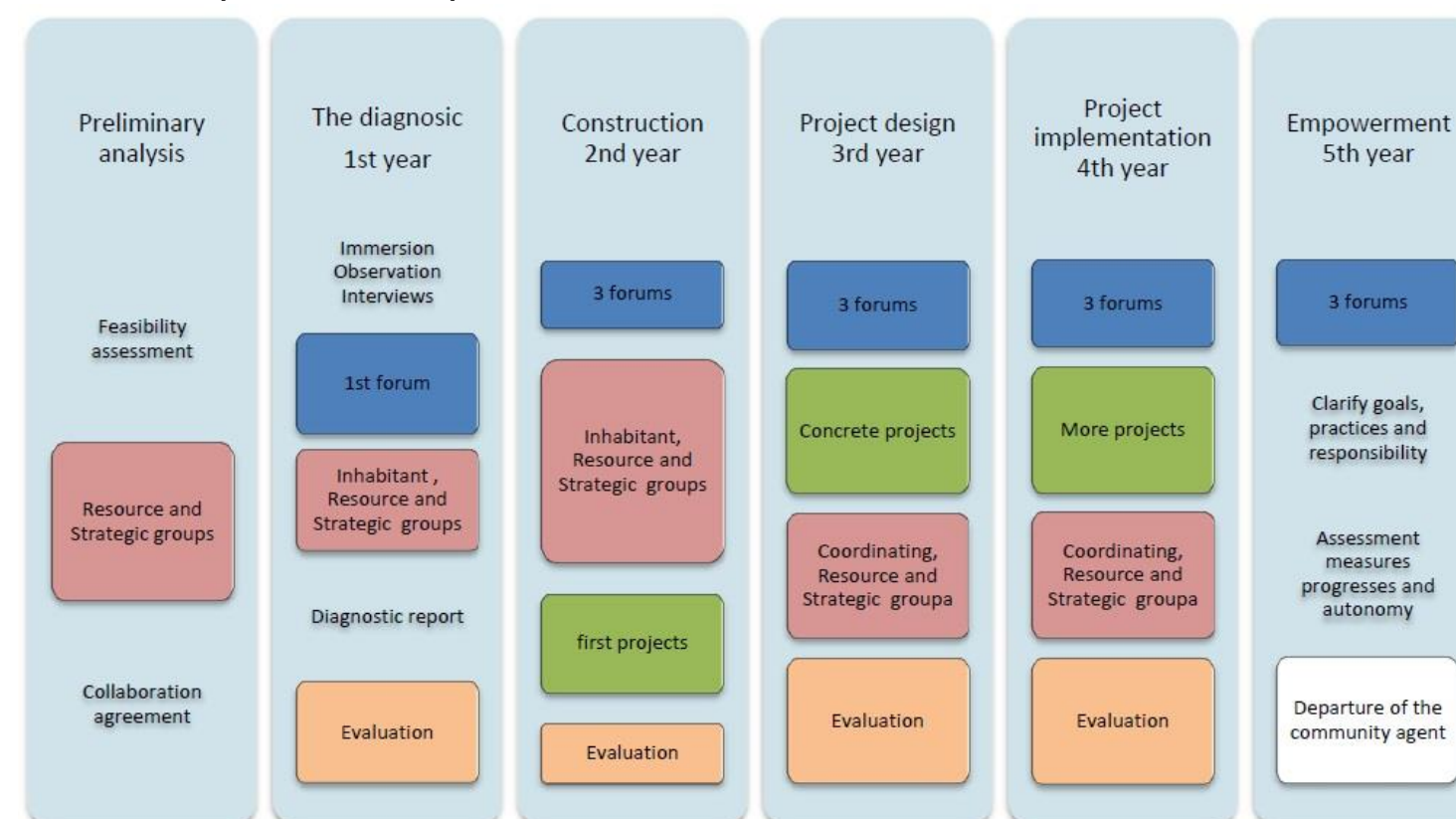
Underpinning philosophy and values

'Reinforcing neighbourliness' - The underpinning philosophy of the programme was to help vulnerable older people to remain at home to improve the quality of their life, foster the integration of older people in their neighbourhood and enable informal carers to cope with difficult situations. To achieve this, finding new ways for 'reinforcing neighbourliness' was deemed essential.

Values - respect, listening, openness, helping each other, solidarity, equality, making everyone feel welcome, freedom, getting together, humility.

What this initiative is about

Based on community development, the process focuses on empowering the elderly through a five-year methodology, which is intended to create an autonomous community that can resolve its own problems. The primary outcome is a self-organised structure sustained by the elderly community connected to the neighbourhood through cross-sectoral networks. Social workers together with neighbourhood volunteers develop interventions to support older persons through community forums. The social workers' aim is essentially to support the inhabitants of a neighbourhood to become 'change agents' and help communities identify what the main issues are according to their life experiences in order to put forward the most appropriate solutions. The way it works is a social worker conducts an initial investigation in order to assess the needs and resources of the inhabitants. He/ she takes into account the number of older people and the structural resources in the area (like social and medical care structure, shops, banks, meeting places, etc). There are six stages in the process, as per the illustration below.



The four main objectives are as follows: (1) developing regular relationships and cohesion within the community; (2) facilitating proximity information for the elderly regarding access to services and activities; (3) developing financial, human and structural resources for the elderly; and (4) facilitating the involvement of an autonomous community in the neighborhood.

Governance & management

- The Leenard Foundation is the main funder. The association Pro Senectute employs the social workers.
- Collaboration between civil society and public services
- New spaces of dialogue are organised within the process.
- Direct contact between inhabitants, public authorities and partners:
 - promotes access to new resources for all
 - enriches neighborhood life
 - Seniors are interlocutors for authorities

Impact

So far Quartiers Solidaires has achieved:

- 250 self-managed activities
- more than 400 people involved in community committees
- 7,000 people participating in the activities
- more than 35,000 people informed

An evaluation (2008) demonstrated:

- Individual welfare and the overall quality of life of the community have also got better.
- The empowerment of inhabitants is increased
- Direct contact between inhabitants, authorities and partners develops their technical and relational skills
- Self-confidence is strengthened
- Residents feel less lonely and more engaged in the community

Insights / lessons learnt

- Elderly have competences and time, they should be given more often responsibilities to carry on social life
- If you take the time to go slowly with everybody you go further
- Need to develop new policy's framework to accompany elderly communities
- This process can be applied in other fields

Future

Disseminate the methodology outside the Vaudois borders

Develop "solidarity villages"

Support and promote the sustainability of structures and activities created

Disseminate the methodology to other topics (urban planning, health)

Continue to develop collaborations on topics such as:

- new technologies
- caregivers
- intercultural relations
- urban planning