



THE COOPERATIVE HOUSING FOUNDATION

A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO BETTER HOUSING AND BETTER COMMUNITIES

2501 M STREET, N.W., SUITE 450, WASHINGTON, D.C 20037 • (202) 887-0700

February 4, 1982

Honorable William Lehman
U.S. House of Representatives
2347 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Lehman:

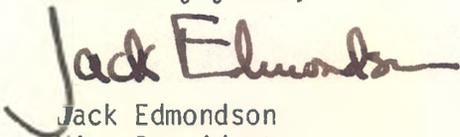
So much negative criticism is being directed at Haiti these days, I thought you would take heart at a program that's not only working but also reaching the poorest of the poor.

It is a slum upgrading and self-help housing project in the center of the capital city. The U.N. Capital Development Fund is providing most of the resources for this program, and our foundation, with U.N.D.P. financing provides technical assistance to the implementing agency. The project is described in more detail in the enclosed Fact Sheet.

While this program can't solve the refugee problem, it does illustrate that given the right incentives and institutional structure, self-help projects can and do work in Haiti.

If you would like more information about this effort, please let me know; and when you hold hearings on assistance programs to Haiti, we would welcome the opportunity to participate.

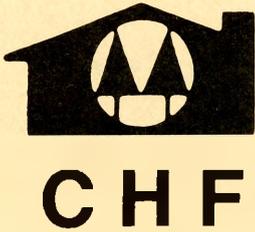
Sincerely yours,



Jack Edmondson
Vice President

JE:scs
Encls: CHF Fact Sheet

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COOPERATIVE HOUSING FOUNDATION FACT SHEET

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A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO BETTER HOUSING AND BETTER COMMUNITIES

Rehabilitation of St. Martin Quarter Port-au-Prince, Haiti



Density in St. Martin is among the highest in the world.

BACKGROUND

The St. Martin Quarter of Port-au-Prince, Haiti is a major reception area for many Haitian rural migrants in search of a better life in the capital city. Consisting of densely packed one and two room shanties constructed with recuperated material, Old St. Martin is almost totally bereft of the basic infrastructure systems; water, electricity, latrines, drainage systems, and roads. With a total population estimated near 25,000, it has densities of up to 2,000 people per square hectare, among the highest in the world. As a case study in urban poverty, St. Martin has all the ingredients—malnutrition, reduced life expectancies, high unemployment, illiteracy, and a complex tangle of land and property tenure.



Such poor sanitary and health conditions as these will be eliminated as part of the upgrading effort. A new canal will improve these very poor sanitary and health conditions.

It is in this environment that the Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) is currently providing technical assistance to Haiti's National Housing Office (ONL) with financing from the United Nations Development Program. Funding for the first phase of construction is through a \$2.7 million grant from the U.N. Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). Approximately one half of the grant (\$1.3 million) is to be used in upgrading existing and providing new infrastructure and housing in the St. Martin Quarter. The remainder of the grant is targeted for a sites and services project in another section of Port-au-Prince.

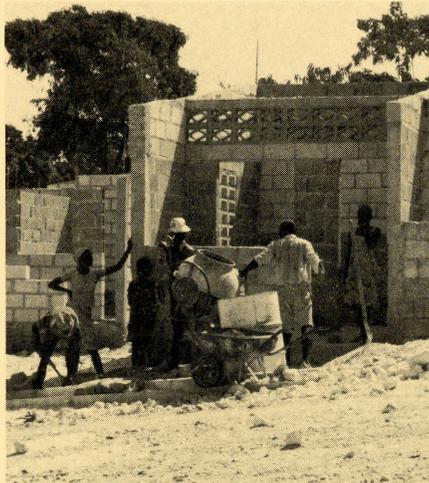
THE ST. MARTIN PROJECT

As indicated, the principal objective of this project is to improve the physical conditions in St. Martin, a zone

formed by Old St. Martin with its 25,000 residents and New St. Martin—an area of several hectares of open land. This entire area (approximately 13 hectares) was expropriated by the Government as a precondition to project implementation.

The construction aspects of the project consist of the provision and improvement of residents' homes, extension of walkways and streets, and construction of a community center, street lighting, public water fountains, and controlled access latrines. Infrastructure items, including a community center, have been built by paid project labor or subcontractors. The individual houses are built by the residents themselves, with ONL and CHF technical assistance. Materials for these houses are financed by 15 year UNCDF building material loans. The repayments from these loans will be made to a revolving loan fund which in turn will be used to continue rehabilitation of housing in Old St. Martin.

A second objective involves assisting the ONL, as an institution, to become capable of undertaking future housing projects of this nature without the need of outside assistance. As executor of the project, the ONL, with CHF technical assistance, has gained firsthand experience in planning and implementing a complex project. In addition to training its own staff, the ONL has coordinated the input of a number of Haitian agencies including the Ministry of Public Works and the electricity and water utilities, in addition to several international donor organizations (CARE, IDB).



Construction is provided by residents themselves with technical assistance from the project.

Thirdly, the project strives to use a cooperative approach to community organization in tackling urban slum renewal. The newly-formed St. Martin Housing Cooperative (COOLOSMA) is charged with community administration including collecting monthly payments for the ONL and providing other services for its resident/members. COOLOSMA is community development at the grass roots, and it is anticipated that this cooperative will channel local initiative to keep the rehabilitation "project" alive long after the first cycle of U.N. funds is exhausted.

A CHF team of five advisors has provided multi-disciplinary support to the ONL in all project areas. CHF advisors have local counterparts for project planning, architecture, community organization, finance and administration, and construction site supervision.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The project began in March, 1979, with the arrival of the CHF team leader and designation of ONL project staff. While master plans were being drawn and housing designs studied, ground was broken for the community center in August, 1979. This complex consists of a meeting hall, a dispensary, and an administration building for COOLOSMA and provides public space for community activities. The dispensary, which was enlarged following a \$26,000 grant from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities is now nearing completion, and will provide community health services and a child nutrition center.

Next, penetration roads into Old St. Martin were staked out, and families to be displaced were identified. Initial community anxiety was overcome by an intensive information campaign directed by the ONL's social workers and the affected families were given the opportunity to join "pre-cooperative" groups. These groups of 20 to 35 families were given priority for the 750 new houses planned for construction in adjacent New St. Martin. The pre-coop members quickly found themselves immersed in group meetings where self-help methods of house-building were discussed, house plans presented, and construction techniques taught. Local slumlords, fearing loss of rental income, provided initial opposition, but the government countered with strong support for the project, winning over most residents.



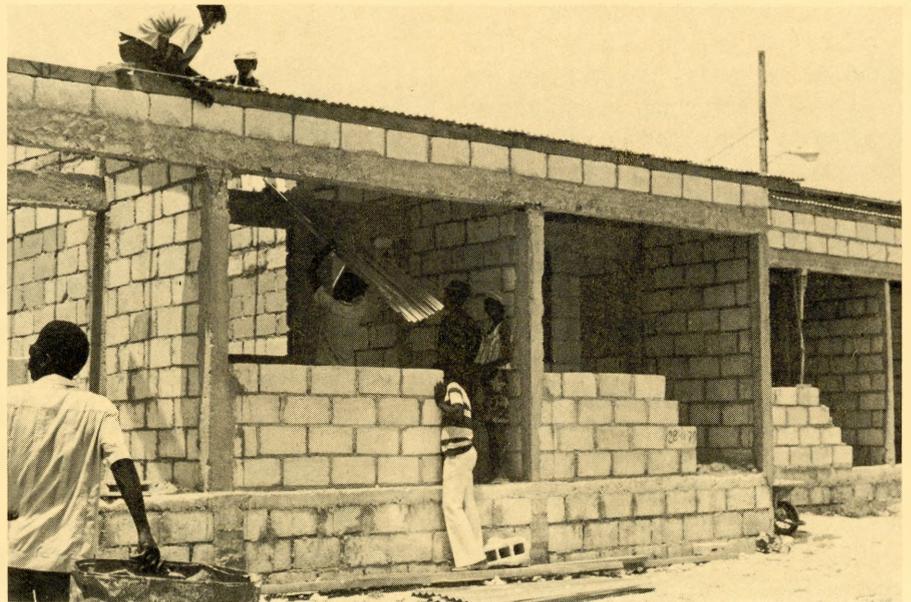
This latrine will serve several families from each residential complex.



The housing cooperative is composed of residents of all ages—men and women alike.

The pre-cooperative groups worked together under the supervision of the CHF Site Supervisor, his ONL counterpart, and a team of ONL Assistant Foremen. A UNCDF-financed revolving fund supplied raw materials and CARE provided "Food for Work" to self-help groups. Given the extremely limited space for building, the large number of families to be re-housed, and the paying capacity of the residents, houses have been kept small and simple: concrete block fabricated on-site, tin roofs, one door, and one window. The smallest unit—a 16m² space with an attached veranda—is designated for a family of up to 5 members. Houses are built around a small common courtyard which contains a water standpipe and a latrine for use only by the surrounding houses. This space allows for normal community activities; cooking, washing, handicraft production, etc.

Upon completion of a block of houses and the associated latrines, each family signs a 15 year rent/purchase contract at a 12% interest rate. The loan repayment schedules incorporate a 5% increase in monthly payments each year over the life of the loan. Prepayments are encouraged by attractive discounts: families paying 10 months in advance receive credit for 12 months.



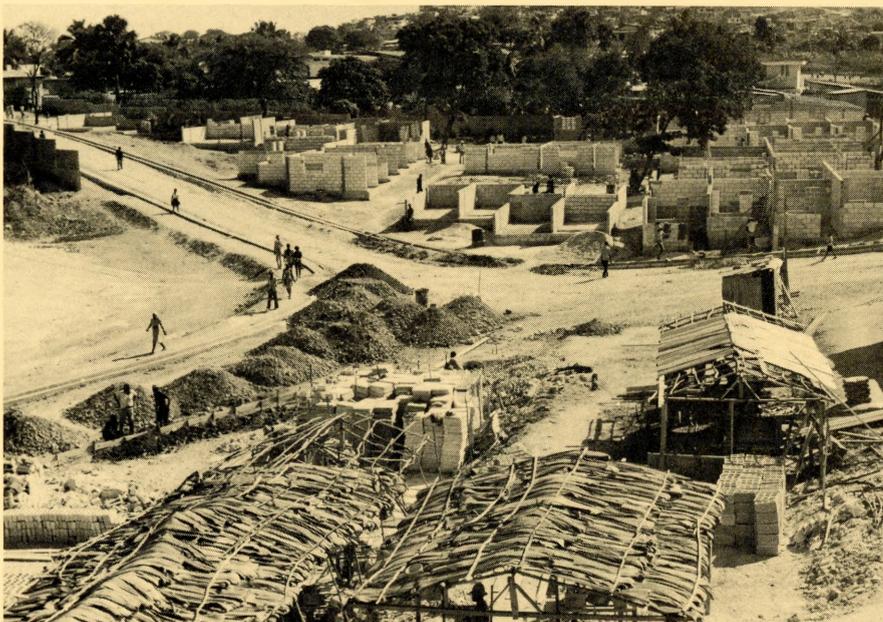
A 16m² one room concrete block unit is the house type most affordable by the majority of residents.

By July, 1981, 300 families had moved into their new houses in New St. Martin, and another 350 houses were under construction. On the day a group of residents is to move, project contractors remove all marked houses on the penetration routes which have not already been demolished by the residents themselves. Street drains, which have been fabricated at the site, are laid, and the route is prepared for surfacing. Before surfacing, many of these roads will be supplied with water mains and public water taps for use by those residents not displaced.

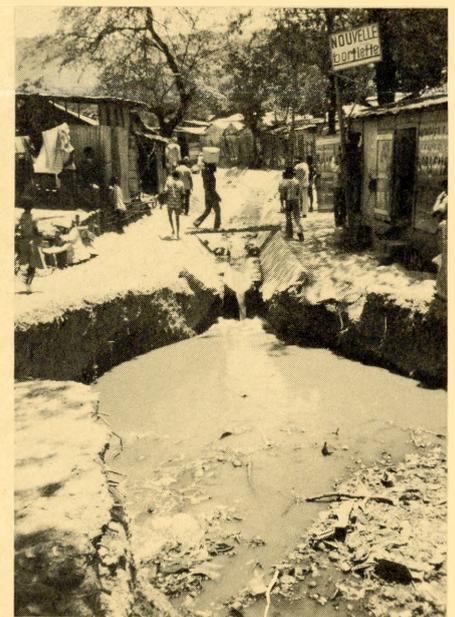
AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

The ONL's St. Martin project is complemented by a major Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)-funded drainage project for Port-au-Prince. The Old St. Martin component is known as the Rockefeller Canal, a foul-smelling open sewer periodically cleaned by rain run-off. The IDB project has already begun reconstruction and several hundred displaced families from areas adjacent to the canal have been integrated into the pre-cooperative groups.

Of course, most residents' houses



In these temporary sheds, such materials as drain pipes are produced for use in improvement and construction of roads.



An IDB-funded canal project provided impetus for construction of new houses earmarked for dislocated residents.

do not fall within the penetration roads right-of-ways or the canal rehabilitation. All residents, however, are encouraged to participate in community upgrading efforts, and a portion of the revolving funds are specifically designated for families not displaced. Small groups of families, organized with the help of a social worker, can rebuild their houses in Old St. Martin following plans approved by the ONL technical staff. To participate in this program, a small downpayment is required from the group. To date, organizing these family groups has proven difficult, since it involves the destruction of their existing dwellings before the new houses can be built, and temporary lodging is either unavailable or difficult to locate.

SUMMARY

This project represents a number of firsts for Haiti. Never before have the problems of the urban poor been addressed by a major upgrading effort. Prior to the St. Martin project, the ONL, as an institution, was limited to the management of existing housing estates. The use of self-help labor on a wide scale was a new concept and has proven itself successful. This required innovative community efforts in a major rehabilitation project. Effective collection and recycling of the monthly payments will be the ultimate test of the ONL's capability and, of course, the ultimate determinant of how quickly and to what extent



These women at work on a typical new house are given technical assistance by the ONL project.

conditions in St. Martin will be improved. The experience gained by the ONL during the execution of this project, the continuing rural migration which increasingly taxes urban infrastructure systems, and the fact that an estimated 60% of the current Port-au-Prince population lives in conditions similar to those in St. Martin greatly increase the potential that this type of project will be successfully replicated in other areas of Haiti.

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The Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) is a non-profit corporation which sponsors cooperative and self-help housing and provides technical assistance to government, community, and private groups in the U.S. and abroad.



Bidonville upgrading, new community facilities, and new self-help housing in St. Martin comprise a development model to be used elsewhere in Haiti.

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