

**From Survival
to Development . . .**

A Self-Help Approach
to Community Upgrading

Port-au-Prince



The Cooperative
Housing Foundation

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PREFACE

This is an account of a squatter upgrading project in the community of St. Martin, located in the heart of Haiti's capital city, Port-au-Prince. The story of St. Martin is significant. It conveys lessons about carrying out a squatter upgrading project under physical and socio-economic conditions best described as trying. This report serves as an assessment of the project after four years of work in Haiti.

The Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) provided technical assistance to the Hai-

tian National Housing Office (ONL)* for the St. Martin Upgrading Project, through funding from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Financing for new homes and community services facilities was contributed by the United Nations Capital Development Fund (CDF). The ONL contributed funds for project administration.

CHF wishes to acknowledge the support of the ONL staff and its former Director, Auguste Maingrette, and present Director, Louis Jadotte. It would also like to recognize the continued inter-

est and support of Fred Thomas, UNDP Resident Representative in Haiti.

This report, prepared by CHF Development Anthropologist John Mason, was reviewed by the UNDP's Fred Thomas, CHF Project Manager Jack Edmondson, and CHF Team Leader Raimundo Guarda, as well as other members of the project team. The publication of this report has been made possible by a Specific Support Grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development.

* The ONL is now called *Entreprise publique de Promotion de logements sociaux* (Public Organization for Social Housing).

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The Haitian National Housing Office (ONL) was the implementing agency for the \$1.8 million squatter upgrading program in St. Martin.

Introduction

In the center of the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince lies the neighborhood of St. Martin. This community does not present a pleasing image, yet beneath the depressing sight lies an intriguing human story. St. Martin residents, many of whom are squatters, have begun to join together to improve their community and living conditions.

This self-improvement effort was facilitated by the Haitian National Housing Office with the assistance of a Cooperative Housing Foundation technical team funded by the United Nations Development Program. A UN Capital Development Fund grant of \$1.3 million financed new homes and community services facilities for the St. Martin Quarter, while almost \$500,000 was contributed by the ONL for

administrative purposes. CHF's team assisted ONL, the implementing agency for the project. In the case of St. Martin, the combined efforts of the ONL, UNDP, and CHF, along with the residents' personal and financial participation, have not only brought about tangible improvements in the physical environment, but also a noticeably stronger sense of community among St. Martin's residents.

Hedging Their Bets to Survive

Haiti, for many, conjures images of carnivals, cock fights, and voodoo. These activities represent only one pattern of adapting to challenging life conditions. In fact, it is the day-to-day acts of *survival* that are far more important in the lives of St. Martin residents.*

Human activity abounds in the St. Martin squatter community. The bustle of daily life—men, women, and children going about their business—strikes an

Foremost, the scene of poverty sinks in, for it is one of the definitions of existence in a "bidonville" such as St. Martin.

outsider in a most impressive way on first entering the community. Foremost, the scene of poverty sinks in, for it is one of the definitions of existence in a "bidonville"*** such as St. Martin.

The rhythm of large numbers of residents criss-crossing the 20-some acres which make up St. Martin reflects both the crowded living and working conditions and the intense efforts to make a living. Much of this movement takes place along and across the Rockefeller Canal, a storm drainage ravine, cutting through the center of St. Martin.



Gambling at "borlettes" such as this one bordering the old Rockefeller Canal is one way that St. Martin's residents "hedge their bets" in their efforts to survive.

Scattered through the Quarter are numerous little betting booths, called "borlettes." St. Martin's residents gamble on the lotteries in Haiti, Dominican Republic and Venezuela, wager on local cock fights, and put their faith and sometimes their money in the cures of voodoo. But these long-shot wagers on hoped-for windfalls obscure the diligent effort of thousands of individuals working to stay alive. St. Martin's men and women, young and old, able and disabled, give daily evidence to their need to survive, their will to

improve their lives through work. Most of their earnings, about \$40 a month per family, as of the

* It is fortunate that a socio-economic study of St. Martin exists as a baseline for present planning and future comparison. The Economics of Survival: A Study of Poverty and Planning in Haiti by Simon Fass for the U.S. Agency for International Development, Office of Urban Development, July 30, 1978, was carried out in early 1976. This provocative study served as the basis for some of the descriptive parts of this report.

**A bidonville is a French term for the tin or zinc shelter comprising spontaneous communities such as St. Martin.

mid-to-late 1970's, is made through the trade and sale of manufactured items and wage labor.

Trade items such as food and dry goods are mostly sold by women, in St. Martin itself and in the city's Central Market. Manufactured items are often made at home on a contractual, piece work basis. Bead collar assembly and embroidery are typical of such home industry. Opportunities for wage labor include employment in construction, factories and the government. The work of peddlers, shoe shiners and porters, is also an important source of income for the community.

... in St. Martin, surviving means just getting by.

Although this brief sketch of work activities gives the impression of limited economic prosperity, there are forces beyond the control of St. Martin's residents that barely permit them to get by. In short, almost everyone in the bidonville must work in order to survive. And in St. Martin, surviving *means* just getting by.

Because of the slum's continuously changing character, estimating the number of people, households, and also incomes is difficult. St. Martin's population is estimated at 30,000, comprised of 5,000-to-6,000 families*. The Quarter has about 1,600 persons

per hectare, one of the highest densities in the western hemisphere. The average household has five to six members living in a house typically built out of wood planks or crate boards, with earth floors and a corrugated tin sheet roof. Most of the construction materials are from demolished houses or waste items from industrial or commercial production, including cardboard, newspapers, wire, and automobile bodies, among

others. Each family lives in very limited space, the average having a miniscule 21 ft² (about 6.5m²).

Most of the houses in St. Martin are connected to one another, tightly clustered, and situated along a maze of narrow pathways. Most homes do not have a latrine and therefore

* The 1976 Development Plan for Port-au-Prince reports a population figure of 20,000 and 4,500 families. These are based in part on the 1976 Census.



The self-help and community elements of the project required the active participation of St. Martin's residents. Community meetings were used to accomplish this and gain feedback from the residents.

Virtually no water facilities existed in the settlement itself. Three public water fountains, operating three hours per week, were located on the edge of the bidonville.

almost every family must share one with seven or eight other families. Traditionally, latrines are cleaned and well maintained.

Virtually no water facilities existed in the settlement itself. Three public fountains, operating three hours per week, were located on the edge of the

bidonville. This shortage creates an ever-present fire hazard, as witnessed by two serious fires which destroyed hundreds of houses in 1982. Furthermore, the scarcity of water drives up the cost to residents. The average family buys water from private vendors for about \$5.00 a month. This is approximately one-eighth of a family's income, almost as much as is devoted to housing. One of the main reasons for the lack of available, cheap water in the Quarter is an inadequate water system for the entire city.

Given the high cost of water, the residents have developed ill feelings towards the vendors, all of whom are women who come from outside St. Martin to sell this precious commodity. An important point in relation to housing is that when forced to, the slum dwellers will pay for water before housing. Given the character of the Haitian climate, shelter lies farther down the scale of human needs than water, since it is an absolute must.

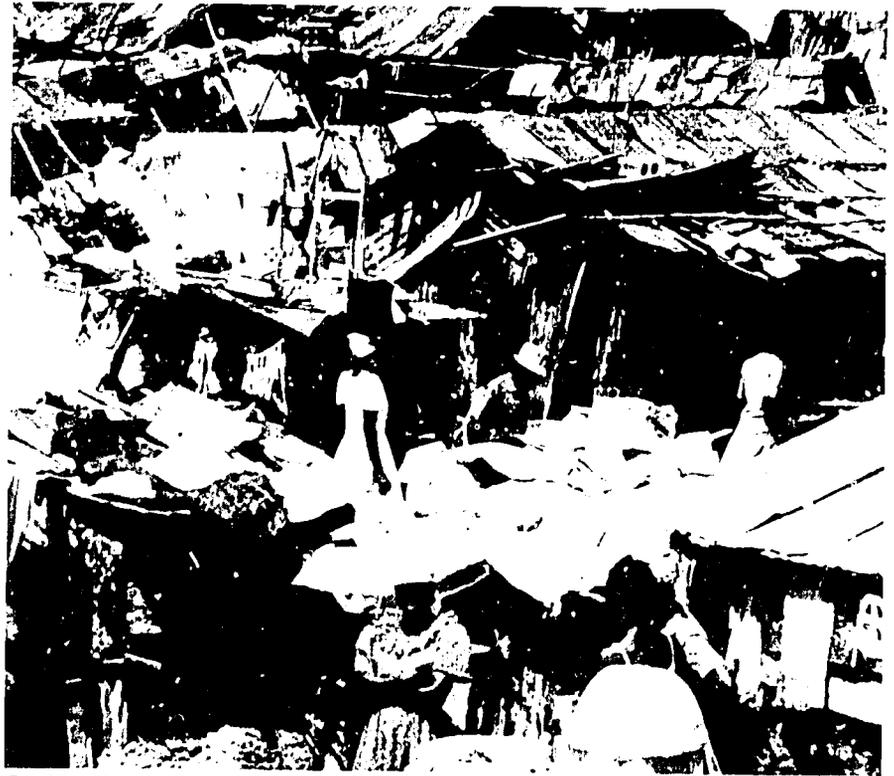


Old St. Martin is a true "bidonville," a French term for spontaneous communities where bits and pieces of tin, wood, and cardboard are used as house building materials.

Traditional Housing in St. Martin

The squalid conditions in St. Martin offer a stark contrast to the comfortable lifestyle of Port-au-Prince's small elite. Yet, regardless of the huge income gap between the haves and the have-nots, Haitian families all seem to follow the same rules of economics.* The basic rules are to make a place for oneself and family within a specific, economic activity and to keep one's capital continuously at work to build the family fund.

While investment in shelter has been desirable to St. Martin residents, it has been made difficult by conditions beyond their control. First, the land in St. Martin was predominantly held by the State and by a small number of owners, who for the most part live outside the bidonville. Second, most families could not afford to buy land, estimated to cost around \$15 per square meter. Those able to lease land from an owner might have built one or more of their own houses which they would live in or rent to others. Most squatters in St. Martin, however, have not had the money to build even a temporary shelter of cardboard and wood. Since the simplest shack costs more than \$25 per square yard (about one square meter) or nearly \$150 for a very small house, the average monthly income of \$40 simply has not permitted most families to build or own their own homes. The



St. Martin, with a population estimated at 30,000 or about 1,600 persons per hectare, has one of the highest densities in the western hemisphere.

vast majority of residents of St. Martin therefore have to rent.

House rental terms in St. Martin differ from each other mainly in their duration. There are long-term, mid-term, and weekly rental periods. The mid-term rental—a few months at a time—is the most common. In general, the shorter the rental term, the higher the rental cost.

Such distinctions in rental terms in St. Martin are due in part to differences in income. The more money a squatter family earns, the smaller the proportion of its income is devoted

to paying for shelter. Even in absolute terms, a family with a higher income spends less per month on the average and obtains better housing. The poorer families of the Quarter spend more on housing because of its higher short-term cost. That is, the housing market demands more for their short-term commitment to rent.

* From Sidney Mintz, "The Employment of Capital by Market Women in Haiti", in *Capital, Saving, and Credit in Peasant Societies*, R. Firth and B. Yarnes (ed.) Chicago, Aldine Pub.Co., 1964.

TABLE I
Relationship of Housing Occupancy Arrangements, Price and Income
in St. Martin

Indicators	Dwelling Unit Rental			Land Rent	Property Owners
	By the week	By the month	6 to 12 months	6 to 12 months	
1. % of Households	8%	36%	30%	17%	9%
2. Rent Payment	\$ 5.90	\$ 6.20	\$ 3.30	\$ 1.60	NA
3. Average Monthly Rent per Person	\$ 1.80	\$ 1.60	\$ 0.90	\$ 0.30	NA
4. Income per Household	\$29.00	\$37.00	\$36.00	\$43.00	\$53.00
5. Rent as % of Household Income	20%	16%	9%	4%	NA
6. Size of Area Occupied	4.0m ²	7.6m ²	6.3m ²	27.4m ²	28.5m ²
7. Rent per Square Meter	\$ 1.50	\$ 0.80	\$ 0.50	\$ 0.05	NA

*Adapted from Fass, P. 142; number in sample = 88; while the numbers in this table are dated (1976), the portions may be assumed to be about the same.

NA—not applicable



The average household in St. Martin has five to six family members, living in a house built out of scrap materials. Even the simplest house can cost more to build than most families can afford.

The lack of land tenure has traditionally made investment in shelter unattractive. Nevertheless, a house in the bidonville is a physical and economic necessity. The house is an integral part of production for most families. In addition to the proximity to the markets where goods are bought and sold, a house serves as a storage place for trade goods for vendors and as a workshop for small craftsmen.

Economic survival alone does not minimize the other important roles that shelter plays. As for people everywhere, the house serves as a place for loving, caring, nourishing, thinking, praying, raising a family, eating and sleeping.

The speed with which rehousing took place after a raging fire in the Barozi section of St. Martin in January 1980 underscored the importance of housing for residents. One hundred houses burned to the ground in this fire, affecting as many or more families. These families immediately found or built new housing in response to their need for private space, protection from the weather, security, and their need to continue the work of producing for survival. The tragedy clarified the need for improved, safer housing and served as an important stimulus for the project which is the subject of this account.

A "Dream" Becomes a Plan

Haitian government planners have emphasized the need for balanced regional growth in their country. The 1970-1975 National Development Plan called for the decentralization of economic activity and population in Port-au-Prince, where most of the industrial production and commerce of the country occurs. However, despite the planning efforts, the types of investments made in the capital during 1970-75 have in fact further concentrated economic and population growth in the City. Rural Haitians continue to optimize their life chances by coming to places such as St. Martin to find their niche and improve their lives.

The squatter communities, an outgrowth of migration to cities, serve as a stepping-off place for many migrants and may continue to fulfill that function for several generations in St. Martin.

Imbalanced growth is characteristic of many developing countries. In Haiti, such growth is partly a function of the gap between the urban-based wealthy class and the rest of the country. The urban centers are where the money is, where employment prospects are best, and where the rural migrant

gravitates to start a new life. The squatter communities, an outgrowth of migration to cities, serve as a stepping-off place for many migrants and may continue to fulfill that function for several generations in St. Martin.

In the early 1970's the United Nations Center for Housing, Building and Planning (CHBP - now known as HABITAT) helped the ONL identify a CDF-financed urban upgrading program for St. Martin. At that time, the Haitian Government's role in housing the poor was limited. The Ministry of Public Works had given occasional support to small public housing projects, while the ONL, which was part of the Social Affairs Ministry, was responsible for administration and upkeep of several middle-income housing projects built in 1955.

A UN-CHBP study of the Port-au-Prince master plan gave priority to St. Martin as a site for an urban upgrading project. The study made recommendations for the basic upgrading of St. Martin through the provision of public infrastructure to make the community a safer, healthier place for residents. Fire breaks and hydrants were proposed to help avoid devastating fires such as the one in Barozi, and public water taps were recommended to increase the availability of water for St. Martin's residents.

In 1977, CHF, on behalf of the CDF, carried out a technical feasibility assessment of the proposed project. Based on this study, the project was approved

and a technical assistance proposal was prepared by the UNDP. On the basis of competitive bidding, CHF was awarded the contract to provide technical assistance for the St. Martin project. The project itself was directed at upgrading the traditional Quarter (Old St. Martin) and sites-and-services in a vacant area which came to be known as New St. Martin.



Everyone "dreams" of their own house . . .

Old and New Parts of the St. Martin Project

Old St. Martin is the original squatter area where most of the inhabitants reside. New St. Martin is the area where sites-and-services housing would accommodate families relocated from the Old Quarter. The planning sequence for the project placed the construction program in New St. Martin ahead of that in the Old Quarter.

Financially, the two parts of the project were treated separately, although in terms of implementation, there was considerable overlap between them. New St. Martin was intended to alleviate overcrowding in the Old Quarter, thus making it easier to upgrade infrastructure, services and shelter in the Old Quarter. Because of the sequencing of construction and the differences in the rental-purchase and mortgage systems between the two

areas, the financial management of the two was kept separate.

Table II depicts the financial structure of the project. Recoverable portions include the revolving fund monies, but exclude most of the infrastructure and administrative costs of the project.

TABLE II
Financial Structure of the Project*

Cost Distribution (US\$ in thousands)

Project Elements	New St. Martin	Combined	Old St. Martin	Total
Revolving Loan Fund	210	—	250	460
Infrastructure	196	—	223	419
Community Center and Dispensary	—	187	—	187
Latrine Pumping Truck	—	60	—	60
Project Vehicles and Equipment	—	40	—	40
Unallocated Portion	—	72	—	72
Inflation Adjustment	—	96	—	96
TOTAL	406	455	473	1,334**

*Based on CDF contribution and does not include Government of Haiti allocation of \$424,899 for administrative costs and UNDP technical assistance grant. Figures are approximate.

**Cost recoverable portion was about \$600,000.

① Old St. Martin
② 5-Meter Paved Road

③ 4-Meter Unpaved Roads
④ Rockefeller Canal

⑤ New St. Martin
⑥ New 8-Meter Paved Road



Aerial view of St. Martin showing the high density residential pattern in Old St. Martin where the upgrading of homes and services is taking place. The vacant area to the right of the Old Quarter is New St. Martin, the location of the sites-and-services part of the Project. Families in the Old Quarter whose homes had to be removed to make room for improved services such as roads were relocated to New St. Martin.

Project Mandates

The project had several guiding principles which gave form to its physical development. The Government of Haiti, UNDP, and CHF concurred from the outset that certain principles should be followed for the upgrading effort to be successful as well as repeatable. These guidelines concerned the relationship of the St. Martin inhabitants to the land they live on, the system of home purchase and ownership, and the type of group participation.

First, assurance was given the residents that they would be granted legal right to the land as a result of their participation in its upgrading. The Government expropriated the land from the few private owners in the community through an Expropriation Decree in 1978. On the newly acquired public land, roads, water, drainage, and public lighting systems, as well as latrines, an improved Rockefeller Canal, and certain community facilities would be constructed. Residential land in the project area would consist of plots with secured tenure on which new houses would be built or old houses improved.

A second principle was to assure residents of the intention to minimize displacement of existing families. Where solid neighborhood or kinship ties existed, often a sign of socio-economic solidarity, disruption was seen to be undesirable. However, new and improved streets, a public water system,

and a rehabilitated canal represented a trade-off in that they would create a much safer, healthier environment for the residents. Although these improvements required the relocation of a limited number of families, they did not need to be disruptive so long as voluntary resettlement was encouraged.

A third principle concerned the method of home ownership. A rental-purchase system was designed for St. Martin, which would make ownership possible through a fixed-rate mortgage. Mortgage repayments would go

monthly mortgage payments, to commence one month after house construction was completed. Technical assistance was to be provided by construction foremen from ONL's Technical Department.

The fifth guiding principle concerned the way in which St. Martin inhabitants could best work to fulfill their collective needs. Because of the absence of cooperative structures in the bidonville, it was determined through discussions and meetings with the residents and certain community leaders that an

PROJECT MANDATES

- Provide legal land tenure for residents in St. Martin
- Minimize displacement of existing homes
- Encourage home ownership through a rental-purchase system
- Provide technical, financial and building materials assistance
- Encourage cooperative structures through self-help construction groups

into a revolving fund, making financing available for future house loans. This system would provide affordable housing to beneficiaries and a method of recovering some project costs.

A fourth principle was that technical and financial assistance be given to St. Martin beneficiaries in acquiring building materials. House construction materials produced by the project would be issued through a building materials loan to residents forming self-help working groups. These building materials loans would be repaid through

experiment in cooperative building groups be attempted. These were conceived as self-help working groups with eight to ten families cooperating in the construction of each other's houses. On completion of the construction and moving into their new homes, these builders would then be neighbors, living side by side in attached houses, which made a residential unit or block.

CHF's Task

CHF, drawing upon its prior experience in upgrading programs, began its technical assistance to the ONL in March 1979. One of the major objectives was to assist the ONL in developing the capability to plan, manage and implement similar upgrading projects. Another objective was to find a workable approach to community participation, including the promotion of cooperatively-based local groups which would participate in constructing their own homes. A third objective was to carry out research which would demonstrate new techniques of self-help construction.

Since the ONL had limited experience in doing this specialized kind of upgrading task, CHF worked with a special project office set up within the ONL to implement the program. The office was comprised of three sections: technical services, finance-administration and community organization.

At the outset the CHF team consisted of five specialists: an architect/planner to serve as counterpart to the Haitian project manager and leader of the CHF team; a second architect assigned to the technical section to advise on planning and design matters; a construction supervisor in the same section to work with foremen on site; a finance management specialist to assist in devising systems for procuring and distributing building materi-

als, and for collecting participants' rental-purchase payments; and a social planner/community organizer to promote community participation in the project, including the formation of a housing services cooperative organization.

A key element in the technical assistance was the training of professionals and other employees of ONL to perform the detailed assignments necessary to implement projects similar to St. Martin elsewhere in Haiti. Although a basic cadre of trained technical personnel worked on the project, most were not experienced in more than the usual "brick and mortar" activities; thus, a great deal of emphasis had to be placed on building the institutional capability of the ONL to respond to the attitudes, perceptions, and style of the bidonville population.

Another responsibility of CHF was to assist the ONL in developing a plan to recover a portion of the project's cost from the residents. The cost of the project was divided into three parts: 1) the CDF contribution of \$1,308,000; 2) the Government of Haiti's allocation of almost \$500,000, for administration; and 3) the UNDP's support of technical assistance activity. Of the CDF amount, about \$600,000 was designated as recoverable. A portion of the remaining non-recoverable funds was used for community facilities, roads, and pathways. This represented a degree of subsidy, which was necessitated by the fact that beneficiaries could only afford the cost of their new homes.



New housing such as these should eventually replace existing homes in Old St. Martin.

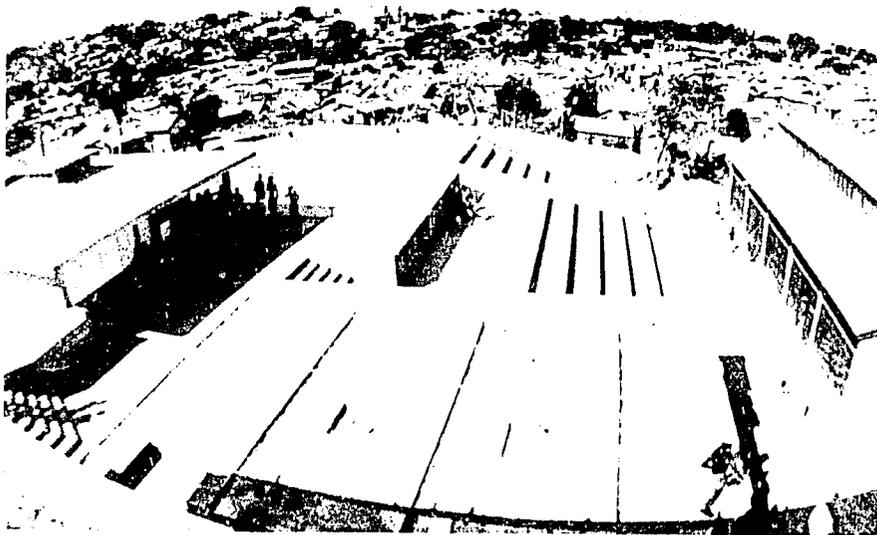
The Upgrading Approach

Past experience has shown that whatever approach to slum upgrading is used, it cannot be imposed on a community or a government agency. This is especially true in the case of St. Martin and the Haitian government agencies. The peculiarities

of opportunistic community leadership, a lack of communal solidarity in St. Martin, and bureaucratic planning machinery all contributed to making the project a complex undertaking. The technical parts of the upgrading project, including plans, designs and construction, were carefully negotiated with the Haitians. The requirements

and expectations of an international agency, such as the United Nations, as well as the professional skills and perceptions of a technical assistance organization, such as CHF, at times clashed head on with the procedures and attitudes of some Haitians.

In time, adjustments took place and the project progressed. The project had to constantly adjust to changing circumstances. For example, a powerful St. Martin leader was jailed for several months for his stubborn opposition, including threats to the project team, while another local leader clearly saw it in his best interest to cooperate.



The early construction of a community center proved important to the progress of the project and provided a meeting place for the residents. Additionally, a health dispensary and child nutrition center were built. Together, these community facilities gave St. Martin's residents a sense that the project was progressing and that the government was committed to improving their community.

The project has worked largely because of the eventual give-and-take of all the parties involved.

This second leader knew that if he didn't work with the project, he could lose all of his constituents. The loss of homes caused by a fire in St. Martin also became a stimulus for the communal self-help effort in new house construction. Despite certain difficulties of working in Haiti, the ONL-UNDP-CHF approach to the upgrading of St. Martin has shown promising results. The project has worked largely because of the eventual give-and-take of all of the parties involved.

A description of the project follows according to its (1) technical, (2) financial and administrative, and (3) community organizational aspects. Although each of the three functions has been carefully defined by project officials for purposes of programming and placement of qualified specialists and other personnel, in reality—on the ground—they interrelate considerably.

Technical

Given the debilitated conditions of St. Martin, it was necessary for the UNDP and Ministry of Planning to plan an almost total upgrading of the Old Quarter. In order to provide access to all parts of the Old Quarter, new principal streets were designed and many existing pathways were scheduled for

widening. Most of this work has been completed. Street lighting for the major thoroughfares, installation of two major water mains to provide more accessible drinking water, and a system of pit latrines were also started early in the project. All of this work has now been completed.

An important part of the planning for the project was aerial photography for the purpose of detailed mapping. This was crucial, given the very dense residential patterns in Old St. Martin. Through aerial photography, both existing and proposed access routes and pedestrian pathways were detailed in the upgrading plan.



Bidonville

new self-help housing

new community facilities

Aerial photo-mapping was a key element in developing plans for upgrading St. Martin. Through this process, both existing and proposed access routes and pedestrian pathways were detailed in the upgrading plan. Shown here is the community center complex, new housing under construction and the Old Quarter of St. Martin in the background.

The Planning Process

The development plan established the following sequences:

- 1) new and improved penetration streets were carefully designed to minimize the displacement of existing homes;
- 2) self-help construction groups were formed to provide labor for new housing;
- 3) building materials were provided through a system of loans;
- 4) a cadre of technical assistants was established to advise the self-help groups;
- 5) a home rental-purchase system was prepared;
- 6) new homes were constructed;
- 7) displaced residents were moved to the new houses; and
- 8) new roads were opened.

Land Expropriation

Preceding all of these steps was an act which the ONL was not itself empowered to carry out: expropriation of the land in Old and New St. Martin. On February 2, 1978, the owners of that land were declared non-owners by the Government, with all compensation questions to be resolved by the Government Tax Office. This resulted in opposition by some landlords, given their eventual loss of high rental profits reaped over the years.

The detailed project plan set the level of house construction in St. Martin at an average of 40 units every two months, for three years. Monthly payments from the sale of these units are funneled back into a fund which is financing construction in Old St. Martin. By late 1982 almost 900 units in New St. Martin had been constructed by residents. New construction in Old St. Martin is continuing at different stages of progress.

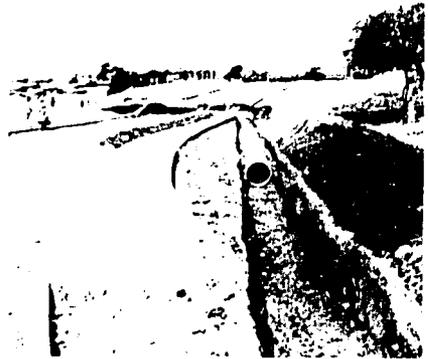
Problems and Issues

Several technical problems arose during the initial phase of construction. The first one was how to house the newly displaced residents. In one case, where the widening of a particular street in a densely populated section of Old St. Martin caused displacement, an urgent solution was needed. Temporary relocation of the existing shacks was thought to be the best solution, yet unforeseen problems were encountered. How to reconstruct the bits and pieces of each shack the way they once were was somewhat analogous to piecing together a complicated jigsaw puzzle, and much more time-consuming than building a temporary structure (though more costly). In Old St. Martin where upgrading still continues, the question of where to house residents while their old houses were being replaced has not been easy to answer. Since the

project had not attempted to deal with the provision of temporary lodging, it remained to be solved informally by the community, through the sharing of homes.

A second problem concerned building standards and the cost of materials and labor. From the outset of the project, most standards were established at an affordable level, although some were set too high. Foundations for some of the units, for example, were too deep, thus wasting material. This was ultimately corrected.

The unit cost of the first standard 16 square meter houses was \$700, a price beyond the means of many St. Martin families. Cost overruns were attributed to excessive use of professionally paid laborers and inefficient use of building materials.



The construction of new roads and water mains was part of the upgrading effort. Prior to the construction of new water mains and standpipes, virtually no water facilities existed in St. Martin.

These mistakes were corrected and the average price per unit dropped—from \$700 to a more affordable \$550.

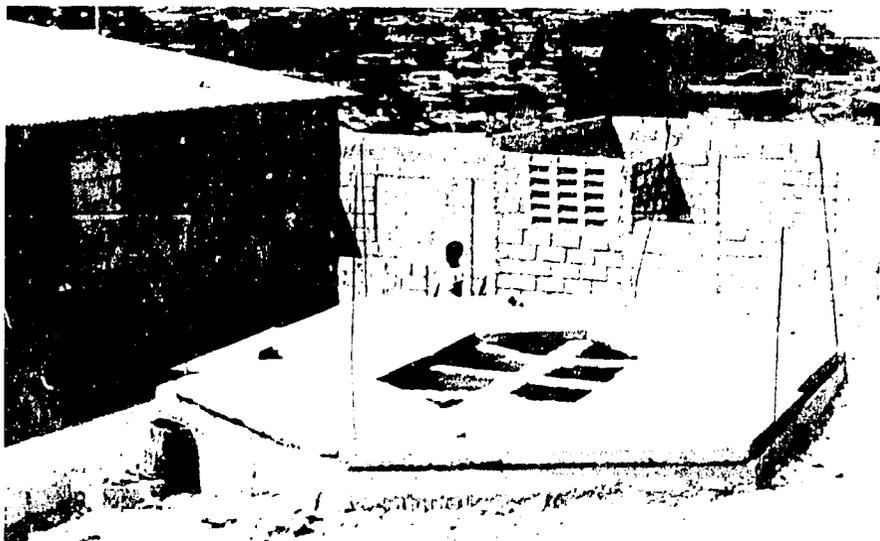
Another source of frustration was the time lag in reconstruction work on the Rockefeller Canal, a project financed by another international agency. A one-year delay in the construction of this canal set back planned street and bridge work and, consequently the relocation effort as well. When the Rockefeller Canal was completed, the other work was carried out.

Solving the water distribution problem in St. Martin was to be alleviated by newly installed water mains and standpipes. Although the mains were completed, water availability is still limited by a city-wide shortage.

Equipment purchases for garbage collection and latrine pumping also fell behind schedule, even though funding had been made available in a timely fashion. The collection of refuse and pumping out of the new communal latrines, which are now being done, have greatly improved the living conditions in the community.

Community Facilities

The early construction of a community center in the new part of the Quarter proved important to the progress of the project. In this center, many community-wide meetings have taken place, including those during which the housing services



Foundation for communal pit latrine.



Completed communal pit latrine.

The construction of new communal pit latrines was important to improving sanitary conditions in the Old Quarter. To date, the sewerage latrines have been kept clean and are emptied by pumping vehicles.

cooperative organization was formed. Additionally, a health dispensary and child nutrition center were completed. Along with the community center, these facilities and services continue to be important features of the project, giving beneficiaries a sense that "something was happening".

Sanitation was provided through semi-private pit latrines, consisting of eight toilets, each of which is locked and shared by several families. This structure represents an experiment in cooperation which to date has worked extremely well. Of equal importance is the role the latrine system has played in creating a more hygienic environment.

Materials Production Center

A temporary building materials production center has been important in meeting the objectives of the project. Located in open-sided, hut-like structures, it is a low-cost operation. Four \$500 hand-operated concrete block presses, a reservoir for water, and forms for making drain pipes and concrete slabs are the basic equipment used in the center's production. One innovation borrowed from a low-income housing program observed during an ONL-CHF training visit to Panama was the use of a petrol drum as a mold for making large drain pipes. At \$10 per drum, which can be used over and over, and \$4 in

labor and material costs for each drain pipe, the economy of this production is considerable. Cement blocks, drainage pipes, windows, and doors have been sub-contracted on a piecework basis to private contractors.

Site Supervision

Through the on-site supervision of self-help builders, the Haitian and CHF site supervisors along with seven or eight assistant site foremen, played a crucial role in ensuring that construction standards and schedules were met. The importance of this function cannot be underestimated, especially given the lack of construction skills and the demand by self-help builders for technical, on-the-job advice and assistance.



This temporary building materials production center produces concrete blocks for use in self-help construction.

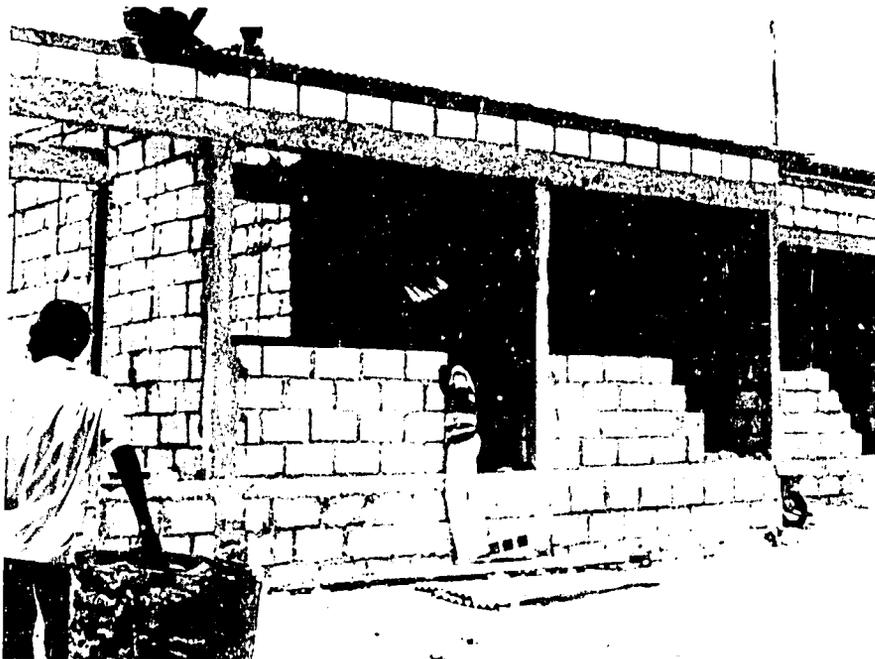
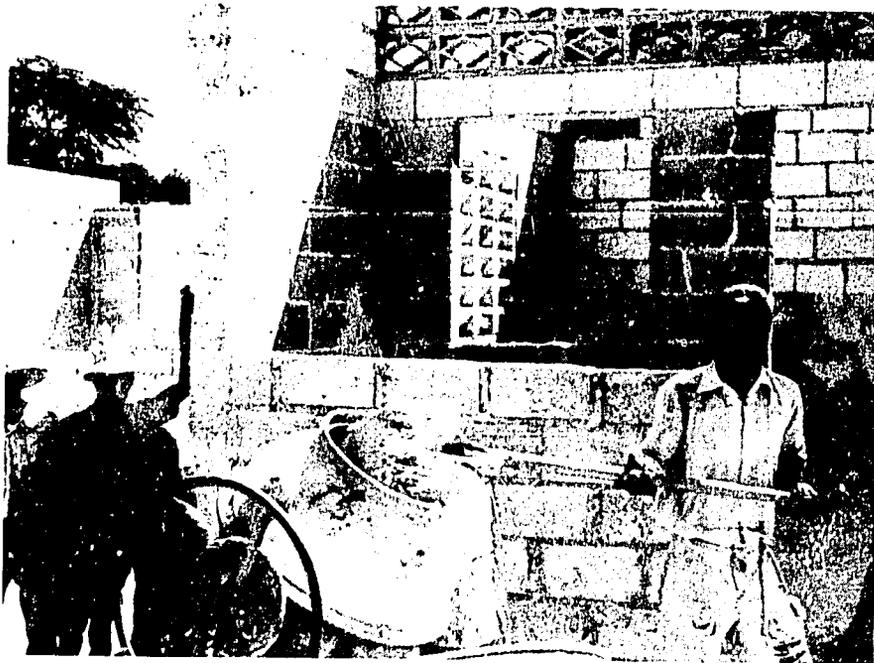
... there was usually a "technical" solution to every physical planning or construction problem that arose [but] the administrative and community organization arenas were considerably more complex.

The project employed anywhere from 40 to 80 laborers, depending on the amount of work at any one time. Their work included building the community center and roads, and block-making. In addition to supervising these laborers, the assistant site foremen also directed the work of approximately 300 resident self-help builders, a ratio of about 30 to 40 resident builders

for each foreman. The self-help working groups consisted of eight to ten heads of households, both men and women, who together comprise a residential unit.

Technical Personnel

The Haitian project manager, an engineer, and his CHF counterpart together oversaw the entire project and were specifically responsible for the team of architects, draftsmen and site foremen. This aspect of the program was the least problematic, because there was usually a "technical" solution to every physical planning or construction problem that arose. On the other hand, the administrative and community organization arenas were considerably more complex from a management and sociological viewpoint.



Both men and women were involved in the self-help construction of new housing. Building groups of eight to ten families worked together to build their units.

Finance and Administration

The finance-administration section of the project bridged the functions of the technical and community organization sections. It administered the flow of funds from the UNDP to the ONL, and established a system for the disbursement, collection and reinvestment of all funds used in the project.

The Haitian administrative officer and his CHF counterpart worked together to revise and improve the following: the processes of mortgage collection and reinvestments of mortgage payments into the revolving fund; the draw down of the UNDP fund; and the maintenance of the building materials inventory. They also made considerable progress in devising a rental-purchase payment system which was set in motion through the housing services cooperative organization, which is described later in this account.

Home Mortgage Money for New St. Martin

Traditionally, mortgage money in Haiti is very limited, even for the higher income families. Five year mortgages are about the maximum offered, making the 15 year ONL loans a novel approach in Haiti to house buying.

A loan program was developed for New St. Martin based on costs which reflected three different house sizes.

TABLE III
ONL's 15-Year Mortgage Plan for New St. Martin

House Size	Initial Monthly Payment	Loan Amount
16m ²	\$ 7	\$ 700
32m ²	\$11	\$1,100
47m ²	\$14	\$1,900

The loans listed in Table III are graduated payment mortgages based on 12% interest (level payment), amortized over 15 years, with the monthly payments programmed to increase 5% per year. The loan covers a small portion of the project's infrastructure costs and is repaid to a revolving fund.

A Rental-Purchase System for Old St. Martin

Short-term rents in the bidonville were highly exploitative, especially for the very poor. In an attempt to create an equitable

rental policy to fit within the aims of the upgrading project, some problems did occur. Despite the State expropriation of land in Old St. Martin, the matter of house ownership still remains unsettled, due to landlords who are reluctant to give up their rental profits.

The financial plan used in Old St. Martin is different from that in New St. Martin, a reflection of the existing rental structures. In the Old Quarter, a downpayment towards a rental-purchase of a new home is required, in contrast to New St. Martin where there is no deposit. However,

TABLE IV
Rental-Purchase Plan for Old St. Martin

Type of Payment	Interest Rate*	Period
Deposit	Variable	Up Front
Monthly	6-20% ** (variable)	3, 6, 10, 15 Years

*Rental-purchase interest rates are not graduated

**variable interest rates are tied to the length of the loan.

payments are not graduated in the Old Quarter, and the amount of the downpayment as well as the number of years in which the loan is repaid are variable.

A set of rules was created for the rental-purchase system in Old St. Martin, permitting the gradual rebuilding of many existing houses in the neighborhood. The rules, as presently formulated, are:

- All payments will be reinvested in housing activities in the community;
- Families participating must be residents of St. Martin;
- Upgrading work should be done by residents;
- Long-term tenure through a guaranteed lease will be granted;
- Monthly rates will be set at reasonable levels and adjusted for inflation;

- ONL as the responsible agent will issue certificates of occupancy, fix rates, and collect and account for payments; and
- Residents are responsible for making payments on time.

These rules have not been fully implemented yet, due mainly to the fact that the administrative machinery for collecting and reinvesting rental-purchase payments has not been working as well as it should.

Coupons, Materials and Records

Each self-help construction group which makes up the block housing unit has a leader responsible for the requisition of materials and tools. Materials are obtained with a coupon book for specified amounts of construc-

tion materials. The leader must sign on behalf of the group, drawing down the materials in stages. An assistant site foreman must also sign for the materials, which serves as a check on possible misuse of these valued items.

Precise estimates have been made for the amount of building materials required for each of the three available houses sizes. The distribution of materials is determined by the method of construction. Both the group drawdowns and warehouse inventories are recorded by the finance-administration section of the project. A branch office run by this unit is located close to the new community center, making it convenient for self-help builders to present their coupons.

5 SACS CIMENT	2 LIVRES CLOUS	6 PLANCHES 2x4x12	1 PORTE	100 BLOC 15
Groupe _____	Groupe _____	Groupe _____	Groupe _____	Groupe _____
Etape _____	Etape _____	Etape _____	Etape _____	Etape _____

Examples of coupons used to obtain specified amounts of building materials. From left to right: cement, nails, lumber, a door, and concrete blocks.

Community Organization

It was clear from the beginning of the project that support from community leaders was important. The official leaders of the neighborhood were formally contacted and invited to participate in meetings about the project. While most of these leaders were supportive, one in particular—the owner of more than 100 rental rooms in St. Martin—opposed the project. Early on, the ONL project leadership recognized the necessity of having an organization that could speak for the community as a whole and actively involve the people of St. Martin in the project. Through the formation of self-help construction groups the foundation for a cooperative was set.

Rumor, Rumor, Fire

Two very different kinds of events occurred at the beginning of the upgrading program which were highly instructive to the ONL community organization staff. First was a rush of rumors about the project, which created both anxieties and expectations. "Will we be ejected from our houses?" "Will we really get new houses?" "Will we have to pay for everything now?" "What will we get for free?" were some of the questions generated by the project. In response to these, the ONL initiated a campaign to actively inform the community and promote the project. In addition, it immediately started the construction of the community



Social assistants helped to organize and inform residents about the upgrading program. Shown above is a social assistant using video-tape to describe the project to a community group.

center as proof of the Government's commitment.

The second event, mentioned earlier, was the January 1980 Barozi fire in which more than 100 houses were destroyed. This incident led directly to the formation of self-help construction groups and the identification of leaders for these groups. By March 1980, three groups, to whom materials had been provided, were at work on sites and a few dozen new houses were being built. Though the fire was a tragic occurrence, it spurred

local action which served as a model for self-help home construction.

The Cooperative Idea

Given the traditional structure of St. Martin society and the conditions of the social life depicted in this account, the efforts to organize the community raised significant problems.

The cooperative concept is not fully understood by the residents, who naturally spend much of their time just trying to figure

Mini Case Studies of Opposition and Support

Case 1: Opposition to the upgrading program was significant in the case of one particular leader, who had a strong political and economic grip on his followers. He owned rental houses, led the local peristyle church (religious house of ritual and cures), supplied herbal medicines, and was a political council head. His response to the project providing a new house rental-purchase plan, a health dispensary, lighted streets around his church, and leadership on a more communal basis was straightforward. He tried to obstruct the project at almost every turn and actually succeeded at one point in stopping work on a portion of it.

In an interview with this leader, he stated that he was fundamentally opposed to the project. He suggested he would "cooperate" to the extent of buying construction materials to build new homes for his followers, which was clearly not the object of the project.

Case 2: Support for the project characterized another leader's approach. A respected person in his neighborhood, this leader said he had been sent by the Haitian Republic's first president, "Papa Doc" Duvalier to St. Martin about twelve years ago as part of the Duvalier revolution. Most of his 12 brothers and sisters were participants in the revolution, which for them, represented a clear route to an improved social position. One of his sources of income is moneylending, a common practice in Haiti. He purportedly assists three dozen needy families in his neighborhood through provision of such basics as food, clothes, money or even release from prison.

This leader contrasts with the first in that he supported the project. As a measure of his support, he organized the first self-help group in Old St. Martin to build their houses. Furthermore, he provided private loans for the individual members of the group to buy their building materials and supposedly does not charge interest on these loans. In contrast to the landlord described earlier, this leader's foresight and work toward progress is heartening.

out where they will obtain tomorrow's meals. Nor has the concept been made particularly clear to the residents by the project social assistants. This is compounded by the lack of cooperative tradition in Haiti. In fact, the normal behavioral pattern in St. Martin is one of each-family-for-itself. In general, where cooperatives exist in Haiti, they tend to follow the hierarchical tendency of the larger society. Thus, their introduction to St. Martin has been a slow and gradual process.

Where the cooperative idea has met with a measure of success in the project is in the home building effort. The self-help construction groups formed to build their own houses have been quite effective.

With leadership, tools and materials and technical assistance, these groups have been able to build good quality houses and, in many cases, in a short period of time. One criticism that has been made, however, is that once the construction is completed, the cooperative spirit

The upgrading project received both support and opposition from different community leaders. A community leader, pictured below in front of a new unit, supported the project and organized the first self-help construction group in Old St. Martin to build their houses.



fades and the group dissolves. In other words, the pre-cooperatives or cooperative-like groups are transitory in character—when the immediate goal has been reached the reason for the structure fades. This is partly understandable because in the first six months after moving to a new house, a family must concentrate on making the interior livable, rather than working on neighborhood matters.

COOLOSMA - Housing Cooperative of St. Martin

COOLOSMA was organized to help serve the shelter needs of St. Martin. Up to a certain point, it has served those needs. For example: building material loans, based on a coupon system, have been made to self-help builders in New St. Martin, and to some extent in Old St. Martin; collections on loans have been made and channeled into the revolving fund; and residents were initially organized through COOLOSMA for the construction effort and general participation in the project. In short, COOLOSMA appears to constitute the correct form of organization for carrying out the community development aspect of the project.

However, as time went on, the human side of COOLOSMA failed to fulfill the project's long-term goals and meet its objectives. Some funds were misappropriated from the revolving fund; favoritism has played a role in appointments of management staff; the by-laws have not been

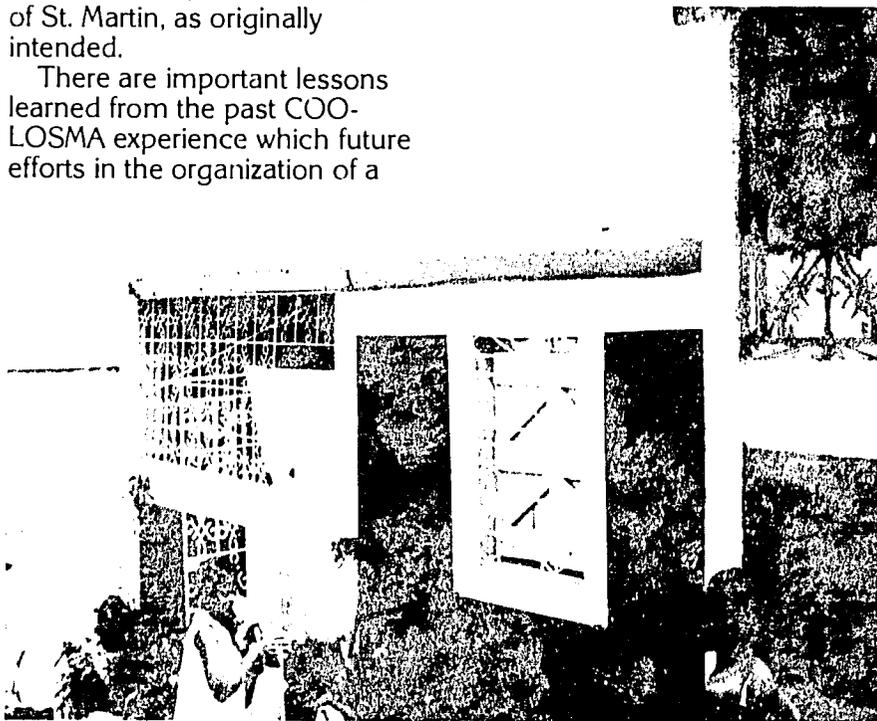
revised to provide necessary corrections of earlier mistakes; and independence of action has not been sufficiently well promoted to permit COOLOSMA's sustained development as a community-based organization.

Nevertheless, if the original principles of COOLOSMA's mandate were activated, the by-laws revised, and new management provided, among others, it could become the dynamic entity it was intended to be. Given the present plan to develop a section of St. Martin which was destroyed by fire, it is possible that COOLOSMA could be revitalized to effectively serve local residents, as well as the rest of St. Martin, as originally intended.

There are important lessons learned from the past COOLOSMA experience which future efforts in the organization of a

workable housing services organization in Haiti might incorporate. These include:

- 1) The importance of early orientation and ongoing involvement and training of participants in the methods of organizing and controlling their own community;
- 2) The need to develop, sustain and strengthen community leadership and management capabilities; and
- 3) The programming of an adequate and sustained technical assistance effort before and during project implementation.



Completed homes take on a character of their own as each family improves them over time.

Training and Personnel

Training

Training for the ONL team members was a very important part of the project. One particular training activity included a visit by team members to Guatemala, Honduras and Panama in September 1980. The team was able to observe a variety of low-income housing solutions and different ways of dealing with the problems of upgrading squatter settlements. Furthermore, functioning housing cooperatives were seen closeup for the first time.

... the social assistants ... are the ones who motivate the squatter population to do what it can to improve itself, and help the residents to directly benefit from the project.

Training in community organization has been of particular importance, given the special social skills necessary to work with St. Martin residents. Thus, seminars in human relations and group dynamics, taught by the Human Sciences faculty of the University of Haiti, were arranged for the social assistants; a special seminar on the topic of cooperatives in Haiti was set up with the assistance and instruction of the National Council of Cooperation; and an audio-visual course

intended for use in promoting the project in the community was given by a CHF short-term advisor. Finally, the participation of a dozen students from the Social Work Faculty of the University of Haiti in a socio-economic study of residents along Rockefeller Canal was useful as both a training exercise as well as applied research.

Personnel - Perceptions and Attitudes

One of the most serious problems was influencing attitude change and motivating the ONL social assistants. Most of the assistants were from a different social background than their clients. This was often responsible for considerable social distance, where the assistants and residents did not always share the same values, perceptions, and goals. Because of these differences, the assistants did not know how to relate to the residents in a way that successfully drew the residents into the upgrading project.

The crucial role of the social assistants in reinforcing the goals of the project cannot be overemphasized. They are the ones who motivate the squatter population to do what they can to improve their lives, and help the residents to directly benefit from the project. The social assistants were assigned to specific neighborhoods in the bidonville where they held meetings to promote the upgrading program and informed the resi-

dents about relocation possibilities, self-help construction groups, and the need for group leaders.

Another factor which may have weakened the community organization aspect of the program was the departure of the CHF community development advisor just as COLOSMA was getting under way. This was due to UNDP budget constraints.

The training of social assistants is critical to their effectiveness in organizing the community.



Commentary

In many developing countries the concept of urban upgrading is often seen by the authorities as an unacceptable solution to improving the living and working conditions of the poor. Reasons for scorning upgrading as an approach are that it does not fulfill some planners' dreams of creating a 'monument'; nor does it fulfill the need of some politicians to provide give-aways to their constituents; nor does it always make sense to beneficiaries who may not realize that upgrading their homes and community may be the only option they can afford. Nevertheless, when these three links in the development chain—planner, politician and beneficiary—can be directed towards the art of the possible, there is a good chance something helpful can be accomplished. This has happened in St. Martin.

The impetus for the upgrading did not come directly from the three above-mentioned parties. In fact, it was a donor-originated program. Nonetheless, the idea for an upgrading program for St. Martin did go through a negotiation process, based on the participation of Haitian officials, foreign assistance officials (UNDP), and urban upgrading advisors (CHF). In the long run, if the upgrading approach described in this account proves successful, it should receive the political commitment necessary for its effective replication.

If there has been a missing ingredient in the planning process, then it was the opinions of the beneficiaries as to what would be best for *them*. Also, in all such upgrading programs there is a need to elicit a participatory response from those most affected by a project. Special attention should be given to community organization in future upgrading projects. Because of the complexity of social life in communities such as St. Martin, an extra effort must be made in sensitizing the inhabitants to the benefits of an upgrading program and how they can best organize themselves to tap these benefits.

The ability of a community to speak on its own behalf for the things it needs must be nurtured and transmitted to new generations and across community lines.

And therein—for the Haitian voluntary sector—lies a further constraint to self-help, cooperatively-oriented upgrading programs. The difficulty in project implementation has underscored the effect of St. Martin's segmented community structure on the self-help, cooperative effort. Coupled with a weak public sector effort, that trait only adds to the obstacles.

One possible solution is for the residents to take the leadership in the upgrading process. Once they have more fully developed the know-how in negotiating for themselves—for this is part of the self-help, cooperative effort—they can then better fend for themselves. They should be able, with appropriate local leadership, to find and use the pressure points in the authority structure to their best advantage. In Haiti, the time for such negotiation may now be at hand.

The successful implementation of physical improvements has brought new vitality to St. Martin. For example, the building of roads has improved vehicular access to the community which in turn has benefited the small and informal sector enterprises which are now prospering because of better access to goods and markets. The physical improvements in St. Martin also serve as a "demonstration effect", encouraging residents and community leaders in other quarters to organize themselves to obtain improvements in their own neighborhoods. The ability of a community to speak on its own behalf for the things it needs must be nurtured and transmitted to new generations and across community lines. Only then can it take hold and serve as a model for others and be used by them to fulfill their requirements.

In addition to the development of a community organization which can represent itself in dealing with outside agencies, banks and public services, there is one more critical measure of the project's success—the stability of ownership of houses constructed by beneficiaries. In fact, what may be more important than residents' efforts to continue to improve their homes after the project is completed is

the extent to which residents retain ownership of their new houses in contrast to selling them to wealthier families from outside St. Martin. A final evaluation of the project will have to account for both the effect of community organization as well as the stability of home ownership by original residents.

Finally, if the St. Martin upgrading project is to be replicable, it must become the basis of

national housing policy and practice. Together the technical advisors, foreign donors, ONL, and other interested and influential officials should begin to shape such a policy, using St. Martin as an example of successful upgrading. In this way St. Martin can become a testimony to the ideals of self-help and cooperation, as well as to all who contributed to its success.



Through the self-help effort and planning, St. Martin's residents now have a more open and healthy living space.

Conclusion

There are so many pressures in squatter upgrading which must be dealt with that what seemed to be a simple project took on great complexity. Official interest, local people and resources, and the role of foreign

The "miracle" in St. Martin is that here is progress. It occurs in little spurts, but residents are working, with the help of government and donor assistance, to . . . better conditions of life for themselves and future generations.

assistance have all interacted and had a definite impact on the final results. An understanding and ability of the different parties to negotiate with one another has been and will continue to be crucial.

The "miracle" in St. Martin is that there is progress. It occurs in little spurts, but residents are working, with the help of Government and donor assistance, to provide a more adequate shelter solution and, thus, better conditions of life for themselves and future generations.

The upgrading process used in St. Martin is adaptable to other bidonvilles in Haiti. True, new funding is necessary to continue the program, and the impetus of

Most important, however, is to keep the spirit of the endeavor alive. Only then will the little "miracles" keep happening.

the present project must be maintained for future upgrading projects to occur. Just as important, is taking the experience of St. Martin and adapting it to new programs that are being considered on a broader, national scale. Most important, however, is the need to keep the spirit of the endeavor alive. Only then will the little "miracles" keep happening.



"Hedging their bets . . ." but in a more productive environment.