



# CARMEN

## Community Resource Centers for House Repairs Project Proposal for CIDA

20 September 2012



More than  
**6 200**  
houses

that were damaged  
have been evaluated  
by the CARMEN teams  
of engineers



More than  
**4 500**  
participants

have taken part in  
training courses that  
have already started



More than  
**12 800**  
families

have come to register  
in CARMEN requesting  
some kind of support



More than  
**1 000**  
Mobile Money

grants have been carried  
out using e-voucher  
system (total amount of  
more than 1 million HTG)



**20**  
Hardware  
stores

are now registered within  
the network



Close to  
**50 %**  
of beneficiaries

who have received a  
grant are women

### Key constraints for Haiti home owners looking to carry out self repairs

A detailed analysis of the current situation confirms that Haitians face a number of common constraints in order to repair and rebuild their houses.

There is a general **lack of information** among the population on the correct procedures to follow to make significant repairs to a damaged building or to build a new home or of the support available in their neighborhood to do so. Many people do not have access to legal and technical support to ensure this procedure is carried out in the best possible conditions.

The construction industry in Haiti is largely unregulated. Despite efforts to approve a revised construction code which can be effectively implemented in Haiti, there are no official standards for materials and building codes are generally only followed by larger companies. Many construction workers, especially in the informal sector have **never received training** on how to undertake safe constructions and reparations. Very few construction workers have received training on anti seismic construction techniques. This results in many occasions in sub-standard construction work being carried out on a regular basis.

Given the lack of standardization and regulation in the construction industry, **the quality of construction materials in Haiti is unpredictable and in many cases sub-standard**. Again this applies especially those materials such as cement and blocks produced by the informal sector in the low-income neighborhoods. Families investing their savings in rebuilding their home need to be sure that they are buying good quality materials in order to build resistant and safe infrastructures.

Finally, the most common constraint for almost all families who have lost their home and/or business infrastructure is **lack of financial resources** and **limited or no access to credit**.

## Title of proposed activity

### CARMEN (Community Resource Centers for House Repairs)

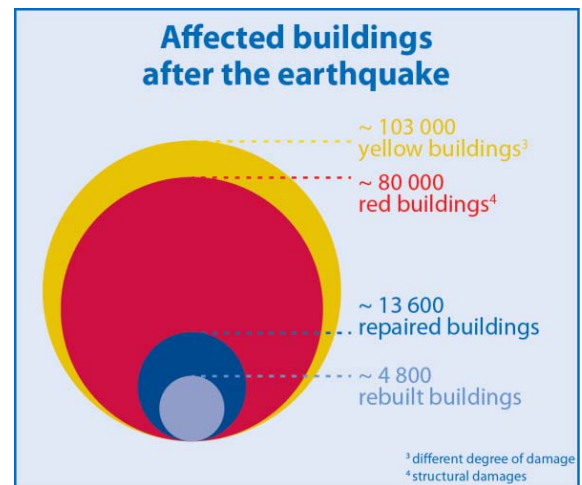
## Objective

Empower the Haitian population in target areas to rebuild their neighborhoods safely and sustainably through the provision of key services (information, training, technical and financial support) to facilitate self-repair and reconstruction.

## Context

The 12 January 2010 earthquake caused severe structural damage to more than 80,000 houses and left a further 100,000 houses with notable damages<sup>1</sup>. Despite considerable advocacy, the area of housing repairs and reconstruction has been consistently underfunded during the Humanitarian and Early Recovery stage. Consequently the results in this area are limited.

Two years after the earthquake, reported figures show that less than 14,000 houses have been repaired (13% of the total) and less than 5,000 have been rebuilt (6% of the total) by the international community, leaving a substantial gap of houses to be repaired.



Despite this limited response, the innate survival strategy employed by the Haitian population has once again prevailed and many families and communities have already begun to use their own limited resources to start to rebuild their homes and businesses. Given the severe lack of access to finance for housing repair and reconstruction in Haiti, many families, among which almost 50 %<sup>1</sup> are headed by woman, have had to rebuild their own homes little by little, wall by wall, using any resources available to find the cheapest and fastest solution to put a roof back over their families head. Some estimates suggest that as many as 50,000 homes have undergone self-repairs since the earthquake. Unfortunately, the cheapest, fastest solution is not always the safest or most sustainable.

Given the stark reality of life in the informal urban settlements, particularly in the areas of downtown Port-au-Prince and Pétion- Ville, without the correct technical and financial assistance, a substantial percentage of ongoing self-reconstruction efforts may actually increase the vulnerability of the inhabitants instead of reducing it.

Thanks to the recent impulse given to the Neighborhood Rehabilitation process, notably through the Government's flagship 16/6 neighborhood return project and other similar initiatives, the importance of providing safe and sustainable housing solutions for vulnerable families both in and outside of camps has now been confirmed as a key priority in the reconstruction process. The Government of Haiti has shown their commitment to this area by establishing a new Housing Unit which will oversee all of the reconstruction efforts in the housing sector.

In order to support this National priority, UNDP launched the CARMEN project together with the Ministry of Public Works (MTPTC) and the Municipalities of Delmas, Léogâne and Port au Prince in October 2011. The project has established 5 Community Resource Centers in earthquake affected areas to provide information, training, technical

<sup>1</sup> 46,5% of beneficiaries who received a subsidy through the CARMEN project were women. This corresponds to the global figure of 47% of households headed by a women, according to the Informal Employment Survey of IHSI (2010) a

and financial assistance to families who are looking to repair or rebuild their home. After almost one year of operations (since October 2011), the project has achieved remarkable results with 5 fully operational centers which have already attended 28,000 direct beneficiaries. 12,800 families have been registered by the centers and 4,500 people have received training on safe construction practices. In addition, project engineers have carried out 6,200 detailed evaluations of damaged houses and prepared reparation plans for these houses. In terms of financial assistance, 1 000 grants have been already been distributed to the most vulnerable families in order to fund the purchase of quality construction materials through a pioneering e-voucher mobile money system. Monitoring and Evaluation systems are currently in place in order to monitor the number of houses that have finally been repaired thanks to the project. UNDP has also developed a partnership with the private sector in order to ensure provision of quality building materials.

## Strategy

### *CARMEN unique approach*

Most existing programmes in the housing reconstruction sector seek to directly carry out house repairs for the affected families while there are also several programmes launched by international organizations to build new permanent homes for those whose homes have been completely destroyed. In general terms, housing support is costly and limited. In parallel, a substantial percentage of damaged homes have been repaired directly by the affected families, showing a willingness on behalf of the affected families to invest in housing infrastructure. Given the limited resources in this area, it is important to make the best use possible of existing resources and unleash the potential of these families to repair and rebuild their own homes by providing them with appropriate information, technical and financial support.

Bearing in mind these factors and above all the gap in the housing response, the CARMEN project was conceived to provide comprehensive support to the to the Haitian women and men who are currently carrying out their own reconstruction efforts with the objective of empowering the community to carry out safe and sustainable housing improvements while supporting the Government of Haiti to improve the coordination of the reconstruction efforts.

The strategy adopted by UNDP Haiti and the Government of Haiti to achieve this objective has been to establish five Community Resource Centers (in key affected neighborhoods in Port au Prince and Léogâne) which are currently providing the following services to the population in the surrounding areas in order to support self repair and reconstruction. The local Municipal offices are key partners in providing the link with the community.

1. Direct, useful and regularly updated **information** is provided to community members on the reconstruction process in general (suggested construction standards and building methodology) and any specific reconstruction related activities happening in the neighborhoods (rubble removal activities, community planning efforts, reconstruction/repair programmes etc).
2. Tailored **training** packages for target audiences from basic training sessions for property owners and other interested clients to theoretical and technical sessions of more than 40 hours certified by the Ministry of Public Works (MTPTC) for construction workers. The centers (all of which are fitted with meeting rooms) also host complementary community training sessions carried out in coordination with organizations working in the area on issues such as business management, gender empowerment, waste management, HIV/AIDs awareness and reduction of domestic violence.
3. Improved access to **good quality construction materials** by establishing a network of certified suppliers who work with the CARMEN project to facilitate the provision of quality products at the best possible market price for the families registered with the project.
4. **Technical evaluation** of all registered damaged houses will be carried out by qualified engineers who have been trained by the MTPTC. Once the evaluation has been carried out, the project engineers provide the family with an individualized reparation plan for the house. This plan includes the areas that need to be

repaired, how they should be repaired and in what order, what type of materials should be used and where can they buy it, as well as an estimation of how much it should cost.

5. **Financial support** is available for the most vulnerable families. Subsidies of USD 500 are currently being distributed to 1,000 vulnerable families to buy good quality building materials in order to implement the reparation plan. These subsidies are being done thanks to e-vouchers transferred through a mobile money system which enables adequate follow up on who has bought what, where, how much and when. This information is very important to analyze and to provide continuous inputs on the real costs and challenges of the reconstruction process, in turns allowing us to adapt our strategy to provide adequate technical assistance to beneficiaries. .

### *UNDP's added value*

In order to implement this strategy effectively and efficiently, UNDP Haiti has taken advantage of its global presence and experience and tapped into its network of best practices in order to incorporate innovative procedures, technology and approaches into the design of this project.

In order to duly register community members who are interested in receiving support from the CARMEN centers, UNDP has teamed up with World Vision International to implement a hi-tech PDA beneficiary registration system which allows all beneficiaries to receive an on the spot ID card and project specific ID number. From then on, the beneficiary can register for the different services offered by the centre using this ID card. This provides an excellent monitoring and evaluation tool as it is possible to track what kind of beneficiaries use what services and how frequently. This beneficiary info includes the GPS coordinates of their damaged house, allowing the project to provide feedback to the MTPTC and Municipal Office on the advances made in terms of house repairs.

The most innovative component in this project has been the inclusion of an e-voucher system which passes a voucher-like subvention to beneficiaries through the use of money technology. In order to establish this electronic platform, UNDP has established a partnership with Digicel and Transversal. After initial registration, home evaluation and training stages, selected beneficiaries receive an e-voucher on their cellular phone, which can be used only at participating suppliers whose stocks of construction materials have been verified by project engineers to ensure the products are of a high quality.

Intervention in the construction sector will not be sustainable unless the private sector is engaged and committed to making the necessary changes in order for the sector to become more competitive. The added value of improving quality standards and services at all levels of the value chain must be demonstrated in order to secure private sector buy-in. UNDP's inclusive market approach seeks to leverage resources and catalyze useful partnerships with the Private Sector and the Government to implement inclusive business models which are beneficial for the most vulnerable people. In the context of the CARMEN project, this approach is being piloted within the construction sector where tractor companies such as CEMEX has been enlisted to support the development of smaller suppliers of construction material.

Social Communication is also a key component of the project. In order to promote community participation and empowerment, the community has been fully informed about the role that the CARMEN centers can play and the services that they can provide. A social communication strategy, based on gender and culturally sensitive communication principles, has been developed to support this component.

In the new phase of the project, a team of 5 lawyers will be deployed (one per centre) with the purpose of providing key information to beneficiaries on legal issues such as property titles, renting contracts, ID cards and other administrative procedures. Even CARMEN staff won't be able to resolve all issues, the team will provide advice to citizens living in the project areas, share formats and other needed documentation as well as providing information about fees and procedures. This is a service completely new in Haiti.

UNDP has also sought to maximize existing resources by partnering with key stakeholders in relevant fields. The result is an innovative, comprehensive and collective approach to a National priority. Capacity building of National and Local actors is prioritized in every step.

### *CARMEN 2012-2013*

This pilot project was originally funded by UNDP core resources in order to ensure rapid deployment of the project team and quick activation of the community support centers. Now that the project is up and running and the proposed model has proven successful, UNDP is now seeking to continue this initiative for the remainder of 2012 and 2013 in order to increase the beneficiary and geographical coverage of project while beginning to put in place the necessary mechanisms to institutionalize the services provided.

In terms of scaling up the coverage of the services, UNDP aims to provide in the next 2 years the following support:

- Specialized technical support for the detailed evaluation of 40,000-50,000 houses (50% of the total damaged houses tagged as yellow)
- Subsidies to 10,000 vulnerable families for self-repairs using mobile money technology
- Training for more than 20,000 people (on safe construction practices and other key issues)
- Distribution of about 3,000 construction security kits
- Community related activities in specific intervention zones

With sufficient resources, the work currently being carried out in 5 centers can be consolidated with a sustainable vision to secure the continuation of services by national institutions. Moreover, and following requests from different Mayors and national authorities, the establishment of other centers could be considered in order to cover the zones in most need of housing reconstruction support.

The CARMEN initiative is framed in the national housing support project that aims to establish Community Resources Centers –CRC- (neighborhood level) and Local Technical Agencies (at communal level). Indeed, the CARMEN centers have been the first CRCs operational in Haiti after the earthquake and have served as stepping stone for other initiatives.

Furthermore, UNDP is already working with key partners from the Government and the Private Sector in order to define a sustainable way to transfer the basic functions offered by the CARMEN centers to the Government of Haiti and to foster a solid relationship with private sector actors in the area of construction and micro-finance in order to ensure the quality of construction materials, training on quality building practices and access to finance for low income home owners.

In terms of sustainability, the following strategy will be followed:

- **Community Ownership /Information:** The CARMEN centers will gradually seek to reduce its cost as a service provider and continue to serve as an information and referral centre for community members, looking for quality solutions to their construction concerns. To this end, efforts will be made to ensure that the CARMEN centers are fully part of the neighborhood/community dynamics and foster social cohesion and economic opportunities. This is already happening in the Centers included in the priority neighborhoods of the Government-led 16/6 project.
- **Registration** of interested community members will still be carried out by the centers, but will be connected to a wider network of damaged house registration managed by the GoH in partnership with the private sector. This information will also feed into efforts to improve land tenure registration and documentation in Haiti.

- **Technical Evaluation:** With sufficient resources, the CARMEN project will be able to assess more than 90% of the damaged houses identified in the area of intervention and provide the homeowners with a detailed reconstruction plan. CARMEN is already working with the MTPTC to develop the capacities of the MTPTC staff to continue to provide technical support and supervision of construction works.
- **Quality Assurance of Materials:** Together with other partners, UNDP has provided technical support to the MTPTC to define quality standards for construction materials. Through the CARMEN centers, UNDP has helped to raise the awareness among the population and private sector on the importance of producing and using good quality materials. UNDP is helping to facilitate the link between the MTPTC and the will be able to verify stocks of materials and make recommendations.
- **Training:** In terms of training in the construction sector, MTPTC experts are already providing free of charge certified training to construction workers in the affected areas. The capacity building component to MTPTC will enable the national institution to continue the training programme at very low costs.
- **GoH Supervision of Quality of Repairs:** UNDP has facilitated the link between the on-going self-repairs and the MTPTC. As a result, engineers from the MTPTC have already started to supervise and certify the quality of the self-repairs carried out under the project. The long term vision is for the MTPTC to have the capacity to offer training and certification of the technical supervisors to be hired by the private sector and to carry out spot checks to supervise the quality of repairs that are being carried out.
- **Access to Finance:** Two key strategies will be pursued. For the most vulnerable families, UNDP will support the creation of a National Policy for Housing Subsidies through the Housing Unit. For other categories, UNDP will support the National efforts to increase and facilitate access to credits for housing (with possible conditions, especially to ensure the promotion and inclusion of local/community suppliers). In both instances, careful attention will be paid to the special needs of women led households in order to develop well-designed financial products that meet the needs of the target population.