

# SHELTER



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## CARE Haiti: Neighbourhoods of Return

**Urban areas** have a major role in development. Conurbation, or the expansion and coalescence of urban areas, allows countries to develop industries and move towards economies that produce more than just raw materials. However, conurbation in cities can also pose unique problems as they represent a much more complex system and therefore need greater investment in organisation and planning.

Neighbourhoods, built environments and social links are important foundations for the development of urban zones. Resident access to opportunities and problem solving depend wholly on the availability of services, infrastructure, and legal recognition within the community. Connectivity, access to public services, links to markets and risk reduction are key elements provided by good urban development. At the same time, social interaction and internal links are the foundations of small scale economic activities, family life, social cohesion and the opportunity to participate in the greater fabric of social civic life.

**The Project** Housing and urban development in Haiti have grown unregulated for years. Unplanned neighbourhoods have expanded spontaneously with little supervision and minimum enforcement of the few established norms.

These low quality construction and infrastructure standards were evidenced when more than half of the capital in Port-au-Prince was damaged or destroyed in the 2010 earthquake. Across the country, lack of urban infrastructure, planning, housing, social organization and civic recognition are undermining development of the most vulnerable communities. While persons with resources can afford to pay for transport, water, sewage and property rights, the most vulnerable often remain shut off from these life supporting services.

A neighbourhood approach to urban development offers a long term impact on the quality of life within urban populations as well as creates a “pull” factor to people still living in camps, encouraging them to return to communities and re-establish ties. The longer neighbourhoods in Port au Prince remain unplanned, the more difficult resident return will be with temporary settlements (camps) becoming permanent, thus repeating the story of unplanned and unsupported growth.

The **Neighbourhoods of Return - Neighbourhoods Improvement Project** works to build a base for reconstruction and recovery founded on social links and local capacity which allow neighbourhoods to organise themselves and make decisions on their built environment. By including the municipality in planning, design and implementation of the project, CARE promotes links between the informal community and local government, giving informal neighbourhoods an official recognition, ultimately increasing longer term impact.

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**Objectives** The Neighbourhoods of Return - Neighbourhood Improvement Project works to create a foundation for reconstruction and recovery based on social links and local capacity, enabling neighbourhoods to make decisions and organise themselves. Social capital present in the community can then be invested to empower the community to take action in developing and safer construction methods in their neighbourhoods. By engaging municipal offices in the planning, design and implementation of this project, CARE promotes links between the community and local government, giving informal neighbourhoods an official recognition and ultimately increasing the longer term impact of the project. How the CARE neighbourhood approach works:

**Empowering Community Based Organizations.** Residents are at the forefront of decision making, prioritizing and implementing actions. Community groups are identified or formed to make decisions on neighbourhood development.

**Legitimizing informal neighbourhoods and reinforcing links with public institutions.** Organizing communities improves their ability to advocate for rights and shift governance in their favour. Working with municipal leaders, CARE helps create links to legal recognition for informal neighbourhoods.

**Create a community development plan.** CARE works to build a common vision among residents with all contributing to the selection and prioritization of works.

**Improve living conditions and reduce risks for the entire neighbourhood.** A technical team, in collaboration with the municipality, designs and prepares all materials in order to implement works. Community and local authorities also receive capacity building on Disaster Risk Reduction strategies.

**Support the most vulnerable in improving housing conditions.** Vulnerable families receive housing support for retrofit/repair. To encourage movement out of camps, homeowners are requested to provide space to a family living in a camp in exchange for project support.

#### Progress to Date

- 64 construction works supervised by CARE mobile teams
- 323 construction workers trained in improved building techniques using national construction standards
- 264 homeowners trained on improved construction, raising consumer expectations
- 66 houses retrofitted or repaired, 521 persons living in safe spaces
- 162 person moved out of camps into hosting homes
- 719 meters of walkways improved to ease accessibility and reduce high population risks
- 10 pilot homes rehabilitated to serve as model homes for future improvement sites

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