

Community approach and institutional support in urban areas



The experience of SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONALE in Christ Roi neighbourhood in Port-au-Prince, Haiti

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Liste des acronymes

ARQ	SUPPORT TO THE RETURN OF DISPLACED POPULATIONS TO THEIR NEIGHBOURHOOD OF ORIGIN
CCGGB	BRISTOUT-BOBIN GENERAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE
CIAT	INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE FOR TERRITORIAL PLANNING
CPA	STANDING COMMITTEE OF ACQUISITION
DINEPA	NATIONAL DIRECTION OF DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION
FAU	FONDATION ARCHITECTE DE L'URGENCE
MTPTC	MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS, TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS
NGO	NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION
PARAQ	NEIGHBOURHOOD RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMME
SI	SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONALE
UCLBP	UNIT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSING AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Post-earthquake context: from emergency to reconstruction

In 2010, the situation was critical and it was time to work for a return to normalcy. As early as the week after the earthquake and then following the cholera epidemic that began in October, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONALE focused its intervention on a WaSH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) emergency response covering the needs of 60,000 people spread over 52 sites in the Port-au-Prince metropolis. It then adapted its intervention to the changing humanitarian context of the capital, accompanying the process of resettlement and/or return of the populations to their neighbourhoods of origin by integrating a neighbourhood dimension into the management of needs and not just a site approach. This approach, which was intended to be holistic and sustainable, required for the community and local authorities to be strongly involved in order to allow a sustainable anchoring of sectoral programmes and an integrated response to needs (the logic of "lifesaving" in the first months of the emergency had implicated them very little).

SI thus launched a first pilot project of **Support to the return of displaced populations to their neighbourhood of origin** (programme ARQ in French) at the end of 2010 in two informal neighbourhoods, **Bristout** and **Bobin** (municipality of Petionville). A "neighbourhood profile" was carried out to obtain an initial knowledge of the area (monitoring and mapping of population movements, mapping of the boundaries of the neighbourhood, of the risks, land situation and inventory of houses, sectoral analysis...). Other activities implemented included a combination of recovery activities: Disaster Risk Reduction, Cash for Work for rubble clearance, EHA, distribution of non-food items, etc.

1. As many of the homes were destroyed or damaged by the earthquake, their inhabitants took refuge in tents in small informal camps or in the streets of their districts, or in larger, more formal camps outside the neighbourhood where NGOs concentrated their activities.



> IDP camp following the earthquake, Bristout-Bobin districts, January 2010
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1.2 Reflections on urban planning

In view of the experience in Bristout-Bobin and of the specific intervention context in which SI, and NGOs in general, were involved, SI initiated an internal reflection to think and position itself in the reconstruction of Port-au-Prince. These considerations reflected the discussions held at the institutional level and by NGOs and donors in general in Port-au-Prince. In fact, NGOs had hitherto faced few disasters of this magnitude in **densely populated urban areas**, with complex and new challenges for them: issues of density, land ownership, power games, precariousness, social dynamics and the representativeness of social groups... A reorientation of the actions of NGOs was necessary so that they fit into an overall urban approach. A **paradigm shift towards a coherent, organised and structuring reconstruction was needed**. The reflection led by SI aimed to find **bridges between emergency and development** and accompany the population and institutions in the reconstruction process in order to avoid anarchic constructions.

Within this framework, SI commissioned two urban planners-architects to carry out a study to help SI position itself in the reconstruction of Port-au-Prince, taking into account the intervention framework

decided by the Haitian government with the support of United Nations agencies. This support mission highlighted the need to “renew the operational strategies of humanitarian aid” and to better understand the social and spatial organisations that underpin the dynamics of this urban environment². It was necessary to move from a sectoral project to a territorial project by integrating a new needs assessment process. It was also recommended that this development of an “urban culture” of NGOs be accompanied by close and transparent collaboration with communities and institutions.

To this end, SI funded in 2012 an “urban study” to prepare the implementation of a reconstruction/rehabilitation project for the Christ Roi neighbourhood. Ongoing discussions with other NGOs (Care, Concern, CRF, etc.) and the European Union led to the **PARAQ (Neighbourhood Reconstruction and Development Support Programme)**³.

2. DEPREZ and LABATTUT, 2011, p. 71

3. A € 74,500,000 envelope (of which € 55,800,000 from the European Union) benefited 8 operators intervening in 10 vulnerable districts of the capital and Petit-Goâve who implemented integrated projects in collaboration with the Haitian public authorities.

1.3 Returning to the neighbourhood: a project in Christ Roi

From January 1st 2013, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONALE therefore implemented an integrated project for the “reconstruction, urban planning and economic development of the Christ Roi neighbourhood”. Initially planned to last 3 years (36 months), this project was completed at the end of August 2017. It was intended to contribute to the return of displaced persons to their neighbourhoods of origin by securing and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the neighbourhood’s living environment and improving the living conditions of the inhabitants.

To this end, the activities were structured around 5 components:

1. Institutional and community support,
2. Rehabilitation or construction of infrastructures,
3. Housing,
4. Sanitation and hygiene promotion,
5. Economic development.

4. Christ Roi is a district in the center of the city that has experienced uncontrolled development, mainly due to a lack of human, technical and financial resources enabling it to be controlled appropriately.

1.4 Objectives of this document

This case study meets several needs:

- SI had not had extensive experience in urban humanitarian response before 2010 and a coherent strategy for implementing reconstruction projects had to be developed. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that in the future, **humanitarian aid workers (and developers) will have to intervene in urban areas more frequently**, due to the increasing global urbanisation and the multiplication of slums. The reflection on Port-au-Prince is obviously specific to the Haitian context, but the lessons learned on this type of intervention are good to take and can be extended to other contexts.

- One of the lessons learned in Bristout-Bobin concerns the community approach and institutional support. Community participation was a common thread running through the various projects carried out in Port-au-Prince since ARQ in 2011. Initially in the

form of a consultation in Bristout-Bobin, it rapidly evolved towards joint planning and even decision-making⁵ with the inhabitants of Christ the King. Moreover, it must be noted that collaboration with local institutions and authorities also played a major role in the project in Christ Roi. It is clear that the combination of these two approaches has made it possible for this project to end without great tension, or at least to avoid many obstacles or shortcomings that have been observed in other areas of intervention by other NGOs.

This case study is therefore intended to begin by reporting on the contributions of the community approach in Christ Roi. The second step is to understand the role of institutions in the project.

5. These terms come from the different degrees of participation according to the URD: *Handbook on participation for humanitarian actors*, URD, 2009



> Launching ceremony of the PARAQ project in Christ Roi, March 2013

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2 COMMUNITY APPROACH: THE CEMENT OF THE PROJECT IN CHRIST ROI

The terms community approach, citizen participation and community management are nowadays an integral part of the vocabulary of humanitarian action... **However, they must be taken with caution in an urban environment where the needs, objectives and cultures of the inhabitants of a neighbourhood are rarely the same.**

Indeed, the city “attracts people of diverse origins who do not necessarily have a strong common past compared to a village terroir, which limits the use of the community analysis framework”⁶. As a result, there are multiple sub-groups of interests and more fragmented

and fluctuating power structures. According to Michel Agier, we can speak of “instant communities”⁷. The analysis and observation of the social fabric, of the relations of social groups and of the dynamics at work in the district are therefore essential before working in an urban environment with the inhabitants.

Nevertheless, for the sake of simplification, we will still use the term “community” in this document when referring to all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

6. GARDIN, 2012, p. 17

7. AGIER, 2004, p. 139-146.

2.1 The community approach as a reversal of the traditional vision of NGOs

The community approach is based on the vision of the beneficiaries of a project: they become social actors and not mere “victims”. We try to discard the «development/underdeveloped» rhetoric⁸. It is above all a “state of mind, a way of thinking about humanitarian action by reintegrating people back into the heart of the action”⁹. The relationship with the affected population is less top-down and unilateral than in conventional projects. This approach is therefore part of a power relationship between the NGO and the affected population; it responds to an ethical need for humanitarian action¹⁰.

Furthermore, in the context of reconstruction projects, the community approach is very strongly linked to urban planning and the involvement of the inhabitants in the decision-making process concerning the activities to be carried out in their districts: the citizen “moves from being a receiver to an actor” and is “empowered for this change”¹¹.

According to ALNAP, the community approach can be broken down into three objectives:

1. Community approach as a means to achieve the objectives of a programme defined by the NGO,
2. Community approach as an exchange: the two stakeholder groups compile their resources to achieve their common goal,
3. Community approach as a support for people affected by the implementation of their own initiatives.

In the PARAQ project, teams were not confined to the achievement of the first objective, as can often be the case: the project’s community approach sought to meet the other two objectives. We’ll see how that happens later on in this document.

8. Op. cit. 6, p. 26

9. SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONALE, 2013a, p. 2

10. Op. cit. 6, p.

11. CALOGERO, FLORES, BISCAN et JARROT, 2017, p. 13

2.2 Lessons learned from Bristout-Bobin

► DIFFICULTIES IN WORKING WITH LEADERS OF IDP CAMPS

In 2011, many neighbourhood associations and site committees¹² were present in Bristout-Bobin. SI, like many other NGOs, chose to work with the site committees, and in particular the central coordination committee of the fifteen existing committees in the two districts, the Bristout-Bobin General Coordination Committee [CCGBB]¹³. In a very complex post-earthquake situation in the capital, it was then easy to only have a single interlocutor to deal with without resorting to either the inhabitants themselves or the other committees. However, the partnership with the CCGBB was difficult for several reasons:

- **Wrong community representation:** By dealing only with the CCGBB, SI contributed to formalise these site committees without taking into account the power structures that existed prior to the earthquake. The self-governing “leaders” grouped within the CCGBB were not considered to be representative of the population as a whole; they were more or less recognised actors with no institutional background. SI thus supported the reinforcement of the CCGBB in haste, without giving much thought to questions of representativeness and legitimacy. This contributed to strengthen the sometimes personal power of their leadership, and created a distance between the expectations of marginalised populations and the NGO.

- **Communication problems and misunderstandings:** Communication between SI and CCGBB, as well as between CCGBB and the inhabitants, was not clearly formalised, resulting in many misunderstandings and tensions.
- **A partnership that remained at the consultation stage:** The CCGBB was not involved as a full partner.
- **Disagreements over activities:** The clearance via Cash for Work was a recurring sticking point between SI and the CCGBB, particularly on the selection/verification of beneficiaries. Many accusations of fraud and abuse of power were raised, which convinced SI to halt the process.
- **Disagreements arose over the remuneration of CCGBB leaders:** Many NGOs at the time paid the leaders. CCBGG members did not feel they were benefiting from the project.

All of these elements explain the bottlenecks that arose as the project was implemented and the failure of talks on the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding with the CCGBB. Faced with the difficulties of dialogue, SI then decided to reorient its activities for a second phase of ARQ towards Christ Roi.

12. Committees created following the earthquake, which managed site life and safety, and particularly relations with aid stakeholders

13. These committees were supposed to be very involved in the life of the population, generally had a good knowledge of their needs and had their trust.

► TAKING LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE ARQ PROJECTS INTO CONSIDERATION

It appeared that a simple transfer of the Bristout-Bobin approach to another district was not desirable¹⁴. The experience of the community outreach (CA) team confirmed the need to **place the community approach at the heart of reconstruction projects**. It was thus recognised as **the mainstay of the four SI operational teams**. All communication between SI and the field had to go through or be validated by the CA team, and for this, the technical teams had to work closely with the CA team and be trained on its approach. An office was opened in the neighbourhood to bring the NGO closer to the inhabitants, inform them, answer their questions and take into account their demands and complaints.

In 2012, the reflection on the community approach continued to progress and resulted in the development of a **neighbourhood study**, which marks a turning point in the collaboration and communication with the inhabitants of Christ Roi and within the SI mission. It is within this framework that the approach that would be applied to the PARAQ project of Christ Roi was considered.

14. MOY, 2012, p. 26

2.3 A team decided to the community approach

► A FULL-FLEDGED EXPERTISE LINKED TO THE URBAN EXPERTISE

SI was therefore able to truly refine and consolidate its community approach. The need to properly analyse and understand the social dynamics within the neighbourhood emerged first, with the elaboration of the neighbourhood study, or “**urban study**”.

The little-known urban context of NGOs forced them to acquire demographic, physical, socio-economic and technical data in order to design and calibrate their action. In parallel, they had to identify the institutional and regulatory framework and to map social stakeholders. This urban diagnosis work is essential; it requires **a full-fledged field of expertise that links urban expertise to community expertise**.

A WaSH technician or an economist could not carry out this work, unlike the architect and the urban planner, who were most likely to be able to match the different levels of interest, between the scale of micro-intervention (one street, one segment of a ravine) and the urban development of a city. This mediation work was completed by a team of Haitian sociologists who developed **a good knowledge of the urban social fabric**, who could understand the needs and aspirations of the inhabitants and who could serve as interlocutors with the population.

Focus on the urban study

This document presents the methodology followed, introduces the district (geographical situation, history, singularities, social structures) and provides a diagnosis (cross-checking of survey data and information gathered during the workshops). It also describes the priority projects identified by the inhabitants and presents SI's recommendations through strategies for the urban, social, economic and environmental development of the Christ Roi district.

“The key to urban planning is planning and developing urban expertise in the neighbourhood”¹⁵. In the context of the reconstruction of Port-au-Prince, the urban was the gateway. The capital function leads to a multitude of systems, problems and issues that need to be understood in order to intervene coherently. The fact of having recourse to urban experts has made it possible to identify these problems and to integrate humanitarian expertise (EHA, economic development, housing, protection...).

Furthermore, in the context of participatory planning, the project team considered **the payment of workshop participants** in view of the disagreements with the CCGBB on this issue¹⁶. Since land use planning

and management was considered to be a true expertise, it was decided that **the inhabitants were “experts” of their neighbourhood** and that the workshops were activities for which a service was provided involving “physical or intellectual production”¹⁷. They were therefore paid for the expertise they provided; this “pragmatic approach put things in their place: the inhabitants provided information that we did not have”¹⁸. “Participation is a very heavy job and requires a stressful and demanding investment. We have to admit that this is a real job”¹⁹.

15. Interview with Simon Deprez, Urban planning consultant, August 2017

16. Interview with Wisly Dorestin, former Community Approach Manager, August 2017

17. SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL, 2013a, p.6

18. Interview with Silvère Jarrot, former Urban Coordinator of the project, August 2017

19. Interview with Simon Deprez

Simon Deprez

“ The key to urban planning is the development of an urban expertise in the neighbourhood. »



> Workshop to prepare the urban study, August 2013
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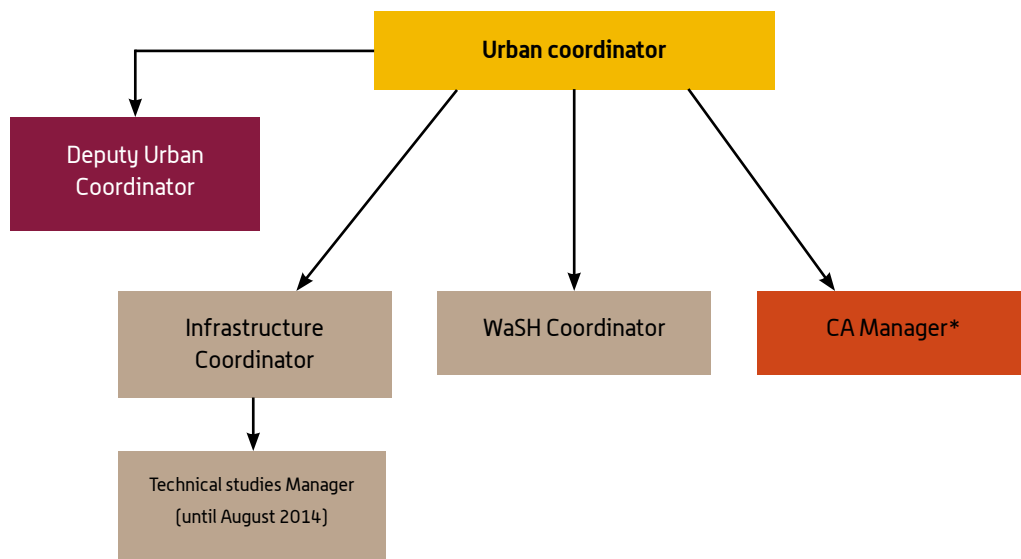
► THE CA TEAM AT THE CORE OF THE PROJECT

The community approach was **one of the pillars of the project with a dedicated team**, composed of 4 mobilisers and a leader, whose responsibilities were:

- The analysis and understanding of the social environment, of stakeholders and partners,
- Communication with the community,
- Facilitation of the participation and ownership of the project by the inhabitants,
- Receiving complaints and frustrations or misunderstandings from the field and managing conflicts,
- Mediation between technical teams and the community,
- Mediation between local and institutional structures to strengthen their links,
- Local capacity building (training) and support for local initiatives to strengthen the community's involvement in the transformation of its territory.

Any activity involving the population was accompanied by this CA team. **Its place was at the heart of the functioning of the project teams**, since it played both a support role to the technical teams on the

communication aspect, but also a main role in the reflection, implementation and monitoring of the projects of the other teams. During the first three years of the project, two of the mobilisers were each in charge of one of the two technical teams (WaSH, technical studies and infrastructures), and the fourth mobiliser had a transversal function, lending a helping hand if necessary. The CA Activity Manager was directly under the umbrella of the urban coordinator, i. e. at the same level in the organisation chart as the neighbourhood coordinator. This transversal position in the operational organisation gave it a certain independence and legitimacy to take and direct decisions that were discussed during coordination meetings: the CA team did not have an executive function applying what was requested by the technical teams. On the contrary, **it gave the pulse in terms of communication and dissemination** by advising on how to do it, by correcting what could be said at the meeting if it considered that operational choices would be detrimental to the proper implementation of the activity or to the image of SI, by communicating to the community accordingly, etc.



* CA = Community approach

> Organisational chart from August 2013 to July 2015, the most “intense” period in terms of activities

2.4 Referring inhabitants and the elaboration of the development plan

► AN OPEN AND FLEXIBLE COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION MECHANISM

When Christ Roi was chosen as the intervention district for the PARAQ programme, it was decided to **open participatory planning to all**. There was indeed a risk of being “taken hostage” if we worked with community leaders assembled within a community platform, as had been the case in Bristout-Bobin²⁰. The idea was to avoid falling into a dynamic where discussions and decisions made for the neighbourhood would be concentrated in the hands of a small group of people confined to a community platform; this would have prevented the inhabitants from being more or less involved in the urban planning of their neighbourhood. According to the CA Manager, in Bristout-Bobin, it was “always the same people who attended meetings and trainings”²¹. The CA team thus communicated extensively about the project and participatory planning, notably during the launching ceremony of the project in the neighbourhood in March 2013, in order to

encourage people from all walks of life to participate in the process. A total of 111 people, called “**referring inhabitants**”, took part in the workshops to draw up the development plan. These interlocutors were:

- persons from grassroots community organisations (CBOs),
- 68 active participants of the urban study workshops held during the second half of 2012,
- notables from the district (persons considered influential and referred by the community) identified by the city delegate and completed by the CA team,
- interested and curious persons,
- persons whose expertise could be solicited according to the issues dealt with.

20. Interview with Silvère Jarrot

21. Interview with Wisly Dorestin

► THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF THE COMMUNITY IN URBAN PLANNING

The urban study had initially identified six major development issues and development strategies for Christ Roi²². The first step in urban planning for the PARAQ project was to **prioritise the development axes for the neighbourhood**. The three issues chosen by the inhabitants were sanitation, accessibility and economic development (the last axis was voted by the population present at a meeting in July 2013). These axes were then translated into projects during some thirty workshops thanks to the intermediary role of SI and the Fondation Architectes de l'Urgence (FAU). With regard to the projects to be prioritised, SI and the FAU did not however proceed to a vote: it is not the population that decides, but the local and national authorities; the population emits priority orientations for their neighbourhood. The planning strategy certainly integrates the results of a confrontation of the visions of the territory of the different actors, but it then comes down to a political choice: “what do we

want for the future of the territory” ? This message, clearly stated at the outset of the project by the CA team and the FAU, was well understood.

Once the development plan was presented to the community (in July 2013) and validated by the authorities (in September 2013), the role of the referring inhabitants ended, but the community as a whole continued to be informed and involved in the project. An information meeting was thus organised every last Friday of the month with anyone interested. Flyers were posted throughout the district, CA mobilisers kept families informed during informal visits and discussions, SMS messages were sent to a long list of contacts... In the first few years, between 50 and 150 people attended these meetings.

22. These 6 axes were:
1) develop and reinforce economic activities (economy),
2) live together better (public spaces),
3) reconcile the neighbourhood with its environment,
4) diminish the vulnerability of the area (risk management),
5) improve access to urban services and neighborhood hygiene (sanitation),
6) strengthen neighbourhood accessibility and internal mobility (displacements).

23. FAU and SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL, 2013, p. 57

Focus on the PARAQ project of Concern Worldwide in Grand Ravine

Concern Worldwide has been working in the slum of Grand Ravine for many years. Its mediation and peace building work paved the way for the neighbourhood development project and facilitated the participatory planning planned by the project. The community mobilisation as implemented within the framework of this project had to deal with the divergent interests of the different stakeholders, the strong presence of gangs and the total absence of public authority (no state or city official could penetrate the district). A community platform was created in the first year of the project, following a consultation process during which experts in social engineering and mediation went to meet the various sectors and stakeholders present in the area (economy, health, religion, women, artists, education, gangs, etc.) to raise their awareness of the project and of the importance of their role. They were asked to identify representatives, people who could advocate and convince within their group. A 3-day retreat was organised with these people in another city to set things straight, unwind latent tensions and bring out the unsaid. An executive committee was elected and statutes were drawn up. Committees within the platform were set up to ensure their participation and take into account their demands and recommendations throughout the project (infrastructure committee, economic development committee, etc.). In addition, community facilitators were identified within the community to allow for in-depth knowledge of the community and its dynamics. These individuals were members of the community under contract who were responsible for facilitating Concern's work and getting the messages across, but also, more informally, providing information to teams on safety aspects (if a brawl was cooking and it wasn't recommended to go in the neighbourhood, for example). Due to the illegal nature of this district and the absence of state authorities, it was the inhabitants who validated the priority projects identified for implementation during the PARAQ project²⁴.

Contrary to the decisions taken by SI teams, the implementation of a community platform was essential for PARAQ's implementation in the very complex Grand Ravine zone. The platform represented a new power, "an alternative government in a neighbourhood where the state is banned". It made it possible to "balance the scales", to better distribute power and to put the State in front of a defined and palpable interlocutor²⁵.

24. Interview with Suzanne Louchard, former PARAQ Programme Manager, Concern Worldwide, August 2017

25. Interview with Silvia Gallo, former PARAQ Programme Manager, Concern Worldwide, August 2017

2.5 Mastering the communication with the inhabitants

One of the first tasks that was undertaken by the teams was the drafting of a communication manual to be used by the CA and technical teams of the project. The aim was to think carefully about the community approach, to **define and to frame the communication with the community**. This document, elaborated by "social engineers" (Haitian sociologists) and urban planners, was essential for the project: it made it possible to take social issues into account in the definition of the project and to think about the best way to avoid misunderstandings and frustrations that could arise during the implementation of the activities. We have seen that the reflection on the community approach included a questioning on the representativeness of the community and on participatory planning in the elaboration of development strategies for the neighbourhood. In addition to this, the team focused on formulating and disseminating messages.

Several communication mechanisms were identified:

1. a monthly information meeting on the progress of project activities, already mentioned,
2. an office in the neighbourhood to receive, inform and respond to residents' complaints,
3. ad hoc workshops to collect data for technical studies and evaluations,
4. ad hoc workshops to present and discuss the results of technical studies,
5. local meetings: daily visits to the inhabitants' homes, informal discussions,
6. festive events: carnival, summer workshops...

The messages that the coordination or technical teams wanted to convey to the community were worked on and validated by the CA team, who then used the appropriate language to communicate. **This work helped to avoid many tensions, and is one of the main reasons why, in the end, the project met with very few difficulties related to the community, unlike other projects carried out in urban districts.** According to local residents, the CA team was the “darlings” of the community (“if it wasn’t for the CA team...”). This relationship of trust, made possible thanks to the CA team and to the “clear, pedagogical and non-verbal discourse”²⁶, enabled the inhabitants to better understand SI, the choices made and the constraints (budgetary in particular) with which they were confronted.

However, shortcomings were identified, particularly in terms of the rigour of communication and the hopes it created within the community. For example, there was talk of building a market for the neighbourhood. During the planning workshops, residents were consulted on this project and provided information. This created expectations without sufficient clarification that this component would not be realised under this project. This lack of firmness in communications, due in part to a certain enthusiasm at the beginning, may have led to unsatisfied expectations later on.

26. Interview with
Silvère Jarrot



> Discussions between the
WaSH team, the CA team and
residents, November 2013
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THE COMMUNITY APPROACH - CONCLUSIONS AND FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- The concept of community is not self-evident in an urban environment, especially in Haiti where overall cohesion is particularly lacking. Any intervention in an urban context in general merits an **in-depth analysis of the individuals and interest groups involved**. Perhaps this means **working with representatives of communities of interest** and not with representatives of a group of homogeneous and converging residents.
- Community participation has produced **realistic information** reflecting the functioning and organisation of the neighbourhood. It revealed the coping and circumvention strategies that the population invents in the face of the lack of means and the powerlessness of the legal system. The community reflection that led to the urban study in 2012 and the development plan in 2013 made it possible to analyse the functioning of the district in its various aspects (physical, geographical, economic, political and social) on the basis of reflections produced by the inhabitants of the district. It thus gave the latter an **“urban expertise” role**.
- **Social urban expertise** (urban systems) is essential when one wishes to set up a spatial intervention²⁷.
- The community approach was not only a **MEANS** as this can be in other projects, but a **full-fledged component of activities**.
- When a community approach is implemented, interlocutors are chosen and in doing so, power is given to certain people; this can affect pre-existing power relationships. The **opening of the approach to all the inhabitants of the district** was a real added value.
- The CA team was the guarantor of any intervention in terms of communication in the field. More firmness is recommended in communication, the use of the conditional and the formulation of reservations where necessary **to avoid creating false expectations**.
- There was some understanding of the neighbourhood issue as a result of participatory outreach and social work. According to one of the urban coordinators, the workshops also served “to train people to understand how and why urban development projects are carried out”. They led them **“to think of common interests, to break with clientelism”²⁸**. This point should however be somewhat nuanced a little as the sustainability of this work is not assured, and the concept of “community” always has to be handled with caution (see previous page).

27. Interview with Simon Deprez

28. Interview with Silvère Jarrot



> Participatory workshops for the elaboration of the Christ Roi development plan, April - July 2013 © SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONALE



> De gauche à droite : ateliers participatif pour l'élaboration du schéma d'aménagement ; réunion mensuelle avec les habitants ; séance de sensibilisation sur le droits des femmes à l'occasion de la journée de la femme
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- The **communication aspect** remains central throughout the whole intervention. It is an important point at the beginning of a project, when it must be clarified that such a project is going to support the project owner, and is not an emergency project. The inhabitants did not fall into the suspicion or skepticism that is regularly found in humanitarian projects in Haiti because the messages disseminated were transparent but thoughtful. The CA team conciliated, explained and brought the residents to reason in order to avoid community disputes²⁹.

- Reducing the number of channels of communication to **a single channel** (the CA team) was the key to the success of the community approach. This minimised discordant messages. In the future, however, it will be necessary to ensure that the work between the partner teams and the CA team is clear and regular. As part of the housing component

of the project, coordination between the partners and the CA team did not always make it possible to communicate effectively with residents about the selection of owners who could or could not benefit from construction activities. This created frustrations that could have been avoided if the CA team had had a better understanding of the partners' role and work on housing.

- In some contexts, such as Haiti, it is important to have **a national CA team** that knows the culture and the unsaid and knows how to communicate well. This team must be made up, at least in part, of social engineers to better take into account the social dimension in the definition and implementation of the project.

29. Interview with Daouda Fofana, former Programme Manager, August 2017

Daouda Fofana

“ The CA team conciliated, explained and brought the residents to reason in order to avoid community disputes. »

3 A STRONG AND FORMALISED LINK WITH INSTITUTIONS

Following the earthquake and the mass arrival of NGOs from a wide variety of backgrounds, with very different motivations, experiences and philosophies, the international community quickly set up the cluster system and several working groups to try to coordinate and organise their actions. This coordination mechanism was widely criticised in the early years of the response for excluding Haitian organisations from the process (most meetings were held at the United Nations logistics base and were in English). Over time, municipal agencies and ministries were more involved, despite historically weak government capacity and weakened by the earthquake.

Indeed, the consequences of the earthquake and the many natural disasters that repeatedly affect Haiti are

greatly exacerbated by the country's many structural problems. As part of the integrated project for the reconstruction and urban development of the Christ Roi district, SI wanted to find solutions to the cyclical economic problems while integrating structural problems. By involving and supporting Haitian institutions in their area of responsibility, the project has integrated issues that go beyond the immediate needs of the neighbourhood. SI placed institutional support at the heart of its project, as one of the pillars of its governance³⁰, insofar as the responses given to the district were aimed not only at improving living conditions in the short term but also at anticipating future developments³¹.

30. Institutional support was, moreover, one of the activity components of the project, with an expected result of "institutional support that will strengthen community structures and local and state institutions in the exercise of their functions and capacities to collaborate".

31. Boyer, B., Gbêtoho Sokpoh, B. & Richener N. (2013). *Evaluation itérative. Rapport de la mission de démarrage*. Document non publié, Groupe URD.



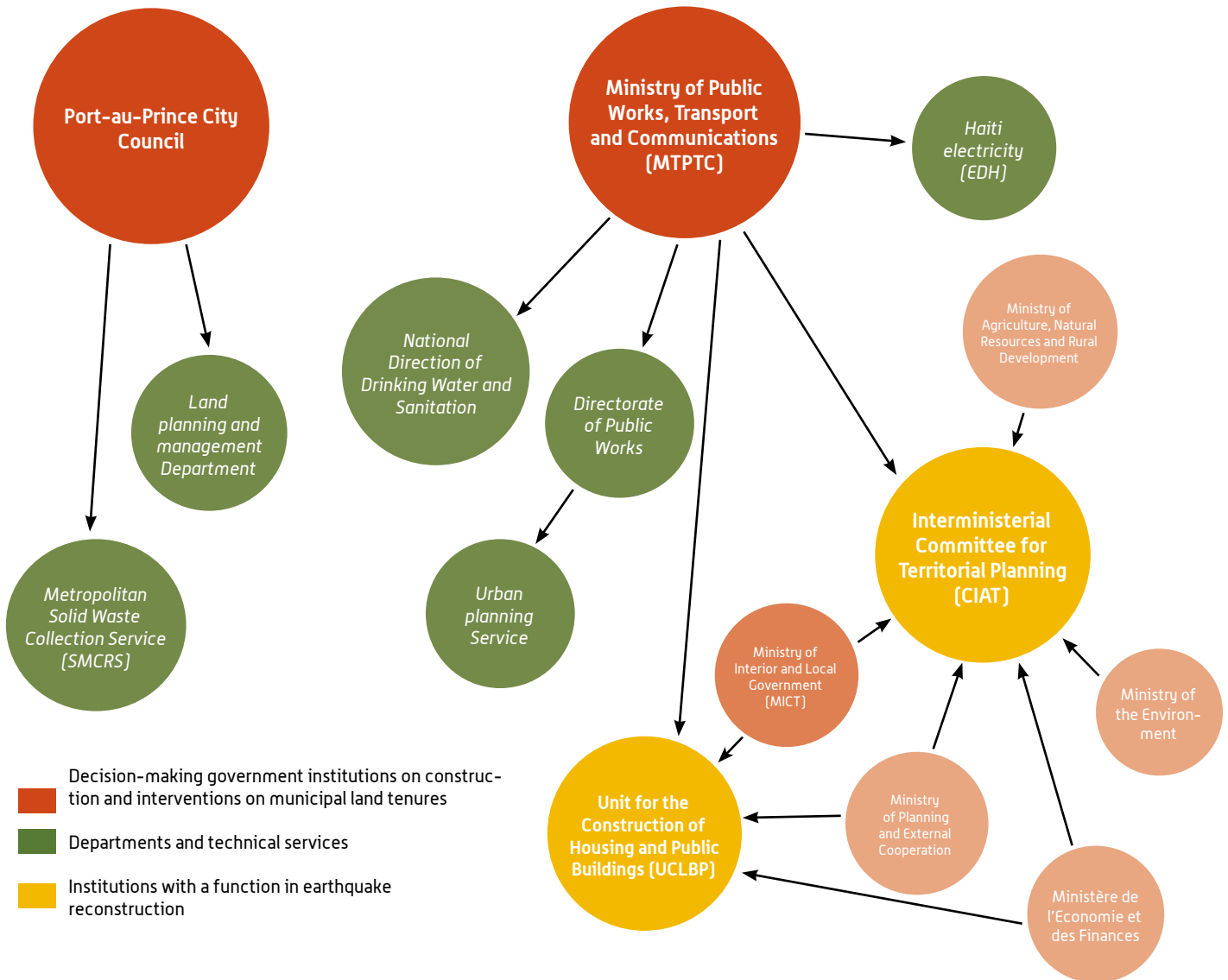
> Clockwise from the top: SI teams and the Director of sanitation at the DINEPA; Engineer Piard, Director of Public Works; SI team members, the MTPTC and the City Council; inauguration of the Bas-Norguès multisports ground in the presence of institutions.

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3.1 Issues directly linked to the competence of institutions

Territorial and spatial management and other issues related to the return to neighbourhoods involve a number of issues that fall within the jurisdiction of

several government and local institutions. The main institutions and services involved were:



Since its first projects of return to the neighbourhood, SI has carried out an in-depth assessment of the institutions and of the legislative framework regarding territorial development. Although the institutional framework of the political governance of urban development is sometimes disordered and unstable, the establishment of relations with these stakeholders and the clarification of the roles and functions of

each were essential. In spite of these constraints and weaknesses of public authorities in Haiti, SI wished and set up the mechanisms of collaboration with these stakeholders. The objective was not to ignore their prerogatives and their vision of territorial planning; on the contrary, SI positioned itself as a technician in charge of translating in an operational way the wishes, ambitions and needs of each individual.

► URBAN PLANNING AND THE PORT-AU-PRINCE CITY COUNCIL

According to the decentralization law (1996), the mayor's office is the governing body of the municipal territory. Its mission is to draw up and implement master plans for urban development, with the support of the central administration. From the very first interventions of SI in Port-au-Prince, links with the City Council were established and strengthened during the urban study work. SI showed from the outset its willingness to place its action in a strong institutional process. The organisation has since then established more extensive contacts with the General Coordinator

of NGOs, the Director of the Department of Spatial Planning and Management and other technicians within the City Hall. The project was intended to provide the City Council with instruments enabling it to embark on an operational urban planning process at the municipality level. The City Council had to select the projects deemed to be priorities for municipal issues while taking into account the development axes and projects proposed by the community through participatory planning workshops.

► PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURES AND THE MTPTC

The MTPTC (Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communications) is a key player for urban planning and urban infrastructure issues and for the configuration of technical authorities validating urban developments. It is in charge of all studies, planning, execution, maintenance and supervision of these infrastructures. Weakened, the institution struggled to assume its responsibilities in NGO projects in the years following

the earthquake, but SI was careful to build trusting relationships with key people in the Ministry, especially within the Directorate of Public Works. All contracts relating to large-scale fitting-out work were therefore co-signed with the MTPTC: SI was the prime contractor representing the MTPTC, which was itself the project owner.

► THE CONSISTENCY OF TERRITORIAL PLANNING WITH THE CIAT

The CIAT (Interministerial Committee for Territorial Planning) is an interdepartmental committee of 6 ministries. It does not have an operational mandate, but is a guarantor of the coherence of spatial planning projects. It works on 4 components, including land use planning, urban planning, housing and land

tenure. The organisation had a good understanding of reconstruction issues and dynamics and the role that institutions had to play. SI's relations with CIAT teams made it possible to know very early on what their expectations were in relation to development plans.

► SANITATION AND THE DINEPA

Two two-year framework agreements (2012-2014 and 2014-2016) were signed with the DINEPA (National Direction of Drinking Water and Sanitation) to formalise the close collaboration maintained with SI since 2010. In order to be consistent with the recommendations of this organisation, aimed at empowering households for the management of sanitation as much as possible, it was decided to support households in the self-

construction of sanitation solutions as recommended by the UCLBP. In keeping with its guidelines, it was also decided to leave the responsibility for plumbing work within the housing units to the households (prohibition of providing households with complete sanitation solutions directly). This close collaboration continued at the request of DINEPA in the city of Saint-Marc.

► HOUSING AND THE UCLBP

Created after the earthquake, the UCLBP published in 2012 the broad outlines of a housing and sustainable development policy to guide the various operations carried out in Haiti by national and international stakeholders. This national policy emphasises the

need to limit subsidies for families to rebuild their homes in order to concentrate international aid funds on infrastructure and to avoid substituting for the investments that private investors can make³².

32. UCLBP, 2013



> Rehabilitation of the road in Bas Norguès, in collaboration with the MTPTC, 2014
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3.2 Institutional support, a pillar of the project governance

As part of the project in Christ Roi, SI played a role not only as a humanitarian actor, but also as a parastatal actor by carrying out missions traditionally devolved to the State (rehabilitation of roads and bridges, housing,

construction of public infrastructures, etc.). However, it has done so with very strong institutional support and by putting each stakeholder back in its role.

► A DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

In order to involve Haitian institutions in the best possible way and to ensure professional relations of trust, SI included in the organigram a team member in charge of understanding the institutional framework and of managing relations with the various institutional stakeholders. This person, the Deputy Urban Coordinator, clarified the roles and responsibilities of

each person and their implications for the programme. Having this overview was fundamental to guarantee a coherent, rational urban development project that took into account the major orientations of the government in terms of land use and development.

► VALIDATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The development plan produced at the beginning of the project aimed to propose a sustainable and rational urban intervention strategy, defined following a process of reflection and community planning. It “provides a framework, a more structured vision of the territory; it is the beginning of the structuring of territorial development”³³. It therefore had to be validated by Haitian institutions so that they could officially uptake it, and the project had to be approved by a municipal decree to be officially ratified. To this end, a validation committee for territorial planning documents was set up. Headed by the CIAT, it is

composed of representatives of the Port-au-Prince City Council, of the MTPTC, of the MICT, of the Ministry of the Environment (MDE), of the Unit for the UCLBP, of the CIAT and of the DINEPA. The validation of the project by this committee gave this plan an official character, before it could be made legal. While this committee did not have a mandate to monitor and support the progress of the project, it did provide an opportunity to discuss certain strategic choices and to clarify the government’s ambitions.

► AN ONGOING MONITORING BY THE INSTITUTIONS

Bilateral relations were therefore established very early on with the institutions most directly involved in the activities carried out, namely MTPTC, DINEPA, CIAT, UCLBP and the Port-au-Prince City Council. These institutions were met in particular to jointly analyse all the diagnoses, evaluations and technical studies carried

out by SI and its partners. This methodology allowed for the project to be recognised by the national institutions and to have their approval for the construction of the various structures (mini-sewerage networks, roads, ravines, sports fields).

33. Interview with Engineer Sully Guerrier, Director of the Land Planning and Management Department at the Port-au-Prince City Hall, August 2017

34. Changes in the municipal council was not accompanied by a handover and the process of legalisation and implementation of these documents was thus unsuccessful.

3.3 Asserting the role of the State

SI wished to reaffirm the role of the State while bringing it face to face with its responsibilities. It positioned itself as an “operator”, i.e. in charge of implementing the directives of the PARAQ and of the Haitian government. **The question of project ownership was fundamental:** SI placed the MTPTC as the project owner, and positioned itself as delegated project manager and prime contractor, accompanying

the implementation of the project. These choices were formalised by memoranda of understanding detailing the roles of each party. This working pattern with this institutional actor was new in the intervention of NGOs in Haiti. This agreement was one of the first of its kind and the format served as a model for other operators.

► THE DIRECTIVES OF PUBLIC AUTHORITIES ENDORSED AND TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT

As the central body responsible for designing, defining and implementing the policies of the Executive branch in the field of public works³⁵, the MTPTC was the technical guarantor of all works carried out in its territory. It had to validate the works to be carried out, studies and technical guidelines. Indeed, since it is a competent state institution, this directorate “is the only one that can judge the quality of these works”³⁶. It provided general supervision by delegating “proximity” supervision to SI. The MTPTC also worked with the project’s technical teams to define and size the structures. It was closely involved in the drafting of the technical documents for the tender dossier and in the selection process of the company in charge of the works.

The Port-au-Prince City Council issued the necessary work permits for the various projects. The prerequisite for any investment operation (such as the multi-sport field in Bas Norguès) was the signature of an agreement between the City Council, the owner of the land in question and the management committee of this land. This agreement was based on a public-private partnership model; it aimed to define the terms of space management and remuneration, in relation to maintenance.

35. Memorandum of Understanding between the MTPTC and SI, signed on January 17th 2014

36. Interview with Daouda Fofana



> Rehabilitation of the road in Bas Norguès, in collaboration with the MTPTC, 2014
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► MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING, ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS AND OPERATORS

The role of the institutions is to set the operator's objectives for the project, to ensure compliance with standards and regulations, and to assume the technical and administrative part of the project³⁷. This collaboration was framed by the signing of memoranda of understanding (between SI and the MTPTC, SI and the City Council...), essential to ensure the active participation of the institutions in question. **These protocols made it possible to integrate the project into the legal processes of neighbourhood reconstruction.**

The Memorandum of Understanding concerning the partnership with the MTPTC committed the latter "in cooperation, validation and reception activities". The document clearly designates the MTPTC as project manager, SI as delegated project manager and SI or a private Haitian firm as prime contractor. It also clarifies the responsibilities of the MTPTC: to support SI in solving the problems that fall within its fields

of competences (notably networked transport, expropriations, construction standards), to validate the design studies and the conformity of the works at the various key stages, to support SI in carrying out part of the technical studies and monitoring the execution of the works, to participate in the bidding committee for large-scale infrastructure works, to pronounce the completion of these works.

Concerning the City Hall, specific memoranda of understanding were signed between the two parties. On the matter of compensation for owners affected by the ravine works, such a document clarified and formalised the role that each stakeholder had to play. The protocol thus stipulated that SI would provide the full amount of compensation, but that the City Council would be in charge of working with the notary and providing security in the event of legal proceedings or future claims.

37. PARAQ, 2015, p. 33

► OPERATIONAL PROTECTION

The working plan established with the MTPTC and the Port-au-Prince City Council ensured SI **great operational tranquillity**, as working on behalf of these institutions protected the NGO administratively by clarifying roles and responsibilities and, on certain relational aspects, from the community by giving it back its place as a direct interlocutor with the State³⁸. Their involvement "cleared SI of any liability that might arise on the works during the project or after our departure"³⁹. During the works on the ravine and when dissatisfaction of the local residents occurred following the various

delays, the MTPTC positioned itself as responsible for the progress of the works and thus preserved SI from various incriminations. The MTPTC told the residents that SI had been mandated and that it, as the project owner, had chosen SI to work on such a project. Similarly, the presence of technicians and managers from the City Council at meetings and their follow-up of activities and works allowed SI to act as an interface with the community. The case of the rights-of-way zone (see next section) is an emblematic example: it is, for instance, the State that managed the expropriations

38. Interview with Benjamin Biscan, former Urban Coordinator, August 2017

39. Interview with Daouda Fofana

40. SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONALE, 2013a, p. 6

Benjamin Biscan

“ The working plan established with the MTPTC and the Port-au-Prince City Council ensured SI great operational tranquillity, as working on behalf of these institutions protected the NGO administratively by clarifying roles and responsibilities and, on certain relational aspects, from the community by giving it back its place as a direct interlocutor with the State.”

of households affected by the ravine works, which contributed to legitimising its approach and granted it a certain legality. According to the CA Manager, in order to avoid conflicts between SI and the inhabitants, the CA team “put forward the State”.

The community approach encouraged using the labour force from the intervention area for construction and sanitation operations. This was notably the case for the ravine works, where the City Hall set up a management committee for the development of the ravine (CGANC) in charge of recruiting young people from the district.

This situation raised problems of corruption: the committee pocketed a “percentage” for each day labourer recruited and the criteria for selecting these people were very vague. The fact that SI kept a distance and did not interfere with the choice of the day labourers allowed it to be guaranteed a certain degree of safety. The CGANC dealt directly with the company SECCA, in charge of the construction of the ravine, and the City Hall. The committee secured a certain “percentage” for each day labourer recruited, and the criteria for selecting these people were very vague.

► THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL IN THE CLEARING OF THE RIGHTS-OF-WAY

Focus on the construction of Ravine Nicolas

The rehabilitation of Ravine Nicolas was a priority action for the prevention and management of natural hazards in the neighbourhood, as ‘ravines’ (gullies) condense a large number of risks in the capital. This rehabilitation included improving accessibility to the center of the district, securing displacements, integrating semi-collective sanitation solutions and improving the neighbourhood’s image by presenting it as an example of an integrated ravine development in a district of the metropolis. It was thus a “trigger” project, in the sense that it responded to several development issues simultaneously and initiated the process of neighbourhood development. The project owner of the security and development works project for Ravine Nicolas was at the outset under the responsibility of the MTPTC.

The case of the rehabilitation of Ravine Nicolas is particularly potent. In order to intervene on the ravine, a phase of preparatory works to clear the rights-of-way along the ravine on the perimeter concerned was necessary. This involved partially or totally demolishing 41 houses on the banks of the ravine and possibly relocating the expropriated inhabitants⁴¹. Discussions were thus initiated with the MTPTC and the City Council in parallel with the preparatory engineering work to evaluate possible strategies to accompany the rehousing of households affected by the works. As the City Council was unable to pay for the compensations, SI had to pay the owners. However, regarding this matter, the involvement of the City Hall and the MTPTC was a real added value that protected SI from the inhabitants of the ravine perimeter. The Standing Committee of Acquisition (CPA) thus carried out the markings

and made the estimates to assess the damage and to propose compensation costs. The MTPTC made the link between the City Council and the CPA. The City Council acted as an intermediary between the owners and the notary in charge of their files and their compensation. Within the framework of this Memorandum of Understanding, SI therefore left the public authorities to manage the communication between the various stakeholders and the compensation process; SI was excluded from potential tensions that could have arisen. It should be noted here that the community approach was a real advantage in the procedure: in the end, there was no “sense of injustice when the houses were demolished, everyone understood why and people defended the project”^{42,43}.

41. This issue of land tenure had been anticipated, but the compensation for household evictions had been declared ineligible by the European Union at the time of the project’s design and as being the responsibility of the Haitian government. Interview with Silvère Jarrot: it seems that the EU had already discussed this issue with the institutions before the PARAQ projects were launched.

42. Interview with Silvère Jarrot

43. Due to changes in the Port-au-Prince municipal council and the fact that the files then in progress were not taken over by the newly elected representatives, the agreements signed between the City Council, the owners and the notary were not stored. As a result, the current City Hall is no longer in a position to ensure that the owners who had committed themselves to release the rights-of-way continue to do so and that the ravine banks remain unoccupied.

► LAND TENURE ISSUES

Land ownership issues in Haiti are important, both in terms of land law (the rules of legitimacy) and land administration (the monitoring of who owns the land, what rights on which parcels of land)⁴⁴. The administrative confusion and uncertainty surrounding the legality of land ownership (lack of cadastre, several property statutes and authorities that can grant legal status) often become nightmares for NGOs wishing to build infrastructures. SI, within the framework of the project in Christ Roi, was confronted with land tenure issues on numerous occasions, notably for the

development of a public space at *1ère ruelle Nazon* on a field long considered public because of its use for several years as a basketball court. Once the procedures were initiated to begin the works, a landlord came forward and requested an envelope for community use of the space. Despite negotiations with the City Council, the situation remained blocked. However, the City Council played its role as an interface to encourage negotiations with the owners and the granting of building permits, which are legally worthless, but which involve the institutions (for example for the multi-sports field of Bas Norguès).

44. LEVINE, BAILEY and BOYER, 2012, p. 9



> Demolition of houses encroaching upon the rights-of-way to clear in order to carry out the security and development works for the ravine, June 2015

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INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT – CONCLUSIONS AND FOOD FOR THOUGHT



- **SI had a good reputation among the institutions** and relations were good. This was probably due to the **respect of these institutions in their roles and responsibilities**⁴⁵ and the “attentions” that SI gave them more than other stakeholders (e. g., asking the institutional interlocutors if and when they were available before setting up a meeting with the construction firm⁴⁶).

- However, the issue of **people and their goodwill** plays a role in institutional relations and good dialogues. The sustained involvement of the City Hall was probably due to the motivation and professionalism of its technicians, especially its managers. Thus, when the new municipal council was elected without continuity and without handover from the former employees, the work started was lost. In the case of the PARAQ, it was planned that the sustainability of the development plans would be ensured by the European Union within the framework of a second PARAQ phase financed by the 11th European Development Funds: the institutions would then be better supported to compile the development plans into a citywide master urban planning plan and to implement priority projects. NGOs would be mobilised for the social engineering and mediation component.

- **The acknowledgment of the existence of a district can condition the relationship with Institutions.** Indeed, the City Council did not recognise the neighbourhood of Bristout-Bobin and it was difficult to envisage any involvement on its part in the project, contrary to the project in Christ Roi, which is a historic town of the capital. When the institutions in question are absent from these so-called “slums”, the NGO must then try to find them and with them on this type of issue. In this type of district, each institution can find an interest in participating in a project: the NGO must perceive this interest and place itself at the level of the institution concerned⁴⁷.

- The project introduced **cross-sectoral cooperation between ministries and agencies concerned** with planning, related infrastructure and services, and housing. It also facilitated greater ownership of the programme’s methodologies and results by these same local stakeholders.

- The issue of **land tenure** can be a real obstacle to reconstruction and urban development. However, land ownership is closely linked to the history and identity of the country. It is therefore necessary to seek a better understanding of informal land management mechanisms and to reflect on the social uses that make up the legality of a plot of land. Collaboration with institutions is also essential to find a joint solution to this problem.

- **The degree of implication of institutions in certain activities such as daily activities must be thoroughly considered.** Either the NGO directly selects the people who thus become beneficiaries of these daily activities, on the basis of objective vulnerability criteria (to the extent that this can be guaranteed), with a high risk of jealousy and community conflict that the NGO then manages, or the NGO lets the City Hall implement its own mechanism. In the case of the Christ Roi project, the City Council created committees in charge of directly managing the selection of workers, which did not guarantee that the most vulnerable are reached, but allowed for a better progress of the work and limited the intra-community conflicts for which the NGO was not responsible. This also allowed for “traditional” sharing mechanisms to be maintained and social dynamics were therefore less disrupted. The choice of approach must thus be considered, taking into account the advantages and disadvantages of each approach, the time allotted and the capacity of the NGO to manage such situations. It is based on a very good knowledge of the context, social dynamics and on a risk analysis.

45. “We never felt like we were being stepped on. We were respected as an institution responsible for the sector, while taking care to maintain a professional relationship”. Interview with Alfred Piard, Technical Director of the MTPTC, August 2017

46. Interview with Benjamin Biscan

47. Interview with Silvère Jarrot

4 CONCLUSION: A TRIPARTITE ORGANISATION THAT GUARANTEED THE SUCCESS OF THE PROJECT

We have identified two major pillars of the project: community approach and institutional involvement.

- The **triangular relationship between NGOs, the community and institutions set up within the framework of the project was a ticket for success.** Formerly almost, if not totally absent from the neighbourhoods with a very dense informal fabric, the City Hall and the MTPTC resumed their functions and ensured a continuous presence in Christ Roi during the project. The urban study, the development plan and the sanitation plan provided them with updated and realistic information and data reflecting the needs and aspirations of the inhabitants in the territory they administer.

- **Links were created between institutions and residents.** The participatory planning work, which involved referring inhabitants and representatives of the City Hall and, depending on the theme of the meeting, the MTPTC, made it possible to initiate dialogue and concertation relations, relations that did not exist, or very few, before the project. This rapprochement of the inhabitants with the municipal authorities was one of the objectives of the project, which sought to bring back public authorities in the district.

- **SI placed itself at the heart of the relationship between community and institutions.**

From the point of view of territorial planning issues, SI played a key role in this rapprochement by **linking institutional aspirations and directives with community needs and wishes.** SI positioned itself as “a technician in charge of translating in an operational way the wishes, ambitions and needs of everyone”⁴⁸. This conciliation work was made possible by the active participation of the four stakeholders in the process: - the community represented by an enlarged group of referring inhabitants, - - and finally - the project teams (SI and its partners).

- the community represented by an enlarged group of referring inhabitants,
- City Council technicians who regularly attended the planning workshops,
- MTPTC representatives to a lesser extent (planning does not directly fall within their areas of competence) and finally,
- the project teams (SI and its partners).

These lessons learned merit to be integrated into the preparatory reflection for future SI actions in high-density urban areas on issues affecting the territory.

48. SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL, 2013b, p. 4



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