

## ★ Self assisted rehabilitation

France

CCAS Les Mureaux

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### Context

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During one day of research on auto production, organized by the PADES and the Foundation of France, Veronique Fayet, Deputy Mayor of Bordeaux, made an appeal to elected officials to find qualified operators to assist in self rehabilitation and to start experimenting at national level. Thanks to the support of several national institutions among which the DGUHC, the CDC, and the Foundation of France, Bordeaux, Mureaux, Le Havre and Perpignan have committed themselves to a project of assisted self rehabilitation. The phase of setting up the projects, which began in 2002, lasted 2 years. The operational start of the actions took place between July 2003 and September 2004, depending on the site.

### Description

The main objective is the social assistance of families in difficulty, within a collective project of improvement, adaptation and maintenance of their housing. In addition to the physical improvement of housing, re socialisation and the dynamic of the beneficiaries, adult educational and initiation to the value of work for young people are also targeted. Two main action plans have been set up within the framework of the project.

1. COLLECTIVE WORKSHOPS: this involves setting up vocational training workshops for various skills (do-it-yourself, breakdown service, home improvement, saving energy) run by a professional in the building trade.

**Participants are thus given the means to improve their home by themselves correctly. Priority is given to themes which encourage the participants to decrease costs and reduce their bills (electricity, water, gas). In addition to training in these skills, the objective is to recreate social contact and to break isolation in these areas. The collective workshops take place once a week or fortnight depending on the sites. The average by town is 35 workshops per year with approximately ten participants.**

2 SUPPORTED RENOVATION WORK: This is a turning point in the project. Supported renovation work is a means of acting on social problems with/from a technical approach. The beneficiary families advised by social services, present for the majority, a situation requiring long term social assistance. Home improvement is a way which enables us to comprehensively complete social integration over a period of time, in a sector where traditional social work only intervenes in well targeted problems.

The final goal is give to families the possibility to be autonomous. The inhabitants who took part in the housing workshops housing can then help their neighbours in a spirit of mutual aid and thus encourage social contact. The operators strongly incite the families to work in this spirit but it happens that certain renovation work is carried out individually. The number of supported (or individual) renovations is around about fifteen a year and per technical organizer, according to the areas and the public. Since the beginning of this operation, nearly 200 households have been able to take direct advantage of this project at national level.

## Means

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### **Human, financial means (budgets): \***

**HUMAN MEANS:** the objective of self rehabilitation is personalized assistance. Technical means are at the disposal of a social project. This is why assistance must be both technical and social, personalised and adaptable to the various circumstances of the beneficiaries. It breaks up into four functions:

a TRAINING function: organization of workshops for collective training sessions.

A SOCIAL COORDINATION function: meeting the beneficiaries, evaluating each situation with the institutional partner, defining their family project, coordinating interventions.

A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE function: defining a project of home improvement with the families, costing, administrative steps, financing and/or relationship with specialized organizations.

An ACTIVITIES function: the operator ensures the structure of the work carried out through supported renovation work, the organization of the tasks, keeping up the level of motivation, valuing assets, contact between the users.

### **Financial Means (budgets):**

The annual budget varies from €100, 000 to €140, 000 depending on the sites. It includes assisting fifteen to twenty households at the most (by site), purchasing materials for the workshops and renovations, running collective projects, communication, and engineering the project (financing files, follow-up evaluation, assessments).

### **Exact name of associated community/structures/institutions:**

**\*\* Town of Bordeaux, CCAS and PLIE \*\* Town of Perpignan, CCAS \*\* town of Le Havre, CCAS (housing department) \*\* town of Mureaux, CCAS and political Housing service of the town. Depending on the sites: the CAF, land spaces, local town halls, and social services. During the experimental phase of setting up the local projects, the PADES took care of the methodological structure and the national association of Fellow Builders were in charge of technical assistance.**

### **Operational partners:**

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A national steering committee brought together representatives of the four cities taking part in the experiment over a five year period. This steering committee, which was run by the PADES, was a forum of evaluation which enabled a methodological guide for future project organizers to be written. (This guide is available online on [www.padesautoproduction.org](http://www.padesautoproduction.org)) At local level, the elected officials of each city carried out significant work to mobilize their partners. The steering committees, run by the project organisers (CCAS and associated services) brought decision makers and financiers together twice a year. The technical committee, run by the operator in contact with the project organizer, brings the social workers of the social institutions of common law together every month.

They intervene in the area (the Regional Council, CIF, MSA) and the representatives of associations are able to advise beneficiaries and to contribute to their integration.

Finally, the timely participation of an elected official can be beneficial. Other participants can also be solicited to bring, if need be, their skills related to housing and/or social action: the CLI, the PDALPD, the Local Mission, local plan ANRU, the PACT, the DDASS, the ADEME, Gaz de France, EDF (gas and electricity boards), etc.

### **Financial partners (for investment and operation):**

The financial partners vary depending on the sites. The main financiers are the cities, the Regional councils, the regions, the State (within the framework of the FIV), Europe (Objective 2, PEAK Urban). Other semi public or private financiers were solicited: the CAF (social benefits); the Foundation of France; regional delegations of the FASILD; la Caisse des Dépôts et consignations, EDF and GDF (gas and electricity boards), savings banks.

## Assessment

The services for assisting self rehabilitation have been operational on the sites since 2003. In 2005 they were able to assert their position in the targeted areas as well as better adapt their actions to the inhabitants' needs and expectations. Thanks to the support of financial, technical and social partners, the professionalism of the teams working in the area as well as the investment of the inhabitants, the results of year 2005 were very satisfactory. Set objectives, creation of social contact, improvement of life quality, and sensitising families to energy saving and the non-renewable resources, are present in each action and the expected results are in constant progress. At the end of 2005, four years after the first local steering committees and two years after the actual start of the first building sites, the operators had reached a normal working rhythm and the volume of their interventions has stabilized, depending on the territories and the public involved to around fifteen sites a year and per technical organizer. On the whole, many benefit from the renovations as it is often not only the official beneficiaries who take part but also their children, relatives and neighbours (...). All this shows to what extent self rehabilitation goes beyond the domestic sphere; it allows an opening to the outside world and contacts to be created. The collective workshops have made it possible for the public to know each other and acquire the basic know how as regards home improvement. The partners have been very satisfied with the effects of the action in each town and wish to see it extended to new areas. The experiment of these last four years has confirmed that the renovation work for self rehabilitation provide a particularly interesting lever to fight against the housing crisis. By actively making inhabitants take part in the improvement of their homes, not only have they allowed people with limited incomes and especially limited know-how to continue to live decently live in their homes, but they also provide the chance to give these people the technical and symbolic capacity to take ownership of their home and maintain it in the long term. However, self rehabilitation is not a means of producing housing at a lower cost. Neither is it a miracle tool, to prescribe to all those who are badly housed. When closely associated with technical and social support, assisted self rehabilitation is a step which does not lend itself to a « one size fits all » application. It is not certain that positive and permanent results will be obtained at the end of each site. In fact assisted self rehabilitation is not necessarily advisable for all people who are in social difficulty and badly housed. On the contrary, the operators know that there are some households for which this answer is not suitable. Having said that, evaluations made after completion of work suggest that positive and long lasting effects are often obtained. In addition, in many cases, work in self rehabilitation does not have to be considered as a step exclusive of all others. The experiment shows that it can work very well with the intervention of construction companies. Likewise, repairs concerning self rehabilitation can complement, to varying degrees, other procedures of housing improvement which are directed to more diversified publics: 'Insalubrity, OPAH, OPATB etc.

## CCAS Estimation

\* SELF REHABILITATION: \*\* A TOOL OF ADAPTATION AND APPROPRIATION OF HOUSING.

D.I.Y is a means of improving a home and adapting it to one's needs and way of life, of making it more beautiful and converting it. Even if the work completed is modest, it helps people in difficulty to save energy and water, to fight against health problems due to the lack of hygiene or insalubrity. Comfort and also sanitary and thermal improvement will have effects on the wellbeing and the health of the whole family. Rediscovering the pleasure to live will encourage the appropriation of the housing ; the beneficiary will be proud of the result, because he will have contributed to it through his own participation. The improvement then has all chances of being long lasting because the person who has gone to the effort to remake his "home" will want also to maintain it.

\*\* INSTIGATING SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Social and technical assistance makes it possible to start a housing project or resolve an old project which was not successfully completed. To finish their renovation, people in difficulty mobilize their energy and their resources. It is also an occasion to learn how to be autonomous. The technical standard of the project, the choice of materials, managing the repairs on a daily basis are many occasions to find some kind of rhythm, to manage time and to take initiatives in relation to the tasks to be carried out. The pleasure of completing a concrete activity, the satisfaction of succeeding and the pride in accomplishing the work contribute to restoring a positive self image. Work on housing is an activity which has always had strong symbolism. The house works like a projection of the ego; converting or building it is the occasion "to remake one's interior" in both the real and metaphorical sense. Very often at the end of the renovation of self rehabilitation, the people in difficulty will feel re-energised, will have new found self confidence and increased autonomy to project themselves in the future.

They will be better armed to face their other difficulties: start the procedures to clear up their administrative or financial status, to better deal with their health, or to take up a failed professional project. The desire to get qualifications or retrain, to constantly redefine a professional project has led to many a beneficiary, particularly in Bordeaux finding work even if it were not the first objective of the project.

A TOOL OF ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILY AND CHILDREN.

**The effects on family dynamics can be felt in not only in the couple, through the implementation of a joint project, but also between the generations. The repair work is the occasion to better take a child into consideration and to make room for him. The work often concerns the creation or the conversion of a space for the children. They are often the main beneficiaries of these works. By taking part, it is also a first contact with work for them. For the parents, these works are the occasion to show them their capacity to do, which will have an effect on their role as educator, thus facilitating the assertion of authority.**

\*\* AN AID TO SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Repairs of assisted self rehabilitation positively modifies the relations of the beneficiary with his environment: it can restore his trust with his landlord or social workers; he becomes economical when it is necessary to call in a company; it is also the occasion to make up informal contacts of relations, solidarity and co-operation. Various people can give a helping hand: couples, children, close relatives, friends, or neighbours. Sometimes it is necessary to mobilize the financial support of the family or friends. The renovation work then becomes an occasion to develop social capital and to break insolation by entering into relations of exchange. After the repairs, thanks to the improvement of his quality of life and to the making of new relations, the beneficiary will enjoy opening up his house to the outside world. He will more readily have visitors to his place and establish good neighbourly relations on the basis of reciprocity and giving.

\*\* AN EXPERIMENT TO MAKE ONESELF KNOWN

**The elected CCAS of the 4 towns are very enthusiastic about results obtained from the participating families and wish to extend this experiment. During the last meeting of the National Steering committee, Mrs V FAYET proposed the organization of a conference in autumn 2006 in Bordeaux. Organized by the PADES, it will make it possible to bring together all the participants and partners of the 4 cities concerned to make an assessment. It will also be the occasion to present the methodological guide on the creation of the assisted self rehabilitation service in an urban environment to show project organisers and their partners how to set about doing it. It wised to be a model example of communication which will allow new operators to come to the fore.**

### Target group

Households in social difficulties and experiencing problems of "bad housing" within a perimeter defined by the organisers of the project (CCAS and associated services).

### CONTACT

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