

For Immediate Release:

Press Contact:

Kathleen Jeanty

Director of Communications

Build Change

P: (509) 3702-3349

E: kathleen@buildchange.org

Build Change Commits to Improving Concrete Block-Making Skills in Haiti in Collaboration with Save the Children and Haitian Ministry of Public Works

Announced at 2011 Clinton Global Initiative Annual Meeting, Commitment can Impact 20,000

New York, NY--(9/21/2011) -- In its continued effort to increase the number of earthquake-resistant houses in earthquake-prone developing countries, non-profit social enterprise Build Change announced its commitment to improving the concrete block-making skills and capacity of small and medium-sized manufacturers in Haiti. The commitment, implemented in collaboration with the Haitian Ministry of Public Works, Transportation & Communications (MTPTC) and Save the Children, was announced at the 2011 Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Annual Meeting in New York City on September 20, 2011 and will benefit 60 block-making enterprises.

Build Change's new commitment to Haiti is based on expanding a successful pilot project with Save the Children that provided technical assistance and training to owners and workers at concrete block manufacturing facilities in Haiti, which is a critical component in the safe rebuilding process. When the pilot project ended in August 2011, Build Change had mentored 9 Haitian small and medium enterprise producers of concrete blocks to increase the quality and profitability of production.

"As a struggling developing country, Haiti needs jobs, and people who have lost their houses in the 2010 earthquake need good quality building materials," says Dr. Elizabeth Hausler, Build Change's Founder & CEO. "That is why over the next two years, Build Change, Save the Children, and other partners propose to expand this successful pilot to continue to mentor these nine producers and reach at least 51 more block manufacturers with technical assistance, ultimately providing support to 60 manufacturers."

One of the most common building materials in Haiti is a concrete block. The strength of blocks produced by local small businesses in Haiti is widely variable and in most cases, the quality and strength are lower than that required by new reconstruction guidelines issued by MTPTC. Through its Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with MTPTC, Build Change developed simple building guidelines for new construction and retrofitting, as well as for improving the quality of building materials.

By evaluating the technical and financial aspects of small scale block production in Haiti, Build Change and Save the Children have determined that small, low or no cost changes to the production process, as well as better cash flow management, can markedly increase the quality of concrete blocks. Build Change plans to continue providing technical assistance and one-on-one, on-the-job training directly to the owners and workers at block manufacturing facilities. The organization is also in the process of preparing a simple do-it-yourself guideline for better block manufacturing and inventory control.

To facilitate quality evaluation, Build Change has partnered with technical experts, including Degenkolb Engineers, Consolidated Engineering Laboratories, and Hilti, to design and manufacture a portable testing apparatus which is essential for confirming that blocks meet quality standards. This machine is being tested now; once it is proven and profitable, Build Change will empower Haitian entrepreneurs to take the small business forward.

Build Change and Save the Children are particularly excited about the project's potential impact. On average, each block manufacturer can produce and sell enough blocks for 9 housing units in a month; in a year, 60 manufacturers can sell enough blocks for 6,480 housing units, which could meet the needs of 20,000 people. Also, each manufacturer employs on average 10 workers, and may lead to increased incomes of 600 Haitian workers.

To fund this initiative, Build Change is looking to raise an additional \$240,000 over the next year to provide technical assistance to these block makers to help them strengthen their blocks. The technical assistance is part of a larger, more comprehensive million-dollar program that includes certification, business planning, and market demand-generation activities.

ABOUT CLINTON GLOBAL INITIATIVE (CGI)

Established in 2005 by President Bill Clinton, the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) convenes global leaders to devise and implement innovative solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges. Since 2005, CGI Annual Meetings have brought together nearly 150 current and former heads of state, 18 Nobel Prize laureates, hundreds of leading CEOs, heads of foundations, major philanthropists, directors of the most effective nongovernmental organizations, and prominent members of the media. These CGI members have made nearly 2,000 commitments, which have already improved the lives of 300 million people in more than 180 countries. When fully funded and implemented, these commitments will be valued in excess of \$63 billion. The 2011 Annual Meeting will take place Sept. 20-22 in New York City.

This year, CGI also convened CGI America, a meeting focused on developing ideas for driving economic growth in the United States. The CGI community also includes CGI U, which hosts an annual meeting for undergraduate and graduate students, and CGI Lead, which engages a select group of young CGI members for leadership development and collective commitment-making. For more information, visit www.clintonglobalinitiative.org.

ABOUT SAVE THE CHILDREN

Save the Children is the leading independent organization that creates lasting change for children in need in the United States and 120 countries around the world. Founded more than 90 years ago, Save the Children helps break the cycle of poverty through programs in health, education, economic opportunities and emergency response. Save the Children has been working with the children and families of Haiti for more than 30 years.
