

## **CARE Level I Grantee Final Report**

Grantee: Harambee House Inc./Citizens For Environmental Justice  
Project location: Hudson Hill/Woodville – Savannah, GA  
Project title: Savannah Environmental Collaboration  
Grant period: 2006 - 2008  
Project Manager: Dr. Mildred McClain  
EPA Project Officer: Ms. Davina Marricini

### **I. Our Partnership**

#### **Description**

Our CARE partnership was composed of a diverse cross section of local, state, and federal stakeholders representing government, academia, faith based institutions and residents. The partnership consisted of 20 organizations and individuals. The purpose of this collective group was twofold: 1) to engage residents in a collaborative problem process and 2) to identify resources necessary to conduct a successful project. Partners met on a regular basis to discuss ways to implement each step of the NEJAC's Roadmap, the tool that was used to carry out the project in all its phases. Various partners were asked to provide specific input related to activities, data collection as well as data analysis. Each partner contributed to the project based in their work, field of expertise and access to tangible resources. Some partners were more active than others; however each partner brought something useful to the overall work of the project.

Meetings were conducted at the offices of the Harambee House and the Savannah Development Renewal Authority (SDRA). Several meetings were held prior to or after a major event to allow for the participation of our federal partner ATSDR and our state partner EPD, who were impacted by agency travel restrictions.

The partnership used consensus as the dominant method of decision making, after each representative provided individual input for consideration. All partners were equal in the project with the residents and their leadership providing overall guidance and direction. The Project Manager facilitated the partners meetings as well as coordinated input outside of the formal meetings.

- a. The environmental problems faced by the community included
  - Industrial air emissions
  - Bad odors/smells (Air)
  - Respiratory and sinus diseases and ailments, particularly asthma and bronchitis (health)
  - Abandoned and poorly maintained housing. (housing/indoor)
  - Damage to roads caused by trucking com., private garbage truck co., and other heavy truck/commercial traffic (infrastructure/transportation)
  - Vehicle speeding, including frequent high-speed police chases (infrastructure/transportation)
  - Crime and apathy to it (drug activity, trucker crimes like soliciting prostitutes, and robberies, especially at liquor store) (socio-economic)
  - Poor drainage (water)
  - Potential soil contamination from chemical and industrial plants (land waste)

- Work exposures at industrial/chemical facilities (housing/indoor)
  - Poorly maintained lawns, especially some senior residences (land/waste)
- b. Three (3) individuals and 17 organizations were involved in the CARE partnership. (see attached list)
- c. The CARE project brought two new partners to our work SDRA, Tools For Change-Savannah. They provided technical assistance where possible. They also provided facilities for meetings and other project activities. Tools For Change-Savannah conducted an environmental survey of the residents that provided us with both valuable and useful information.
- d. The Harambee House served as the convener of the CARE partnership, as well as the liaison between the partners and the residents. The important skills were brought to this project were:
- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| -managing            | -coordinating      |
| - training           | -capacity building |
| - coaching           | -time keeping      |
| - working with youth | - resourcing       |
- e. **Most Active Partners**
- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1) Savannah Development Renewal Authority | -Technical assistance     |
| 2) ATSDR                                  | -Data collection          |
| 3) EPD                                    | -Data                     |
| 4) Shinhoster Group                       | -Meeting attendance       |
| 5) Tools For Change-Savannah              | -In Kind resources        |
| 6) Carolyn Burks                          | -Volunteer                |
| 7) Neighborhood Associations              | -Hosting Meetings         |
| 8) Elected Officials                      | -Networking with the city |
- f. Your Project
- Each partner brought the voice of their organization to the project. They provided knowledge, information, documents, helping hands at events, meeting facilities, reproduction of documents, refreshments and donations of time and energy. The reputation of each organization also provided the project with credibility in the eyes of the general public and amongst the residents.
- g. Strong emphasis was placed on ensuring that the most vulnerable community members were included in the partnership. House meetings were the primary vehicle to gain input from the elderly, young people as well as people who were incapacitated in different ways. Information was provided by door to door canvassing.
- h. The project officer participated in the partnership meetings, providing information and data and helping to resolve minor issues as they were identified. Additionally the EPA staff assisted in identifying agency resources that could be used by the project in conducting its work. The project officer played a critical role in communication with the elected officials. The Environmental Justice staff of Region=IV facilitated the

development of our partnership with Regensis of Spartanburg, S. C., who serves as a mentor for our industry/policy maker engagement strategy.

- i. The biggest barrier the CARE project experience was a lack of participation from industry in the partnership. This was a very important ingredient that was missing. We continued, with the help of ATSDR, EPD and EPA-Region IV, to invite their participation. ATSDR was instrumental in finally bring International Paper Company and Arizona Chemicals to the table as participants in the working group on the Health Consultation.
- j. The partnership provided a forum and format that has allowed for the development of positive relationships. The adversarial atmosphere has been eliminated and people actually recognize that they can work together for a common good, although positions and values may differ. The relationship with the neighboring industries changed most significantly, particularly International Paper and Arizona Chemical. Our work with Colonial Oil has yet to begin. There is the place where much more work will have to be done.
- k. The Harambee House helped to create a similar natural partnership addressing issues associated with nuclear weapons production and its legacy of waste. We served as the convener of 16 organizations working collaboratively to engage the federal government and federal facilities in identifying solutions to issues and concerns of impacted communities living with radiological exposure. The Harambee House assisted with management, resource acquisition and the data collection.

## **II. Our Project**

Using the NEJAC Roadmap the residents of Hudson Hill and Woodville identified and ranked their environmental, environmental Health and community issues and concerns. We followed the steps of the Roadmap s a guide to our work. We were able to:

- Build a collaborative partnership representing a range of interests
  - Identify the environmental, health and related social and economic concerns of the community
  - Identify community vulnerabilities that may increase risks from environmental stressors
  - Develop a list of community of community assets in order to build on the existing strengths of the community
  - Identify and begin to address immediate concerns and vulnerabilities
  - Collect and summarize available information on stressors, concerns and vulnerabilities
  - Compare and rank community concerns to help identify those that have the greatest impact
  - Identify and analyze options for reducing priority concerns and for filling information gaps
  - Decide on an action plan to address concerns, fill information gaps, and mobilize the community and its partners to carry out the plan
- a. The project used the following tools and methods to identify toxic risks

- Roadmap
- Training using the RESI
- Working with ATSDR in the Health Consultation process
- Toxic release inventory
  
- Tools for Change-Savannah Survey
- Planning Charettes
- Experts Meetings
- Past Reports and Studies

We used the Roadmap Step seven (7) to help the community setting its priorities. The top risks identified were:  
 (see ranking summary)

The Community residents rank these issues based on impact to vulnerable populations.

A summary of the Risk Ranking and priorities for action is attached.

- b. The community partnership used voting and consensus to reach agreement on what toxic risks to take first. Residents of both communities offered their opinions discussed each risk and then voted on where to place their primary attention.
- c. A summary of risk ranking and priority setting process and results was distributed to the residents, policy makers and partners through postal mailings, electronic mailings, door to door and a community newsletter. The summary was also presented to the neighborhood association boards.
- d. We are currently working on toxic reduction strategies in collaboration with experts and EPA-Region IV. We are at the beginning stages.
- e. The CARE project was able to increase the level of awareness of residents and policy makers. We were able to build a solid base of support for action within our partnership, including the mayor and several industries that have committed to participation in a Business Roundtable that was launched August 15, 2008.
- f. Building momentum for the project was slow and arduous particularly in Hudson Hill. We use community champions and Regensis of Spartanburg, S. C. to help build momentum. The two site visits to Spartanburg were instrumental in creating a vision of what was possible through the CARE project. The policy maker and media briefing conducted in the winter of 2008 was a turning point because of the participation of the mayor Dr. Otis Johnson, City Councilwoman Mary Osborne, Councilman Van Johnson, County Commissioners James Holmes and Harris Odell and County Commissioner Chair Pete Likakis. The First planning charette held in St. Simon Island, GA was the initial momentum builder. The presence of Russ Wright was also a pivotal point that generated a great deal of enthusiasm and involvement in the project. We did not look for additional funding; however we attempted to integrate work and resources from other existing and new grantees.

g. The REIS as a data source and the Roadmap as an approach were important to the decision made by the two communities; the ATSDR Health Consultation was also a valuable resource because it assisted in identifying specific chemicals that had been emitted into the air. EPA-Region IV provided training in using the RESI program.

h. Significant out puts include

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <u>12</u> Community meetings  | <u>2</u> Health Fairs                         |
| <u>6</u> Partners meetings  | <u>2</u> briefing for policy makers and media |
| <u>6</u> House meetings   | <u>2</u> Charettes                            |
| <u>      </u> Neighborhood Presidents & Community Coordinators meetings |   |
| <u>100+</u> People trained  |   |
- Site visits to Regensis in Spartanburg, S.C. hosted by Rep. Harold Mitchell
  - Business Roundtable

Materials Developed

- |                             |                      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| <u>3</u> Newsletters        | <u>4</u> Fact sheets |
| <u>2</u> Community profiles |                      |

- The Army Corp of Engineers held visioning sessions with the two communities and produced illustrations to represent the communities' vision.
- i. Significant Outcomes
- More information and date provided to residents
  - Residents more aware and informed
  - Increased engagement of residents and elected officials
  - Consensus on priority issues
  - 20+ partners
  - Action plan
  - Embryonic Business Roundtable
- j. We will explore environmental risk reductions strategies during our CARE Level II project.
- k. The project implemented a revised plan that was shaped by the communities and their internal dynamics. One major decision made was to use the NEJAC Roadmap which provided an orderly and coherent guide map easily understood by residents. Using the Roadmap the achieved the following objectives.

**III. Reflection**

- a. Progress Achieved  
Without the CARE partnership our work in Hudson Hill and Woodville would have been much more difficult; and it is likely that we would not have achieved the progress that was made. The partners helped to increase the level of trust of the residents both in the process and the project. The partners provided valuable advice, supplemented resources,

collected information, advocated for involvement by policy makers and encouraged resident engagement.

b. Greatest Achievement

The project's greatest achievement was three fold:

- 1) Capacity building and leadership development amongst residents;
- 2) Involvement of elected officials in the process; and
- 3) Relationship building with industry.

c. Greatest Challenge

The greatest challenge was identifying the data that was necessary to help develop an understanding of the environmental risks facing the communities. We worked diligently with EPA-Region IV, agency and other experts, as well as ATSDR to collect data that could paint a picture of real issues that needed to be addressed.

d. Looking Back

If we could do the project over we would organize and structure the partnership into teams and working groups to help achieve the projects objectives. Each team/works group would have specific and discreet tasks with time lines. They would be composed of partners, residents and resource volunteers. We would also organize a core leadership circle with the responsibility of communicating with and mobilizing partners for participation in the various components of the project.

e. Project Design

Using the Roadmap to implement the project was very effective. However more time should have been devoted to step one (1) – organizing the partnership. Securing new partners from missing sectors should have been a priority and constant activity throughout the project.

f. Logic Model

The project did not really use a logic model

g. Interaction with CARE Communities

Initially we communicated with a CARE project out of Atlanta with the DeKalb County Health Department. Through our exchange they shared a survey they used to identify information from residents. With very little modification, Tools For Change-Savannah one of our project's partners conducted the survey in both Hudson Hill and Woodville with a total of 330 responses.

h. Media Coverage

Media coverage did not play a role in the project.

i. EPA Assistance

The project work very closely with EPA-Region IVVV particularly the Air Toxics Division. They provided technical training, consultation, project support as well as participated in significant activities and events.

j. Role of Project Officer

Our EPA Project officer was very active in our partnership, providing both information and resources needed to implement a successful project. Our project officer was very skilled at identifying agency resources and staff that could help us with the project. She maintained close communications, consistent feedback and challenged us where deficits were identified. She took a hands on approach and developed close relations with partners and residents. The project officer collaborated on every aspect of the project and often went beyond what was required of her position. She provided critical thinking on the use of the Roadmap and was a true advocate for our project.

k. Organizational Capacity

The CARE Level I project increased our organizational capacity in the following ways:

- 1) Increased awareness of how to access technical data
- 2) Innovative approaches to engaging industry
- 3) Deeper engagement of local communities
- 4) Recognition for environmental work
- 5) Enhanced understanding of the value of a logic model to guide the work; and
- 6) Producing tangible outcomes at the neighborhood level.

Examples

- 1) Training on RESI
- 2) Business Roundtable
- 3) Invitation to work with communities on other issues and projects
- 4) Working with local elected officials; called upon for advice
- 5) Development and application of logic model to other organizational projects
- 6) Revised Emergency Response and Evacuation plans by Chatham County Emergency Management Agency.

Community

- 1) Mobilization of resources and residents (increased numbers of engaged residents, accessing resources from participating papers)
- 2) Leadership Development (core group of engaged women)
- 3) Networking opportunities (participation in CARE Training and events)
- 4) Access technical resources (Visioning with Army Corp of Engineers)
- 5) Technical training (RESI)

l. Community

New community leaders emerged as a result of their participation in the project. The women of Hudson Hill must be recognized for their amazing growth and development and provision of leadership within the project and their neighborhood from very soft spoken often shy and timid remarks to bold questions and powerful statements, these women developed a community voice that resonated both with passion and common sense. The transformation was both profound and humbling. Harriett Green, Michelle Howard and Debra Puckett provided stellar leadership in the project. Hazel McCoy who made her transition during the project was an early pioneer, brought voice as a Mother and helped to articulate the real concerns of the residents. These women participated in learning very complex and difficult information; preserved through many meetings, ups and downs, changes in neighborhood leadership, internal division, mistrust and territory battles insuring that their neighborhood would benefit from the CARE project and grant.

m. Advise to the Community

There is no recipe or cookie cutter approach to working with community in addressing environmental and environmental health concerns and reducing risks. There are many lessons learned and best practices identified.

- Build the capacity of residents and neighborhood associations
  - Create community voice
  - Engage residents in evidence based decision making
  - Seek technical assistance
  - Examine both assets and vulnerabilities of the community in collaboration with policy makers
- Adopt a collaborative problem solving approach
- Identify project champions in agencies and academic institutions
- Train and integrate young people into both the process and the project
- Include faith based institutions in the partnership
- Always have good, fun and fellowship with the residents and all activities
- Finally, trust the people and the process and document every phase of the work.

#### IV. What Next?

a. Partnership

We were awarded a CARE Level II grant and the current partners have agreed to continue to work with the project. Level II will develop a Business Roundtable with the goal of creating a sustainable group that will work well beyond the scope and period of the grant. The real work is just beginning and the partners have a critical role to play in the overall success of the neighborhoods in improving their quality of life.

b. Sustainability

The work will be sustained through the establishment of a permanent structure dedicated to work long term with communities. Linking the communities with existing city and county resources and programs will also assist in sustaining the work until goals are achieved.

c. Organizational/Partnership Involvement

The Harambee House in collaboration with its partners will continue to be involved with Hudson Hill and Woodville in achieving their vision of developing their community. Revitalizing neighborhoods, and reducing risks to both the environment and health.

d. Project Funding

As stated we are recipients of the CARE Level II grant (2008-2010), allowing for 2 years of additional work. We have also linked three other projects to the work which allows for greater opportunities to produce tangible outcomes:

- Lead Awareness Campaign – funded by the Center for Disease Control (CDC)
- Worker Education and Job Training Program – funded by the Deep South Environmental Justice Resource Center, New Orleans, LA

- Community Based Participatory Research Project – funded by the W.W. Kellogg Foundation

We are also working with Georgia Congressman John Barrows to secure an appropriation for sustained work and infrastructure renovation.

The Woodville Neighborhood Action Organization will be actively seeking funds to develop a Bownfields project.

## V. **Feedback and Follow-up**

### a. CARE Program Improvement

The CARE program is an excellent tool for communities working on environmental issues and concerns. EPA has put a tremendous amount of thought into the purpose and design of the program. There should be a requirement for grant recipients to conduct a strategic planning session that looks specifically at sustainability, businesses/industry engagement and leveraging city and county resources. In addition the CARE program should encourage the integration and training of young people as partners in the process and project.

### b. Future Communications

The Harambee House invites EPA to continue to communicate with the organizations as well as the communities of Hudson Hill and Woodville. New tools and new opportunities should be shared with the organization to assist in continuing to implement action plans that will go well beyond the grant period.

### c. Case Study

The Harambee House would welcome the opportunity to participate in a case study on the CARE program and the collaborative problem solving approach inherent in the program.