



# HAITI POLICY REPORT



Haven volunteer Colin Wiggins, from Galway, Ireland, helps to finish a roof during the week before the 2011 Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project.

CREDIT: EZRA MILLSTEIN

Habitat's permanent housing community in Léogâne is designed to house 500 families. Volunteers constructed 100 core homes in one week as part of Habitat's 28th annual Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project. An additional 50 Habitat homes were built in partnership with Haven, an Irish nonprofit. Habitat will construct another 100 houses in 2012, with more to be constructed pending additional funding.

CREDIT: BERNARD CHERELUS



### Rebuilding hope: Two years after the Haiti earthquake

Recovery after a disaster as massive as the earthquake that struck Haiti on Jan. 12, 2010, can take years. Housing recovery can take a decade. The countless piles of rubble, clogged land systems and hundreds of thousands of people still living in camps serve as sobering reminders of just how difficult the path to reconstruction is.

The earthquake that struck Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas left 1.6 million Haitians displaced or homeless. Tens of thousands of homes were leveled, and many more were damaged or rendered uninhabitable. In the immediate aftermath, millions of people donated to relief efforts, and in July 2010, the U.S. Congress appropriated \$1.14 billion in supplemental funds for reconstruction.

But, at the two-year mark, more than half a million men, women and children continue to live in dilapidated and unsafe shelter. As of Sept. 30, 2011, the U.S. Agency for International Development had spent only \$3.1 million — less than 1 percent of the nearly \$412 million allocated for long-term infrastructure and construction activities in Haiti.

One year after the earthquake, Habitat for Humanity articulated the need for a shelter strategy in Haiti. To date, no comprehensive shelter and resettlement strategy has been implemented. And though there are signs of hope, rebuilding has been slow, and several challenges remain.

To fully understand the challenges of reconstruction, one must appreciate the housing and institutional context Haiti faced before the earthquake. Long repressed, Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Seventy percent

of the population survives on less than \$2 a day, and the unemployment rate is between 60 percent and 70 percent.

Much of the Haitian economy operates informally, with very little government involvement in such areas as low-income housing. Government responsibility for housing, in fact, has traditionally been scattered across at least five agencies, resulting in policy that has been inconsistent and unenforced.

In addition to not having overarching legislation to guide housing and urban planning, Haiti lacks a comprehensive cadastre system to record landownership. Because of this, only 40 percent of landowners have legal documentation. The earthquake exacerbated an already broken system, crumbling government buildings and reducing the government's workforce by a third. Foreign aid jumped to 80 percent of Haiti's total revenue in 2010.

USAID's hampered progress in Haiti can be explained, in part, by these long-standing institutional and economic weaknesses. It can also be attributed to government instability. An inconclusive election in November 2010 postponed President Michel Martelly's inauguration until May 2011; a prime minister was not confirmed until October 2011. USAID also experienced an exodus of staff in Haiti after the earthquake and continues to grapple with lengthy, bureaucratic procedures to replace them, and to approve planning documents for reconstruction. A cholera outbreak in late 2010 that affected nearly half a million people and claimed 6,000 lives further stymied recovery efforts.

Amid all of these problems, rubble removal and land

tenure remain the two largest barriers for adequate housing. Disasters in urban areas produce much more rubble and debris than those in rural areas. Clearing land and removing debris before rebuilding is an enormous challenge, particularly when access roads for construction equipment are blocked. Perhaps more important are the complex legal issues that confront cities such as Port-au-Prince after a disaster. Many records were lost or destroyed in Haiti, and building shelter is risky when residents are vulnerable to eviction. Rebuilding one's home often involves an extensive, time-consuming community consultation process to determine who owns the land. Port-au-Prince's density makes it inefficient to focus on one shelter at a time, and housing in urban areas is intrinsically linked to infrastructure and services such as water and sanitation. A neighborhood or settlement approach to reconstruction often is necessary.

Despite these challenges, the lack of an overall shelter strategy and ongoing concerns for the approximately 550,000 people still in camps, Haiti has shown substantial progress on the shelter issue since the beginning of 2011. The following examples from the government of Haiti, the U.S. government and Habitat for Humanity suggest that although progress is slow, Haiti can build back better. But if funding remains sluggish and donor support does not continue, Haiti's long-term recovery efforts will not be possible.



**Ken Klein, former chairman of the board of Habitat for Humanity International, and new homeowner Marie Veronila Antoine work together to assemble the trusses for her new Habitat home on the second day of the 2011 Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project.**

CREDIT: EZRA MILLSTEIN

## Habitat for Humanity

- Habitat is working with enumeration methods to identify community needs. In October 2010, with funding from the Canadian International Development Agency, Habitat began helping residents in the Simon-Pelé neighborhood of Port-au-Prince organize to identify, prioritize and act on those needs. The Simon-Pelé project is creating the basis for housing interventions, including upgrading existing houses so they are earthquake-resistant, repairing and retrofitting earthquake-damaged homes, and building permanent homes on vacant land. For Habitat and the community, however, the surveys and focus groups are tools for building more than housing in Simon-Pelé. The enumeration methodology is designed to build community confidence, create a platform for ongoing engagement with the community as a whole, and initiate post-earthquake reconstruction in a way that builds on existing community capacities, both physical and social.
- Habitat for Humanity also helped found the Haiti Property Law Working Group, bringing together representatives of government, donor agencies and nongovernmental organizations to help solve issues of land tenure in Haiti. The group's goal is to support the government of Haiti in the recovery effort through the appropriate development of property for job creation, wealth creation, housing and other public purposes by defining the current processes that apply to land transactions and recommending actions to be taken to improve future policies.
- In September 2011, Habitat broke ground on a permanent housing community in Léogâne. Habitat's Santo community will provide up to 500 houses, along with vital community infrastructure and services for families left homeless by the earthquake. Habitat has partnered with Architecture for Humanity to develop the overall master plan for the Santo site, and the community has provided input on house design, sanitation and other crucial services. So far, 150 homes have been built in the Santo community; 100 more are planned for 2012.

Habitat is leading a coalition supporting land tenure reform. To that end, Habitat has created and fostered the Haiti Property Law Working Group, a diverse coalition of Haitian government officials, lawyers, academics and business leaders, along with representatives of the World Bank, USAID, the Inter-American Development Bank, the government of France, the Organization of American States, Architecture for Humanity, the Clinton Global Initiative, development partners and nongovernmental organizations engaged in reconstruction and development.

### Government of Haiti:

- Haitian President Martelly appointed a new housing adviser, Patrick Rouzier, shortly after taking office. Though there is still a long way to go before the government has significant capacity in the housing sector, having a dedicated presidential adviser on housing issues is a significant step forward. One project initiated by the government is called 16/6. It is a \$78 million project that aims to move 30,000 residents from six prominent camps for the internally displaced to 16 neighborhoods where they once lived. The resettlement approach currently under way uses a combination of rent, repair and rebuilding subsidies focused on providing a lasting solution for more than 5,000 families.
- The Invest in Haiti Forum, which was organized by the government of Haiti, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Clinton Foundation, brought more than 1,000 members of the business community and government officials to Haiti in November 2011 to discuss concrete business opportunities in areas such as apparel, tourism and agribusiness, in addition to infrastructure projects related to Haiti's reconstruction and long-term development efforts.

### U.S. government:

- Though USAID has spent little on long-term development, the agency provided nearly \$108 million for emergency shelter activities, including transitional shelters, repairs to damaged houses, and support to host families housing people displaced after the earthquake. More than 320,000 people benefited. With a prime minister now in place, many observers expect more of the emergency supplemental funding to be spent in the upcoming months, particularly on long-term shelter projects.
- USAID supports a participatory enumeration process, which consists of collecting land tenure information from those living in camps and validating it with others in the community. This process helps streamline land issues in lieu of a formal cadastre system. More than 8,800 plots have been clarified by USAID.

*Please read [Habitat for Humanity International's 2012 Shelter Report: Housing Cities after a Disaster](#) for additional information about the complexities of rebuilding housing in urban areas around the world.*



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