



Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti

Fighting for the human rights of Haiti's poor

Haiti's Housing Crisis

Reduction in Camp Population is not a sign of improvement

As the International Organization of Migration (IOM) reported the end of June 2012, the official number of displaced earthquake victims still living in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps has fallen from 1.5 million in 2010 to 390,000. Unfortunately in most cases, the decrease in camp population is not a sign of improvement. Many displaced families have left camps because they were forced out by threats of unlawful and extrajudicial evictions. The IOM acknowledges that it is not clear where the bulk of the people have gone or if their living arrangements are better than the camp conditions. IOM spokesperson Leonard Doyle said, "A lot of these people we know have pitched tents on the side of the mountains."

The 16/6 government housing program is a temporary solution to a long-term bigger crisis

This program, which only affects 5% of the camp population, subsidizes residents with up \$500 to pay their rent for a year. The temporary solution is that the program has closed the most visible camps on public land in Port-au-Prince. But it would be a mistake for the international community or Government of Haiti to think that this program, which is being replicated in the private sector, is a fair or sustainable solution.

- In interviews with several dozen residents relocated under the program, the majority reported that the plan had not made them whole since from before the earthquake. Many reported living in worse conditions than before the earthquake.
- Camp residents were so desperate to leave due to poor conditions that they would accept any assistance at all. Many felt they had to accept the program or they would be forcefully evicted.
- The program only places people in housing for a year. Many program recipients, especially women, complained of losing their household belongings and businesses in the earthquake. Without economic opportunities, these families will be homeless again in a year's time.

The U.S. should support the Haitian government to adopt and fund a comprehensive national rehousing strategy that provides affordable housing

Earthquake reconstruction funds should benefit Haiti's poor, who were left most vulnerable from the earthquake. Eighty percent of the people rendered homeless by the earthquake were renters or living without formal title to the property. The earthquake resulted in a decrease of housing supply, coupled with soaring rent levels, an influx of wealthy foreign renters, and the traditional practice of demanding 12 months' rent in advance. Without affordable alternatives, displaced persons who leave camps risk returning to living conditions that are even more unstable and dangerous than they were before the earthquake. The national housing strategy should:

- Ensure that IDP camps are not closed until adequate housing alternatives are provided;
- Include social housing programs;
- Assure consultation with displacement communities, especially women;
- Protect against unlawful and violent evictions; and
- Ensure that any area to be used for resettlement meets international standards in terms of safety, affordability, habitability and accessibility.