

Haiti: What Happened to the \$10 Billion in U.S. Aid Pledged After the Earthquake?

VICE on HBO follows the money in Haiti

By [Center for Economic and Policy Research](#)

Global Research, April 24, 2015

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Region: [Latin America & Caribbean](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

In-depth Report: [HAITI](#)

Tonight, Vikram Gandhi, VICE on HBO correspondent travels to Haiti to see just what happened with the \$10 billion in aid pledged after the earthquake that occurred more than five years ago. The episode airs at 11 PM EST.

In a [sneak peek](#) posted yesterday, Gandhi goes to the site of a [housing expo](#) held in 2011. Organized by the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission led by Bill Clinton, the expo was meant to showcase model homes that could be built across the country. With more than a million made homeless, and hundreds of thousands of homes damaged or destroyed, [providing new housing was seen as key](#) to “building back better.”

“If we do this housing properly, it will lead to whole new industries being started in Haiti, creating thousands and thousands of new jobs and permanent housing,” Clinton stated after the earthquake.

But, as Gandhi shows, the expo never had the intended impact. Instead, the homes were abandoned and left to decay. Now, years later, the model houses have been occupied by residents, creating a new community in the rubble of the international community’s broken promises.

Gandhi speaks with CEPR Research Associate Jake Johnston, who explains how the U.S.’ premier aid agency, USAID, had [an ambitious plan to build some 15,000 houses](#). But while costs nearly doubled to over \$90 million, currently only 2,600 are planned and only 900 have been built thus far. USAID is no longer involved in new housing construction.

750 of the 900 houses were built far from the earthquake, in Caracol, the site of the international community’s flagship reconstruction project, the Caracol Industrial Park. Since the filming of the VICE investigation, [more information has to come to light](#) about the houses in Caracol. While residents are being asked to pay rent and eventually take ownership of the houses, internal assessments conducted by the Army Corp of Engineers and USAID revealed that the houses were [poorly constructed](#), with substandard concrete, roofs that are not properly attached, and broken sanitation system that causes sewage to flood the area during rains. Both USAID contractors involved [have been suspended](#) from receiving further contracts while a legal investigation is being conducted.

With only around 9,000 new homes built by international donors and NGOs since the earthquake, hundreds of thousands of residents have taken to the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, to an area known as Canaan, without government services or infrastructure of any kind. While little has been done to address the burgeoning crisis, from the hills of Canaan, one can see a new \$18 million sports complex built by the Olympic Committee.

Johnston tells Gandhi that while billions were spent, much of the funds went to the short-term emergency response, which left little lasting impact. Meanwhile, Haitian organizations were largely bypassed in favor of beltway firms. "The big question that's been on everyone's mind is where did the money go? And I think that's when we enter this sort of 'black box'," Johnston says in the episode. "For every dollar that USAID spends, less than a penny actually goes directly to any Haitian organizations," he added.

Yesterday, the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* [published an interview](#) with Gandhi:

"Do we understand what aid is, for real? And is there really a system of accountability that is out there?" Mr. Gandhi told *The Chronicle*. "I think the answer is no, after being in Haiti and seeing how money was spent there."

Tune in tonight at 11 PM EST to watch the full episode.

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