



Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Briefings

## Habitat Fast Track Process in Portmore, Jamaica



Informal settlements are a significant challenge in developing countries, and Jamaica is no exception. Portmore, the country's second-largest city, exemplifies this problem. Residents in these settlements are typically highly exposed to natural hazards such as floods and landslides, whereas the lack of secure land tenure discourages investment in disaster-resilient housing and infrastructure.

Funded by USAID (OFDA/BHA), Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) implemented a four-year pilot program, BRACED (Building Resilience and Capacities for Emerging Disasters), in Portmore. Designed as a replicable model for Caribbean slums, BRACED initially focused on community empowerment and physical improvements such as housing and basic urban infrastructure.

A participatory risk assessment revealed the importance of secure land tenure for disaster resilience. BRACED then integrated land titling and fostered redevelopment plans, addressing the vulnerability of insecure ownership. Existing land tenure procedures proved slow and expensive, so a collaborative effort with national government agencies, including the National Land Agency, developed a faster, more affordable process.

The BRACED project secured land tenure for over 6,000 residents in Portmore, fostering a sense of security and encouraging investment in disaster-resilient homes and communities. This fast-track, low-cost land titling process serves as a replicable model for Jamaica and potentially other Caribbean

nations. Engagement with communities and governments, supported by technology like drones and a central information platform, streamlined the process and reduced costs. This not only benefits the directly impacted residents but also paves the way for regularizing the vast swathes of unregistered land across the country. Formalized land ownership also unlocks access to infrastructure improvements and empowers community members to advocate for their rights. The project's success, particularly in engaging youth through technology, provides valuable lessons for future disaster risk reduction efforts.

### **Habitat Fast Track Process model. A pro-poor approach to urban formalization.**

The Habitat Fast Track Process (HFTP) model framework simplifies and lowers the cost for communities to regularize and secure land tenure through participation and technology.

Phase Zero. Rapid assessment pre-feasibility analysis. Assessment of willingness, readiness, and eligibility of communities. Residents collect data to reduce costs and build ownership. Collected data informs rights and titling preparation. Steps: community selection, desktop research, community sensitization, aerial survey and digitizing, verification and enumeration, community assessment. It takes about 5 months and costs approximately US\$100 per family.

Phase One: Community Preparation. It focuses on preparing residents for land titling. Community service hubs offer mediation, technical, legal, and social support. The Territorial Information Management System (TIMSP) platform, accessible through the hubs, allows for case recording, property rights analysis, and title application preparation. Key milestones include establishing the hub, creating cases in TIMSP, facilitating mediation, gathering documents, parcel identification, and application preparation. It takes about five months and costs approximately US\$130 per family.

Phase Two: Stakeholders participation and agencies follow-up. It focuses on national-level participation for community regularization. Prepared applications, boundary information, and property rights analyses are submitted to state agencies. This phase prioritizes government approval for funding and processing titles within communities utilizing the HFTP model. Key milestones include community declaration, lot demarcation, plan approval, title preparation, and establishing payment agreements. This can take up to about four months and cost about three hundred and eighty us dollars per family.

Phase Three: Groups and households' support. This final phase focuses on title distribution, property status updates in the TIMSP, and maintaining interagency connections. At just \$38 per family, it significantly reduces costs compared to the LAMP process (currently the most affordable option at ~\$1250 per quarter acre). The HFTP also aims for faster titling, with a projected timeframe of 12-14 months compared to LAMP's 12-24 months. This streamlined process, with its community focus, offers a more efficient and impactful solution for land regularization.

*A more detailed systematization of the HFTP process is available in video format:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vpd2ZJNr5VM>

### **Contact information**

**Javier Cidon**

Field Operations Officer, Disaster Risk Reduction and Response

[jcidon@habitat.org](mailto:jcidon@habitat.org)