

## Foreword

Habitat for Humanity is excited to announce the resumption of the Global Village program after a three-year pause. The Global Village program provides an opportunity for our volunteers to participate in and contribute to the work of addressing inadequate housing worldwide. Habitat is grateful for your interest in joining its global mission.

As the world becomes more complex and interconnected and with only several years remaining until the world has to achieve the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, Habitat's Global Village program needs to continue to adapt. Habitat for Humanity International is consistently updating its work based on the needs identified and prioritized by communities so that volunteering will be more effective and have greater influence on housing systems around the globe.

Housing needs have persisted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and on this occasion, we would like to share emerging trends and drivers of the complex housing situations in communities around the world.

The goal of this learning guide is to expand the breadth and depth of volunteers' understanding of Habitat's work internationally and to bring forward our evolving understanding of how to address inadequate housing worldwide through a sustainable development lens. Housing is not only about having a safe place to live, but also a prerequisite to accessing employment, education, health and social services. Housing also sits at the very heart of the Sustainable Development Goals.

You are about to begin a special journey. It is our hope that your experience through the Global Village program will begin a lifetime journey for you to become a strong advocate for adequate shelter around the world.

Please join us in making Habitat's vision of a world where everyone has a decent place to live a reality.

In partnership,



Boram Kim  
Senior Director, Volunteer and Institutional Engagement  
Habitat for Humanity International



## Global housing situation

The need for housing around the world is enormous. Currently, 1 in 4 people do not have decent shelter. The U.N. estimates that more than 10 million people worldwide die each year from conditions related to substandard housing. The World Health Organization says those living in poor conditions are exposed to greater personal and environmental health risks. These vulnerable groups are less well-nourished, have less information and are less able to access health care, thus they have a higher risk of illness and disability.

By 2030, the U.N. estimates that 3 billion people — about 40% of the world's population — will lack access to adequate housing. This translates into a demand for 96,000 new affordable and accessible housing units every day. If we truly want to bring about a world where everyone has decent shelter, we must continue to address the barriers families face to accessing affordable and adequate housing. To do this, we are listening, learning and engaging the global community as they mobilize to change the trajectory of this reality. Here are some ways in which Habitat is working in solidarity with our partners:

- Placing **people at the center** of all of our work and highlighting their role in defining and realizing the ways they will improve their lives.
- Examining the root causes of inadequate housing, from the power imbalances caused by **systemic inequities** to stressors and shocks.
- Understanding the drivers of the housing deficit that support or hamper people on their housing journey.

## What is the development sector?

Development is a multidimensional undertaking to achieve a higher quality of life for all people. The U.N. General Assembly's Agenda for Development of 1997 says, "Economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development."

## Key development trends

### People-centered development

Habitat for Humanity Zambia uses the participatory approach for safe shelter awareness, or PASSA, methodology to live into people-centeredness in its work to reduce disaster risk. In Zambia, communities living in slums are disproportionately affected by climate change, as their housing units are often built with cheap materials such as mud and are unable to withstand the heavy rains and winds that are increasing in intensity. Habitat Zambia is using PASSA to raise awareness of the "everyday vulnerable" and "everyday risks" to foster locally appropriate safe shelter and settlement practices. Local communities can now identify their own solutions and realistic comprehensive strategies for addressing spatial and environmental planning, local building cultures, and construction techniques. This approach also fosters partnerships among local authorities, communities and supporting organizations to prepare for, cope with and recover from disasters.

People-centered development aims to ensure that all people have equitable opportunities to enjoy their rights as human beings and full members of society, able to live their lives in dignity, justice and peace. People-centered development proceeds on the basis of people's autonomy — people as the agents of their own development, free to make decisions on the basis of their own values, needs and aspirations. This development approach focuses on improving local communities' self-reliance, social justice and participatory decision-making. The people themselves drive the solutions we need through people-centered development.

### Systemic inequity

Habitat for Humanity Nepal works with indigenous people and marginalized Dalits, who are considered the lowest social class under the traditional caste system. This includes members of landless communities such as Suntals, Haliyas, Kamaiyas, Badis and Musahar, along with other disaster-affected groups. These groups continue to endure historical and systematic discrimination. Examples of caste-based discrimination against Dalits include lower-class occupations, weak exercise of political rights, and inability to access financial resources. Helping to uphold Nepal's 2015 Constitution, Habitat Nepal is partnering with various parts of the government to secure land rights and housing for these vulnerable groups.

Systemic inequity refers to the discrimination or marginalization of particular people or communities and occurs because of power imbalances within a particular system or society. It inhibits a population's ability to enjoy their rights as equal members

of society and to live in dignity, justice and peace. Systemic inequalities are specific policies, standards and practices — as well as attitudes and prejudices — combined to create institutionalized and even structural problems of inequality in workplaces, schools, religious institutions, politics, etc. In every country, substandard housing is most frequently encountered by specific populations who are subject to certain underlying biases within their cultural, social and economic contexts. These biases often manifest in traditions, customs, policies, regulations and standards that dictate access to public goods such as education, public spaces, markets and housing, in addition to discrimination based on personal characteristics.

These underlying inequities contribute almost imperceptibly to the housing deficit at the community level and undermine equitable access to adequate housing for all. Systemic inequity is a driving force of poverty, which is perpetuated by dominant power dynamics and inequitable access to resources.

## Drivers of the housing deficit

Many global and local factors drive the global housing deficit. Each country hosting Global Village co-designs its work with community members to address their specific needs. However, we would like to highlight some key drivers for all Global Village volunteers. These trends or short-term disruptions exacerbate the global housing deficit in places where the housing supply falls well short of demand.

### Humanitarian crises

Habitat El Salvador has provided humanitarian assistance to more than 56,000 families affected by various disasters since 1998, including a series of tropical systems in 2020: tropical storms Amanda and Cristóbal and hurricanes Eta and Iota. In partnership with local governments, private companies and humanitarian networks, Habitat helped families rebuild their houses and make roof improvements and provided emergency supplies and shelter to bridge the gap until homes were once again livable.

In another example, Habitat and our partners have provided a comprehensive humanitarian response for 47,000 families vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many received hygiene kits and information about how to prevent the spread of the virus, while others partnered with Habitat to improve their homes, including upgraded water supplies. These actions were coordinated with community leaders, civil protection agents and local health officials, among others, to ensure solutions are part of a more integrated, community-led effort.

A humanitarian crisis is defined as a singular event or a series of events that are threatening in terms of the health, safety or well-being of a community or large group of people. It may be an internal or external conflict and usually occurs throughout a large land area. The past decade saw the highest ever number of people internally displaced by conflict and violence, with many locked in a state of protracted displacement. In addition, increasingly severe weather and rising numbers of natural disasters are exacerbating chronic vulnerabilities and are being made worse by climate change.

### Climate change

In Central America, climate change is making life even more difficult for rural communities in the Dry Corridor, which stretches from Mexico to Panama, by causing more frequent and intense extreme weather events, land degradation, pests and infestations.

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, such as through variations in the solar cycle. But since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas. Burning fossil fuels generates greenhouse gas emissions that act like a blanket wrapped around the Earth, trapping the sun's heat and raising temperatures.

Everywhere in the world, households living in substandard housing are already suffering the most from the effects of climate change. Countries least vulnerable to the impacts of climate change are generally the highest greenhouse gas emitters. Conversely, those most vulnerable to climate change are the least responsible for its genesis.

### Migration

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees records that nearly 8.1 million refugees from Ukraine have spread across Europe since February 2022. This mass migration of people is a direct result of Russia's war on

Ukraine. Habitat for Humanity has been responding in neighboring Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia to help meet the shelter needs of both families on the move to other destinations and those seeking a place to live for at least the next few months. Habitat for Humanity Romania secured hotel accommodations and distributed kits at two border crossings. Habitat for Humanity Poland is operating a housing help kiosk at one of Warsaw's main train stations through a partnership with the city, helping match refugees with midterm accommodations.

Migration is an umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from their place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. As of the end of 2020, the number of international migrants was estimated to be approximately 281 million people globally, representing 3.6% of the world's population. The number of refugees also increased to 26.4 million, with an additional 55 million internally displaced people — 48 million because of conflict and violence, and 7 million because of disasters.

Migration, both within and between countries, has a critical impact on the capacity of the housing sector to deliver adequate and affordable housing for all. With governments working to meet the housing needs of the local population, migration is often seen as adding further stress to public budgets rather than as a necessity for ensuring the safety, resilience and success of communities.

## Urbanization

Urbanization generally refers to the size and growth rate of the urban population in a particular geography. As these populations grow, there have been a number of byproducts, including the rise of slums in urban and periurban areas. In Bangladesh, the number of communities in slums is increasing 2.7% annually. Given the demand for adequate and affordable housing in these communities, Habitat for Humanity Bangladesh has been working to address issues of safe and decent housing, inadequate water and sanitation facilities, and disaster risk in slums since 2012. Activities include building houses, community toilets with shared shower facilities, community water points, and drainage systems. As a result, families are able to move into new homes with access to improved sanitation and safe drinking water. More than 14,000 individuals have been served through Habitat for Humanity Bangladesh's Dhaka slum upgrading project.

Urbanization is the increase in the proportion of a population living in urban areas or the process by which a large number of people become permanently concentrated in relatively small areas, forming cities. A globally recognized attribute of rapid urbanization is the demand for housing rapidly outpacing supply, most notably for housing that is adequate and affordable. This has resulted in increasing rates of informality, overcrowding, inequality and substandard housing. Urbanization can lead to rapidly expanding informal settlements, which strain infrastructure and public services while also increasing wealth disparities and creating social and economic challenges.

## Change through advocacy

Habitat for Humanity addresses these housing deficit drivers and other essential housing needs in more than 70 countries worldwide. We recognize, however, that we need to do more than build to fully reverse these housing realities. That is why Habitat also engages in advocacy at every level of government and society at large to influence housing-related policies and systems in order to lower barriers to affordable housing and reduce threats to housing security.

Habitat's global policy and advocacy agenda includes:

- Ensuring access to adequate housing options for all.
- Expanding affordability through housing finance options.
- Promoting secure tenure rights and equitable access to land for shelter.
- Enabling stakeholder engagement and community participation.
- Fostering resilient and responsive communities through housing.

We encourage you to actively be engaged in the ways Habitat is addressing inadequate housing, to learn about the impact of volunteering, and to be an advocate for adequate and affordable housing. Thanks to your passion and commitment, we will continue to see lives improved and communities transformed around the world.

