



## **The Post-2015 Development Agenda:**

### **Elevating Housing in the Next Millennium Development Goals September 2012**

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## **Introduction**

In 2000, more than 150 heads of state signed the United Nations Millennium Declaration. This unprecedented document provided a common vision for poverty reduction and set the stage for the creation of the Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs. For the first time, a framework existed with specific and measurable indicators to guide development globally. The MDGs were given a 15-year timeline, creating a sense of urgency and meaning. With less than three years until the MDGs expire, the global community is now asking, "What's next?" Although it is unclear exactly what form it will take, there is movement toward creating a "post-2015 development agenda."

Because of the importance of and dire need for adequate housing around the world, it is critical that the post-2015 development agenda elevate housing as a key issue.

Habitat for Humanity International's scope and reach on the issue of adequate housing means the organization is well-positioned to participate in the creation of the post-2015 development agenda. Habitat operates in nearly 80 countries and is one of the largest organizations facilitating housing solutions for those in need. Focusing on systemic change and housing's role in poverty reduction, Habitat works with partners to implement a diverse set of programs, including house construction, slum upgrading, water and sanitation, disaster response, housing microfinance, and advocacy. Habitat defines adequate housing by five standards: design, durability, secure tenure, water and sanitation.

While this paper's scope is limited to housing, we recognize the critical role other issues play, and we support a comprehensive global development agenda. Deciding on a framework for the next MDGs will not be easy. Humans, however, have only a few basic needs, one of which is shelter. The need for adequate housing is growing exponentially, and the post-2015 development agenda should address this directly.

## **Beyond 2015**

The MDGs expire in less than three years. Some of these targets will be met, but most will not. There has been progress, but many efforts have not kept pace with the increasing demand and changing demographics. Although the MDGs have raised awareness and provided a common framework for the alleviation of poverty worldwide, the World Bank estimates that in 2008 (the most recent year for which global data are available), 2.47 billion people still lived on less than US\$2 per day. A global financial crisis, polarized international powers, increased urbanization and the shifting composition of those living in poverty make the world a very different place from when the Millennium Declaration was signed in 2000.

In 2007, for the first time in history, more people were living in cities and towns than in rural areas. By 2050, 70 percent of the world's population is projected to be living in urban areas, according to the U.N.'s Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Urban areas have grown exponentially as people flock to cities in search of economic opportunity, better health care,



education, and the promise of a better life. As urban areas have grown, so too have slums. The MDGs included eight overall goals, with targets under each goal. The “environmental sustainability” goal included a target on slums. This target, referred to as Goal 7, Target 11, sought to improve “the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.” This target has proved insufficient; a stronger, more focused target on slums and housing will be necessary when the MDGs expire in 2015.

### **The importance of housing**

Housing is important because it improves outcomes for people and affects broader communities and the global economy. For policymakers to develop effective and innovative housing policies, the far-reaching impact of adequate housing must be fully understood and successfully communicated.

More than four walls and a roof, adequate housing includes sufficient space, tenure security and access to basic services such as water and sanitation. A safe and secure home provides more than protection from the elements. Studies have shown the positive impact housing has on an individual. Overcrowded rooms, dirt floors, poor ventilation, unsanitary living conditions and doors that don’t lock all take their toll on one’s health. Sufficient light, a quiet space to work and stable occupancy have been linked to educational outcomes.

Experience has demonstrated the broader implications housing has on the health of our planet, the global economy and a neighborhood’s ability to develop into a strong, vibrant community. The housing sector comprises 7 to 20 percent of a country’s gross domestic product, according to UN-HABITAT. Without a well-functioning housing sector, a country’s economy is likely to stagnate.

Demand for housing remains extraordinarily high in the developing world. Asia, for example, is urbanizing most rapidly and will need to absorb 120,000 new residents every day into its cities. This translates into at least 20,000 housing units per day, according to UN-HABITAT. Home construction and the associated need for supplies and materials generate jobs in both the formal and informal markets and will continue to play an enormous role in the development of economies. Every job created in the housing sector generates two jobs elsewhere in the economy. Further, small businesses are often run out of homes. A walk through any slum will highlight the grocery stores, barbershops, tailors and entrepreneurial spirit found on each front porch.

Slums, which are growing globally, are the most visible indicator of poor access to housing. Slums are defined by their lack of adequate housing, access to clean water and improved sanitation. They are often endemic with disease, crime and corruption. Daily life is a struggle, and the fear of eviction can be constant. Nearly 1 billion people, almost one-sixth of the world’s population, live in these conditions, and the pace is increasing. As slums swell, the need for housing continues to grow.



### **Cities without slums**

In 2000, more than 150 heads of state ratified the U.N. Millennium Declaration, acknowledging the growth of slums and their unique role in poverty eradication. They resolved, “by 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers as proposed in the Cities without Slums initiative.” This was the first time that cities and urban poverty reduction were recognized by an international development goal as essential to eliminating poverty. Launched by Cities Alliance and championed by Nelson Mandela in 1999, the Cities without Slums initiative challenged cities to build on successful community-based upgrading programs and encouraged governments to address broader policy and institutional issues, thereby creating more inclusive, sustainable growth.

However, many governments and local authorities remain wary of planning for systematic expansion of their cities for fear of attracting more people, despite little evidence that a lack of adequate housing, infrastructure and basic services has slowed the migration from rural to urban areas. People are primarily moving for jobs and economic opportunity. Therefore, our objective should not focus on keeping people from moving to cities, but rather on concentrating our efforts on careful planning and management of growth to make cities as productive as possible.

Some governments, though, are encouraging more action around sustainable cities. The RIO +20 conference held in June 2012 in Brazil produced commitments to “promote an integrated and holistic approach to planning and building cities.” Individual governments also brought serious proposals to the conference endorsing sustainable human settlement. As more and more cities struggle with the influx of people, the importance of this planning is becoming widely recognized.

In the original Millennium Declaration, the slum indicator was included under “poverty eradication.” When the Millennium Declaration was translated into the Millennium Development Goals, the slum target fell under “environmental sustainability.” Although one could argue that MDG Goal 7, Target 11 — improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers — has been met, perhaps even several times, the absolute number of those living in slums has increased from 776.7 million in 2000 to 827.6 million in 2010, according to UN-HABITAT. Much of the progress in upgrading slums has been in Asia, specifically China, while Africa and others have lagged behind. The number of slum dwellers, and subsequently those in need of adequate housing, is expected to rise to nearly 2 billion in the next two decades. This trend deserves attention.

In addition, the slum target was imperfect. For one thing, it is inconsistent with its peers. The original timeline for Goal 7, Target 11 was to improve the lives of 100 slum dwellers by 2020 rather than 2015. The numerical target of 100 million was also relatively modest. A stronger



target might have used a proportional indicator, e.g., reducing the number of those living in slums by a certain percentage, rather than a set number.

### **Next steps**

What role, then, do adequate housing, the growth of slums and rapid urbanization have beyond 2015? Ensuring housing and slums are represented in the next Millennium Development Goals is essential.

The U.N. Millennium Declaration should serve as a starting point for future discussions. More than 150 heads of state agreed that addressing slums is important. Conversations around economic growth, environmental sustainability, climate change, health, housing, education, water and sanitation simply cannot be effective without considering the trend of urbanization, the growth of slums and the ever growing need for an adequate place to live.

Indeed, the United Nations Task Team on the post-2015 development agenda agreed that the trend of urbanization and growth of slums should not be overlooked. In its recent report, "Realizing the Future We Want for All," the task team acknowledged certain targets "undervalued demographic change and consequently also the magnitude of certain social problems, such as the size of urban slum populations." The report goes on to note that "rapid urban growth is mainly occurring in countries least able to cope with the demand for decent jobs, adequate housing, and urban basic services ... 33 percent of the urban population in developing countries, live in slums." Shockingly, though, the report produced an "integrated framework" for "realizing the future we want for all" and failed to include any mention of housing, slums or urbanization. If this incomplete framework becomes the basis of the next MDGs, it is unclear how these trends will be represented.

The United Nations has committed to a broad consultation process for the next Millennium Development Goals, including reviews, meetings, task teams, conferences and papers, and any agenda should leave room for country- and city-level design and implementation. Because of unprecedented urbanization, though, the growth of slums and the need for housing are too great to be ignored. The next Millennium Development Goals must include increased access to adequate housing in a meaningful and measurable way.



## Recommendations

- *Habitat for Humanity believes that housing needs to be prominently featured in the MDG framework, and that the positive impact of adequate housing is considered during the development of strategies to address education, health and financial stability.*

While it is still unclear what form the post-2015 development agenda might take, Habitat for Humanity makes the following recommendations:

1. If the U.N. decides on a minimal update to the existing MDG framework, then there is a need to improve existing language on Goal 7, Target 11:
  - The current target of “improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers” was not enough to keep pace with growing trends. The target should focus on meaningful impact on those living (or soon to be living) in slums. “Reducing, by half, the number of those living in slums by date X” would be a more ambitious goal while also being more consistent with the other goals (at least as they were presented in the MDGs).
2. If the U.N. decides to increase a focus on sustainable cities, then adequate housing should be an indicator for the related goal.
  - Assuming that “sustainable cities” could be a goal for the post-2015 development agenda, adequate housing could then be a target. One appropriate indicator for adequate housing is the overall number of people with security of tenure.
3. If the U.N. decides to use the draft framework developed by the U.N. MDG task force in any way, then a focus on housing, slums and urbanization needs to be included. The U.N. stated in its recommendations to the High Level Panel that managing demographic trends should be a priority. It should clarify what it means by this.
4. UN-HABITAT, which is responsible for tracking Goal 7, Target 11 in the current MDGs, has extensive knowledge of housing, slums and urbanization. UN-HABITAT should:
  - Advise the U.N. High Level Panel on housing, slums and urbanization issues.
  - Engage partners on the development of the housing-related aspects of the post-2015 development agenda.
5. The High-Level Panel should:
  - Meet with global housing, slum and urbanization experts so they have the most current and accurate information to provide the Secretary General.
  - Include community leaders from slums in global consultations.
6. Global Civil Society Organizations with a focus on housing, slums and urbanization should engage and influence the post-2015 development agenda.
7. The World Urban Campaign should push these issues in the post-2015 development agenda.