



## THE 2021 WORLD HABITAT AWARDS WINNERS ANNOUNCED

**Nairobi, 16 December 2021** – A project that develops and provides permanently affordable housing for people on low incomes in Brussels and a housing rights project in Beirut that provides an online reporting tool to monitor and respond to housing injustices, including evictions, are the **two Gold Winners** of this year's World Habitat Awards, announced today, Thursday 16 December 2021. The Awards are organised by World Habitat in partnership with UN-Habitat.

The first Gold winner is the project **Introducing Community Land Trusts in Continental Europe**. Rising house prices and a lack of social homes has created an affordable housing crisis in **Brussels**, that leaves people on the lowest incomes with little choice but to rent low-quality accommodation or leave the city. The project is run by **Community Land Trust Brussels (CLTB)** which has successfully advocated for the use of the Community Land Trust model in Belgium to address this growing problem. The homes are bought by people on low incomes, most of whom (over 80 per cent) have a migrant background.

Residents play a central role in both the governance of the organisation and in the design and management of the housing projects. Homes are sold at 30-50 per cent below market equivalents with the cost of the home subsidised according to the household's ability to pay. Residents and non-residents also have the opportunity to participate in a cohesive and caring community. CLTB has completed five projects, housing 450 people in 103 homes. Four more projects are in preparation and the organisation is strongly committed to expanding the Community Land Trust model throughout Europe and beyond.

The second Gold winner, **Housing Monitor**, is a housing rights project in **Beirut** run by Public Works Studio. It provides a safe and secure database for people to report housing violations and injustices. Public Works Studio responds to individuals' housing needs with access to legal and social services, building awareness among vulnerable groups, including low-income Lebanese, refugees and migrant domestic workers, who have limited legal representation and/or knowledge of their rights.

The project has received 603 reports of housing injustices since January 2020, of which 472 cases were responded to with targeted interventions. So far, it has prevented the eviction of 92 households and negotiated better housing security for hundreds of people. Housing Monitor mobilises local advocacy efforts to demand housing policy reform. As the first project of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa region, Housing Monitor is giving vulnerable communities a voice to demand their basic housing rights and campaign for a more equitable society.

**Maimunah Mohd Sharif, UN-Habitat Executive Director and a Final Judge of the World Habitat Awards, said:** “COVID-19 has particularly underlined the crucial need to strengthen resiliency and promote more inclusive and just societies. Reducing urban inequalities is a cornerstone to ensure we are all better prepared for future shocks and crises. We particularly appreciate initiatives that put people, especially from marginalised groups, at the centre by tailoring solutions on their needs and empowering them to be agents within the process.

“We also appreciate the focus on addressing housing unaffordability, which prevents people from tapping into the opportunities that urbanisation carries. The affordability crisis pre-existed COVID-19 and was a strong driver of its disastrous effects. At the same time, the challenge of better understanding how to increase access to quality and affordable housing has been made even more urgent by the growing income instability triggered by the economic spill overs of the pandemic. In particular, these two Gold award-winning initiatives are linking operational activities with advocacy efforts to produce long-lasting and sustainable policy changes.”

**Leilani Farha, Global Director of The Shift and a Final Judge of the World Habitat Awards, said:** “These are both highly innovative projects and drive forward the much-needed realisation of the human right to housing. They recognise that marginalized and low-income households need affordable, adequate housing to thrive and that to ensure this - specific interventions targeted at these communities are essential. In addition, they provide much needed stability to individuals and families – especially important during these very uncertain times, when access to a secure home is so fundamental to human security, health and life itself.”

**David Ireland, Chief Executive of World Habitat, the funders and co-ordinators of the World Habitat Awards, said:** “We are extremely impressed by our two Gold Award winners. Housing Monitor shines a light on housing injustices. They empower people to report violations - abandoned properties, evictions, properties built without permission – and holds government, companies and property owners to account. Community Land Trust Brussels is a trailblazer as the first big Community Land Trust in Europe. It provides affordable homes for people on lower incomes in an expensive city. And has also inspired and supported many other Community Land Trusts to form across Europe.

“All our winners illustrate the range of housing challenges facing people across the world from the impact of the climate emergency to housing rights to affordability. It is all too easy to become overwhelmed about these challenges. However, the work of every one of our incredible award-winning projects prove that there are solutions and steps that can be taken to ensure that safe and secure housing can be a reality for everyone - rather than an aspiration.”

## **Media Contacts**

Further details about the World Habitat Awards and all of the winning projects are available from:

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