

Second Session of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Expert Working Group on Adequate Housing for All

Agenda item 3. Consideration of the outcomes of the
preparatory intersessional meetings, including draft
recommendations

Social Housing



UN-HABITAT

22 October 2025
Nairobi



Background

HSP/OEWG-H.2025/INF/5

SOCIAL HOUSING - Framing the discussion

The **definition** varies significantly between countries. Key features include:

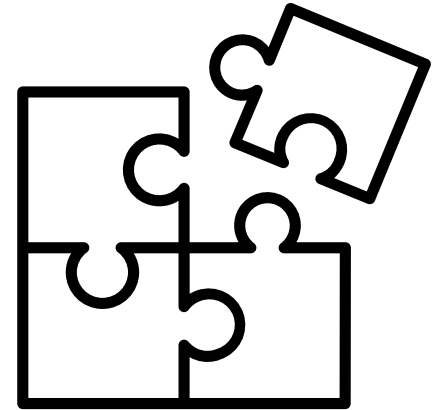
- **Costs** are generally set below formal market rates and are often linked to incomes or to the costs of supplying the dwelling.
- **Owned or managed by** government bodies, non-profit or limited-profit organizations.
- **Allocation** is typically based on criteria such as need, including income level, occupation, vulnerability.
- Its **core purpose** is to address housing inequality, promote social inclusion, and support marginalised groups.
- Designed to preserve **long-term affordability**

Core functions:

- Promote social cohesion and stability, strengthen gender equality
- Ensure spatial justice
- Moderate housing markets and strengthen macroeconomic stability
- Enhance climate and health resilience
- Support economic and livelihood security

SOCIAL HOUSING - Institutional, regulatory and financial setups

- **Governance models:** Vary from centralised to decentralised or mixed.
- **Regulatory frameworks:** Define eligibility, rent setting, tenant rights, and allocation; inclusive models promote social mix.
- **Financial tools:** Include public investment, capital grants, subsidies, tax incentives, land-based instruments, and cooperative finance.



SOCIAL HOUSING – Status and evolution of the sector

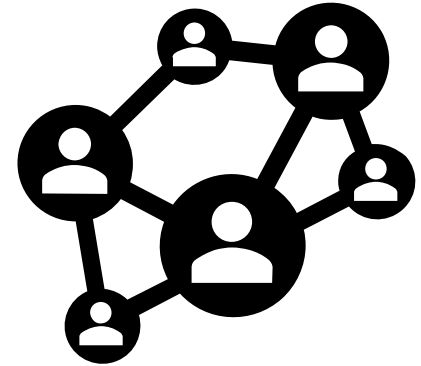
- **Europe:** Oldest systems; Northern/Western Europe maintain mixed-income models, while Southern/Eastern Europe face stock reduction from privatization. Renewed attention due to affordability crises and green retrofits.
- **North America:** Limited and highly targeted. US emphasizes vouchers and tax credits, Canada maintains co-ops and municipal housing.
- **Latin America:** State-subsidized homeownership dominant, but challenges with peripheral location. Growing support for cooperatives, self-build, and settlement upgrading.

SOCIAL HOUSING – Status and evolution of the sector

- **Asia:** Wide range from state-led to subsidy-based.
- **Sub-Saharan Africa:** Limited provision and intersecting mostly with slum upgrading, tenure security. Renewed interest in housing cooperatives. Infrastructure gaps remain critical.
- **Middle East & North Africa:** Primarily homeownership-driven through subsidized schemes. Public rental housing rare.

SOCIAL HOUSING – Global Trends

- **Community-led and cooperative models:** Resident-driven cooperatives and mutual aid.
- **Strategic land use to address challenges of spatial inequality and financial strains:** Land banking, value capture, and public land use.
- **Municipal leadership:** Cities integrating housing with urban policy.
- **Cross-sectoral integration:** Linking housing with health, transport, and gender equity.
- **Design innovation to address cultural adequacy and demographic shifts:** Modular, adaptive, and sustainable housing solutions.





Proposed Recommendations

HSP/OEWG-H.2025/2

HSP/OEWG-H.2025/INF/5

Proposed Draft Recommendations on Social Housing

1. Enablers of inclusive social housing programmes

- Develop robust institutional and policy frameworks to guide the implementation of inclusive and sustainable housing strategies, ensuring sufficient flexibility to accommodate and support incremental housing approaches, mutual-help and cooperative delivery systems. (par. 30)
- Mobilize long-term, diversified and accountable public-interest financing frameworks for social housing, including tailored channels for incremental, mutual-help, cooperative and community-based provision. (par. 31)
- Build integrated housing, spatial and demographic data systems to support evidence-based planning and decision-making. (par. 32)
- Demonstrate the public value of social housing through impact measurement. (par. 33)

Proposed Draft Recommendations on Social Housing

2. Land allocation and spatial equity

- Unlock access to well-located land for social housing development by mobilizing strategic public land use, land banking and land value sharing. (par. 34)
- Embed social housing into urban policy and governance to ensure equitable access to housing and promote territorial justice. (par. 35)
- Align social housing with infrastructure planning to support connected and inclusive communities. (par. 36)

Proposed Draft Recommendations on Social Housing

3. Inclusive and accessible design

- Establish inclusive, accessible and adaptable housing design standards for diverse needs and life stages, as well as forms of delivery. (par. 37)
- Foster cultural adequacy and economic inclusion through participatory design and support for informal livelihoods. (par. 38)

Proposed Draft Recommendations on Social Housing

4. Integrated welfare support and transparent housing allocation

- Develop integrated ecosystems of social partners to support the maintenance of social housing stock and provide continued welfare support to beneficiaries, particularly through coordination with other administrative and social assistance systems. (par. 39)
- Establish and implement transparent eligibility criteria and allocation procedures, grounded in principles of equity and inclusion (par. 40)

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