

# Progressively realizing the right to Adequate Housing

**SDG 11** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

**Target 11.1** By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

**Target 11.c** Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials.

## ” Key Statements:

Slums and informal settlements are the most visible physical manifestation of the ways in which poor urban planning and a lack of sustainable policy frameworks result in a deficit of adequate housing and serviced land.

Adequate housing in urban contexts is improved when:

- 1) A commitment to progressively realize the right to adequate housing is promoted by all key stakeholders, and
- 2) Affordable housing programmes are strategically linked with inclusive and sustainable urban development strategies such as participatory city-wide slum upgrading.

National governments must lead efforts to develop and implement guiding policies and strategies that plan for the adequate housing for all urban residents..

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## KEY MESSAGES:

- Like all urban dwellers, people living in slums aspire to live in freedom and dignity in order to raise families and undertake social, economic and cultural activities.
- The 'Right to Adequate Housing' is recognized in international human rights law as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, enshrined in both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Universal Declaration on Human Rights, adopted in 1948) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, adopted in 1966)<sup>1</sup>.
- For housing to be adequate, it must, at a minimum, meet the following criteria:
  1. Security of tenure: housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have a degree of tenure security, which guarantees legal protection against forced evictions, harassment and other threats.
  2. Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure: housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, energy for cooking, heating, lighting, food storage or refuse disposal.
  3. Affordability: housing is not adequate if its cost threatens or compromises the occupants' enjoyment of other human rights.
  4. Habitability: housing is not adequate if it does not guarantee physical safety or provide adequate space, as well as protection against the cold, damp, heat, rain, wind, other threats to health and structural hazards.
  5. Accessibility: housing is not adequate if the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups are not taken into account.
  6. Location: housing is not adequate if it is cut off from employment opportunities, health-care services, schools, childcare centres and other social facilities, or if located in polluted or dangerous areas.
  7. Cultural adequacy: housing is not adequate if it does not respect and take into account the expression of cultural identity.
- Adequate and affordable housing has been identified as a key target of Sustainable Development Goal 11 "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" with target 11.1 making explicit the aspiration to, "...by 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums". Global development frameworks reinforce this goal, including the proposed UN-Habitat New Urban Agenda in which calls for renewed efforts to address adequate housing for the urban poor and make it central to policy and programme priorities.
- Houses in slums are often overcrowded, meaning more than 3 people share a room on a frequent basis. This additional demand on space will be visible using a participatory approach towards slum upgrading.
- At the same time, housing in slums is often utilized in a multifunctional manner. Houses are both a place for living but also a space for economic activities and social gatherings, especially for women. Housing interventions during slum upgrading must therefore be designed with this multi-functionality and gender components in mind.
- Many slum dwellers spend a considerable amount of their income on rent but can find themselves forced into homelessness as a result of an unstable income and failure to pay rent.
- Financing housing in slum upgrading has to rely on a variety of instruments. Many communities are willing to be active partners in housing initiatives that support the improvement of their living conditions provided that security of tenure can be provided and there pro-poor financing options available. An incremental approach to housing with these elements secured can effectively respond to the saving and spending ability of slum and informal settlement communities.
- Housing in slums is mostly built using low-cost materials which are often not recognized in regulatory frameworks. In many cases, these materials present affordable and durable housing material alternatives for slum dwellers which should be recognized. In some cases, it is the construction techniques which undermine safety and durability, not the materials themselves.
- Housing construction, maintenance and upgrading within slum upgrading contributes substantially to job creation, local economic development as well as increased skills of slum dwellers to improve their competitiveness on the job market.

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1 For the status of ratification of the ICESCR of various States, visit <http://indicators.ohchr.org/>.

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**KEY RECOMMENDATION:**

Use National and City-wide slum upgrading policies, strategies and programs as frameworks to put Housing at the Center and progressively realize the Right to Adequate Housing for all.

**KEY ACTION:**

Ensure current policies, strategies and plans including national and city-wide slum upgrading strategies, contain the criteria of adequate housing.

**Table 1:** Additional Recommendations and Actions

RECOMMENDATIONS	KEY ACTIONS
<b>Revitalize discussions with all stakeholders around adequate and affordable housing and integrate with slum upgrading.</b>	
Review current adequate and affordable housing needs.	Develop a situation analysis report which reviews current population growth, poverty levels, overcrowding and numbers of urban dwellers living in slums, include an inventory of what public land is currently being unused, even small pockets could be converted into affordable housing as infill.
Understand how current policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks align with a vision for affordable and adequate housing	Review current policy frameworks and how they link with national and city-level urban development plans and strategies identifying gaps and opportunities. Include a review of associated key thematic areas related to land and financing and the mechanisms to support tools like PPPs, slum upgrading and land readjustment.
Review current approaches to adequate and affordable housing	Develop a report which maps out the mechanisms currently used to provide affordable and adequate housing. Using global good practice, explore what alternatives might be viable through mechanisms such as Public Private Partnerships, land readjustment, and others
Understand the map of stakeholders engaged in adequate housing provision	Undertake a national and city stakeholder analysis identifying all actors from government, private sector, the community and others and map their roles, resources and needs.
<b>Communicate key messages on the right and role of adequate and affordable housing as a key mechanism to reduce poverty and slums</b>	
Use situation analysis report to communicate challenges and opportunities for adequate and affordable housing for a positive approach to housing.	Hold a series of fora to promote the importance of housing as part of the urban development dynamic and the role of government to promote and facilitate the environment for affordable housing alongside funding commitments.
<b>Strengthen policy, legal and planning frameworks</b>	
Develop or strengthen key frameworks to support adequate and affordable housing delivery	Start a review process to ensure adequate and affordable housing is reflected in relevant National Urban Policies as well as in national and city-level physical plans and strategies..
<b>Develop a financing framework for adequate and affordable housing</b>	
Financing adequate housing has to happen using a mix of financing options.	Develop concrete financing options in collaboration with all stakeholders that reflect the needs and context of the national vision on the provision of adequate housing, including mechanisms for micro-financing.

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Right to adequate housing, including land and resources [UDHR art. 25; ICESCR art. 11] [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf)

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