Driven by the vision that everyone needs a decent place to live, Habitat for Humanity welcomes the adoption of the New Urban Agenda and supports its emphasis on adequate and affordable housing, secure land tenure, and community-led development. As the agenda acknowledges, urbanization is one of the 21st century’s most transformative trends, and we congratulate United Nations member states in reaffirming their commitment to sustainable urban development and establishing a framework for collective action in the years ahead.

The New Urban Agenda addresses many aspects of Habitat for Humanity’s work, but we are particularly encouraged by the agenda’s:

Emphasis on housing

Housing, both in the informal and formal sectors, is at the center of key development outcomes – poverty reduction, livelihood opportunities, education, crime reduction and health – while contributing to economic growth, addressing energy consumption and fostering resilience. We applaud the inclusion of strong language on adequate and affordable housing throughout the New Urban Agenda – especially its integration with other sectors and the commitment to “foster the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing” and “the implementation of sustainable urban development programmes with housing and people’s needs at the center of the strategy.” We also support the “development of appropriate and affordable housing finance products … to invest in affordable and incremental housing in all its forms.”

Focus on secure tenure

Land is the foundation of a decent home, and the cross-cutting nature of secure land tenure presents a substantial opportunity for the New Urban Agenda: Strengthen and enforce secure rights to land, and help achieve myriad other development goals. We are encouraged that the New Urban Agenda promotes “increased security of tenure for all, recognizing the plurality of tenure types … with particular attention to security of land tenure for women as a key to their empowerment, including through effective administrative systems.” Also critical are “strong, inclusive management frameworks and accountable institutions that deal with land registration and governance.”

Attention to community-led development

“People-centered” is a core principle of Habitat for Humanity’s urban approach, meaning families and communities should be at the center of the development process, with decision-making authority and access to information and resources. The formation of the New Urban Agenda itself was inclusive, as is the language contained within the text. Community participation is referenced in many places, including in relation to housing. We welcome the New Urban Agenda’s commitment to “promote participatory age- and gender-responsive approaches at all stages of the urban and territorial policy and planning process, from conceptualization to design, budgeting, implementation, evaluation and review, rooted in new forms of direct partnership between government at all levels and civil society.”
Habitat for Humanity’s commitment

Cities are dynamic hubs of activity that are interconnected and continuously evolving. Housing can serve as a platform that connects and improves urban quality of life as an integral and integrating element of sound urban development and urban policies. But housing also relies on a broader enabling environment to fully foster strength, stability and self-reliance. Thus, in addition to boosting access to adequate and affordable housing, Habitat for Humanity commits to promoting sustainable cities, increasing security of tenure and catalyzing market development to implement the New Urban Agenda through the following:

A new urban approach

By 2030, nearly two-thirds of the world’s population will be living in urban areas, and the number of people living in slums continues to grow. To address this, Habitat for Humanity is introducing a new urban approach to promote sustainable cities and is looking for partners to support the implementation of this new strategy globally. This approach is based on the premise that there are eight non-negotiable principles that are universal and essential for good urban and housing development, which can be implemented through various contextually adapted practices.

The Solid Ground campaign

Housing accounts for more than 70 percent of land use in most cities, yet 1 billion people in cities around the world lack secure land rights. As a result, households are forced to operate in complex informal arrangements, making them vulnerable to displacement and loss of livelihoods and unable to reap the social and economic benefits associated with security of tenure. Habitat for Humanity recently created a global advocacy campaign called Solid Ground to raise awareness and improve policies and systems to help 10 million people secure access to land for shelter.

The Terwilliger Center for Innovation in Shelter

Government funding and private philanthropy alone cannot meet the shelter needs of the world’s population – local markets are critical. Most low-income people currently use local formal and informal market options to put a roof – no matter how frail or insecure – over their heads. As a response, Habitat for Humanity is launching the Terwilliger Center for Innovation in Shelter to accelerate and facilitate better-functioning, inclusive housing markets to enable over 8 million people to access improved shelter solutions by 2020.

Increased access to housing for 40 million people

Inequality is rising, and currently over 300 million households are financially stretched by housing costs. To address this, Habitat for Humanity will implement a wide array of community development strategies, advocacy initiatives and market development approaches by 2020, increasing housing access and affordability to housing for nearly 40 million people. Over the course of the New Urban Agenda, Habitat plans to help over 200 million people gain access to decent shelter by 2036.

About Habitat for Humanity

Driven by the vision that everyone needs a decent place to live, Habitat for Humanity began in 1976 as a grassroots effort. The Christian housing organization has since grown to become a leading global nonprofit working in nearly 70 countries. Families and individuals in need of a hand up partner with Habitat for Humanity to build or improve a place they can call home. Through financial support, volunteering or adding a voice to support affordable housing, everyone can help families achieve the strength, stability and self-reliance they need to build better lives for themselves. Through shelter, we empower. To learn more, visit habitat.org.