

MULTIPLYING IMPACT THROUGH ADVOCACY



**Capturing lessons from Solid Ground
on improving access to land for shelter
through policy and system changes**

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A GLOBAL ADVOCACY
CAMPAIGN OF

 **Habitat for Humanity®**

**SOLID
GROUND**

Executive summary

Habitat for Humanity is driven by the vision that everyone deserves a decent place to live. **Advocacy** is essential to making this vision a reality; it can be a tool to change policies, systems and practices and help exponentially more families meet their housing needs than any one organization could ever serve alone.

Advocacy has come a long way since it was first embraced by Habitat for Humanity International's board of directors in 2005. It was only in 2016 that Habitat for Humanity launched its first global advocacy campaign, **Solid Ground**, with the mission of changing land policies and systems to ensure that more people around the globe have a decent home. Solid Ground focuses on four interconnected subthemes: expanding security of tenure, promoting gender equality in property rights, upgrading informal settlements, and making communities more disaster resilient. This report summarizes the **methodologies, successes and lessons** related to the implementation of Solid Ground by Habitat for Humanity and partners in over 40 countries and at regional and global levels to support the land policy and advocacy efforts that will continue after the campaign ends.

Country advocacy efforts usually started with understanding the need or the opportunity to advocate, followed by different processes to design an advocacy methodology, which included engaging partners, assessing the issue and context, and developing a theory of change and plan for action. Successful **advocacy methodologies** often combined working in partnerships, engaging governments, engaging communities and building public support.

The **global advocacy efforts** had two main focuses. The first was to develop the capacity of the network to advocate and bring in new supporters, mainly through trainings and learning exchanges and through knowledge production and dissemination. The second was to influence global, regional and local dialogues and agendas, mainly through promoting multistakeholder engagement, participating in strategic global and multinational spaces, and building public support at the global level.

To date, Solid Ground has helped to change policies and systems to improve access to land for shelter for over **3 million people**. It also has had an impact beyond policy changes by empowering local communities to better understand their rights, access existing government programs, interact more efficiently with governments to express their demand, and hold governments accountable for their actions. Solid Ground has reached millions of people in the wider society to support its vision. Lessons from Solid Ground show that sustainable advocacy success required efforts and impact at the **local community, sector and wider society levels**. In other words, impactful advocacy cuts across all three levels of influence of Habitat for Humanity's 2014-20 strategic plan.

The **challenges** emerging from Solid Ground's implementation range from general/external ones, concerning any organization engaging in advocacy work, to organizational/internal ones, specifically concerning Habitat for Humanity's network. **Recommendations** include building on the lessons learned through Solid Ground's implementation; improving reporting skills at the country level and information flow among local, regional and global teams; and enabling long-term presence and relationships on the ground to generate evidence for ongoing and further advocacy initiatives and to strengthen the voice of Habitat for Humanity in policy circles.

Five in-depth country case studies supplement this report, illustrating relevant methodologies, successes and lessons: Côte d'Ivoire, focusing on security of tenure; Lesotho, on gender equality; Jamaica, on disaster resilience; Bangladesh, on informal settlements upgrading; and Brazil, on promoting adequate housing in vacant property.

This report should provide **technical insights** to help Habitat for Humanity's network and partners start or grow their advocacy programs and increase (and better understand) their impact. It also should **inspire** Habitat for Humanity's colleagues to start and **continue working toward meaningful change through advocacy**.

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Introduction

Habitat for Humanity is driven by the vision that everyone deserves a decent place to live. Currently, billions of people around the world are living in inadequate conditions, and millions are being evicted or living in fear of losing their homes. As the world continues to urbanize, an estimated 3 billion people will need new housing and basic urban infrastructure by 2030.¹ This unprecedented housing challenge calls on the Habitat for Humanity network to promote changes in policies, systems and practices to address some of the root causes of housing inadequacy and insecurity.

Advocacy can be a tool to influence changes to policies and systems to help exponentially more families meet their housing needs than any one organization could ever serve alone.

WHAT IS ADVOCACY? WHAT IS HABITAT FOR HUMANITY'S DEFINITION OF ADVOCACY?

The definition of advocacy varies from one organization to another. According to Habitat for Humanity International's Global Advocacy Guide,² "advocacy" is the most common, globally recognized term to describe a holistic strategy of influencing policies and systems. At the most basic level, advocacy means supporting and defending a cause you believe in. An "advocate" is a person who argues for a cause or course of action.

Advocates make the case and argue for the rights of those in need or who suffer from injustice. They often also provide those dealing with injustice with the skills and opportunities to speak on their own behalf. Advocates work for justice by raising awareness of and working to change situations and policies that are causing injustice.

Advocacy has been a part of Habitat for Humanity's work for at least the past 14 years. In 2005, following the recommendations of a Habitat for Humanity International task force,³ Habitat for Humanity International's board of directors embraced advocacy as part of the work of the organization and adopted the following definition of advocacy for Habitat, based on its strategic focus of providing decent, affordable shelter: **Changing systems, policies and attitudes to achieve decent housing for all.**

Since the adoption of Habitat's 2014-20 strategic plan (also known as the "three-house" strategy), advocacy has been encapsulated in the "Build Sector Impact" objective. However, as will be discussed in this report, lessons from Solid Ground help to reveal the need to think of and work on advocacy through all three houses of the strategic plan: **working with communities, with the housing sector and with wider society.**

In 2016, Habitat for Humanity launched its first global advocacy campaign, **Solid Ground**, to address issues related to land access for shelter, which emerged as one of the top priorities within the Habitat for Humanity network. Solid Ground was launched with the goal of influencing global, multinational, national and local policies and enforcing implementation to directly improve access to land for shelter for 10 million people, moving closer to a place where everyone has a decent place to live. To achieve that level of impact, the campaign provided significant resources to build the capacity of the global network and campaign partners to conduct advocacy campaigns and bring in new supporters through an increased public profile. Solid Ground is being implemented by Habitat for Humanity national organizations and partners in over 40 countries, focusing on four interconnected subthemes: expanding security of tenure, promoting gender equality in property rights, upgrading informal settlements, and making communities more disaster resilient. **To date, over 3 million people around the world have been impacted by the advocacy work conducted under Solid Ground.**

¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/financialsector/brief/housing-finance>

² HFHI (2013). *Advancing Access to Housing and Improving Lives Through Advocacy: A Guide for Habitat for Humanity's Global Network.* <https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/globaladvocacyguide.pdf>.

³ *Habitat for Humanity Advocacy Task Force Report, July 2005*; adopted by HFHI's board of directors in October 2005.

Objective of this report

This report seeks to capture advocacy methodologies and tools designed and implemented throughout Solid Ground, along with the successes and lessons related to the campaign on multiple levels, to inform the ongoing and future policy and advocacy efforts of the network. Data has been collected through desk research and interviews with key informants, drawing from the experiences of nine Habitat for Humanity national organizations and the global advocacy team, which includes colleagues in the Government Relations and Advocacy office in Washington, D.C., and advocacy managers at the regional area offices. Although this report looks at an advocacy campaign that focused on land issues, the methodologies and tools described here can be useful for advocacy work in other fields.

Who should read this report?

This document should be read by Habitat for Humanity network members and partners who are preparing, implementing or reviewing advocacy efforts, and by land and housing advocates who wish to learn from what has been implemented throughout Solid Ground around the globe. This may include Habitat for Humanity national directors and program staff members who include advocacy in their work or who are learning about advocacy as part of staff development; staff and board members in critical functional areas such as advocacy, communications, fundraising and research; and peer organizations, volunteers and local community leaders looking to learn for the purposes of their own land policy and advocacy efforts.

Road map for the reader

This document has been organized in the following five sections to summarize a wide range of methodologies, successes and lessons associated with advocacy efforts carried out by the Habitat for Humanity network under Solid Ground:

1. **Advocacy efforts carried out at national and local levels.** This section covers how the need and the opportunity to work with advocacy has emerged differently in various countries and how the national and local teams have designed and implemented advocacy strategies using different methodologies and tools.
2. **International advocacy efforts** to strengthen the capacity of the Habitat for Humanity network for advocacy and to influence global and regional agendas and dialogues. This section reviews how local, regional and global collaboration has provided an evidence base to strengthen Habitat for Humanity's voice in the global and multinational land sectors.
3. **Advocacy success and impact**, in terms of changes in policies and systems, at local community and wider society levels, and in terms of strengthening Habitat's network capacity to advocate.
4. **Key challenges** associated with advocacy work, in general, and with Habitat's campaign.
5. **Key lessons and recommendations** for Habitat for Humanity national organizations, the global advocacy team and leadership to improve ongoing and future advocacy efforts.

Five country case studies provide detailed information to supplement this report: [Côte d'Ivoire](#), focusing on security of tenure; [Lesotho](#), on gender equality; [Jamaica](#), on disaster resilience; [Bangladesh](#), on informal settlements upgrading; and [Brazil](#), on promoting adequate housing in vacant property. Experiences from other countries such as India, Nepal, Zambia, South Africa and Argentina also are featured in this report.

Previous reports and documents looking at Solid Ground supplement this report.

Section 1: Country advocacy methodologies

This section describes how Habitat for Humanity organizations around the world and country project teams engaged in advocacy work and how they designed and implemented their advocacy initiatives.

Understanding the need or the opportunity to advocate

Throughout Solid Ground, the need or the opportunity to advocate for changes in policies and systems emerged in different ways for different country teams. Some teams took a more reactive approach, while others took a more proactive approach, as explained below.

PROACTIVE APPROACH

Some Habitat for Humanity organizations have been conducting advocacy work for many years and have been engaging with policy and advocacy circles in a more proactive and systematic way. In these cases, such as in Habitat for Humanity **Brazil** and Habitat for Humanity **Honduras**, there is often an institutional, long-term advocacy strategy, and Solid Ground supported a specific phase or element of it. As the national director of Habitat Honduras put it: “The global Solid Ground campaign is very important to us because it has validated the work that we all have been doing for many years to improve municipal land and housing policies across Honduras.”

REACTIVE APPROACH

In most countries, advocacy efforts emerged as a reaction to a need or opportunity to influence policy dialogues. Sometimes, such as in **Jamaica** and **Côte d’Ivoire**, a specific project or program at the community level revealed roadblocks or challenges that required the engagement of other stakeholders, such as governments. In other cases, such as in **Nepal** and **Lesotho**, the engagement with governments through projects and programs revealed opportunities to influence policy dialogues, such as moments when policies, laws, plans or budgets were being drafted or reviewed.

In **Jamaica**, where Habitat was implementing a project to build more disaster-resilient communities, the project team realized through community-centered sessions that the lack of tenure security was preventing families from improving their homes. Government programs for land regularization of informal urban settlements were needed to overcome this roadblock for change. That triggered the project team to engage in advocacy and leverage existing relationships with governments and communities to push policy change.

In **Nepal**, the recently approved Constitution provided a key opportunity for Habitat for Humanity to advocate for land access for shelter. The new law established that safe land and safe housing are fundamental rights of every Nepalese citizen, and it generated a process of formulation of new policies, guidelines and laws on many topics at the national level, with impact at provincial and local levels. At the time, while most organizations were advocating for land rights in general, very few organizations were advocating specifically for land access for housing. As Habitat Nepal’s program operation manager put it: “This is the right time to influence the government, to convince the community people to raise their voice and influence government to formulate the policies in the favor of the most vulnerable communities.” Habitat Nepal started to advocate for “safe land for safer housing” at the federal level, where the policies and guidelines are formulated, and at the local level, where the policies and guidelines are implemented.

In most cases, the opportunities to advocate for system and policy changes resulted from long-term presence on the ground that generated evidence for advocacy and ensured existing relationships with communities and governments. Participation in policy circles also was crucial, ensuring that Habitat is “at the table” when the opportunities for advocacy arise.

Designing an advocacy methodology

Once the need or opportunity to advocate emerged, the country and local teams designed or reviewed their advocacy methodologies considering the following elements:

- Engaging partners and communities as key stakeholders.
- Assessing the issue and the context.
- Developing a theory of change and an advocacy plan.

The following lessons emerged from the practical experiences conducted by country and local teams under Solid Ground.

ENGAGING PARTNERS AND COMMUNITIES AS KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- **Working with partners:** Advocacy is usually a highly complex path that requires multiple resources and short-, medium- and long-term efforts. Changing systems and policies is too difficult to do alone. Country and local teams often engaged with other organizations with similar interests, such as NGOs, grassroots social movements, academia, governments and even the private sector, when possible and appropriate. In some countries, such as Jamaica and Côte d'Ivoire, **coalition groups or advisory committees** were formed from the beginning of advocacy efforts, bringing together a broader range of perspectives, expectations and commitments from various stakeholders.
- **Engaging communities as soon as possible, including women and the most vulnerable groups:** The inclusion of the voices, expectations and contributions from the potential beneficiaries of advocacy work helped to clarify advocacy goals, led to greater ownership of the process and greater sustainability of advocacy impact, and also strengthened Habitat's voice in advocacy circles. In some cases, as in Zambia and Brazil, communities have been involved from the grant proposal or planning phases of the advocacy cycle, through **study circles or community-centered workshops**, which strengthened the programs and its outcomes.

ASSESSING THE ISSUE AND THE CONTEXT

- **Understanding the issue and the context:** A clear understanding of the issue causing the inability to access housing or land, along with an assessment of how policies and systems work on the ground, was the foundation of Habitat for Humanity's advocacy work in many countries. This approach identified the gaps, barriers and challenges, as well as entry points and key stakeholders, to inform a theory of change and a plan for action. Some countries — including Argentina, Brazil and Lesotho — conducted **policy research and studies**, usually combining desk reviews, field assessments and interviews, to explore lessons from previous experiences and best practices. Others — such as Nepal and Cote d'Ivoire — held **formal or informal meetings** with governments, affected communities and their unique network of partners to complement information, bringing together a broader range of perspectives and therefore a more comprehensive assessment to support action planning.
- **Understanding the relevant government bodies, processes and decision-makers:** An important step taken by country teams when designing their advocacy methodologies was an assessment of the current legal frameworks, policies, plans or budgets to identify whether new policies were needed or whether proper implementation was the main constraint; whether related legal or policy reviews were ongoing or planned; what the government's capacities and priorities were in terms of policies and plans; and what the entry points for action were (local, district, country, regional and global levels, or executive, legislative, judicial and popular sectors). **Power maps** and **context analysis** were useful tools for identifying or clarifying the key policy issues, actors and policy environment, in addition to feasible advocacy goals and the risks, challenges and opportunities of undertaking advocacy in each context. In Cambodia, for example, Habitat understood and took advantage of the government's priorities in terms of policies and plans, leading to a quick advocacy win through the implementation of the Social Land Concession. A similar approach was followed by Habitat in the Philippines, with the implementation of presidential proclamations relating to secure tenure and informal settlements.

- **Using local data, evidence, lessons:** Whether **local data** collected at the community level, **official data** analyzed in an innovative way, **findings from policy assessments**, evidence from **previous experiences**, or best practices from other organizations, this will help to identify the targets and entry points and to create clear messages and goals. For instance, Habitat Brazil has been monitoring judicial responses to land regularization for low-income families for years. More recently, it is leading a collaborative effort to map land conflicts and forced evictions. The policy assessments building on these different data sources, and in partnership with a network of stakeholders, helped to clarify advocacy goals and targets at judicial and executive branches of power.
- **Learning from your programs and communities:** Your advocacy work does not need to start from scratch. Bring to the table your local evidence, lessons and experiences; build on existing relationships with stakeholders; and leverage previous results and potential commitments. In Argentina, for example, **lessons from a pilot project and existing relationships with governments** opened the doors for Habitat to engage in advocacy circles building on local evidence.

DEVELOPING A THEORY OF CHANGE AND AN ADVOCACY PLAN

- **Developing a theory of change:** Once the relevant data and information were collected and the key partners and stakeholders were mapped or engaged, as explained above, many country advocacy teams developed a theory of change, or an articulation of change they wanted to see on the ground. That helped to break down long-term processes of change into actionable advocacy steps. One way to develop a theory of change is to start with your desired long-term goal and work backward to identify the decision-makers who must be targeted, the actions that must be taken, and the participants and resources that must be mobilized. For instance, when the advocacy goal is to influence a new land or housing policy, the advocacy targets may be within the executive branch, where policies are being designed, such as the land and housing agencies or ministries. Advocates' action may include conducting policy research, drafting policy proposals, and building or strengthening coalitions to push forward policy proposals and influence decision-makers. The participants engaged in these actions may include advocates, community members and wider society, along with influential representatives from other branches of power, such as judicial and legislative authorities, depending on each context. Other advocacy goals, such as pushing policy implementation and resource allocation, influencing new laws, or even influencing changes in behavior and procedures within judicial systems, imply different targets and require different actions and participants. For example, consider the theory of change for the Solid Ground campaign: Solid Ground will activate and coordinate mobilization of existing and new allies to motivate policymakers to enact and implement policies that will advance access to land for shelter.



Source: [Solid Ground Tool Kit](#)

- **Collaborative planning and capacity assessment:** In parallel with developing a theory of change, it was important for the country advocacy teams to have clarity of the human, financial and institutional capacity of their own organizations and their network of partners to conduct the advocacy efforts. Many Habitat country teams planned their advocacy initiatives in collaboration with partners, aiming at resource-sharing. Collaborative planning and capacity assessment provided a clearer understanding of what each partner was bringing to the table, what advocacy goals and methods would be feasible, and how to outline the crucial capacity constraints that should be addressed.
- **Developing a clear advocacy plan:** Once the advocacy goals and targets were clear, the country advocacy teams planned the actions and activities to be conducted, the participants to be mobilized, and the resources to be allocated. Keeping in mind that advocacy usually deals with long-term aims, it was important to break down advocacy efforts into smaller steps, with intended outcomes and next steps identified.
- **Investing in the long term:** Advocacy goals can take months or even years to be realized. In many cases, new policies and systems are not enough to improve the lives of the most vulnerable groups. Particularly (but not only) in the so-called “developing countries,” government policies often will be implemented and benefit the most vulnerable only after continuous and long-term efforts to ensure implementation plans are designed, sufficient resources are allocated, and transparency and accountability mechanisms are established. Advocates, beneficiaries and all citizens must monitor and pressure government action to ensure peoples’ needs are actually being met. Advocacy plans must connect the short- and medium-term actions with the long-term goals. The strongest advocacy efforts recognized the long-term nature of advocacy work and invested in research, a staff person, and a strong presence in coalition to drive their advocacy forward and ensure it doesn’t fall off the priority list.
- **Including monitoring and evaluation into advocacy programs:** Measuring progress (activities), success (goals) and impact (signs of change) led to informed decisions, helped to adjust implementation throughout the project, and highlighted expected and unexpected outcomes and why they happened.
- **Planning ahead:** Developing an exit or transition strategy helped to ensure the sustainability of advocacy’s impact. Beneficiaries must own the process and be equipped to hold governments accountable to their commitments. Systems must be in place to sustain advocacy impact after the direct intervention.

Implementing an advocacy methodology

Informed by the initial assessments, theory of change and advocacy plans detailed above, the country advocacy teams pursued different goals under Solid Ground. In some cases, the advocacy goal was to influence governments to create new policies, laws or systems or to review existing legislation, policies, budget or plans. In other cases, relevant policies, planning and legal frameworks were already in place, and the focus of the advocacy was to ensure implementation either through more effective government action or through community empowerment and capacity development to access existing government policies.

In general, the most successful advocacy methodologies implemented under Solid Ground combined the following elements:

- Work through partnerships.
- Engagement with governments.
- Engagement with communities.
- Public support.

SUSTAINING AND EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS

Working through partnership was a key element of advocacy methodologies implemented at the country level throughout Solid Ground. Partnership promotes collaboration, building on complementary roles, capacities and

resources of partners, and provides incentives for resource-sharing and improved results. Some partnerships established since the project design phase continued and evolved into project implementation. In other cases, the theory of change and the plan for action shed light on new partners that should be engaged. As already mentioned in this report, the most common forms of partnership at the country and local levels under Solid Ground were:

- **Coalitions, alliances, networks, civic forums and platforms** that bring together civil society and community-based organizations with similar interests, including NGOs, social movements or academia, and often became a learning platform.
- **Project committees, advisory groups and working groups** that connected advocates, communities and governments from different agencies and sectors, depending on the advocacy goals, such as executive, legislative and judiciary branches, around concrete issues that were being tackled. These groups often became communities of practice.

Other forms of partnerships and collaboration connecting local, national, regional and global actors will be discussed in [Section 2](#) of this report.

ENGAGING WITH GOVERNMENTS

Successful means of engaging with governments and decision-makers in an effort to create or change land policies and systems or to influence behavior and push implementation of existing policies and programs included:

- **Taking advantage of initial assessments and studies as an opportunity to engage stakeholders**, such as governments, in a collaborative approach. Having recognized researchers on board helped to open doors and enhance the credibility of the process. Presenting research findings through strategic channels got media attention, instigated informed dialogue with governments and engaged public support to pressure decision-makers. Moreover, research papers and notes added legitimacy to advocacy efforts, proving a need to use your voice for policy or system changes.
- **Sensitizing or raising awareness of government representatives about the issue and their role under current policies and legal provisions.** This can be done through informative sessions, workshops, movie screenings (such as in India and Brazil), or field visits to demonstration projects or intervention sites (such as in Brazil and Nepal). Identifying key people within the organizations or governments who are more open to the discussion helped to influence change, but sharing findings and recommendations broadly with all influencers was also strategic to reinforcing the advocacy message.
- **Drafting and presenting policy papers with recommendations or proposals**, ideally through a participatory process and based on evidence, research and lessons learned. Government representatives were often interested in what has worked in other parts of the world and feasible action that can lead to tangible results. The initial assessment and policy position often identified roadblocks for implementation and included innovative solutions that would promote a collaborative environment to influence policy change. Policy papers were shared in a number of ways, including in bilateral meetings with relevant members of government at all levels or through workshops and seminars, reaching a broader audience.
- **Advising governments or providing technical input for policy change or implementation** was also an effective tactic for influencing change. This usually happened when the technical information was made available through studies and initial assessments, when the government representatives were more aware of their role and of what could be done to change the situation on the ground (through informative or awareness-raising sessions), and when the policy proposals were consolidated in a policy document that clearly understood the government priorities and provided recommendations and evidence that change was possible. These were key aspects of the advocacy initiatives that reached the greater levels of collaboration with government.
- **Organizing or participating in informal or formal meetings with government representatives**, through bilateral sessions, coalition meetings and institutional multistakeholder spaces, local or international

conferences, and others. Important elements at this stage included ensuring that advocacy messages reflected a common vision of a network of partners and beneficiaries and finding ways to hold governments accountable for their actions and commitments — ideally in a nonconfrontational approach — in partnership with communities. Continued dialogue with governments is key to furthering advocacy work.

- **Taking advantage of technology-based systems to engage stakeholders, improving information flow among government agencies and communities.** Examples include a slum mapping database in Bangladesh and a GIS territorial information platform in Jamaica, detailed in the respective country case studies. This helped to reduce costs and improved systems, such as slum upgrading and land regularization, that was a key argument to discuss with governments.

ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITIES

Engaging with communities, including women and young people, increased their capacity and empowerment to access existing land policies and interact more efficiently with governments. Successful methods for engaging communities include:

- **Organizing communities** through block-level meetings in India, School of Women Leaders in Brazil and Bolivia, and community-based hubs in Jamaica, among others. Habitat for Humanity Zambia, for example, is implementing a methodology called **study circles**, which engages women and men to build consensus and raise consciousness of issues affecting the community, such as gender-discrimination, property grabbing, and lack of roads and infrastructure in informal settlements. The study circles provide a pulse on the community, which drives the policy or system changes proposed by Habitat and has increased women’s participation in the community political spaces.
- **Action planning and power mapping with communities** provides a unique opportunity to identify and understand the issues and explore alternative solutions from the perspective of the community itself.
- **Door-to-door sensitization and distribution of informative material** on an individual’s land rights or laws that they aren’t aware of. For instance, in India, members of the Irula community were unable to access government programs, including land allocation and housing credit programs, because they lacked a “community certificate.” Ensuring that community members were able to navigate the process to get these community certificates became one important step of Habitat India’s advocacy efforts, with effects beyond their housing rights, contributing to their livelihood opportunities.
- **Providing specific training to community members**, such as training paralegals in Lesotho to help women write wills to ensure continued ownership of their land by family and avoiding opportunistic land grabbing, or training community enumerators in Jamaica to mobilize and educate communities while gathering local data. The work in Jamaica at the community level through the USAID-supported project Building Resilience and Capacities for Emerging Disasters, or BRACED, helped to create the **BRACED Youth Media Team** for young people living in the informal communities of Portmore. Through Habitat’s Media for Social Change initiative, the young people acquired and improved skills in the areas of photography and videography, including everything from simple camera maintenance to on-set and post-production techniques. They were taught to use these new skills to tell the stories of their communities; to talk with community members, leaders and governments; and to gather information and share it back with the community.
- **Improving information flow between communities and governments.** This was very clear in the case of Jamaica, where the BRACED project helped to put a GIS system in place, allowing community members to participate more actively in the land regularization process as enumerators, avoiding multiple trips to the city center to follow up on the process, and ensuring the government database was constantly updated. This system can be replicated in other areas of the country. GIS platforms also were implemented in Dominican Republic, Haiti, Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil and Bangladesh.

BUILDING PUBLIC SUPPORT

Building public support is an integral way of ensuring acceptance and promotion of your message. Successful methods for building public support throughout Solid Ground included:

- **Communications campaigns taking advantage of different media**, including TV, newspapers, blogs, social media, etc. In Lesotho, for example, the advocacy team got media attention and exposure from national TV and community radio and newspapers for its efforts to promote legal awareness of women's inheritance rights and policy messages.
- **Challenging stereotypes by combining storytelling with research findings and policy messages** improved sensitization and engagement. For instance, in Brazil, a feature-length documentary called *Quem Mora lá* (*Who Lives There* in English), showed how families evicted from their homes received no support from the government and sought shelter in vacant property in the city centers, contributing to ensuring the social function of land in densely populated cities. This started a series of dialogues with stakeholders that were not originally in touch with Habitat Brazil, such as the national and state public defense offices in different states, and strengthened the dialogue with students and academia.
- **Finding creative ways to convey your policy messages and raise the voice of those in need.** Catchy jingles and songs helped to change behavior in Cambodia, and Carnival demonstrations in Brazil touched with humor on serious issues like the slow pace of judges deciding on land regularization processes. The more creative, the better!
- **Online activities, such as webinars** on social rent and vacant property in Argentina, were also an important channel for positioning the issue and disseminating policy messages, engaging specific audiences such as young people, students and academics.
- In some countries, **working with volunteers was part of the advocacy strategy**, such as in Nepal through a Women Build Committee, and in the Asia-Pacific region through the Habitat Young Leaders Build.
- **Petitions** also were a tool of advocacy strategies in some countries, such as India and Brazil, serving mainly to identify potential supporters. In Brazil, Habitat **garnered over 3,000 signatures** calling on the government to **fairly compensate families** for their homes when relocating them in preparation of the Olympics.

Country examples

The following country examples further detail how Habitat organizations and country project teams designed and implemented land policy and advocacy efforts.

ARGENTINA

After a relevant a **pilot project focused on social rent in Buenos Aires**, Habitat for Humanity Argentina decided to advocate for government support to scale and replicate the pilot experience through social housing programs. Leveraging existing relationships with government agencies and with civil society organizations that were actively engaged in advocacy circles, Habitat Argentina conducted a baseline **study focused on vacant property and social rent**. The findings were presented through a series of strategic meetings with local civil society and governments called Action LABs, in parallel with a series of webinars called Micro LABs, to promote informed dialogues with multiple stakeholders and to draw from experiences from across the region. The baseline study, the Action LABs and the series of Micro LABs informed the development of policy proposals and helped to establish a multistakeholder working group on the topic.

Since then, Habitat Argentina has strengthened its role as an expert on the topic and has been invited to participate in several government-led discussions. Acknowledging the recommendations from Habitat Argentina and partners, the national government is changing the way it measures vacant property throughout the country, and the

government of Buenos Aires launched several programs to regulate the price of rent, standardize tenant agreements, and provide warranties and legal assistance for tenants. These advocacy programs opened new funding and collaboration opportunities with governments. For instance, Habitat Argentina has been invited by the national government to lead a program to adapt and replicate the assessments and policy proposals piloted in Buenos Aires for several cities across the country.

SOUTH AFRICA

Habitat for Humanity South Africa's advocacy methodology included the development of four extensive research papers investigating the ways in which informal settlement — or slum — upgrading processes and systems can be formulated to allow for extensive community involvement and capacity building to provide for final settlement consolidation. This approach emphasizes the role that intermediary organizations such as Habitat South Africa play in addressing poverty, economic growth and development, social cohesion and capacity constraints within the state. The convening of sector partners through the Practitioners Platform brought urban-sector specialists together to share their experiences, design collective responses and make inputs into policy.

Evidence and lessons learned through long-term programs were used to influence informal settlement upgrading and social development policies through engagement with policymakers, government officials and the private sector. Habitat South Africa was part of the consultant group that recognized the need for a new strategic response addressing the informal settlement upgrading strategy. Habitat South Africa developed the document *Design and Tenure Options for Informal Settlement Upgrading* through the Informal Settlement Support Plan as part of a broader Informal Settlement Support Programme consisting of five chapters. Part of the strategy is to ensure funding for intermediary organizations like Habitat South Africa. The drafting process was accompanied by several training sessions to help municipalities build local capacity for implementation, and thus should be regarded as a system change as well. The Western Cape government adopted this new approach and committed to start upgrading 60 settlements based on this methodology. Habitat South Africa's advocacy work has impacted 88,440 people, which is a major advocacy breakthrough in Africa, and a result of an advocacy approach implemented for almost four years.

INDIA

Habitat for Humanity India works with the Irula tribes, a historically marginalized community belonging to a lower caste and often denied access to public services. Through a government policy that restricted forest land use, the Irulas have been forced from their land and left to seek livelihood opportunities in areas prone to disasters. A great number of bonded laborers belong to the Irula tribes. There is a government provision that each state can allocate land for the marginalized tribes, but discrimination is embedded in all spheres of government and society; government authorities and decision-makers are usually from higher castes. The Irulas also lack legal knowledge about their rights, and some even lack their "community certificate," which is the first step to accessing government programs targeted to their population groups, including land allocation and housing programs.

Habitat India worked with a number of partners to organize Irula communities through block-level meetings and committees, including members of women self-help groups, opinion leaders and youth club members. Aiming to promote land allocation for Irula communities, these committees collected applications and relevant documents from the community and presented them to the local government to document and forward the resolutions to the district administration through the district forums. They also provided an avenue for the community to meet with district and state governments officials regarding land issues. In parallel, Habitat India worked to sensitize government representatives and decision-makers in several departments, through a series of meetings, a movie screening and a Charter of Demands with policy recommendations.

Section 2: Global advocacy methodologies

Policy and advocacy initiatives happening under the Solid Ground campaign at the local and national levels are being complemented by regional and global efforts. This section focuses on the advocacy efforts of staff members at the regional offices and the global advocacy team, which includes colleagues in the Government Relations and Advocacy office in Washington, D.C., and advocacy managers. It explains how these efforts supported developing network capacity and influenced policy debate at the global level.

Developing network capacity

To achieve successful policy influence at the global, multinational, national and local levels and enforce implementation to directly improve access to land for shelter for 10 million people, Solid Ground is committed to building capacity within the Habitat for Humanity network to lead and execute advocacy campaigns and bring in new supporters through an increased public profile, including as an expert on housing and land policies. Through Solid Ground, the global advocacy team worked to develop network capacity in several ways, mainly through trainings, learning exchanges, and knowledge production and dissemination.

TRAININGS AND LEARNING EXCHANGES

The training and learning activities promoted by the global advocacy team include:

- **Online trainings and peer-learning exchanges**, such as webinars and online discussions. One example is the series of network learning calls organized by the global advocacy team in Washington, D.C., on each of the Solid Ground subthemes. These calls provided a platform for cross-regional sharing and learning. In each call, selected Habitat national organizations were invited to present their work and lessons from practice and learn from one another, while the regional and global staff helped to connect these local efforts and impact with Habitat for Humanity's global commitments and other global frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda.
- **Face-to-face trainings and knowledge exchanges**, such as the [Global Learning Exchange on Land](#) held before the 2017 World Bank Land and Poverty Conference in Washington, D.C. Hosted by Solid Ground and the Civil Society Cluster of UN-HABITAT's Global Land Tools Network, or GLTN, the learning exchange provided a relevant overview of the concepts and terms related to land tenure, highlighting the interface between land and housing advocacy. It also presented a wide range of land tools that can be implemented at the national and local levels, such as the Secure Tenure Domain Model, or STDM, developed by GLTN, and the Mobile Applications to Secure Tenure, or MAST, developed by USAID. The Global Learning Exchange and the Land and Poverty Conference together provided a venue for knowledge exchange, networking and potential consensus-building through the promotion of evidence-based approaches to land governance.
- **Regional trainings** also were held, such as in the Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia-Pacific regions. In Asia-Pacific, a training focusing on [Strengthening Land Tenure Security for Disaster Resilience](#) was held during the Asia Pacific Housing Forum in September 2019. The region also hosted the Asia-Pacific Learning Exchange on Land: [Strengthening Land Tenure Security for Urban Poverty Reduction](#) in Manila, Philippines, in November 2017. Land-related challenges and opportunities in the region were discussed, including strategies to address the challenges currently faced by civil society organizations and new ways to share knowledge and collaborate among the cluster members to advance individual and collective goals. The conference also highlighted several lessons from multistakeholder engagement.⁴ Another approach to promote multistakeholder engagement involves Action LABs, eight of which were hosted and implemented by

⁴ Katz et al. (2018) *Multi-Stakeholder Engagement to Increase Access to Land for Housing: Case Studies through the Solid Ground Campaign*. 2018 World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty.

Habitat for Humanity in Latin America and the Caribbean. **Action LABs** are knowledge exchange and evidence-based advocacy approaches to build the capacity of multiple stakeholders toward changes in land policies, systems and practices. In alignment with responsible governance frameworks and sustainable development agendas, the Action LABs gather experts and representatives from governments, civil society, grassroots organizations and communities, academia, and the private sector to design collaborative action plans, building on lessons and evidence, and promoting innovation and co-creation. The Action LABs methodology combines online and face-to-face meetings, usually through three steps:

- An initial assessment of the issue, actors, context and previous experiences that can clarify the local challenges and barriers and shed light on innovative policy solutions. This initial phase culminates in a series of online meetings, forums or webinars, through which partners can share opinions, recommendations, successful experiences and innovative solutions around land issues and tools
- Convening key stakeholders face-to-face over two or three days to promote intensive dialogues and collaboration in drafting policy proposals informed by evidence and lessons learned.
- Engaging partners through the implementation phase, with Habitat for Humanity and other partners offering support, following up, and encouraging implementation and documentation.
 - In Bolivia, for example, the Action LABs focused on social rent policies as an alternative method of ensuring tenure security for the most vulnerable groups living in cities. In a collaborative environment, government representatives were enthusiastic to learn from experiences implemented in other countries, leading to improvements in policymaking and decision-making.
 - In Argentina and Brazil, the Action LABs focused on the paradox of having so many vacant and underused properties in city centers while so many families lack adequate housing. In these two countries, the Action LABs highlighted an emerging policy issue in the region and are helping to advance regional dialogues and practice around the **social function of land**, a key concept of the global frameworks toward sustainable development, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, still lacking proper implementation.
- Solid Ground also ensures the access of Habitat network members to **external training opportunities** convened by other organizations, such as the yearly **LANDAC Conference and Utrecht Summer School**, attended by several network members.

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND DISSEMINATION

The global advocacy team supported the development and dissemination of important knowledge products to serve both as a thematic reference and as an advocacy tool for the network. These include:

- **Thematic documents** such as the **issue briefs** on each of the Solid Ground subthemes, including a theoretical review on the issue, Habitat's approach to addressing that issue, and examples of work that has been conducted in different countries. The issue briefs provided a thorough and comprehensive research document to the network and can be seen as helpful policy and advocacy tools that link to each subtheme, have examples from the country level, and have the principles of policy related to the subtheme.
- **Country documents** such as periodic reports, blogs and conference articles to showcase local efforts and their impact to a broader audience. For example, Habitat's Asia-Pacific area office supported a number of conference articles and presentations at the World Bank Land and Poverty Conference on Cambodia, Philippines and India.
- The global advocacy team also provided technical support in the development of several **local studies** carried out at the country level, such as the study on rental and vacant property in Argentina and the study on women's access to land and housing in Lesotho.

- Other interesting ways to produce knowledge in a collaborative way were explored. For example, in the Latin America and Caribbean region, an [online discussion](#) on urban land conflicts gathered contributions from 28 experts in 12 countries to reveal the main forms of land conflicts and evictions occurring in the region, the root causes of such conflicts, and the potential guidelines for action. The [final report](#) compiled these contributions and connected the regional with the global discussions. It influenced the Land and Conflict Coalition led by UN-HABITAT's Global Land Tools Network to include the perspectives of Latin America and the Caribbean in their global discussions and to raise awareness among the coalition members of the land conflicts happening outside peace-making and humanitarian contexts. Other examples include the [baseline assessments](#) produced to start the Action LABs, detailed earlier in this report, and the [event reports](#) produced afterward with input from the various experts who participated in the sessions.
- [Policy documents](#) and summaries were also important knowledge products that framed Habitat for Humanity's work in a broader context.

Disseminating such knowledge products and relevant information was done both online and face-to-face:

- Providing regular content through monthly updates and a quarterly newsletter, complementing the campaign [microsite](#) and [blogs](#), has been an important means of gathering and sharing information about country, regional and global efforts, serving as a reference and inspiring the network.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, a regional web portal for Solid Ground, [Suelo Urbano](#), was created, translating some of the contents from the English website into Spanish and Portuguese and disseminating knowledge in other ways, such as the open library, online forums and webinars.
- The global advocacy team also supported showcases of local efforts and impact in international spaces, including global conferences like the World Urban Forum, the World Bank Land and Poverty Conference, or the U.N. High-Level meetings. On one hand, promoting local representation in these global events helped to connect Habitat national organizations with potential partners and donors, and exposed them to trends, innovations and recognized best practices in the sector. On the other hand, ensuring local perspectives and voices were present in such global, often disconnected settings, enhances the discussions with real experiences and demonstrates Habitat's deep knowledge and expertise in the places where they work.

Influencing global and regional dialogues and agendas

The global advocacy team sought to influence global and regional agendas through various efforts, such as promoting multistakeholder engagement, participating in strategic global spaces, and building public support at the global level. Global and regional efforts also can have an influence on local and national policies and systems.

PROMOTING MULTISTAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Organizing regional conferences was one important way the global advocacy team promoted multistakeholder engagement to influence development agendas and dialogues under Solid Ground. For example, the regional conference led by Habitat Europe, Middle East and Africa, [Partnership for Action: Improving Land Governance and Management in Africa](#), presented the opportunity for stakeholders from multiple sectors to come together to explore approaches to land governance toward inclusive and sustainable development. The conference was convened under the umbrella of Solid Ground and the GLTN's Urban Civil Society Organization Cluster, in partnership with Namibia University of Science and Technology, or NUST; the Habitat International Coalition, or HIC; the Huairou Commission; and Slum/Shack Dwellers International, or SDI, also engaging representatives from the Pan-African Parliament. It was one of the first events of its kind in the African region. Policy papers and a conference report were produced after the conference and have become useful knowledge products for the network.

For Habitat national organizations, this regional conference provided not only an opportunity to share and learn from their unique contexts, but also a key moment to strengthen relationships with invited guests from their own countries and to engage with potential partners. For example, Habitat Lesotho found the conference served as a means of overcoming the challenge of convening local stakeholders, allowing working groups and an advisory committee to be established. Representatives from government, academia and civil society gathered after the conference and were able to strategize and build a common advocacy agenda to address gender- and land-related questions. The networking during the conference also triggered an opportunity to implement the Gender Evaluation Criteria in the country, a land tool designed by UN-HABITAT's GLTN to assess whether land laws and policies are responsive to the needs of both women and men and to identify pathways for bringing about improvements.

Other examples of regional multistakeholder events led by Habitat for Humanity under Solid Ground were the [III Latin American and Caribbean Housing Forum on Housing and Habitat](#), held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, in June 2019, and the [Asia-Pacific Housing Forum](#), held in Bangkok, Thailand, in September 2019.

Yet another example is the establishment of [Urban Housing Practitioners' Hubs](#), or UHPHs, in partnership with Cities Alliance. The UHPHs are knowledge platforms that bring together multiple stakeholders such as national and local government authorities, civil society organizations, financial institutions, private-sector groups, multilateral agencies and academia to exchange, disseminate and promote innovation around housing. The effort started in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2016, and is now being replicated in Asia and the Pacific because of the great interest of stakeholders. In terms of advocacy, the UHPHs are becoming important spaces for interaction between civil society and governments in a collaborative approach, to improve the effectiveness of the region's housing ecosystem and its synergy with adjacent sectors such as urban planning and community resilience and with global crosscutting themes such as gender and climate change.

PARTICIPATING IN STRATEGIC GLOBAL/INTERNATIONAL SPACES AND POLICY DISCUSSIONS

Solid Ground provided a clear focus and goals — and local evidence — for Habitat for Humanity to engage in various coalitions, platforms and forums at the global, regional, national and local levels. This has been key to presenting Habitat's positions, to networking, to building knowledge and to helping shape policies and processes in support of housing and land. One key example of such engagement was the preparatory process toward Habitat III, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development. Through advocacy on security of tenure and the continuum of land rights in preparatory meetings, regional forums, national government thematic meetings and U.N. venues, the global advocacy team successfully influenced the main outcome of the Habitat III conference — the New Urban Agenda — to include 3 of our 4 policy priorities: housing, secure land tenure and community-led development. In October 2016, at Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador, Habitat for Humanity also committed to helping over 200 million people gain access to adequate shelter by 2036.

An important element of Habitat for Humanity's participation in global dialogues and spaces, as mentioned earlier in this report, is a constant effort to bring local evidence and local staff members to international gatherings, not only to build the capacity of local network members, but also to strengthen Habitat's global voice, showing that Habitat's global messaging and positions are informed by practice and evidence, building on country work around the globe. One example of how Solid Ground promoted local-global collaboration happened at the U.N. High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2018, where governments were providing progress reports on their implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 11, which focuses on ensuring cities and human settlements are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. While Habitat for Humanity [submitted a statement](#) calling on all stakeholders to work together to help create an enabling environment and establish urban policies that prioritize affordable housing, secure land tenure and community-led development, a representative from the BRACED project led by Habitat for Humanity Jamaica presented local evidence of change through advocacy at the SDG 11 plenary

discussion focusing on the success of the BRACED project in training and empowering communities to increase disaster resilience.

Collaboration between country and global teams was also a strong advocacy tactic for influencing international policies, such as the work of Habitat for Humanity's Europe, Middle East and Africa area office toward the new European Union African, Caribbean and Pacific Partnership Agreement. The global advocacy team drafted a [policy document](#) with Habitat's recommendations for placing housing at the center of achieving development outcomes in the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions. The policy document was shared in Brussels, Belgium, to members of the European Parliament, Commission and Council and with high-level policymakers in some African countries. The highlight of this advocacy effort resulted in a workshop, at the invitation of the Romanian government during its EU presidency and in collaboration with Cities Alliance, in which Habitat Europe, Middle East and Africa presented to the policy officers of the 28 EU member states at the European Council ACP Working party in Brussels. Habitat for Humanity Malawi joined Habitat for Humanity International's advocacy efforts to influence global development discourse to reach out to the Malawi government and share the policy document with it. As the negotiations continue, Habitat for Humanity International has drafted an [additional policy paper](#) to support the inclusion of land and housing in the Africa-EU agreement. As negotiations are ongoing, there is evidence that Habitat's recommendations are being incorporated into the text, recognizing the importance of housing and land to achieve sustainable development. By influencing this new agreement, advocacy efforts under Solid Ground may have an impact on the EU development funding priorities for 79 ACP countries in the next 15 years.

More and more, Habitat for Humanity has been invited as a knowledge leader to participate in global spaces. One recent example was the invitation to participate in the UN-HABITAT Assembly: Business Leaders Dialogue. In a session titled Partnering for Bankability: Turning Investors into Financiers, Habitat for Humanity had the unique role of providing the critical voice of civil society in discussions about government policies toward private investments in urban areas, real estate, affordable housing, urban infrastructure and other topics. Habitat for Humanity was elected to co-chair the civil society partner constituent group of the General Assembly of Partners, or GAP, a U.N.-recognized platform toward Habitat III, through which Habitat for Humanity successfully advocated before the member states to reflect secure tenure and affordable housing finance in the New Urban Agenda. Habitat for Humanity's successful participation led to an invitation to be an adviser in a stakeholder engagement platform for the U.N. Office of Disaster Risk Reduction, which held its first stakeholder forum at the U.N. Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. Habitat for Humanity was elected to be co-chair with Slum Dwellers International, representing the GLTN's Urban Civil Society Organizations Cluster to the steering committee. This puts Habitat in a unique position to provide leadership and engage with UN-HABITAT, member states and other advisers concerning the future direction of the GLTN.

BUILDING PUBLIC SUPPORT AT GLOBAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

As in the country and local levels, building public support is an important aspect of Habitat for Humanity's advocacy work at the regional and global levels.

Through the [Build Solid Ground](#) project, a Development Education and Awareness Raising grant financed by the European Union, 14 project partners across seven countries are disseminating campaign messaging as a means to inform, educate and engage EU citizens about global issues related to SDG 11: housing, urbanization and land rights. Project partners launched extensive mass communication campaigns, reaching 1.5 million people in the first year, using both traditional and online media in addition to public advertising and participation at creative events. It can be challenging to attract a wider audience with topics related to housing and land rights from the global perspective, particularly in countries with well-established property rights, policies and institutions. For this reason, the Build Solid Ground project began by using creative avenues to share insights into the risks and challenges communities living in informal settlements experience. One such avenue was [a video](#) produced by Habitat for

Humanity Great Britain. Since Build Solid Ground launched, nearly 6,500 Europeans – primarily university students, civil society organization members, local authorities and corporate workers – participated in a variety of learning events led by the project partners, which are crucial for building critical understanding about SDG 11 and housing. Further, more than 900 EU citizens have volunteered for trips aimed at building or renovating houses in partnership with vulnerable families in non-EU countries.

Understanding that changing the underlying policies and systems is critical to long-term improvements of the global housing situation, our advocacy managers and experts from Habitat for Humanity Europe, Middle East and Africa took advantage of the current negotiation process around the European Union-Africa, Caribbean and Pacific States Agreement and attended several meetings with EU and national policymakers in Brussels, as already mentioned in this report. Policy papers and participation in events highlighting this and other policy priorities have been a key part of Build Solid Ground, and in the third and final year a petition will give a public face to – and an opportunity for EU citizens to participate in – its advocacy efforts, using increased visibility to enhance the accountability of policymakers to support global development.

The **Urban Thinkers Campuses, or UTC**, organized by Habitat for Humanity in the Asia-Pacific region were another example of activity contributing to building public support, particularly among young people. As an initiative of UN-HABITAT conceived as an open space for critical exchange between urban actors toward urban transformations, the UTCs held in the Philippines and Thailand discussed topics from housing as a key to sustainable growth to young people's perspectives on housing. The UTCs brought together participants from government institutions, civil society, academia, the private sector, financing institutions, and multilateral organizations to provide wide-ranging perspectives from across the region and beyond.

Leveraging the global component of the campaign was critical in supporting and reinforcing local, national and regional public support initiatives. Solid Ground led communication strategies with global reach through online petitions, social media campaigns, newsprint, interviews, videos and regular blogs to highlight the issues of the campaign. As a partner for Devex's New Urban Agenda campaign, Habitat for Humanity helped create thoughtful and engaging content that amplified the conversation around the New Urban Agenda in the lead-up to Habitat III, which reached over 85 million unique users through social media and over 459 million impressions of the whole campaign. Habitat's global advocacy team was able to leverage the media partnership with Devex alongside a public petition to support our direct advocacy efforts to influence the New Urban Agenda. Using paid and network promotion of the petition, 35,000 people joined us in calling on U.N. member states to include our four key priorities – housing, secure land tenure, community-led development, and specific and accountable measures – in the New Urban Agenda.

Section 3: Successes and impact

Solid Ground had two main goals. The external, overarching goal was to reform and strengthen implementation of policies and systems to improve access to land for shelter for 10 million people. Meanwhile, the main internal goal was to build the capacity of the network and partners to conduct advocacy campaigns and bring in new supporters through an increased public profile.

Policy and system changes

As a result of multiple efforts in various spheres of influence and directions, Solid Ground to date has helped to improve access to land for shelter for over 3 million people. Because of the long-term nature of advocacy work, and through the foundation built by Solid Ground, advocacy outcomes and wins will continue to be realized long beyond the campaign, moving the world much closer to a place where everyone has a decent place to live.

Signs of change in policies and systems related to the Solid Ground advocacy efforts include:

- Habitat for Humanity influenced **new policies or policy implementation** related to land and housing, such as the Strategy and Methodological Guidelines for Informal Settlement Upgrading in Western Cape Province, South Africa; the implementation of the Social Land Concession in Cambodia; and the implementation of presidential proclamations relating to secure tenure and informal settlements in the Philippines, as already mentioned in this report. Another example comes from **Honduras**, where the national organization and partners worked at the municipal level across the country to create 227 new land and housing policies, granting secure tenure for 1.2 million people and influencing municipal budgets, ensuring over US\$50 million in funding for land and housing.
- **New government programs** have been launched, influenced by Habitat's advocacy messages. In Argentina, for example, the government of Buenos Aires launched a series of programs to regulate the price of rent, **standardize tenant agreements**, provide **warranty for tenants**, and provide **legal assistance** and **conflict mediation** for tenants and landlords, as already mentioned in this report.
- **New land systems** have been designed jointly by Habitat for Humanity national organizations and governments, such as the new system for land certification at the village level in Côte d'Ivoire, the land cards system in Zambia, or the new system for land regularization in urban areas in Jamaica. These systems have been piloted in selected communities and have the potential to be scaled and replicated in many other areas across the respective countries.
- **Information platforms** have been developed to gather information, connect stakeholders and improve information flow to support decision-making and policy implementation, such as the **Urban Informal Settlement Mapping** in Bangladesh and the **Territorial Information Management System Platform** in Jamaica, Haiti and Dominican Republic. These information platforms improve information flow and processes, helping to sustain the impact and relationship between governments and citizens. In Jamaica, for example, using drones to draw images for digitalized land maps rather than using manual drawings and engaging community enumerators proved to be cost-effective, provided opportunity for employment, and led to integrated cooperation between governmental bodies and community members when it came to the research of land ownership and enumeration and verification of land.
- **The implementation of existing policies** related to land and housing also has improved as a result of Habitat's advocacy efforts to raise the awareness of government representatives of their roles under the law. In Côte d'Ivoire, the village chiefs were not aware that their role in providing land certificates was the first step to allowing families to apply for land titles. In India, caste discrimination at high levels of governments and society was blocking land allocation for the Irula community. And in Brazil, judicial responses to land regularization for low-income families could take up to 20 years, while the same judges take only a couple of days to allow evictions of low-income families from the property of wealthy landowners, disregarding the

constitutional principle of the social function of land. In Côte d'Ivoire, over 5,500 land certificates have been issued since the national organization's advocacy efforts started. In India, land has been allocated to 206 Irula families. In Brazil, the number of judicial sentences favorable to low-income families went from 15 across 20 years to over 115 across two years. More than numbers, these signs of change in the behavior of traditional, government and judicial authorities should serve as a demonstration that changing deeply embedded inequality and discrimination is possible through advocacy efforts.

At the regional and global levels, Habitat for Humanity has also influenced important agendas and agreements to ensure that housing and land tenure security were considered, such as the New Urban Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and the New European Union African, Caribbean and Pacific Agreement. These overarching agreements serve to guide action by governments at national, subnational and local levels, and therefore have an impact around the globe.

Beyond policy change: Advocacy successes at the local and wider society levels

As already mentioned in this report, effective advocacy initiatives often combine efforts beyond the “building sector impact” sphere of influence, as determined by Habitat for Humanity International's 2014-20 strategic plan. Policies and laws often are not enough to impact the lives of people, particularly but not only in developing country contexts. Communities must be empowered to access existing government policies and to monitor proper policy implementation without depending on external aid. Public support from wider society is an essential pressure on decision-makers to ensure policy implementation and resource allocation. Hence, impactful advocacy strategies require long-term presence and relationships on the ground with governments, communities and other advocates, and a combination of efforts on all three spheres of influence acknowledged in Habitat for Humanity's strategic plan: **community, sector and society.**

The positive impact of advocacy initiatives under Solid Ground beyond policy change include:

- **Citizens are more aware of their rights** and better able to access existing government programs, such as the Irula families who needed community certificates to access land allocation and housing subsidies.
- **Women are more empowered to understand and act to protect their property rights**, such as women in Zambia and Lesotho who are now challenging gender discrimination and are willing to come forward to apply for land titling or to write their wills to avoid land grabbing.
- **Communities are more organized and empowered** through a number of methodologies, such as study circles, community-based hubs and coalitions. The example from Jamaica showed how youth media training for advocacy helped young people to be better prepared to speak for themselves, to prepare and support advocacy messages, to hold governments accountable, and to participate more actively in policy decision-making.
- **More and more people from wider society have been reached** through communications campaigning at the local and international levels, including blogs, newsletters, short videos, documentary movies, social media posts and even mainstream media attention. This contributed to the overarching policy environment, triggering government response and reaching other groups, such as legislative bodies, which added pressure for a political response, and students and academia, who helped develop innovative policy solutions, such as Habitat Brazil's work on vacant property.

The advocacy impacts beyond policy change are key elements for sustaining, scaling and replicating the policy changes after the direct advocacy initiative ends. In addition, local evidence and presence on the ground, along with an active voice within wider society, are instrumental when new advocacy opportunities arise.

Stronger network capacity

The internal goal of Solid Ground was to build the capacity of Habitat's network and partners to conduct advocacy campaigns and bring in new supporters through an increased public profile. Noteworthy changes within the network include:

- Network members have accessed a number of online and face-to-face **trainings and learning exchanges**, increasing their knowledge of the concepts around land and the relationship with housing, their exposure to innovative tools and methodologies to conduct land-related advocacy, and their ability to present and showcase their work to different audiences. This helped cross-regional connection among Habitat national organizations to learn on common policy issues and good practices.
- Network members promoted and accessed several **networking opportunities**. As a result, new partnerships have been established and existing relationships have been strengthened, ranging from universities to judicial entities, from legislators to social movements and grassroots organizations at the international, national and local levels. This leveraged partnerships and resource-sharing.
- Solid Ground supported the development of a number of **studies**, information gathering and databases, along with policy assessments and policy briefs, at the local and national levels. This is a key element of evidence-based advocacy, which strengthens the voice of Habitat national organizations in advocacy circles and helps ongoing review and development of advocacy strategies, messaging, policy proposals, etc. As one of Habitat Lesotho's representative put it: "These studies have become **'our solid ground for advocacy,'** the legs on which we now stand to advocate for land and housing rights."
- Other **knowledge products**, such as the issue briefs on each of the Solid Ground subthemes, have been developed and shared widely across the network, providing a thorough reference to support further advocacy and policy work related to land. These knowledge products are appreciated across the network and inspire more subject matter expertise on the issues we focus on. They also can be used globally as a resource for stakeholders and governments.
- Solid Ground also supported the development of a number of **communications materials**, such as short movies, long documentaries, graphics and presentations, that helped to shed light on the importance of the need for land for shelter and helped deliver policy messages more effectively to a wider audience. These materials have become important advocacy tools and are being widely used by Habitat national organizations to sensitize and engage stakeholders, including the public.
- **Innovative advocacy methodologies** have been developed and improved, often combining evidence-based and participatory approaches, such as the Action LABs in Argentina and Brazil. Others have promoted technology-based engagement with stakeholders, such as in Bangladesh and Jamaica; while still others have focused on community engagement and capacity development, such as the study circles in Zambia, the training of paralegals in Lesotho, or the block-level committees in India. The common "formula" of impactful advocacy strategies seems to include these four elements:
 - Engagement with governments.
 - Engagement with communities.
 - Building public support.
 - Working through partnerships.

This understanding can be useful for future advocacy efforts in other topics.

- **Local-regional-global collaboration** supported country-level implementation and capacity development, and provided local evidence for global messaging and influence.
- **New resources** have been developed, such as a new government consultancy opportunity in Argentina and a new phase of funding in Zambia with a new donor. As the Zambia advocacy officer put it: "The signs of change on the ground are an enormous source of evidence for fundraising."

- Habitat for Humanity’s leadership is increasingly **acknowledged in the land sector**. Habitat has been invited as a knowledge leader to several spaces, such as the U.N. business roundtable and the World Cities Day; has led groups such as UN-HABITAT’s Global Land Tool Network Urban Civil Society Organizations Cluster; and has participated in the U.N. General Assembly of Partners.
- Ultimately, **Solid Ground strengthened advocacy work within the Habitat for Humanity network**. Habitat national leadership is increasingly supportive of advocacy programs, especially when it is aligned and contributes to other programmatic areas or the work of the organization, as in Habitat Argentina. Habitat Philippines now includes advocacy as a clear line of work in its strategic plan, which helps to generate a more proactive approach to advocacy and to strengthen ongoing efforts not previously understood as advocacy. This is key to ensuring resource allocation and supporting continuation of the advocacy work.
- Solid Ground also has **raised the interest from other teams within the Habitat network**, such as colleagues from the Institutional development and resource development departments in the Habitat Latin America and the Caribbean area office, to understand the value of advocacy work and the global scope of the campaign and the key issues it addressed.

Section 4: Challenges

Summarizing the challenges encountered during Solid Ground requires distinguishing the external challenges, related to the context and the very nature of policy and advocacy work, from the organizational challenges that directly concern the Habitat for Humanity network.

At the general level, the most common advocacy challenges reported by the Habitat for Humanity country teams include the lack of political will or resources to fulfill their responsibilities; limited space for meaningful and transparent interaction between governments and civil society organizations to express concerns, demands and ideas; and political reshuffling that wastes advocates’ efforts in awareness-raising and sensitization. It was clear that advocacy success is extremely sensitive to external factors and may be affected as the political, economic and social environments change.

Measures to overcome these challenges range from the most technological approaches, such as working on often expensive GIS data platforms to ensure the advocacy impact can be replicated and sustained through time, to analogical yet very effective approaches based on sustaining the local presence and participation of the advocacy staff in policy circles, nurturing relationships with governments and communities, and basing the advocacy work on evidence from the ground. Sooner or later, these become organizational challenges.

Successful policy and advocacy engagement come with many challenges, as advocacy is a complex undertaking. At the organizational level, the key challenges reported were the inability to sustain long-term presence and relationships on the ground, often due to an inability to sustain long-term funding, alongside the issues of measuring and reporting advocacy success and impact. When the advocacy opportunity comes, existing relationships with government officials, communities and other partners — and a fairly strong voice to be heard by the wider society — were key for impactful advocacy work. This requires medium- to long-term funding, at least for an advocacy staff person to participate in policy circles and foster opportunities to engage in policy dialogues and processes. But many times, advocacy falls behind in the priority list for resource allocation when resources are available within the organization, or for resource mobilization when external funding is needed. This links to the challenges of measuring and evaluating advocacy success and impact.

The signs of change that may result from advocacy efforts take a long time to manifest, particularly when attempting to influence the behaviors of stakeholders and challenging cultural norms. Signs of change are often hard to capture in short- and even medium-term reporting. It also may be difficult to trace the cause-and-effect correlation between the efforts undertaken during a specific campaign and actual signs of change, as many other processes might have

been occurring alongside the advocacy efforts. Attribution also may be difficult, as advocacy tends to happen in coalitions and networks, using a combination of strategies, and different organizations work in different ways. The signs of change at the local community and wider society levels, explained in the previous section, often cannot be framed as changes in policies and systems *per se*. Developing a better understanding and longer-term assessment of the impact of advocacy efforts may be an important step in revealing meaningful change that is often overlooked, legitimizing resource development and allocation, and improving ongoing and further advocacy initiatives.

Section 5: Key lessons and recommendations

The Solid Ground campaign, with a clear focus and goals, tools kits, and funding, provided an important avenue for Habitat for Humanity to have an impact on the housing challenge across the globe. At the same time, it was an opportunity for the network to develop and improve understandings of a whole range of methodologies that can be used in ongoing and further advocacy efforts. The key lessons and recommendations from Solid Ground are summarized below.

When **designing or reviewing** an advocacy initiative, remember that:

- Meaningful and sustainable changes in policies and systems require efforts in all three spheres of influence of Habitat for Humanity's strategic plan: the community, sector and society levels.
- The basic elements of impactful advocacy strategies include evidence-based engagement with governments and with communities, along with working through partnerships and with public support.
- Advocacy usually deals with long-term goals, challenging social norms and practices and deeply embedded power relations. It is important to balance and adjust goals, funding, resources, evaluation criteria, etc., in a way that sustains and guides advocacy work accordingly.
- Investment in long-term presence and relationships on the ground is essential and does not have to be immense. Committing to a research product and hiring a staff person can be the best way to ensure success in advocacy efforts. Including an advocacy element in new project proposals can ensure a small amount of funds to support a larger program to achieve more comprehensive outcomes through advocacy.
- Advocacy can and should be connected to other programmatic areas of the national organizations. Advocacy teams can and should build on existing projects, resources, relationships and evidence to influence changes in policies, systems and practices.
- For long-term success, it is essential that the advocacy work is supported internally by organizational leadership at all levels and within Habitat national organizations.
- Existing results from previous efforts may be a great resource for fundraising. Donors are interested in what is already on the ground. Advocacy efforts don't have to start from scratch.

When **implementing** an advocacy effort, remember that:

- Initial assessments or studies are key moments for those engaged in the advocacy initiatives to better understand the issue and the advocacy targets and goals, and to engage key stakeholders (like governments) from the beginning in a collaborative way.
- Disseminating the study findings through strategic channels triggers media attention, helping not only to build public support but also to instigate government public responses that can be used to hold government accountable to some extent. This can be a kick-start for informed advocacy dialogues with key stakeholders that are not yet engaged in the advocacy initiative.
- Concrete partnerships provide incentives for sharing resources and can increase results. Alliances strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations to have an impact on the ground and a stronger voice in advocacy. Practitioners platforms help share best practices and formulate common objectives.

- Community empowerment and ownership of the process contribute to the sustainability of advocacy wins. Since in most cases policies alone are not enough to ensure positive, lasting and scalable impact on the ground, communities can play a key role in monitoring government action through implementation, long after the advocacy efforts come to an end.
- Local-regional-global collaboration is crucial, as it strengthens the voice of Habitat for Humanity in regional and global spaces for bringing local evidence and also helps to develop the capacities of the local network to document and showcase local efforts and impact, learn from best practices and innovation, and connect with potential partners.
- Find creative ways to be heard. There are potential nontraditional allies out there, particularly in the private sector, that have a lot of influence in building public support for Habitat for Humanity's vision.
- Advocacy feedback loops and communities of practice may improve information flow and lead to more systematic communication among country, regional and global teams. Continuous engagement and learning opportunities generate buy-in for out-of-the-box solutions to complex challenges.

As said in the introduction of this report, the housing challenge is alarming and growing. Advocacy can be a tool for influencing policies, systems and practices, thus helping more families meet their housing needs than any one organization could ever serve alone. Hopefully, this report will inspire colleagues at the Habitat for Humanity network and beyond to start or continue to engage in meaningful change through advocacy.

EXPANDING SECURITY

OF TENURE IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

BACKGROUND

Conflicts and tensions around land play an important role in the recent history and current context of Côte d'Ivoire, in West Africa. In the 1980s, after a period of economic growth and poverty reduction unique within the region, the country saw rapid population growth and economic decline that led unemployed urban young people to return to rural villages searching for alternative, land-based livelihoods.⁵ They found that most arable land was already being cultivated, often by migrants from other parts of the country or from neighboring states, as a result of previous public policies that encouraged immigration to make productive use of agricultural lands. In 1998, the Rural Land Law predicated land ownership on Ivorian citizenship and further increased tensions between indigenous landowners and foreign-born farmers.⁶ Up to now, the root causes of land conflicts remain fundamentally unaddressed, including poverty that is overwhelmingly concentrated in rural areas, and important gender disparities.⁷ Legal pluralism brings additional challenges to the land governance frameworks.

In 2017, while Habitat for Humanity Côte d'Ivoire was conducting two main building programs, it discovered that many people in rural villages did not have proper land documentation.⁸ This not only was preventing these families from accessing Habitat's programs to build houses and improve their living conditions, but also was exposing them to a greater risk of land conflicts, including important inheritance issues affecting mainly women/widows. **It became imperative for Habitat Côte d'Ivoire to promote access to land tenure security, integrating advocacy as an important component of its other programmatic areas, as part of the Solid Ground campaign.**

ADVOCACY METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS

Habitat Côte d'Ivoire's advocacy methodology started with a **baseline study** to assess the land frameworks in the context of legal pluralism and facing new legislation. The aim was to better understand the challenges and opportunities for an advocacy program in the country. The main issues identified were twofold. On the one hand, many people living in the villages didn't see the need to document and register the land where they have been living for generations. Indeed, farmland is often held and transferred according to customary law, decided by village chiefs who consider a lineage of original inhabitants of the area.⁹ "People are used to simply trusting that their chiefs, neighbors and families will know that the land belongs to them," says M Yao Jean-Jacques, Habitat Côte d'Ivoire's national director.

On the other hand, the baseline study shed light on the fact that there was no system in place for the village authorities to issue formal land certificates, which is the first step in the process to register land and apply for a bank

⁵ USAID. 2013. Côte d'Ivoire Country Land Tenure and Property Rights Profile.

⁶ World Bank. 2017. Cote d'Ivoire Land Policy Improvement and Implementation Project (P157206).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Save and Build program for low-income families who can get a loan from the bank, and the Orphan and Vulnerable Group program, fully subsidized by government

⁹ USAID. 2013. Côte d'Ivoire Country Land Tenure and Property Rights Profile.

loan and building permit.¹⁰ Village chiefs were not sufficiently aware and did not have the technical capacity to issue land certificates according to the most recent legal provisions, and that was blocking an entire chain of processes to ensure tenure security in rural villages.

A combination of these issues had a severe impact on women's tenure security: both village chiefs and citizens, including women themselves, underestimate the need for women to document their property. Women's lower levels of legal awareness, combined with conservative customary norms, preclude women from owning land independently of their male relatives. As a result, widows are constantly being disinherited and evicted through land grabbing.

The objectives of Habitat Côte d'Ivoire's advocacy program became increasingly clear through the baseline study. Habitat for Humanity Côte d'Ivoire had to work across all levels of society. At community level, it worked to **raise awareness of community members** through a number of sensitization meetings about the need to register land, helping to clarify misconceptions about women's property rights. It also helped **organize and train village chiefs and authorities** through a number of informative and sensitization meetings to raise awareness of their role according to the current legal provisions. A **local committee** formed by village authorities and community members was set up to facilitate the technical process of identifying land that could be allocated for housing, measuring and parceling the land, getting all documents from applicants, issuing land certificates by village chiefs, and registering land certificates at local government agencies. **Coalition groups** were established in each district to promote peer exchanges among village chiefs and between them and the local government representatives. These groups became a type of community of practice. The **national government** was engaged in strategic moments to ensure that the new land certificate system and registration would be aligned with the national frameworks. This work was supported by **policy research** and the development of **position papers** with recommendations.

IMPACT, SUCCESSES AND LESSONS

Through this new land certificate system, over 1,132 land certificates have been issued. "When we visit these areas today, people come to us showing the land certificate in their hands," M Yao Jean-Jacques says. "This is the first time these people have access to a valid document proving their right to property, with a stamp from the local government." Once the system is in place, the local committees in each village continue to issue and deliver land certificates, and this number is likely to grow. For that, it was crucial to train village representatives to sustain the work after Habitat's direct intervention.

Strong coalition groups were also key for the implementation and success of this initiative. "These groups worked as a learning platform where chiefs could learn from one another in many aspects, from conflict resolution to technical work with the geometer, to political aspects of organizing communities," M Yao Jean-Jacques says. "Village chiefs were also engaging with the local government representatives, while local governments could learn from the field challenges and try to facilitate and improve processes."

One of the important points discussed in these coalition groups was the need to engage women in the local committees and to raise awareness among village chiefs that women, especially widows, can and should register their property. Since this is still a sensitive issue, consensus was usually built based on positive evidence from other villages during these coalition group meetings. Habitat Côte d'Ivoire and local government representatives played an important role in changing village chiefs' perceptions.

Community organizing and awareness raising also were strong points of this advocacy strategy. Both women and men need legal literacy programs to educate them about their rights, and people are starting to understand the importance of having proper land certificates. Through a series of information and education campaigns, there are

¹⁰ The formal land registration process starts when the village chiefs issue land certificates, then the Ministry of Construction issues the highest governmental land ownership certificate (Arrêté de Concession Définitive, or ACD), required to apply for bank loans. Only then can building permits be issued.

signs of change in the perceptions of both men and women in the villages. This is likely to contribute to overcoming gender inequality, but changing behaviors and challenging social norms takes a long time.

This system is replicable in other villages and other districts in the country. Habitat Côte d'Ivoire's goal is to ensure that all villages in the districts where they work implement this system. Habitat is already seen as a reference organization in implementing this system, which can help it scale and replicate the system in other villages and even move into the next step of land registration, working with the Ministry of Construction toward the ACD (the highest land certificate). There are still 6,068 land certificates to be issued, which will result in 30,340 people being less likely to face eviction in the case of overlapping land claims.

Further information on how Habitat for Humanity is working to expand security of tenure through advocacy in other countries is available in the [Secure Tenure & Land Issue Brief](#).

PROMOTING GENDER

EQUALITY IN LESOTHO

Background

In Lesotho, a small African country wholly surrounded by South Africa, increasing competition for land is constantly fueled by climate-change-related droughts, commercialization of land, globalization, conversion of agricultural land, and high rates of urbanization and HIV and AIDS, among other processes.¹¹ Legal pluralism —when customary and statutory/legal frameworks and practices coexist and, at times, contradict one another — marks the country's highly complex land governance environment. Despite the recent legislative and institutional progress in the country, a combination of implementation failures, limited awareness of the laws and limited capacities in the application of the law consistently challenge the tenure security of the population.

For women, patriarchy and gender discrimination add additional layers of challenges when it comes to securing land and property rights. Legally, men and women are treated equally per the 2006 Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act and 2010 Land Act, which repealed gender inequality. In practice, however, land possession and transmission dynamics generally undermine tenure security for women in Lesotho. For example, according to traditional practice and depending on the type of marriage conducted, a widow can lose her rightful share of property to her deceased husband's family, leaving her with no housing or livelihood alternative. Customary inheritance laws and practice still allow the firstborn male child to inherit the family assets, leaving out girls. Land grabbing, disinheritance and dispossession are common struggles of women in the country, challenging their well-being and the country's social and economic development.

Habitat for Humanity Lesotho has had an advocacy program on matrimonial property systems, helping Basotho families (of a specific ethnic group) to write their wills and obtain legal documents to strengthen their security of tenure, property and inheritance rights. **Under the Solid Ground campaign, Habitat Lesotho continued to work directly with Basotho families, providing training and awareness-raising activities in parallel with promoting changes in the legal framework and practices toward strengthening inheritance rights for all Basotho, particularly women and vulnerable groups.**

Advocacy methodologies and tools

Habitat for Humanity Lesotho's advocacy methodology included the following elements:

- **Two studies were conducted.** The first was a desk review focused on the current gaps in land ownership policies and systems, conducted by a renowned academic professor. The second was an in-depth qualitative study focusing on gender issues related to land and property. The research methodology of the second study included interviews with key informants, focus group discussions, field visits, and the application of the Gender Evaluation Criteria, or GEC, a land tool designed by the UN-HABITAT/Global Land Tool Network to assess whether land laws and policies are responsive to the needs of both women and men, and to promote gender-responsive land governance.
- **Policy messages and recommendations, together with personal stories of people who have been affected by inheritance issues, were disseminated through different channels,** including TV, radio, phone text messaging, and a series of events organized by civil society and governments, along with blogs

¹¹ Habitat Lesotho/Gaynor Paradza. 2018. Women's Access to Land and Housing in Lesotho.

and webinars, at country and international levels. These efforts helped to build public support and to push the need to review and create legislation related to gender equality in marriage and succession.

- **Training of paralegals, councilors and chiefs on a host of legislation** through partnership with the Federation of Women Lawyers in Lesotho and the Office of the Master of the High Court.¹²
- **Training and awareness-raising of communities on property, inheritance and succession rights, in addition to security of tenure.** These trainings highlighted to community members the need to write wills and to have proper documents to one's land. It was also important to clarify the differences between civil and customary marriage rites, and the requirements and rights associated with each type of marriage, as these nuances are hardly understood by most community members, and often lead to land grabbing, disinheritance and evictions.
- **Mobilization and engagement with different partners and stakeholders,** and establishment of a working group, particularly after the Regional Conference [Partnership for Action](#), held in Pretoria, South Africa, in August 2017. The conference brought together representatives from government, academia and NGOs.

Impact, successes and lessons

Through the inheritance rights training events, 20 paralegals were trained in will writing, 40 women heads of household wrote their wills (protecting inheritance rights for future generations), and over 800 women gained leases. The distribution of informative material and face-to-face sensitization also helped to educate women about the differences between traditional and civil marriage, and on issues around polygamy and the root causes of property grabbing and disinheritance. This advocacy work is also aligned with other programmatic areas of Habitat Lesotho to ensure security of tenure when building homes. Training paralegals, councilors and chiefs increased communities' access to legal institutions, enabling those communities to access assistance and support in reporting infringements, sexual violation and marriage.

"The policy studies have become 'our solid ground for advocacy,' the legs on which we now stand to conduct our advocacy work," says Bohlokoa Mokhotho, Habitat Lesotho's advocacy and fundraising manager. The studies not only provided an important base of evidence to support the advocacy work of Habitat Lesotho, but also opened the doors for informed dialogues with governments and shed light on clear policy recommendations supporting the advocacy agenda of Habitat and its partners. The study findings and policy recommendations came at a crucial time, as Lesotho is undergoing national reforms likely to have a further policy impact.

Different ways of disseminating information and policy messages, from TV and radio appearances to workshops that publicized the research findings, increased Habitat Lesotho's visibility in the arenas of land policy and governance. As a result, the organization has been invited for several events and spaces. For instance, recently, Habitat Lesotho was invited by the Ministry of Local Government through the Housing Department to participate in the Habitat Steering Community to contribute to the National Policy Agenda and join the New Urban Agenda Forum, in addition to public hearings and seminars. Habitat Lesotho is now in a better position to contribute to and raise its voice in policy dialogues on land and gender issues.

The regional conference in Pretoria was an important moment for overcoming the challenge to convene local stakeholders and establish a working group and advisory committee. Representatives from government, academia and civil society gathered after the conference and were able to strategize and build a common action plan and advocacy agenda to address gender and land-related questions.

¹² The Marriage Act, 1974; The Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act, 2005; the Inheritance Act; the Land Act, 2010; Children's Protection and Welfare Act, 2011; and the Sexual Offences Act, 2003.

However, constant political reshuffling remains an issue in the country. “This is why we do not focus only in one channel,” Bohlokoa says. “We work through partnerships and also at grassroots level and with the youth; we want to make noise, to be heard, so someone somewhere will get and resonate with what we are promoting.”

At least 500,000 people have been reached through the phone messages and TV and radio appearances pushing policy change and promoting awareness of women’s inheritance rights.

Building on the research findings and recommendations, and on strategic meetings with partners, Habitat Lesotho will continue to work in partnerships at the programmatic, policy and institutional levels to strengthen women’s inheritance rights and improve legal, policy and institutional frameworks in Lesotho. This includes training the media and promoting the creation of a gender-sensitive Land Dispute Agency.

Further information on how Habitat for Humanity is working to promote gender equality through advocacy in other countries is available in the [Gender & Land Issue Brief](#).

UPGRADING INFORMAL

SETTLEMENTS IN BANGLADESH

Background

Bangladesh, in the Asia-Pacific region, is one of the most populous countries in the world. Of a population of nearly 163 million people, it is estimated that 55.1% live in slums.¹³ The capital, Dhaka, is rapidly growing, drawing up to 400,000 poor migrants every year, many of whom migrate because of the effects of climate change, river erosion or loss of livelihoods.¹⁴ The informal settlements that generally host these groups often have poor housing; very high population density; very poor environmental services; very low economic status for the majority of the residents; a lack of tenure security; and political, social and cultural conflicts.

Since 2012, Habitat for Humanity Bangladesh has been working to increase the resilience of communities living in slums in Dhaka through vulnerability assessments, community action planning, urban informal settlement mapping, water and sanitation infrastructure, housing repairs, and capacity building. But the challenges experienced by communities living in slums, such as the threat of eviction and the lack of access to government services, require the collaboration of numerous stakeholders across the city. Communities also did not have a structured way of engaging the various NGOs and stakeholders who were working in the informal settlements. **Habitat Bangladesh engaged in advocacy to improve urban planning and development initiatives through the establishment of an information system and through multistakeholder engagement.**

Advocacy methodologies and tools

Through an advocacy approach, Habitat Bangladesh worked to:

- **Initiate an annual event called Urban Dialogues and to form the Urban INGO Forum**, which brings together 24 international organizations to discuss and contribute to urban development. Every year, the Urban INGO Forum organizes a national dialogue on urban development issues, challenges, opportunities, government planning, the role of corporate and social responsibility, and the roles of each of the stakeholders. At the end of each forum, INGO members jointly take policy positions in the form of declarations on various urban-related issues.
- **Establish an information system called Urban Informal Settlement Mapping** to develop a needs-based geo-referenced map and database of informal settlements and to promote stakeholder engagement. To complete the social mapping and develop the database, Habitat Bangladesh partnered with the Center for Environmental & Geographic Information Services, or CEGIS, which is experienced in Geographical Information Systems, or GIS, mapping and had all the required expertise for developing the database. Habitat Bangladesh also bought a domain for the GIS maps and database, purchased satellite image (3D), and provided orientation to the users of GIS databases and maps and a series of trainings on database maintenance.
- **Map selected informal settlement areas in Dhaka and develop various maps**, such as the ward base map, the map of NGO activities in slum areas, the water and sanitation map of slum areas, the household location map of slum dwellers, the road network map, and the important structures map. This process included developing data collection tools and a guideline for urban mapping, testing and sharing the tools with urban

¹³ <http://solidgroundcampaign.org/blog/habitat-humanity-bangladesh-improving-urban-planning-and-development-initiatives-through>

¹⁴ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bangladesh>

stakeholders, collecting comprehensive data from 25 slums within two wards under the Dhaka North City Corp., and making the database available to urban stakeholders.

- **Ensure a participatory approach while designing and implementing the project** that involved the Urban INGO Forum Bangladesh, the Water and Sewerage Authority, the Dhaka North City Corp. Authority and community representatives from the respective slums.
- **Conduct research on improving multistakeholder collaboration for urban climate resilience, water and sanitation**, along with research on six national policies to find the main gaps in the context of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation to improve advocacy plans.

Impact, successes and lessons

This initiative provided a sustainable, user-friendly platform that generates comprehensive geo-referenced data of social and physical characteristics and vulnerabilities of informal settlements, services provided by organizations, land ownership and management, livelihood characteristics of slum dwellers, housing characteristics, and demographic information. This effort contributes to the ongoing initiatives in the country using technology, citizen engagement strategies and collaboration in developing a GIS database and mapping for upgrading informal settlements.

The physical and socioeconomic information from the slums have supported evidence-based advocacy efforts and influenced government policy decisions in undertaking holistic development plans for slums and the urban poor. Concrete changes in the informal settlements mapped through this initiative include the implementation of effective waste management systems, improvements of drainage systems, implementation of concrete drains and slab covers, and sanitation and housing improvements in 10 slums. By the end of fiscal year 2019, Bangladesh reported that 68,500 people had been impacted by their advocacy efforts. Beyond physical upgrades, these interventions can contribute to the tenure security of informal settlement dwellers from a “continuum of land rights” perspective.¹⁵

The database and maps are accessible to all urban stakeholders, serving as a basis for their respective programming, advocacy and policy initiatives and promoting optimum resource allocation. The web-based database is being maintained and updated by Dhaka North City Corp., which will expand the efforts to other areas of Dhaka, using the data collection tools and guidelines developed by Habitat Bangladesh.

Urban development is one of the concentrations of the Habitat Bangladesh program. Starting with a small development project in one slum in Dhaka, the program has been expanded to the city of Mymensingh in the northwest and to Khulna in southern Bangladesh. Habitat Bangladesh has partnered with eight stakeholders, including government, NGOs and institutions, for its urban development program and is playing a leading role in this sector.

From a technical perspective, important elements considered include:

- **Survey development:** Formulation of the questionnaire through wide discussion and consultation ensured ownership from the stakeholders.
- **Working with communities:** Short-term work in slums has difficulty achieving adequate buy-in from the community and follow-up activities. Orientation and awareness raising are the keys to ensuring that families better understand the process and provide more accurate information to the surveyors.
- **Data monitoring:** Close monitoring during data collection activities, cross-checking and random checking were very effective in ensuring data validity and reliability.

¹⁵ <https://mirror.glt.n.net/index.php/land-tools/glt.n-land-tools/continuum-of-land-rights>

- **Flexibility and patience:** During data collection, it was important to accommodate the schedules of the adults in the households, e.g., timing by lunch breaks, after-work hours, weekends, etc. Sometimes two or more visits were made to the same responders to collect the data

MAKING COMMUNITIES MORE

DISASTER RESILIENT IN JAMAICA

BACKGROUND

Jamaica, in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, has a population of approximately 3 million, a quarter of whom live in over 700 informal and unplanned settlements. These settlements are particularly vulnerable to disasters because, in addition to their often-precarious locations and exposure to natural hazards, the homes often do not comply with construction and safety standards. In addition, 45% of the land in the country is unregistered, including much of the land within informal settlements. Without secure tenure, those living in informal settlements find it difficult to invest in disaster-resilient materials to secure their homes, and the government may be slower to assist those without land documentation.¹⁶

From 2015 to 2019, Habitat for Humanity implemented a disaster risk reduction pilot project called BRACED — Building Resilience and Capacities for Emerging Disasters — in the municipality of Portmore, Jamaica. The project focused on increasing the resilience of housing; improving access to water, hygiene, sanitation and waste management; building public-private partnerships; upgrading human settlements through redevelopment plans; and identifying critical infrastructure interventions.¹⁷ **In Jamaica, Habitat’s advocacy work started as one element of the BRACED project, after recognizing that securing land tenure may increase families’ interest in investing in their homes and would formalize their land as a marketable asset that could create access to credit, providing opportunity for wealth creation.**

ADVOCACY METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS

In Jamaica, Habitat’s advocacy methodology included:

Strategic selection of communities to pilot the experience, considering size and contexts that would shed light on the potential to replicate the experience in different areas of the country.

Engagement with government agencies and multiple stakeholders, including community leaders, through an advisory committee. This was useful for facilitating project implementation, but also for advancing some political elements. For instance, Habitat requested that government agencies expand an existing program of land regularization that originally focused on rural areas to include urban settings, and asked that selected communities be declared special areas for tenure upgrades, which accelerates and reduces the cost of the regularization process. The aim was to bridge some of the gaps between the communities and government programs and resources.

Mobilizing and empowering communities through participatory methodologies and community-based hubs. A series of technical trainings and advocacy activities were conducted. Community members were engaged in the enumeration and mapping, the preparation of the individual cases, and the inclusion of such cases in a common information platform connected to government databases. Engagement with communities also enabled a participatory approach for safe shelter awareness, known as PASSA, and participatory risk assessments and mapping in the selected subcommunities. Work at the community level also included training young people living in informal settlements through the Media for Social Change program, helping them acquire and improve photography and videography skills, from simple camera maintenance to on-set

¹⁶ HFHI / Solid Ground. 2019. Issue Brief: Disaster Resilience & Land.

¹⁷ <http://solidgroundcampaign.org/blog/reducing-risk-disasters-securing-land-tenure-case-study-portmore-jamaica>

and post-production. These skills help them tell the stories of their communities; talk with community members, leaders and governments; and gather information and share it with the community.

Auditing the land where the selected informal settlements were located, to identify the tenure status and ensure that the right stakeholders were involved.

Assessing the performance of the land tenure regularization system, including process, institutions, regulations, barriers and bottlenecks, to highlight where there was room for policy improvement.

Exploring technological tools and systems to improve and speed up the regularization process, and to bring down the costs. Drones were used to capture aerial imagery of the selected areas, replacing the need for expensive land surveys. A GIS information management platform called [Territorial Information Management System Platform](#) was created to share information among government agencies and to connect the government database with the community-based hubs.

Implementing a series of workshops and forums to train community members and government officials on secure tenure and disaster resilience measures. This connected community leaders and municipal authorities to work together on improving policies and processes, particularly around complex and expensive land regularization processes.

Creating guides, redevelopment plans and fast-track documents as references for community members and the project closeout handover agency — in this case, the municipal council — in addition to a **policy paper** with 11 recommendations to governments on improving disaster resilience.

SUCCESS, LESSONS AND IMPACT

The BRACED project has developed a fast-track, low-cost procedure for land regularization in Jamaica's informal urban settlements. This has a major impact on these communities, enabling them to better prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters, predictable or otherwise. These efforts have directly impacted over 6,000 people, and 65,000 more people are expected to benefit indirectly.

This regularization process, including engagement with communities and governments, supported by the use of technology, can be replicated across the country and can help document the nearly 50% of the territory that is still unregistered and out of the government databases. Different national and local government agencies have shown a tremendous interest and fully supported this experience. This also can be useful in other countries, especially in the Caribbean region, when focusing on disaster risk reduction, as it helps to overcome the unwillingness of families to improve their homes and communities in terms of disaster resilience.

At the community level, the formalization of community land improves access to infrastructure investments, as the government is now able to provide public services formerly denied to informal settlements, such as water piping, electricity and drainage. Community members were trained and empowered, and now have extended roles as community advocates. They are now able to record land conflict cases in the Territorial Information Management System Platform, mediate land disputes, and advocate for the rights of each resident to benefit from these mediation processes. Young people were generally involved in the project, but once technology came into the picture, such as the use of tablets for community enumeration and a videography training through the [BRACED Youth Media Team](#), they were a lot more willing to engage.

Technology was also a key element in scaling up the regularization process and bringing down its costs. The drones can be used for more than one community at a time. The government agencies are sharing a common information platform, which avoids duplicating efforts to collect similar information. This platform being connected to the community hubs means that government agencies have up-to-date information from the communities, and that community members don't have to make expensive trips to the city center to follow up on their cases, improving the information ecosystem and service provision in general.

The efforts in Jamaica also highlight that advocacy can and should be combined with the programmatic work of Habitat for Humanity. Advocacy does not have to be a standalone initiative; it can rather mutually support building strength, stability and self-reliance through shelter.

Further information on how Habitat for Humanity is making communities more disaster resilient in other countries is available in the [Disaster Resilience & Land Issue Brief](#).

PROMOTING ADEQUATE HOUSING

IN VACANT PROPERTY IN CITY CENTERS

BACKGROUND

“Too many people without homes, too many homes without people.” This phrase captures a paradox that has echoed in several cities across Latin America and the Caribbean. On one hand, people are living in precarious conditions in informal settlements, without access to infrastructure and far away from jobs and services; countless families are being evicted; and homelessness is increasing at alarming rates. On the other hand, well-located and serviced land and buildings sit empty or underused, not serving a social function. In Brazil, according to the Fundação João Pinheiro (2018), 6.3 million families lack adequate housing, yet 6.8 million housing units remain empty.

Habitat for Humanity Brazil has been developing and improving its advocacy strategy since 2008, in parallel with its work of building and improving houses. Originally, Habitat Brazil’s advocacy focused on promoting tenure security and comprehensive upgrading of informal settlements, mainly through networks and institutional spaces such as multistakeholder forums and conferences that allowed the democratic participation of civil society in urban policymaking. But the turbulent political environment that the country is currently experiencing not only jeopardizes the democratic structures for civic participation in urban policies at the national level, but also challenges resource allocation for housing construction and improvements. **As Habitat Brazil reviewed its advocacy strategy in the face of this political and housing policy crisis, the idea of promoting adequate housing in existing vacant property emerged as an innovative approach toward building more compact cities.**

ADVOCACY METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS

A **baseline study** was the first step to better understanding the context, challenges and opportunities of advocating to improve existing vacant property for housing. Focusing on the city center of Recife, where the national office of Habitat Brazil is located, and working with a network of partners and volunteers, the study included a field assessment in the neighborhood with the highest concentration of vacant property. A desk review was conducted of local legislation and policies, and national and international experiences and best practices. Findings showed that in Recife’s Santo Antonio alone, at least 40 multistory buildings were vacant, in reasonable condition, and owing millions of Brazilian reais (R\$) in property taxes to the municipality. In only one neighborhood, in one city, there was enough building area to house 2,000 families.

By **disseminating the study findings through a workshop** and inviting various stakeholders and media channels, Habitat triggered informed dialogues with government representatives, raised media attention and started to build public support for the cause. **A series of meetings were conducted with local government representatives**, from the historic heritage department to the housing departments and legislative bodies. Habitat Brazil then organized **field visits so that government authorities** could see the vacant property for themselves. The issues became clear and undeniable to all stakeholders.

Habitat Brazil and partners also started to **draft policy proposals**, taking advantage of the moment when the City Master Plan and the Social Housing Policy were being reviewed. In partnership with the regional area office, Habitat Brazil organized **Action LABS**, a methodology developed by Habitat’s Latin America and Caribbean area office to promote peer exchanges and informed dialogues so that policy proposals are designed collaboratively, based on lessons and evidence. Experts from across the country gathered with Habitat Brazil and partners from NGOs, social movements, academia and local government to discuss the challenges and opportunities for action. As a result of this

effort, a series of **policy recommendations** was drafted, disseminated and mutually supported by coalition members to ensure a commitment to convert vacant property into affordable, adequate housing units for the most vulnerable groups in the city and metropolitan region.

In parallel, Habitat Brazil was **building public support through a communication strategy** that included the dissemination of both technical information and human-interest stories through social media, mail, TV, radio and newspapers. A highlight of this strategy was the preparation of a documentary called *Who Lives There* (*Quem Mora Lá* in Portuguese), which tells the story of families living in risk of eviction who organize themselves and occupy a vacant building in downtown Recife.

IMPACT, SUCCESSES AND LESSONS

Evidence, quantitative and qualitative data, and life stories supported the advocacy work of Habitat Brazil and its partners in drafting sharper policy proposals and recommendations, strengthening their voice in public spaces. “With this study, we are more prepared and confident to participate in public debates about vacant property, and the local governments can’t deny the urgency for action,” says Socorro Leite, national director of Habitat Brazil. The study also signaled the opportunity to engage with different stakeholders, such as the Catholic Church, an important property holder in Brazil. Alongside this advocacy initiative focused on vacant property, Habitat Brazil has been monitoring cases of land conflicts and forced evictions in Recife and the metropolitan region, which provides a more comprehensive perspective of the housing issues to be addressed.

Disseminating the movie and study findings through different channels also increased the visibility and legitimacy of Habitat Brazil, strengthening its role as a reference institution on the issue. Habitat has been increasingly invited to speak and participate in local and national events at universities, governmental public hearings and even some spaces usually inaccessible to civil society, such as judicial public defense offices. This helped to raise the awareness of different stakeholders, including government and legislative representatives, and to build public support by challenging stereotypes and engaging new audiences with housing and land issues.

This advocacy program also was an opportunity to discuss **forms of tenure security in cities** besides the conventional approaches that tend to focus on individual private ownership. Creative alternatives have been explored during the policy proposal phase, such as social rent or collective or cooperative ownership arrangements, along with other approaches that combine housing with livelihood opportunities and ensure the sustainability of the social interest developments.

Working through a strong coalition and diverse networks of partners backs up Habitat Brazil’s advocacy strategy. That means the policy proposals and recommendations, and the positions taken in the coalition, are drafted and supported through a collective process, informed by different perspectives on the issue, including voices from the grassroots and social movements sector to the academia and professional sectors. As a result, Habitat Brazil helped to ensure programmatic lines for converting vacant property into affordable housing units in the Recife Local Plan for Social Housing and in the City Master Plan. In addition, the municipality recently passed a decree enabling civil society to report vacant property that should be reclaimed by the municipality. This is likely an indirect result of Habitat Brazil’s advocacy work.

However, changes in policies and even public commitments by governments to address an issue are sometimes too far from actual changes in people’s lives, particularly in developing contexts. “With limited resources, our role was to trigger an informed debate with the relevant stakeholders and position the issue,” Socorro says. “But we still have a huge load of work ahead to ensure budget for policy implementation and to monitor

government action. For that, we must continue participating in advocacy circles to be 'at the table' to shape affordable housing decisions and government resource allocation at local, state and national levels, and that requires resources that are not always available in the organization. Meanwhile, we also need indicators to better express our efforts and successes, in an environment where policy changes *per se* do not necessarily represent concrete impact to the most vulnerable groups."

VACANT PROPERTY: AN EMERGING POLICY ISSUE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Habitat Argentina is also exploring ways to take advantage of vacant property to promote affordable housing. After conducting a pilot project focused on social rent, the national organization decided to engage in advocacy work to scale and replicate the experience through governmental policies. Leveraging existing relationships with government agencies and with civil society organizations that were actively engaged in advocacy circles, Habitat Argentina conducted a baseline study focusing on vacant property and social rent, followed by an Action LAB and a series of webinars, also called Micro LABs, to promote informed dialogues with multiple stakeholders and to draw from experiences from across the region.

The study and Action LABs informed the development of policy proposals, to identify the entry points for a sustainable advocacy approach, and to establish a working group on the topic. Since then, Habitat Argentina has strengthened its role as a reference organization on the topic and has been invited to participate in several government-led discussions. Acknowledging the recommendations from Habitat Argentina and partners, the national government is changing the way vacant property is measured in the country, and the government of Buenos Aires launched a number of programs to regulate the price of rent, standardize tenant agreements, and provide a warranty and legal assistance for tenants. Habitat Argentina now has been invited by the national government to lead a program to replicate the assessments and policy proposals piloted in Buenos Aires for other cities across the country.

The advocacy efforts led by Habitat for Humanity both in Argentina and in Brazil have contributed to advancing the policy dialogue and practice around the social function of land, a key concept of the global frameworks toward sustainable development, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. The concept of social function of land has been embedded in the legal frameworks of Latin American and Caribbean countries for quite some time but has lacked a feasible means of implementation. Habitat Brazil and Habitat Argentina are advancing ways to make the social function of land a reality to help more families meet their housing needs in central areas, near job opportunities, public services and infrastructure. This will make cities and human settlements more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.



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