



Advancing access to housing and improving lives through advocacy:

A guide for Habitat for Humanity's global network

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This guide supports and aligns with the “Build Sector Impact” objective of Habitat’s global strategic plan for 2014-2018: “Promote policies and systems that advance access to affordable housing.”

Foreword

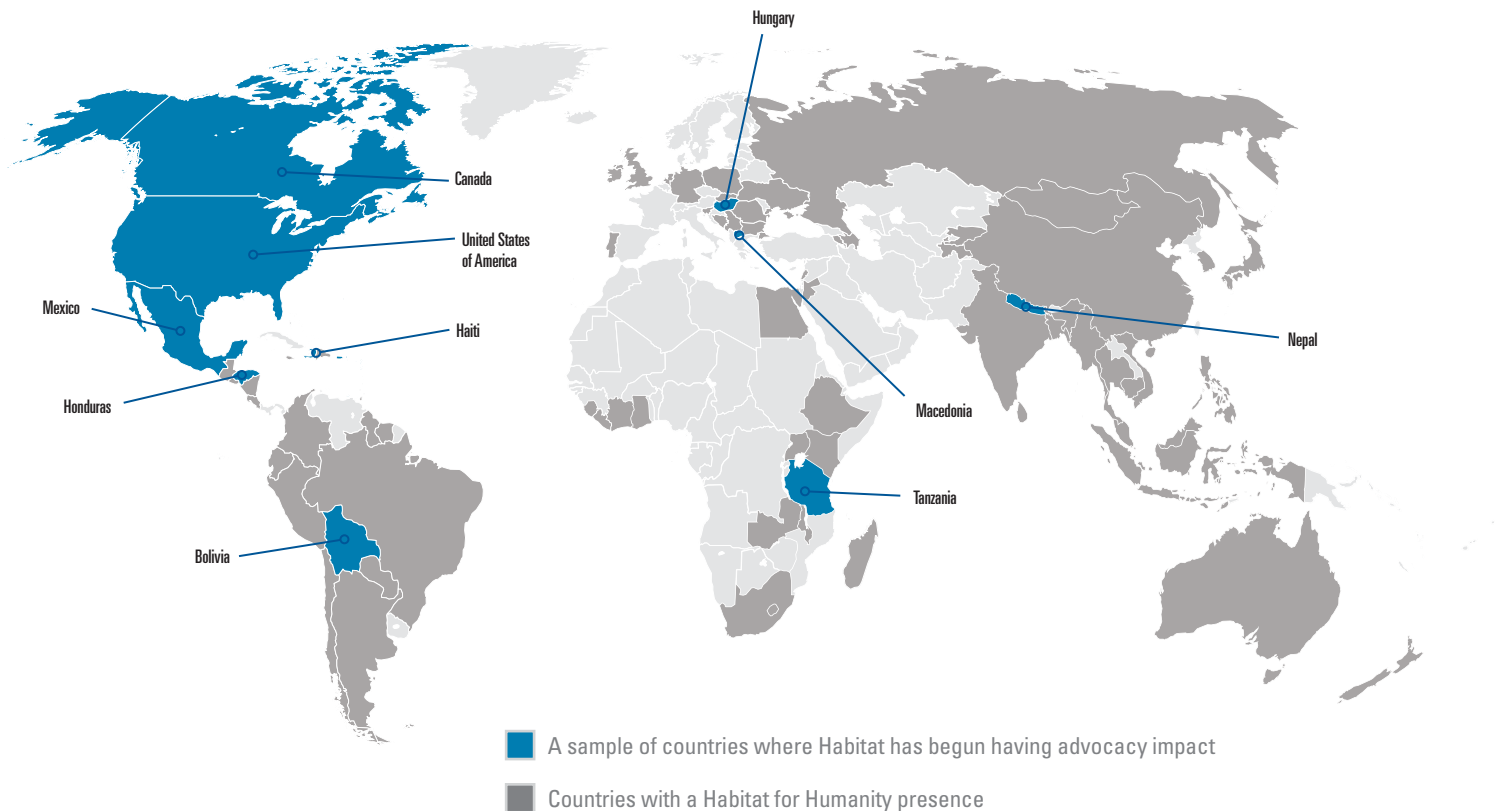
Dear colleagues,

Habitat for Humanity's 2014-18 strategic plan challenges us to become catalysts of change — change that strengthens our organization and increases our ability to serve those in need. As this guide will demonstrate, advocacy is essential to our mission and meeting our goals. The following pages contain helpful tips, tools and techniques to grow your advocacy program and increase your impact. You will learn through case studies and hear about your peers' advocacy initiatives currently underway. Use this guide to get started and refer to it as you advance. As the map below shows, we are truly a global organization, and the opportunities to create lasting change are limitless.



Please join us in building louder,

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About this guide

Habitat for Humanity's global strategic plan provides a framework to guide Habitat's global network through 2018. One of the objectives of the strategic plan is to "promote policies and systems to increase access to affordable housing."

This guide is designed to support Habitat national organization staff members, volunteers and supporters on this objective. It provides information on advocacy strategies and supports national organizations looking to devise new strategies — or improve on existing ones — to promote policies and systems that increase access to adequate housing.

Advocacy work is no longer new to Habitat for Humanity. With each passing year, advocacy becomes more broadly embraced as being fundamental to creating a positive and lasting impact on the lives of those in need of decent shelter.

As stated by Habitat's advocacy management team in 2005, the risks of advocacy are nothing compared with the risk of doing nothing. Poverty rates are increasing worldwide, and far too many people suffer the effects of living in unhealthy, overcrowded, substandard conditions. To be true to its mission, Habitat for Humanity needs to put poverty housing on the minds and hearts of people everywhere, including those with the power and means to end it. Habitat needs to leverage its power, partners and position of respect throughout the world to eliminate substandard housing. If Habitat doesn't advocate for decent, affordable housing, who will?

Objectives of this guide:

1. To provide a common, global understanding of Habitat for Humanity's advocacy definition, goals and strategies.
2. To provide all national organizations with a resource to guide their advocacy efforts.
3. To provide all staff members in the Habitat network with information, tools and examples for implementing or enhancing their advocacy work.
 - a. Chapters 1-3 focus on the theoretical underpinnings of advocacy.
 - b. Chapters 4-5 focus on providing practical, simple steps for getting started with advocacy.
 - c. Chapters 6-7 focus on the measurement of advocacy outcomes and examples of advocacy initiatives.

Who is the guide for?

- National directors who include advocacy in their work.
- Program staff members who include advocacy in their work.
- Staff members learning about advocacy as part of staff development.
- Staff and board members in critical functional areas such as advocacy, communications, fundraising and research.
- Local community and affiliate leaders looking to better understand advocacy.
- Volunteers interested in understanding Habitat's approach to advocacy.

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Introduction: Habitat's 2014-2018 strategic plan — the impact of promoting policies and systems

Habitat for Humanity has been building homes, communities and hope through direct engagement for nearly four decades. As powerful as that has been, 1.6 billion people are still in need of adequate shelter, and 100 million more have no home at all. HFHI's 2014-2018 strategic plan challenges us to become more effective catalysts for systemic change against poverty housing — change that will help exponentially more families than any one organization ever could directly serve alone. To reduce the housing deficit at scale, the plan calls for operating with impact in three connected spheres of influence: community, sector and society.

This guide focuses on the second objective of the “Build Sector Impact” goal of Habitat's strategic plan: “Promote policies and systems that advance access to affordable housing.” This guide equips Habitat's global network with key information about building sector impact and helps staff, volunteers, board members and others better understand how to implement key advocacy strategies, tactics and initiatives to effectively accomplish this objective. Additionally, the guide draws from examples of national organizations all over the world that are implementing initiatives related to policies and systems.



Building sector impact in Mexico:

Habitat for Humanity Mexico worked with the Social Producers of Housing Network to advocate for the Mexican government to change the operating rules of its This Is Your House program, which provides government subsidies to low-income families. The rules severely limited the numbers of families that could access the program. Nearly 9,000 families benefited from the modification of the rules, with an additional investment of US\$18.4 million in government subsidies in 2010-11. During this period, Habitat Mexico implemented US\$11 million, helping 5,815 families access new homes.

This guide can help Habitat national organizations better understand how to implement advocacy initiatives that support the 2014-2018 strategic plan. The results will be an increased impact on those in need of improved housing.

Chapter 1:

Promoting policies and systems — the basics

What does it mean to promote policies and systems?

Policies, systems and attitudes affect us every day: how we get our water and heating; when and how long our children have to attend school; whether we take public transportation; whether we have subsidized health care; whether men and women, as equals, can own property legally; and if, when and how we are able to vote for officials and local leaders. Policies also shape our cultural and social norms, attitudes and ideas: whether we smoke tobacco or drink alcohol, how we raise our children, the role of gender in society, whether girls go to school, and how we treat those who are different from us, to name a few.

It is also important to recognize that policies and systems are developed at multiple levels. Policies are developed and influence our lives at the community, municipal, national, multicountry, regional, and even the global level. Thus, it is highly important to understand where policies are made and who the decision-makers are.

Policies may exist, yet be ignored (purposefully or accidentally). In these cases, it is vital to make sure policies are implemented well. Ensuring that the implementation of policies occurs can be just as important as having a policy in the first place. Failing to implement a policy is essentially the same as having no policy at all. Therefore, when we consider the policy context, we also consider the systems for implementation and delivery of laws, regulations and services. These systems for implementation become just as important to our lives as the policies themselves. (See box at right)

Just as policies and systems influence our lives, government regulations and laws also have a significant and powerful impact on all nonprofit organizations and the people they serve. This makes it imperative for organizations at all levels to become involved with policymakers at the local, municipal and national levels who affect their organizations and constituencies. It is up to us to promote a fair and just policy context for our work and to ensure its implementation.

Why does promoting policies and systems matter?

To be effective, an organization must recognize the rules affecting those it serves. Art and cultural organizations know that without public support, many groups would struggle and great opera houses would be difficult to build. Environmental organizations realize that the public must be energized if the earth is to be preserved. Although providing services is critical, so is speaking out on the issues that concern those in need.

Systems change in Costa Rica

In Costa Rica, Habitat for Humanity advocated to change the system for obtaining housing subsidies. Habitat Costa Rica, in the “Quality Circle” Coalition, successfully worked to ensure that i) the 127 administrative steps and the number of documents required to obtain a subsidy were decreased by 25 percent, and ii) the amount of the subsidy is automatically adjusted every six months according to the increase of construction costs. This systems change will significantly help the poor to access housing subsidies in a more efficient way and to keep the real value of the subsidy amount for adequate housing.

The Alliance for Justice, a nonprofit advocacy organization, argues that nonprofits are in unique, key positions to help change or influence public policy because they traditionally serve constituencies and issues that have a limited voice in the policy process. Nonprofits providing services frequently have the best, and sometimes the only, firsthand information on the social needs that exist among the groups they serve. In addition, these nonprofit organizations are less subject to self-interested motivations, driven instead by a commitment to a broad community of people or common interests.

How does advocacy relate to promoting policies and systems?

“Advocacy” is the most common, globally recognized term to describe a holistic strategy of influencing policies and systems. At the same time, advocacy is defined differently by many organizations.

At the most basic level, advocacy means supporting and defending a cause you believe in. The word “advocate” is derived from a Latin word meaning “someone called to one’s aid.” Although sometimes used to refer to a paid legal representative, the term advocate also refers to someone who argues for a cause or course of action. These advocates support and argue for the rights of those in need or who suffer from injustice. They also provide them 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 unjust. Advocacy takes place on many different levels: Professional lobbyists advocate for specific legislation, nonprofits advocate for their clients and legislation that affects them, and individual citizens advocate for community needs and causes.

Chapter 2: Habitat and advocacy

What is Habitat for Humanity's definition of advocacy?

In 2005, a Habitat for Humanity International task force¹ created 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.

Habitat for Humanity uses advocacy to influence public opinion and to encourage decision-makers to adopt policies and practices and transform systems that lead to the creation and preservation of housing for all, toward the goal of ending poverty worldwide.

Why does Habitat need to advocate?

Habitat needs to address and influence policies and systems to establish an environment where housing solutions are accessible to everyone. Advocacy can help address some of the root causes of poverty housing. By intentionally working to change policies and systems, Habitat can increase its impact on housing and improve more lives.

Chapter 7 of this guide provides two detailed case studies of national organizations working to influence policies and systems and illustrates why and how these national organizations are improving access to adequate shelter through advocacy.

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

Policy change in Honduras

Habitat for Humanity Honduras led a two-year advocacy process with participation from community-based organizations. As a result, 11 municipal housing policies and budgets were approved. In 2010, the implementation of these policies benefited more than 1,800 families with interventions such as land development, infrastructural assessments and housing improvements, with a municipal investment of US\$4 million. Starting in 2011, approximately US\$1.35 million was invested annually in housing by the 11 local governments. Habitat Honduras and other nongovernmental organizations will help implement these funds for housing improvements.

Habitat's global approach to advocacy

Habitat for Humanity strongly believes in influencing policies and systems at all levels to increase access to housing. Although strategies will need to be tailored in each country, Habitat shares a common advocacy approach around the world. The following are guiding principles for Habitat's advocacy approach:

- **HOUSING-ORIENTED:** Habitat's mission is focused on building homes, communities and hope; its advocacy efforts should have the same focus. Advocacy should focus on issues that directly affect housing or Habitat operations. Secure tenure, for example, does not pertain to a physical house, but it is a necessary precondition for families to access adequate housing, so it remains a global priority. This also includes advocating on issues that affect Habitat's ability to operate. For example, Habitat Hungary is working to advocate for the 1 percent tax allocation that supports the work of NGOs in Hungary, including Habitat.
- **COMMUNITY- AND POVERTY-ORIENTED:** Habitat is advocating to improve communities in need. Although policies and systems may be set at national or global levels, it is vital to ensure that communities in need of adequate housing (including women and vulnerable groups) are supportive of and benefit from Habitat's advocacy initiatives.
- **PROGRAM-ORIENTED:** Habitat's advocacy and direct service programs inform each other, which is a great asset to the organization. Learning from issues affecting the families Habitat supports is essential to any successful advocacy approach. Although there is no single formula for using program information to inform advocacy efforts, ensuring that linkages exist strengthens the overall effort.
- **EVIDENCE-BASED:** When promoting changes to policies and systems, one must understand not only the current policy environment but also any changes that may occur. Using research and background information from multiple sources to inform your advocacy work is essential, as is understanding the broader implications of the related facts and figures.
- **OUTCOME-FOCUSED:** It is not enough to conduct advocacy activities. Although conducting meetings with legislators, organizing community action, developing policy positions or having an issue-based TV commercial all may be deemed successes individually, Habitat looks to the outcomes of these collective activities and how they affect individuals, neighborhoods and communities. What actual policies or systems did you change, and what influence will that have on society?

Should Habitat focus its advocacy on treating housing as a right?

Human rights issues often play an important role in the work of global NGOs. Habitat for Humanity International's board of directors has officially recognized housing as a human right, and many Habitat organizations already use housing rights as the fundamental basis and approach of their advocacy work. However, the decision to focus on housing as a right should be weighed carefully given the national context in each country. The key issue is not whether housing as a human right is a position of Habitat; the question should be whether taking a housing rights approach will help Habitat in a particular country achieve its overall goal to improve people's access to housing and to change policies and systems that perpetuate poverty housing. That decision can be made only by a national organization itself (See Appendix 2 for the U.N. Human Rights Declaration).

- **VOLUNTEER-ORIENTED:** Although the use of volunteers is not universal, it remains true that one of Habitat's biggest assets is its volunteers. Make the most of your volunteers by mobilizing them to advocate. Involving volunteers in such a crucial task maximizes their impact as well as Habitat's ability to engage and retain them.
- **COALITION-ORIENTED:** Changing systems and policies is very difficult to do alone. Coalitions, both informal and formal, are usually necessary to cause change. Whether you are coordinating with local community leaders or national platforms, joining, participating in and leading coalitions is often essential to advocacy success.
- **MUTUALLY DEPENDENT:** Habitat entities are mutually dependent, which means that what one Habitat organization does can have ripple effects on other organizations. It is important therefore to make sure advocacy positions will not harm other Habitat organizations. Although taking positions at local and national levels on housing issues may rarely affect other countries, national organizations need to consider this when deciding what policies and systems they will work to change.
- **NONCONFRONTATIONAL:** Habitat is not confrontational in its advocacy. Some advocacy organizations intentionally promote conflict as a strategy of their advocacy; Habitat does not. Habitat works to promote understanding and knowledge using evidence and practical knowledge gained from implementing housing solutions around the world. This does not mean Habitat is averse to taking controversial positions, but the manner in which those positions are voiced and explained is important.
- **NONPARTISAN:** Habitat advocacy efforts should be nonpartisan. They should be issue-focused, not focused on promoting candidates or specific political parties. In many countries, legal issues regulate the need for NGOs to remain nonpartisan.

Interfaith Advocacy Tool Kit

Faith is often the motivating factor for Habitat's advocacy efforts. Habitat for Humanity International has developed a tool kit for working with interfaith communities. It has three main components: It describes how to form an interfaith group, it describes how the group can "put faith in action" through a Habitat build and other Habitat-related activities, and it describes how interfaith groups can become advocates against poverty housing.

From local to global: Advocacy at all levels

Advocacy takes place at all levels of society, and Habitat for Humanity can have a role, responsibility and impact on influencing each of these levels.

Community and municipal:

At the local level, it is likely that affiliates will have a much closer relationship with the community they serve. Local governments provide basic services, land for housing, zoning regulations, local roads, schools, housing, etc. Influencing municipalities to make changes or improve access to housing is typically done in coalitions with local partners with similar interests (e.g., the private sector, businesses, academia, neighborhood representatives), through civic associations, through direct relations with local government officials, or with community leaders and grassroots movements.

In larger cities with many communities, government might be more difficult to engage. More than half of the world's population is now urban, and municipal and city governments must engage in long-term planning that incorporates all the people who live in cities.

National:

Many housing policies are set through national government laws and regulations. Among these are the amount of funding budgeted for housing by the government, the existence of a federal housing bank or agency, laws affecting ownership of land and tenure, regulatory restrictions and costs associated with homeownership and rental housing, and the availability of public transportation to livelihoods. Strategies to engage in national-level advocacy might include using local connections to influence national decision-makers (both within the government and the for-profit corporate sector), joining national-level coalitions and campaigns, sharing local policy priorities and program successes to inform Habitat's national policy agenda, and grassroots mobilizing in support of national priority issues.

Multicountry and regional:

The most robust and active multicountry-level policymaking would be the European Union, whose policies have a profound impact on all EU countries and the entire globe through massive development assistance funding. However, the African Union, the Organization of American States and the Asia/Pacific Economic Cooperation are other regional institutions that play a part in setting and influencing policy regionally. The multinational corporate sector can often be more powerful than government.

Regional advocacy often remains focused on developing common issues and sharing lessons in an effort to increase impact at the national and local levels, given the relative weakness of regional policymaking (with the exception of the EU). National interests generally outweigh the interests of the region, and, therefore, the lowest common denominator ends up becoming policy.

Global:

The United Nations has a global influence on policies that have a direct impact on housing and human settlement issues. The Millennium Development Goals were established by the U.N. in 2000 and serve as globally recognized goals and priorities for international development. Habitat for Humanity International works in coordination with other NGOs to influence the MDGs to reflect a priority on housing and land tenure as key targets for eliminating poverty.

**Latin America/Caribbean
Regional Advocacy Committee**

In 2009, national organizations from around the LAC region met to develop a regional plan for advocacy. The national leaders recognized that having a strong, common, collective voice on advocacy issues would strengthen their impact within their own countries. Thus, a regional committee was formed to cooperate on an ongoing basis, selecting regional priority policy issues, sharing lessons and strengthening the advocacy impact at the local, regional and even global levels.

Roles and responsibilities for advocacy

This chart illustrates the typical activities one might engage in depending on where you are based in the Habitat network. This is not a comprehensive set of activities, but it is illustrative of the typical and most common activities one will do to support advocacy work at strategic levels of society.

	Community and municipal advocacy	National advocacy	Multicountry and regional advocacy	Global advocacy
LOCAL AFFILIATE/ COMMUNITY PARTNER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join or develop local coalitions. Influence local/ municipal actors. Mobilize grassroots/ communities in support of local/ national/global advocacy. Influence local/ municipal budgets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the national organization policy agenda. Use local connections to influence national policy with direction from the national organization. Join national-level coalitions and campaigns as appropriate. Share local policy priorities to inform the national organization's policy agenda. Mobilize grassroots in support of national organization policy priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take action on regional advocacy action alerts. Share local priorities to inform the regional policy agenda. Mobilize grassroots in support of regional action alerts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take action on global advocacy action alerts. Share local priorities to inform the global policy agenda. Mobilize grassroots in support of global action alerts.
NATIONAL ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide technical assistance to local affiliates. Share lessons learned from other parts of the country. Share information with key national decision-makers about municipal policy concerns. Directly engage as appropriate with local affiliates. Gather data to inform the national policy agenda. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join or develop national coalitions. Join national NGO platforms. Influence national-level policymakers. Influence national budgets relating to housing. Develop a National Advocacy Committee. Measure and evaluate national advocacy successes. Share national-level policy priorities with the area offices to inform regional and global policy agendas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the regional policy agenda. Use national connections to influence regional policy with direction from the area office. Join regional-level coalitions and campaigns as appropriate. Share national policy priorities to inform the regional policy agenda. Mobilize grassroots in support of regional policy priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take action on global advocacy action alerts. Share national policy priorities to inform the regional policy agenda. Mobilize grassroots in support of regional policy priorities.

chart continues on page 10

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	Community and municipal advocacy	National advocacy	Multicountry and regional advocacy	Global advocacy
AREA OFFICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide tools and resources for local advocacy. • Share lessons learned from other countries' local advocacy efforts. • Gather data to inform the regional policy agenda. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical assistance to national organizations. • Share lessons learned from other countries. • Directly influence national decision-makers as appropriate with national organizations. • Gather data to inform regional/global policy agendas. • Measure and evaluate success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join or develop regional coalitions. • Join regional NGO platforms. • Influence regional-level policymakers and governing bodies. • Influence regional budgets (Europe only). • Measure and evaluate regional advocacy successes. • Share regional-level policy priorities with HFHI to inform regional and global policy agendas. • Develop a regional advocacy committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the regional policy agenda. • Use national connections to influence regional policy with direction from the area office. • Join regional- and global-level coalitions and campaigns as appropriate. • Share national policy priorities to inform the regional policy agenda. • Mobilize grassroots in support of regional policy priorities.
HFHI HEADQUARTERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share lessons learned across regions of local advocacy success. • Gather data to inform the global policy agenda. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share lessons learned across regions of national advocacy success. • Gather data to inform a global policy agenda. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical assistance to national organizations. • Share lessons learned from other countries. • Directly influence national decision-makers as appropriate with national organizations. • Gather data to inform regional/global policy agendas. • Measure and evaluate success. • Develop a regional advocacy committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join or develop global coalitions. • Join a global NGO platform. • Develop global policy priorities. • Influence global-level policymakers. • Influence the U.N./G-8/G-20. • Measure and evaluate global advocacy successes. • Share regional-level policy priorities throughout HFHI to inform regional and global policy agendas.

Advocacy and program: Mutually reinforcing

It is important to understand the linkages between advocacy and the programs your organization implements. Advocacy and programs are often intertwined and mutually dependent. It is critical that lessons learned from program implementation and direct service be incorporated into national and local advocacy strategies. For example, if your disaster response work is hindered by government regulation around rebuilding, then those policies should be a focus of your advocacy efforts. Additionally, advocacy can play a key role in determining which programs a national organization implements. By designing both together and creating intentional learning, both program and advocacy results should be strengthened. Here are examples of how this can work:

Program informing advocacy

In Haiti, after the earthquake of 2010, all shelter organizations were complaining that getting access to land was extremely difficult for earthquake victims, causing significant complications, delays and inefficiencies as groups worked to provide shelter solutions. Solving land issues became a clear and urgent policy and advocacy priority for all shelter actors based on the direct knowledge and experience of program staff working in the post-disaster environment.

Integrated programming

A U.S. Agency for International Development-funded program being implemented by Habitat Macedonia has four primary objectives. One of those objectives is to influence national housing laws related to energy efficiency. All four components work to enhance the others, yet each has its own measures of success, dedicated resources and skills needed for implementation.

Advocacy informing program

After the housing collapse of 2008 in the United States, the Department of Housing and Urban Development set about implementing a program to revitalize neighborhoods. Through advocacy efforts, the new HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Program was opened up to include national nonprofit housing organizations, enabling HFHI to secure a \$157 million grant to implement one of its largest programs ever.

This can often be taken a step further when donors (or others) push for holistic programs that include both direct service and advocacy.

Resourcing advocacy

There are funders interested in supporting advocacy-oriented work, especially foundations and global development agencies working to make bigger, lasting impacts with the limited resources they have to spend. There are three ways for country programs to think about resourcing advocacy initiatives:

1. **INTEGRATE PROPOSALS TO FUNDERS:** Giving funders proposals that have both program and advocacy components can help ensure enough resources are provided to both priorities. Funders interested in advocacy often prefer this approach because they usually want to have more immediate and direct effects on people's lives through their programs while broadening their ability to affect more lives through advocacy.
2. **TARGET FUNDERS SPECIFICALLY INTERESTED IN ADVOCACY AND ADVOCACY-RELATED ACTIVITIES:** Just as some funders are interested only in direct service or direct programming efforts, others are interested only in supporting work that will have an impact on policies and systems. Additionally, certain funders also have interest in advocacy-related activities such as capacity building, coalition building, research, knowledge sharing, public awareness and empowerment.
3. **USE EXISTING RESOURCES:** Many country programs just becoming interested in advocacy will set aside a small portion of their budget to begin implementing an advocacy strategy. Although this is not ideal, it is often the most practical and immediate avenue of getting started. Setting aside a modest percentage of a budget for advocacy can have long-term payoffs.

Examples of national organizations successfully resourcing advocacy

- *Habitat Hungary received a grant to influence a rental subsidy policy.*
- *Habitat Bolivia received a grant to change land laws.*
- *Habitat Honduras received a grant to share its advocacy experiences to help empower the advocacy efforts of other groups.*

The risks of advocacy

Any change within an organization carries some element of risk. For example, some longtime supporters may try to steer attention from advocacy to continue focusing solely on building houses. Most, though, will welcome the greater impact our organization is having. On some contentious issues, we might take sides, but Habitat is known as a nonpartisan, mission-driven organization. We are balanced and fair, and we will carry this forward in our advocacy work. Often, the risk of remaining silent is greater than the risk of speaking out.

Although working in the wrong coalition — one that is highly partisan and confrontational, for example — can be detrimental, partnering with like-minded groups can amplify our voice and extend our reach by creating power in numbers.

Risks associated with implementing advocacy initiatives include:

- **DAMAGED REPUTATION OR RELATIONSHIPS:** This may result from becoming involved with a

coalition whose membership is not well-aligned, or from alienating board members who might not agree with the position taken on a specific subject.

- **ECONOMIC LOSS, SUCH AS SUPPORT FROM GOVERNMENT OR DONORS:** There is always the potential of donors being on opposite sides of an advocacy issue. In many cases, Habitat has found that donors will remain close even if they have opposing views, but this is not always the case. Such situations should be studied carefully.
- **LACK OF RESOURCE ALLOCATION:** Advocacy work can stall or decline because of a lack of resources or staff. Choosing an issue in advocacy always carries the risk of achieving neither near-term nor long-term results because of varying circumstances.
- **BRAND IDENTITY:** Working in coalitions, especially diverse coalitions, can be beneficial or even essential to advocacy success. Yet those same coalitions may dilute or damage your existing brand identity.
- **SECURITY:** In rare situations, advocacy could have security implications for your staff. Threats could come from opponents, from other organizations or even from the political motivations of government officials.

How to mitigate risks associated with advocacy:

- **HAVE CLEAR, RESEARCHED GOALS BASED ON EVIDENCE AND SOLID DATA.** This will help ensure you have the information to back up the positions you advocate for and will help others understand your motivation.
- **UNDERSTAND YOUR POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT.** This will help ensure advocacy initiatives are targeted at the right people at the right time.
- **COMMUNICATE CLEARLY AND THOUGHTFULLY.** This will help ensure your messaging is not misinterpreted or misunderstood.
- **BE POLITICAL, NOT PARTISAN.** This distinction is subtle, but important. Stay focused on supporting housing issues, not political parties.

Chapter 3:

Housing Policy Fundamentals

Housing policy: What is the role of government in housing?

In "Housing Policy Matters," housing experts Steve Mayo and Shlomo Angel explain that housing outcomes are attributable, at least in part, to differences in the housing policy systems within cities and countries. They state that "the housing policy environment is the set of government interventions that have a critical and measurable effect on the performance of the housing sector." In addition, the policy environment around the housing market significantly affects its performance.

Housing has significant influence on social and economic development, and governments play a critical role in ensuring access to affordable housing and providing a framework for housing to thrive.

Given housing's significant influence on social and economic development, government plays a critical role in ensuring access to affordable housing as well as providing a framework for housing to thrive.

However, in discussing the housing policy environment and the role of governments in setting those policies, the World Bank, UN-HABITAT and others have identified lessons learned with respect to the enabling housing policy environment leading to good housing conditions. The World Bank and UN-HABITAT have written extensively on the do's and don'ts of an enabling approach to shelter and principles for what is considered adequate shelter and guidance for good housing policy.

Beyond housing policy

As an organization focused on housing, it is logical for Habitat to think about influencing housing policy and to focus on these issues when it comes to implementing advocacy programming. However, country programs are encouraged to look beyond housing policy when considering issues to tackle.

Economic and social issues are complex and overlap. Sticking only to issues specifically tied to housing policy might be too limiting. For example, in some slums, gangs control access to people's homes and force families to pay on a regular basis to enter their own house. In this situation, security could very well be the highest priority to help families improve their housing situation. This example clearly shows the importance of looking beyond the housing policy environment to the broader set of issues affecting those in need of adequate housing.

Tanzania: Land Act and Village Land Act of 1999

Tanzania's Land Act and Village Land Act of 1999 exemplifies government making a difference in housing. The act secured women's right to acquire title and registration of land, addressed issues of customary land rights, and upheld the principles of nondiscrimination based on sex. The impact of the act was cited as progress toward Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals and directly affected the well-being of most Tanzanians. Gender activists are among the most active lobbyists in the national debates surrounding the act. They successfully lobbied for the inclusion of women in both statutory and customary land tenure.

Habitat's Five Pillars of Housing Policy

Habitat approaches housing policy by supporting five related and overlapping pillars: property rights, housing finance, housing subsidies, infrastructure and regulations. By understanding these five pillars and the subissues that fall under each of them, you can strategically advocate, even though the policy environment is complex.

Looking at housing policy in this way should help country programs determine potential policy priorities and key policy gaps. (See the Global Housing Indicators box to learn more about a tool to help you study housing policy in your country.)

Pillar 1:

PROPERTY RIGHTS: The recognition of people's rights to own, occupy and use housing and land is fundamental to providing access to safe and affordable housing. According to the United Nations, more than 1 billion of the world's poorest people are living "illegally" and without protection from eviction from their homes. Lack of secure tenure makes it hard for families to obtain credit and invest in home improvements or home-based businesses. Often, families without secure tenure live on the margins of society, neglected by local governments that do not provide basic services such as water and electricity.

Full titling is a route some governments have taken to provide tenure security to residents. But it is not always easy or practical to establish the history of land ownership. Without accurate records, the certainty provided by titles is lost, but alternatives to titles are possible. These include long-term leases, certificates of occupancy, and community land trusts, including simple addressing, which has been successful in more than 50 African cities. These policies have been shown to provide the poor with the protection and security they need to invest in improvements in their homes and community.

Pillar 2:

HOUSING FINANCE: In many countries, a home is usually a family's largest expense and, if owned, their most valuable asset. It often consumes a significant share of a household's budget — up to 40 percent in some places, according to the Global Housing Indicators. A well-functioning housing finance system puts homeownership within reach of more middle-income households and finances the construction of more rental units. The impact of housing finance is even wider: Homes can be used as collateral to obtain credit to improve living conditions or to finance small or home-based businesses.

Primary mortgage markets require a sound financial environment, a land titling system, the enforcement of contracts including foreclosure procedures, an operating credit system, and fair and transparent mortgage underwriting guidelines. The depth of the mortgage market varies from one country to the next. GHI assessments indicate that in some countries, including Mozambique and Cote D'Ivoire, mortgages from financial institutions to purchase a home are rare.

The Global Housing Indicators

The Global Housing Indicators collect consistent, objective, comparable information on the policy environment for adequate and affordable housing. The GHI include information on the policies and practices under which housing in a country is (or is not) owned, rented, financed, subsidized, serviced, regulated, planned and built.

HFHI helped launch the Global Housing Indicators project because we saw a clear need for housing policy indicators to support our advocacy work. Relatively few housing policy indicators exist. Some collect information about one aspect of housing policy such as property rights. Others focus on finance in the formal, developed real estate sector. Still others are data collections of housing conditions. The GHI are different because they consider housing policy holistically. They are designed to address such questions as:

- *What policies are in place and where?*
- *Who are the housing policies intended to benefit?*
- *Which policies are enforced or ignored, and why?*
- *What types of investment behaviors do policies encourage or discourage?*

Learn more at globalhousingindicators.org.

Pillar 3:

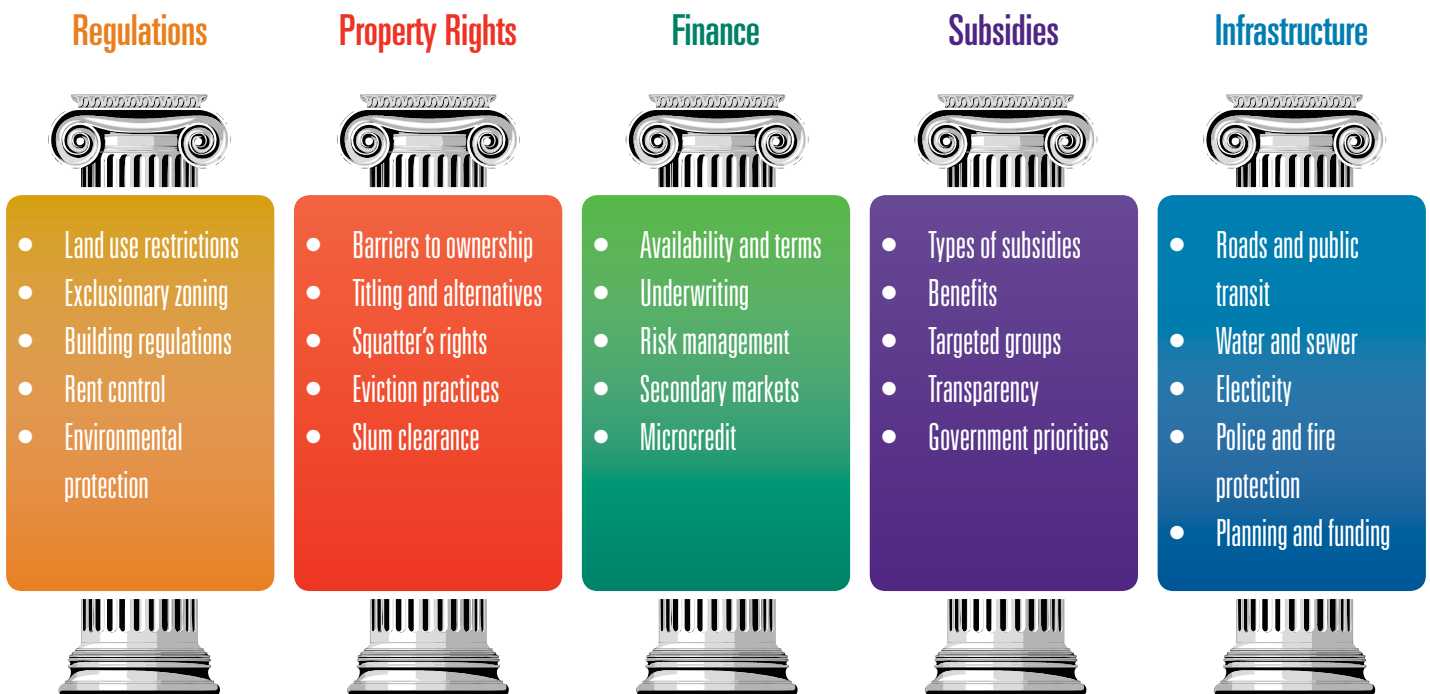
HOUSING SUBSIDIES: Often, housing is a family's largest expenditure. Sometimes more than half of a family's income will go toward their rent or mortgage payments or to making necessary home repairs and improvements. Many households save for years to build their homes room by room or to purchase a new home.

A housing subsidy should be designed to help poor households obtain decent, affordable housing. Although subsidies can help ensure access to housing, they can also be fiscally irresponsible or regressive or drastically distort the housing market. Subsidy programs should be reviewed periodically to make sure they are targeting the population in need.

**Argentina:
Protected Rental Project**

The Protected Rental Project that Habitat Argentina implements for families who informally pay rent in conventillos and "hotels" in the south area of Buenos Aires has been recognized by the Legislative Assembly of the City of Buenos Aires as a project of "social interest" influencing the rental housing market. The Global Housing Indicator tool applied in Argentina identified certain practices in the housing rental market, such as a reluctance to rent to single women with young children or discrimination against immigrants from neighboring countries or other people for socioeconomic reasons.

This graphic shows the five pillars of housing policy, including subissues related to each pillar.



Pillar 4:

INFRASTRUCTURE: For many parts of the world, living without access to water, sanitation or electricity is common. The United Nations estimates that almost 40 percent of the world's population is living without access to improved sanitation facilities and 13 percent are living without safe drinking water.

Inadequate infrastructure, such as lack of a solid waste treatment plant, lack of access to safe water supply, inadequate roads, and inadequate police or fire protection, is unsafe and unhealthy for residents. Many cities lack the resources to maintain or expand infrastructure networks as their population grows. Poorer residents become priced out of homes connected to formal infrastructure networks.

Pillar 5:

REGULATIONS: Building codes and land-use regulations are necessary for many reasons. They ensure that buildings are safe, that land use is efficient and that sensitive environmental areas are protected.

Regulations need to be carefully developed and periodically revisited and updated, because outdated regulations can inadvertently make housing less affordable. For example, capping how tall buildings can be or requiring very large lots can lead to shortages of housing and higher prices. In addition, high fees or complicated processes to obtain building permits and approvals may push lower-income residents into illegal housing.

Chapter 4: Getting started – Six steps to building a winning advocacy plan

Although general guidelines and various components for consideration are provided in the following pages, developing a strategy for your advocacy is not a fixed, linear process. Such planning is often iterative, dynamic and participatory because of ever-changing events and information. Not all of these components are necessary or even appropriate to use in all situations. Each national organization has flexibility to determine what works best for it, and although the best methods for advocating might be subject to change, strategic direction can improve your impact and efficiency.

Before you begin, ask yourself: How can promoting policies and systems help us reach our vision? This fundamental question will help guide you as you develop an advocacy plan.

The key to succeeding in any initiative is having a plan. Before building a house, you have house plans that show you where you are headed and ensure that everyone involved understands what is needed and how to achieve the goal of building the house. Just like when you build a house, you need an advocacy plan to give you a road map of where you are headed in your efforts to influence policies and systems.

Habitat's vision is to eliminate poverty housing. This is a massive vision that will require decades of work and extensive resources, and it can't be done by Habitat for Humanity alone. Your national organization might have its own, similar vision.

To develop an advocacy plan, you need to begin with a vision, and then understand how advocacy can help you achieve that vision. Creating a clear vision for your advocacy with concrete goals will keep your efforts focused and on track. It will help Habitat leadership make good decisions at turning points or when potential setbacks occur. A vision motivates a group when change seems impossible, inspires new advocates, and helps diverse individuals build consensus. While developing your vision, look to your programs and capacity — and to what the research says — for guidance.

Most importantly, ask yourself: How does promoting policies and systems help us reach our vision? If you can't answer this fundamental question, it will be nearly impossible to make good decisions as you develop an advocacy plan.

Six steps to developing an advocacy plan

1. Learn from your programs and communities.

A natural place to start is by discerning which policies affect the work you're already doing and which policies have the biggest effect or limitation on the communities where you work. For example, are there government regulations that consume great amounts of time and slow down your housing production? The policies and systems around these regulations might be good issues to consider developing in your advocacy work. Or, if many of the communities in which you work are affected by regular disasters with little preparedness or support from the local government, that too might be a good issue to research and add to your advocacy agenda.

Look to your programs and the communities where you serve to discern how the policy context may limit or help facilitate the development of decent and secure housing for those living there. If your program includes providing land title to 200 families, what lessons can be learned and shared from this process? Is there a way to improve the land titling process in your community? How can you broaden the scope of your project to affect more than 200 families? Consider how advocacy can add growth and scope to your existing work.

As noted in Chapter 1, policies and systems affect everything you do. The key is asking which ones affect the programs and operations of your organization and the families you are working to support. Here are a few key questions about programs to inform your advocacy plan:

- What policy and system issues affect your program delivery the most?
- What policy and system issues keep all families in your country from accessing better housing?
- What policy and system issues help you implement your programs?

Habitat X recently hired a new executive director who wants to increase the number of families served. The staff cites a number of factors that will make this difficult. "Not enough funding," they say. But the staff also mentions how much time they spend trying to establish clear title to the land they have acquired. If they weren't so bogged down by the local municipality, they could get more families in homes faster. Intrigued, the executive director decides to look into it.

2. Consider your capacity.

A national organization's capacity for advocacy and choice of advocacy methods will depend on its size, location, staff, finances, relevant laws and issues. Effective advocacy might involve new skills, research, monitoring and evaluation, and different ways of communicating. New skills required may include public policy knowledge, lobbying, media advocacy and research. Advocacy also requires organizational commitment, support, understanding and cooperation.

Although advocacy is everyone's job, without dedicated resources, strategic planning and support from a national organization's board and leadership, the plan will not succeed. The capacity for supporting an advocacy plan must be considered when building your vision.

Any advocacy effort should take careful stock of the organizational resources that already exist. This could include previous related advocacy work, alliances already in place and those that need to be built, staff and stakeholder capacity, current information, research capacity and political intelligence. It should also include the years of experience national organizations have in implementing programs in the field. Your programs should be informing your advocacy work, and vice versa. Taking such an inventory will help identify which advocacy resources are at hand and what needs to be developed.

In taking capacity into account when creating your plan, you help ensure that any planning efforts are measured against actual capacity constraints. Be realistic and ensure that your plans match your capacity. You can always raise dedicated resources to support your efforts as well.

Here are a few questions to consider about capacity when building an advocacy plan:

- Are you planning to implement your own advocacy initiatives, to support existing coalitions, or both?
- What information do you already have in regard to housing policy and systems?
- What skills — research, mobilizing supporters, government relations, etc. — do you already have that can support advocacy strategies, and what skills do you need to enhance within the national organization?
- Is your office in a good location to influence policies and systems, or will you need to travel or hire staff in another city?

The executive director for Habitat X is not familiar with advocacy and does not have any staff members who are government experts. The affiliate also does not have the budget to hire someone new. But establishing clear land title is a prerequisite to building homes, and, other than funding, it is the biggest issue identified by the staff. The executive director decides to make simplifying the city's land tenure system a priority and agrees to dedicate 20 percent of work time to the cause.

3. Research possible policy issues and identify constraints.

Gathering data and evidence supports all aspects of advocacy, from issue selection to developing objectives to crafting communications to monitoring and evaluation. Advocacy depends on evidence, and it is referenced continually.

Research includes general information gathering to help select and inform an issue. Issues often arise through monitoring what public officials are saying and doing, speaking with other organizations involved in similar work, listening to national organization staff, and considering the needs of partner families and those we serve. Checking with other local, state and national organizations about the issue will help determine if others have observed similar trends or have collected corroborating data.

Research also includes finding numbers, facts and statistics to support your argument and craft messaging. Consider these two hypothetical talking points. Which do you think is more compelling?

- Mayor, you should improve your process for titling land because it is important to Habitat.
- Mayor, studies have shown that secure land tenure spurs investment in homes and leads to economic growth. If land title does not need to be registered with both the tax and housing authorities, 35 percent more people will have title to their property, increasing the city's tax revenue by \$500,000 per year.

Sometimes publishing your research can be an effective and powerful advocacy tactic.

Research in Brazil

*Habitat for Humanity Brazil and its partner CENDHEC have significant experience in the land tenure regularization process within a territorial program intervention. They recently developed a study targeting the Judiciary's practice in the State of Pernambuco, finding evidence on why a collective **usucapion**, or adverse possession, case takes 42 months to travel from the intake stage to the first hearing in the Judiciary. This lag is hindering the access to justice and the security of land tenure for the economically vulnerable sectors of the population in Brazil. Habitat Brazil and CENDHEC are developing advocacy strategies to change this situation.*

As you select, develop and refine possible issues, potential questions to research include:

- What is the emerging trend or need, and what are the causal factors involved?
- How does the issue affect Habitat?
- What data and evidence support this?
- How many people are affected by the issue? Who are they?
- If the issue is complex, how can it be broken down into more manageable pieces?
- Who is responsible for addressing the challenge? Politicians? The housing minister? A local authority?
- Are other organizations, coalitions or groups tracking this issue?
- What would be the impact of suggested solutions on the affected group, and on the community at large?
- What extra considerations does the current policy environment require?

The executive director asks a member of the staff to help conduct research on a project. How long does it take to get land titled in their city? How many steps and agencies are involved? How many more families could Habitat serve if the process were faster? Is the city losing tax revenue because the process is so slow? Meanwhile, the executive director begins to call other organizations in the area to see if they're experiencing the same delays. The executive director identifies a few community associations that are also affected.

4. Identify key issues and policy solutions.

Putting a policy agenda document together on a regular basis allows you an opportunity to share your vision and goals in a concise manner. When selecting issues to include on your agenda, be sure to take into consideration what you have learned from your programs, what you know about your capacity, and the things you have discovered in your research. Keep in mind while selecting issues that you cannot confront every issue at once. It is important to choose some issues you can win along with some that are more difficult. Help ensure buy-in from key groups by developing your policy agenda in a way that gives stakeholders time to provide input, and by creating a process to ensure your board approves of your agenda. Posting your finalized policy agenda on your website allows you the opportunity to be even more open and transparent while highlighting the high-level issues you care about. Create an agenda annually, or to coincide with your government's timeline.

After speaking to the affiliate's staff, collecting some data and mapping the key players, Habitat X's executive director decides that changing the local land tenure laws is still possible. A complete system overhaul, though, is unlikely. Through the research and power mapping, the executive director

Issue identification in Hungary

The Habitat Hungary office conducted research and found that 14 to 18 percent of households have serious difficulties in paying their housing-related expenditures, which leads to a growing number of arrears and to the insecurity of tenure both in the public and the private sector. Secondly, they found there is a severe lack of social rental housing, which is largely the consequence of housing privatization. So, Habitat Hungary's advocacy activities will focus on the introduction of a Social Rental Agency to provide access to affordable social rental units for many different groups affected by poverty housing.

has identified a way that the number of agencies involved can be removed from six to three and the number of steps required can be reduced by a third. This would substantially simplify the process and improve Habitat's ability to serve more families. The executive director decides to focus advocacy efforts on this process.

Here are some of the national organizations that have identified key issues and policy solutions:

Location	Institution to influence	Issues	Target beneficiaries
Brazil	National Council of Cities	Improve the rights of slum dwellers	Women heads of families and economic and socially vulnerable families
Mexico	State and local governments	Improve the National Housing Subsidy program	The poor (urban and rural)
Romania	Parliament	Improve the national government's disaster planning for housing	Disaster-affected populations
UK	National government	Influence the funding of the Department for International Development for housing	Least-developed countries
Zambia	Civic Forum for Housing and Habitat (CCHH)	Improve people's rights to land and housing	Low-income and vulnerable populations
South Africa	Ministry of Housing - national and local	Improve the National Subsidy Program	Low-income populations
Vietnam	National and local government	Land rights	The poor and landless
Philippines	Board of Investment	Change tax laws to incentivize nonprofit housing production	Informal settlers and the poorest of the poor
Hungary	Parliament	Create a Social Rental Agency	Families in need of access to rental options

5. Begin power mapping.

Once your issues are established, it is important to document the forces that have influence over them. Forces that influence housing issues may be political, economic, social, technical or environmental. Mapping out possible advocacy opportunities in relation to the decision-making process or legislative calendar will help you develop your overall advocacy strategy. Understanding the realities around your issue is crucial as policymaking often takes place in a thicket of conflicting interests and priorities.

Key elements of mapping include:

- **POLICY ISSUES:** What are the issues? Policy issues may include the absence of a policy, an inadequate policy or the improper enforcement of a policy.
- **KEY ACTORS:** Who is the main institution or person responsible? Who else has influence on the matter? They may be politicians, administrators, housing ministers, business leaders, religious leaders, etc. How are their decisions made?
- **THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT:** How is your issue perceived by the people who hold power? Is it a priority or given little attention? Is there public discourse on the issue? Is it covered in the newspapers? Understanding the formal and informal policymaking processes and the social and political contexts are crucial. Are there any upcoming opportunities, such as key events, symbolic celebrations or strategic alliances that add to your influence and power? Do any of these events pose a threat to your agenda?
- **BUDGET ANALYSIS:** Budgets are the most powerful policies produced by governments; they reveal the true priorities. Budget analysis can determine if adequate resources are allocated to your issue. How much money will it take to solve the issue? What is realistic?

Key questions to consider:

- Which groups have the most influence on decision-makers?
- Do any of your board members have relationships and connections with key decision-makers?
- What groups might oppose having improved housing conditions in your country? Or, to put it another way, whom might you be competing with for limited resources?

After some basic initial research and a few conversations with other organizations, Habitat X's executive director decides to delve deeper and map all of the key players involved in titling land in the city. This reveals that there are six agencies involved, and each has at least 10 steps. The executive director jots down the heads of these agencies and their contact info, checks their websites to see if there is any related information on land tenure, and does a search for any interesting news articles. The executive director is trying to get a sense of who the players are and what the factors might be that affect land tenure in the city. All the research is documented.

6. Create goals and objectives.

As with any program or initiative, setting goals and objectives is critical to success. Goals should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. Advocacy practitioners understand the long-term nature of advocacy as well as the need for short-term planning. Because getting a law changed or influencing a system may take years, it is essential that you have a plan to focus on key issues and track progress over time.

One of the most difficult aspects of setting goals and objectives in advocacy is finding the right balance between your vision of change and the practical realities for how you make progress in the near term. Because there are so many factors outside your control, planning should help you organize and track progress but not necessarily be a perfect road map to achieving success. Having flexibility and knowing when to change or adapt a plan based on external factors is essential.

Finally, it is critical to measure your goals against key outcomes. There is a difference in setting a goal that educates the public about housing and setting one that involves a policy change that will directly affect the way people access housing. Both goals have value, but the second goal clearly focuses on the outcomes Habitat for Humanity International will measure when it comes to advocacy success. (See Chapter 6: Measuring Advocacy Outcomes)

Now that an issue has been identified, Habitat X's executive director outlines the goals and objectives and creates a rough timeline. Recognizing that the regulations governing land titling will not change overnight, the executive director decides to create short-term goals, such as creating a working group as a space for policy dialogue of relevant public and community support organizations.

BE FLEXIBLE

As discussed in the beginning of the chapter, advocacy is rarely linear, and planning, strategies and tactics often change over time to accommodate unexpected developments. Sometimes these unexpected developments are outside the scope of your original goal or initial strategy, but nonetheless require your attention. This can best be described as "reactive advocacy" or the art of maximizing an opportunity when a window opens unexpectedly.

Examples of reactive advocacy vary but may include being invited to speak or present at a conference, being asked to provide advice on a policy or testify before a committee, being included in a coalition, or being approached by the media to comment on a current event. These instances might not have been part of the plan, but they are invaluable in building your reputation, expanding your network and influencing issues you care about. With limited capacity and resources, though, the challenge becomes balancing what is part of your strategic plan and what is impromptu.

Policy monitoring is important in your advocacy work. Often, while you are monitoring housing policy, new opportunities for advocacy will present themselves, and you must adapt your plan.

Reactive advocacy in Hungary

After spending two years establishing itself as an expert, Habitat Hungary recently released its first report on poverty housing. The report gained traction in the media, reaching more than 6 million people, one of whom was a policy officer with Hungary's National Development Agency. This officer had been drafting guidelines for the rehabilitation of several Roma settlements, read the report, and reached out to Habitat Hungary for advice. This led to a meeting in which Habitat Hungary helped craft policy guidelines and determined how European Union funds affected informal settlements in Hungary.

Chapter 5: Creating change – Five key tactics to implementing advocacy plans

Once you have identified your issues and the factors that influence them, it's time to develop an action plan. Not all advocacy efforts call for a meeting with the president or the passage of a new law. With each issue, national organizations should evaluate the most effective arena for action and design a campaign accordingly.

Understand that elements cannot all be assembled at one time. Breaking advocacy goals into manageable pieces allows for the creation of individual action steps that become part of the whole. When building an action plan, national organizations should focus on what will have the greatest impact on the policies and systems they are working to influence. Emphasizing the end goal and adapting tactics along the way will be central to the plan's success.

Tactics to implement your plan

This chapter outlines five key advocacy tactics selected based on their past use and success within Habitat national organizations that have implemented advocacy initiatives to date: coalition building, mobilizing advocates, developing policy, directly engaging government decision-makers, and advancing your advocacy through media. Additional tactics may be required. In the previous chapter, we mentioned tactics such as publishing research and policy monitoring, but the five tactics we focus on in this chapter are the most common and effective techniques used by Habitat national organizations around the world.

Local context, especially the type of government, and varying levels of democracy, will inform the types of tactics that might be acceptable in any given country. It will be important for all national organizations to better understand local laws, customs and practices that will affect tactical implementation of advocacy initiatives. Speaking with colleagues in other NGOs or existing advocacy coalitions would be a recommended first step before making key tactical decisions.

Tactic 1: Coalition building

One of the main tools for effective advocacy is building and working in coalitions. A coalition is a group of individuals or organizations that form an alliance or agree to work together in order to achieve a common purpose or engage in a joint activity. The long-term objectives of a coalition may vary widely, but in most instances, there is a common goal, which is the desire to change people's behaviors and to influence or develop public policy. Some coalitions develop campaigns tied to the common issues.

Partnering with like-minded groups can amplify your voice and extend your reach by creating power in numbers. Habitat's primary objective is to reduce poverty housing and provide adequate and affordable shelter, but the types of coalitions in which Habitat affiliates might want to engage will vary depending on local issues.

Demonstration projects

One way to build support for a change to policies or systems is to implement a project to show decision-makers the benefits of that change. This is a common tactic in advocacy. For demonstration projects to be effective, there must be specific and intentional planning to share and influence decision-makers.

Successful coalitions can:

- Empower community members.
- Obtain or provide services on a broad scope.
- Bring about more effective and efficient delivery of programs.
- Pool limited, local resources.
- Increase communication among groups and break down stereotypes.
- Reinvigorate group members who might be trying to do too much as a single entity.
- Form greater political power.
- Demonstrate for policymakers the diversity of support for an issue.

Successful engagement in coalitions requires:

- Understanding and respecting institutional self-interest; each organization brings its own history, structure, agenda, values, culture, leadership and relationships to a coalition.
- Agreeing to disagree; member organizations seldom agree on all issues and that is acceptable.
- Compromising when necessary and strategic. However, a coalition's strategy can include encouraging related organizations to act independently.
- Recognizing that contributions vary; organizations bring different strengths and weaknesses to the coalition.
- Helping organizations achieve something valuable and feel that they are benefiting, either through attaining a goal, increasing their visibility or expanding their base. Coalitions often dissolve unless members see concrete, measurable results.
- Urging participation of decision-makers in the coalition.
- Clarifying the participation and voting procedures. Whatever the structure, it should be clear to all coalition members how the process works and moves forward.
- Distributing credit for success fairly among the members.

Coalition success in Haiti

Habitat for Humanity helped create the Haiti Property Law Working Group coalition. More than three years ago, Haiti experienced the most devastating earthquake in 50 years. Today, land tenure remains the biggest roadblock to rebuilding in Haiti. This need was identified by many development partners, multilaterals, bilaterals and NGOs engaged in reconstruction and development. It also was acknowledged by President Michel Martelly, who has prioritized land issues. To address these challenges, Habitat for Humanity has played a leadership role in creating and sustaining the Haiti Property Law Working Group. Habitat drew on its global advocacy work on land rights and its 27 years of experience in Haiti to bring together more than 100 representatives of the government, donor agencies, the business sector, civil society and NGOs to form the group. The working group has generally met every four to six weeks since June 2011.

Tactic 2: Mobilizing advocates

Mobilizing advocates is about identifying people and groups to reach through grassroots efforts, educating them on key issues, and empowering them with practical, concrete ways to collectively influence the policy environment.

A strong collective voice is one of the most powerful tools for influencing policies, systems and even attitudes. Grassroots efforts to build support, conviction and passion for change among groups and individuals are effective. The goal is to make the issues around access to affordable housing important to all people so that it becomes politically popular for decision-makers to address them.

The work of mobilizing advocates is about identifying people and groups to reach through grassroots efforts, educating them on the issues at hand, and empowering them with practical ways to collectively influence the policy environment.

1. Identifying audiences to mobilize depends on the context and your programs. Consider the individuals and groups your organization already works with, including staff members, donors, board members, volunteers, communities and partners. These are natural places to start with your grassroots mobilizing work. The goal is to allow the message to spread, so that each individual or group identified and educated is also emboldened to educate others.
2. If it's appropriate in your context to share your policy priorities, then that is the content you should use to educate your audiences. Just as the many individuals and groups we work with understand the importance of decent shelter, so should they understand the importance of the policy context in helping or focusing the work of achieving decent shelter for all.
3. The most effective way to leverage a growing base of advocates is to provide clear and simple suggestions on how to advocate as an individual or a group that cares about the housing policy context. For example, you might provide simple talking points and instructions on how to contact a local government representative, or organize a community meeting to discuss a key issue and explain how each individual can take action.

Volunteers as advocates

Many national organizations use volunteers. Volunteers can be local community members or foreigners traveling across the globe to help build in a community. Volunteers may sit on the board or carry a hammer; they may be experts lending their advice or youths learning about the needs and solutions from partner families. Habitat's mission states that it brings people together to build homes, communities and hope. This is achieved in part by mobilizing people from all walks of life, educating them and empowering them to help us reach our vision of a world where everyone has a decent place to live. Consider the following opportunities to engage volunteers:

- *Integrate a learning component on your policy priorities into your programming for volunteers. Whenever you inform volunteers about safety, security or Habitat programs, be sure to include general information about the need for adequate housing in your country.*
- *Follow up with volunteers by making information on the policy context accessible to them and their networks.*
- *Ask them to take action and get involved in helping change policies or systems. Appropriate actions will vary by country but could include writing or meeting with government officials, giving a presentation at a church or school, or getting the media interested in the topic.*

Mobilizing advocates in Haiti

At the 2012 Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project in Haiti, 600 volunteers from all over the world were mobilized to build more than 100 houses in a week. These volunteers also were given daily fact sheets about poverty housing and information about how each of them could support housing in Haiti upon their return home. The volunteers not only built houses but also continued to take action and support improved policies and systems for the people of Haiti when they returned home.

Tactic 3: Developing policy

Developing policy can play an important role in supporting advocacy initiatives. Having specific policy proposals can dramatically enhance your ability to influence decision-makers. Although there are certain complexities to developing policy, the advantages to including this in your work are significant.

Developing policy proposals can be done with support from organizations designed to draft policy documents. These may be think tanks, coalitions, universities, law firms or other groups with policy knowledge. It is likely that Habitat national organizations will need to team up with partner organizations, unless existing staff members have a background in public policy development. For example, Habitat Hungary teamed up with a local think tank that helped draft policy language related to the creation of a national rental agency.

Tactic 4: Directly engaging government decision-makers

Lobbying is sometimes negatively thought of as deals being struck, bribes being taken or concessions being made. However, “lobbying” is really about providing information on an issue and trying to build support for your priorities and can often be an important part of the advocacy process. Government decision-makers cannot monitor every issue, and they rely on experts and well-informed constituents to tell them how their policies are functioning and whether needs are being met. Meeting with decision-makers usually involves explaining an issue and making the case for its importance. Sometimes these meetings might seem intimidating, but remember, you are the expert, and people will be interested in what you have to say.

Here are a few helpful tips:

BEFORE THE MEETING:

1. Find out everything you can about the decision-maker. Power mapping will help determine his or her interests and priorities. What is his or her professional background? Does he or she have committee assignments or belong to membership organizations? What are his or her legislative accomplishments?
2. Prepare your three strongest evidence-based talking points. Your meeting will probably be brief. Ensure that your information is accurate, and be ready to answer questions.
3. Prepare issue-based materials to leave with the decision-maker.

DURING THE MEETING:

1. Arrive on time, but do not be surprised if your meetings start late. You might end up meeting with a staff member or an assistant.
2. Introduce yourself and start on a positive note. Say “thank you” for any past support of Habitat.

Policy drafting example

In Macedonia, Habitat's national director sits on the national housing commission, whose job is to develop a national social housing policy. Habitat Macedonia drafted the chapter focused on the commission's social housing policy and will look to stay in a leadership role to ensure the policy is implemented.

Advocacy vs. lobbying

What's the difference? The two terms are often used interchangeably and can change based on a country's legal definition, but lobbying usually involves influencing specific policy while advocacy includes a broader audience. An advocacy strategy can include lobbying but might not. For example, writing a news article to shape public opinion can be considered advocacy, while meeting with a housing minister to discuss a specific law would be considered lobbying.

3. Clearly state your policy asks.
4. Explain your position with the facts, but use personal or local stories whenever possible. Decision-makers are most interested in how legislation will affect their communities and constituents. Never speak badly about another policymakers, staff member or advocacy group.
5. Ask the policymaker or staffer how he or she will respond to the requests that you make.
6. Invite your policymakers and their staff members to build with you.
7. Offer to be a source of information on the specific housing issues addressed, on your work with Habitat, and on affordable housing more generally.
8. Thank the policymakers and staff as you leave.

FOLLOW-UP:

1. Write or call your policymakers to thank them for their time. Reiterate your major points and remind them of anything they may have agreed to do.
2. Send along any additional materials that were requested or follow up with the answers to questions.
3. Maintain communication with policymakers and their staff through letters and calls, and visit when relevant.
4. Invite your policymakers and their staff members to build with you or visit a Habitat project.

Tactic 5: Advancing your advocacy through media

Increasing awareness of Habitat's brand is important to the organization, but engaging a broader audience on policy issues is critical to fulfilling our mission. Using media to focus attention on a critical issue can be an important tactic in your advocacy work.

Media advocacy

The goal of media advocacy is community change. It involves the strategic use of traditional and new media to support community organizing and the advancement of public policies. Media advocacy elevates affordable housing discussions out of individual communities and into the public arena, where it can influence policymakers. Media advocacy can provide information to the general public or target specific groups, visually illustrate a point, focus on solutions, and create a sense of urgency. Media advocacy also can shape public debate, help you speak directly to those who have influence, and apply pressure to decision-makers.

Media advocacy should not be confused with social marketing or public relations. Social marketing targets the individual based on the premise that if individuals have appropriate information, they will change their behavior. Public relations creates a positive public image of people or organizations and their activities. Public relations goals may conflict with media advocacy goals, particularly when an organization considers that it is not in its best interest to discuss problems.

Engaging decision-makers on Build Louder trips

Example of engaging decision-makers: HFHI has organized a number of special Global Village short-term mission trips known as Build Louder trips. These trips are designed in part to educate volunteers about poverty housing issues, but many have included capacity building for national organizations, with a special focus on engaging decision-makers. Meetings have been held with key government officials in multiple countries to advocate for improved housing policies.

Media Advocacy

Media advocacy is the strategic use of mass media, both traditional and new, to support community organizing and the advancement of healthy public policies.

Key differences between traditional use of media and media advocacy:

Media	Media advocacy
Seeks to inform about an issue.	Seeks to mobilize the community.
Motivates individuals to change their own behavior.	Motivates social and political involvement.
Develops issue messages.	Develops healthy public policies.
Focuses on the information gap.	Focuses on the power gap.

Media advocacy has three fundamental steps:

1. **FRAMING FOR ACCESS:** This step ensures your story is considered newsworthy and thus has a greater chance of generating coverage. Framing for access can be thought of as setting the agenda.

Determine a media “hook.” Ideas include:

Controversy	Milestone	Anniversary
Irony	Celebrity	Breakthrough
Localization	Personalization	Injustice

2. **FRAMING FOR CONTENT:** This step influences the manner in which your story is covered, shifting the news media focus from the individual to society. Framing for content can be thought of as shaping the debate.

Remember:

- » Not everything can be said about every issue in every story.
 - » Tell the audience what is important about the story; create the meaning.
 - » Translate individual or community problems into a social issue.
 - » Assign primary responsibility and present a solution.
 - » Make a practical/policy appeal.
 - » Develop pictures and images to make it personal.
 - » The way the story is framed will determine whom the audience deems responsible for fixing the problem.
3. **ADVANCING THE POLICY:** Well-conceived and well-positioned media coverage can have a tremendous influence on policymakers. The ultimate goal of any media advocacy effort is to promote policy reflective of the agenda.

Media advocacy in action

Invisible Children has used Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and its own website to organize hundreds of student rallies across the U.S. in opposition of the use of child soldiers in northern Uganda. In 2009, a protest outside Oprah Winfrey’s Harpo Studios gained coverage on Twitter by protesters. The protest became one of the top 10 Twitter topics of that day and earned Invisible Children an appearance on “The Oprah Winfrey Show.”

The following year, President Obama invited leaders of Invisible Children to the White House for the signing of a bill that is expected to reduce child soldiering.

Below is a list of the types of media and ideas for employing them in your advocacy. Don't limit yourself in engaging the media in your work — be creative.

Know and take into consideration your target audience to maximize your impact. Community-based media mechanisms, which are managed by social and economic organizations themselves and are often unknown to outsiders, can be effective tools for mobilizing communities. Also keep in mind that a combination of these ideas is often the strongest approach, and the ideas can be reinforced by linking to one another. Remember that any medium is only one of many channels for connecting with people and mobilizing them around an issue.

Medium	Tool	Idea
Print media	Newspaper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan a series of letters to the editor to start a community conversation about an issue. Ask a community leader to submit an op-ed as a means of taking the issue to the policymaker you are working to sway.
Broadcast media	Television	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch public service announcements to educate and activate the audience.
	Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rally radio operators in street markets to engage on the issue.
Outdoor media	Billboards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sponsor billboards that share success stories and inspire to action.
Digital media	Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send an email to your base of supporters, asking them to sign on to a petition.
	Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host opportunities for action directly on your website.
	Blog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write issue-focused blogs calling on readers to get involved.
	Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an event and invite people to call their decision-makers at a certain time in support of an issue.
	Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tweet directly at your elected officials to ask for change. Host a Twitter party to motivate other tweeters to take action on an issue.

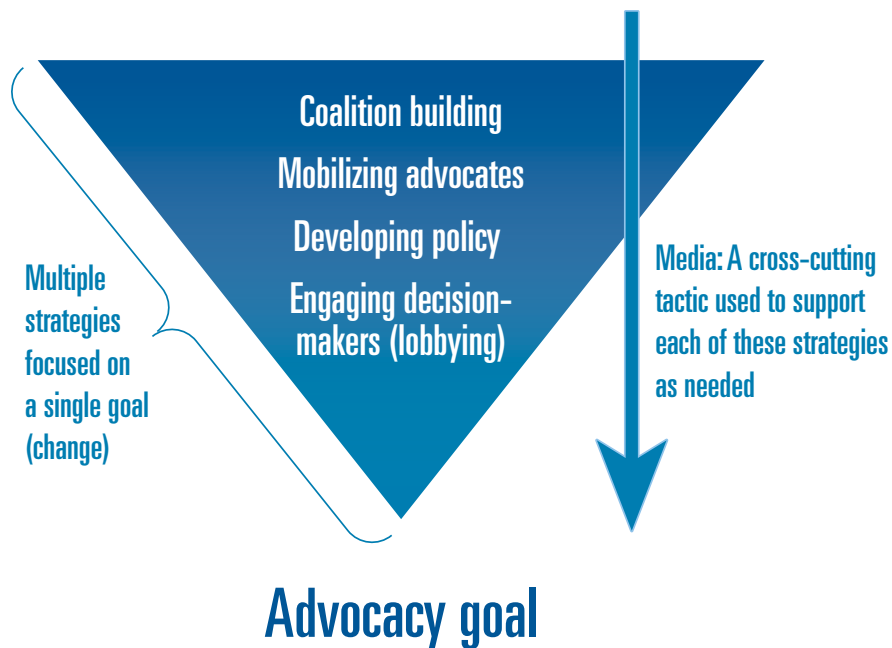
Relationship of key advocacy tactics

Promoting policies and systems

The triangle represents a funnel and shows the breadth of the activity in terms of public engagement.

All strategies within the triangle are working toward a single goal.

Advocacy is the umbrella term that encompasses everything.



Chapter 6:

Measuring advocacy outcomes

The impact tracking tool site has more specific information about advocacy metrics. We encourage you to visit the site at impact.habitat.org to learn more. The following is specific to the advocacy outcomes we are measuring in the 2014-2018 strategic plan.

Monitoring and evaluating advocacy is important and challenging; it helps focus your activities and allows you to understand and communicate your progress to a variety of audiences.

Advocacy work responds to the policies, customs, systems and attitudes of a specific place. From country to country and locality to locality, this work will look different as it responds to the opportunities and challenges presented by different policies and customs. Advocacy does not fit perfectly into a model that will work everywhere. Therefore, evaluations of the success of advocacy efforts also must be customized for each place.

Careful monitoring and evaluation can help you create the most effective and efficient advocacy agenda for your organization. The data generated can show what you have accomplished and where you are experiencing challenges that prevent success. This information can help you adapt your activities and goals to make them more effective and strategic.

There is no singular model of advocacy that will succeed everywhere. The most successful advocacy work is location-based and responds to the policies, customs, systems and attitudes of a specific country or locality. Advocacy work will look different as it responds to the opportunities and challenges presented by different policies and customs. Advocacy must be customized to meet the needs and fit the context of a particular community, and the metrics you use to evaluate the success of your advocacy work must be flexible to reflect and fit that context. You should design your monitoring and evaluation plan to capture and measure exactly what you set out to accomplish in your advocacy goals.

The challenge of advocacy monitoring and evaluation

It can be difficult to determine causal relationships between advocacy efforts and outcomes. Outcomes may be achieved for any number of reasons, and it is difficult to know for certain whether they are due to your specific activities. Therefore, it is important to gather and use detailed information to demonstrate that your effort contributed to achieving the outcomes you identified in your goals, planning, and monitoring and evaluation efforts.

Advocacy outcome indicators

Changing policies and systems may be difficult, and even take years, but it is possible. Moreover, a policy change might not result in immediate impact; true change will depend on policy implementation, including monitoring, compliance and administration.

The following two indicators assume that a successful policy or system change will have the intended effect and will ultimately directly affect people's lives. Understanding the projected result of a

particular policy or system change allows you to measure the potential effects of that change in terms of people affected or amount of money mobilized.

Advocacy outcome indicator 1:

NUMBER OF PEOPLE (POTENTIALLY) AFFECTED BY A SUCCESSFUL POLICY OR SYSTEM CHANGE

- This indicator both measures your influence over a policy or system change and quantifies the expected results of the change by determining the number of people potentially affected.

Advocacy outcome indicator 2:

DOLLARS ACCESSED FOR ADEQUATE HOUSING AS A RESULT OF A POLICY OR SYSTEM CHANGE

- This indicator both measures your influence over a change in a policy or system and determines the amount of money mobilized or saved as a result of the change.

How to measure these indicators:

- Use annualized numbers.
- Count the outcome only once, when the success is achieved.

Principles used to develop these indicators:

- The policies and systems indicators are universally useful within the Habitat network and can be used with any advocacy initiative taken at any level of society: local, national, regional, global.
- These indicators have been drafted to allow as much flexibility as possible to reflect the diversity of advocacy initiatives and activities undertaken.
- Quantity is not always the key driver in advocacy. The goal is to have a framework to regularly measure the successes of any advocacy activities attempted and in progress, and to track and understand those measurements.
- Many external factors can enhance or inhibit advocacy success, and measuring progress can show where and why successes and challenges occur.
- All organizations doing advocacy should regularly measure the work being completed and ensure indicators exist to measure specific outcomes that will affect people's lives.

NOTE: Not all policy and system changes can be measured in terms of both people affected and dollars mobilized, but in most situations, at least one of these indicators should be able to provide a practical measure of the success of your advocacy work.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF MEASURING THE INDICATORS:

Example 1: A national organization is successful in working to change a housing policy that will create access to housing interventions for approximately 10,000 families with an investment of US\$10 million over the next five years.

Advocacy outcome indicator 1:

Number of people (potentially) affected by a policy or system change: 10,000 x 5 people per household = 50,000 people potentially affected

Advocacy outcome indicator 2:

Dollars accessed for adequate housing as a result of a policy or system change: US\$10 million

Example 2: A national organization advocates for a housing program that provides government subsidies to low-income families. An initial investment of US\$2 million is approved for the first year to benefit 5,000 people. The national organization advocates for the program to continue for a second year, and US\$5 million is approved to benefit 10,000 people.

Year 1-

Advocacy outcome indicator 1:

Number of people (potentially) affected by a policy or system change: 5,000 people

Advocacy outcome indicator 2:

Dollars accessed for adequate housing as a result of a policy or system change: US\$2 million

Year 2-

Advocacy outcome indicator 1:

Number of people (potentially) affected by a policy or system change: 10,000 people

Advocacy outcome indicator 2:

Dollars accessed for adequate housing as a result of a policy or system change: US\$5 million

FAQs:

If I engage in advocacy, is it mandatory to use the advocacy outcome indicators?

Neither indicator is required, but both are useful indicators of how our advocacy work is directly affecting people's lives. It is possible that you have measurable outcomes for one indicator and not the other. It is also possible that at times, you do not achieve measurable outcomes for either. That is why determining measurements for each advocacy plan is necessary.

How do these indicators align with the new impact measuring tool?

With the new impact measuring tool, which is called the Global Metrics Tool, all national organizations will be required to track and record against objectives in each goal of the 2014-2018 strategic plan. The two key outcome indicators directly correlate with the objectives for the "promoting policies and systems" goal. They are the main points for information gathering in the tool.

What if I want to use my own tools to measure the impact of our advocacy work?

Using your own tools to measure your advocacy is great. We ask that you also use these indicators, because they correlate with the new impact measuring tool, which will help us standardize the information gathered from all of our national organizations.

Is the “Promote policies and systems” objective within “Build Sector Impact” the only area where we should be measuring our advocacy impact?

Advocacy work can cut across the three divisions of Habitat’s strategic plan. While the plan measures advocacy at the sector level through the “policies and systems” objective, advocacy success can be achieved at the community and societal levels as well. Capturing your advocacy impact at all three levels is encouraged.

How do you determine how many people are affected by any given policy?

The people you count are those who have the potential to be affected by the policy change. If the policy change increases access to a housing subsidy, then you count the total number of people who can now access the subsidy but could not previously access it. Although some of those who have access to it will likely not take advantage of it, you still count the total number. When possible, use official data sources such as census information so that your numbers are evidence-based.

Do dollars saved count toward the indicator?

If you influence a policy or system that saves funding, those dollars count as well.

What if we do not have access to the number of dollars accessed?

To be able to report on the number of dollars accessed, you ideally will have transparent and trackable government budget systems and organizational expertise in interpreting government budget tools. However, we realize that government data may not be available in many situations. In this case, we ask that you take other third-party data and create your own justifiable assumptions to report on this indicator.

Do the people affected or dollars accessed need to be affected or accessed by Habitat for Humanity?

No. If you are influencing a policy or system that allows partners to access funding or benefit families, those numbers are still counted as an indicator of your advocacy work.

If the policy will be in effect for years, how do I count it?

You count only the potential impact for the first year that the policy is in effect.

How do I report on an annually renewed policy?

If it is a program you are actively advocating for and have a hand in the renewal of, then you count each win separately when the win occurs.

If we worked in collaboration with another national organization or the area office to achieve the outcome, do we both count it?

No. You need to coordinate so that the outcomes are being counted only once.

Chapter 7: Case studies of national organization advocacy initiatives

Bolivia

One of the poorest countries in South America, Bolivia is home to about 10 million people, more than half of whom live below the poverty line. About 60 percent of Bolivians live in inadequate housing conditions without secure land tenure (freedom from the fear of eviction).

Nearly 40 percent of Bolivian homes are built with adobe (clay and straw), and 69 percent of the houses have dirt floors. These homes are highly susceptible to pests such as the vinchuca bug, which thrives in adobe and transmits Chagas' disease, an incurable neurological disease that can result in death. In most cases, these families live in houses without sewage service or easy access to potable water.

Nearly one-third of all Bolivian households are headed by women. Informal land transfers are prevalent in urban-adjacent areas, with very limited basic infrastructure and services.

Habitat for Humanity Bolivia

Habitat Bolivia was established in 1985 in the Alto Beni community in La Paz. It now works in five departments in the country: La Paz, Oruro, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. Habitat Bolivia builds brick and concrete homes, eliminating the threat of the vinchuca bug. In addition, it holds workshops on financial education for homeowner partners and contributes advocacy efforts to defend the basic human right to adequate housing.

The need

In the wake of a new constitution in 2009, Bolivia adopted a new regulatory framework that recognizes property entitlements, secures land access for women, promotes citizen voices in public policy, and encourages accessible mechanisms for land use, planning and registry.

Although the framework appeared promising, female residents in District 9 of Cochabamba City did not feel empowered to act on the new constitution's promises of enfranchisement. They saw the apathy of local authorities as an obstacle to badly needed reform. Cochabamba, the fourth largest city in Bolivia, lies in a valley in the central part of the country and is home to about 500,000 people. Seventy percent of the city's inhabitants live without secure land tenure.

Because of high urban migration, staggering population growth in Cochabamba's District 9 has resulted in nearly 10,000 homes — about 90 percent of the population — that have no legalized property rights. These properties have only notes or handwritten receipts to prove ownership, and most are in the male's name, thus threatening the rights of women. Appropriate reforms will benefit more than 3,000 female-headed households in District 9 alone.

Habitat's advocacy initiative

A strategic partnership among Habitat for Humanity Bolivia, Ciudadanía and The Gregoria Apaza Center for the Promotion of Women helped start the Women's Leadership School for Security of Urban Land and Housing, where Bolivian women can receive training in legal rights, citizenship, secure tenure, Bolivian law, political advocacy and awareness-raising.

A group of women from Cochabamba's 9th District who participated in the school's training formed The Women's Leadership Network for Secure Land, Housing and City Tenure. The network is committed to advocating locally, regionally and nationally, and to raising awareness among other organizations about the importance of secure land tenure for women. It was created as a space from which to advocate for legislative change that would allow gender equality and the inclusion of vulnerable groups.

Advocacy outcomes

In March 2012, a group of women from the network joined with social leaders to present a gender-focused proposal that would supplement the Urban Property Owner Regularization Law. The proposal was presented at the Plurinational Assembly in La Paz during a Social Policy Commission session. It was incorporated into the final version passed by President Evo Morales Ayma on June 5, 2012.

Among the additional provisions: "In the case of marriages and free or proven unions, the legal title to the urban property destined for housing will be emitted and registered in favor of both spouses or partners, mandatorily consigning with complete names."

In this way, the law not only guarantees property rights but also provides the possibility for women to exercise land rights within the framework of equality — a historic achievement that, without doubt, will establish precedent for future struggles for the rights of women to urban land and housing.

The Women's Leadership Network continues to work in defense of the rights of women on housing issues in Bolivia.

Lessons

- Advocacy calls for ensuring that the barriers and evidences that women and vulnerable families face are made visible to public authorities by means of informative publications, dialogues and collaborative work that enhances social audit, transparency and accountability.
- Succeeding in advocacy means building capacities among all actors involved and joining efforts.
- Training women and vulnerable families on rights, awareness-raising and advocacy increases their capacity to take responsibility over the defense of their land tenure rights, and drives them to reach out to women's organizations (such as mother's clubs), community-based organizations, other women, and men to change policies.
- Advocacy is a key component of grants that enhance and strengthen the active role of civil society, communities and vulnerable groups for sustainable change and impact.

Hungary

The former Soviet bloc country had to make the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy in the 1990s. It is now a member of both the European Union and NATO.

About 14 percent of Hungary's almost 10 million residents live below the poverty line, and unemployment has hovered around 11 percent. Like many of the poorer EU countries, it has struggled with debt problems in recent years. Housing costs have increased much faster than household incomes, and 14 to 18 percent of households have serious difficulty paying their housing-related expenditures.

Habitat for Humanity Hungary

Habitat for Humanity has been serving families in Hungary since 1996. That year, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and more than 500 volunteers came to build 10 homes in a week in Vác. Since then, Habitat for Humanity has supported more than 2,000 families through a variety of initiatives, ranging from new construction to home improvements and financial education.

The need

More than 20 years after the fall of communism, Hungary is still struggling to improve its housing stock and find housing solutions for low-income and vulnerable citizens. One in four houses in Hungary is overcrowded, and the poor quality and affordability of housing also are problems.

Housing privatization hurt many low-income families as the social housing sector shrank, resulting in home waiting lists of more than 10 years. A typical home in the public sphere consists mainly of one room without basic amenities. In addition, the majority of private houses were built from low-quality materials. Although people could buy these properties, they had trouble affording maintenance.

In 2009, the Hungarian government scrapped housing benefits for low-income families. Without the state support, many Hungarians cannot afford to take out mortgages. Although a similar subsidy was reintroduced after 2010, it is virtually not accessible to low-income households.

There is also a severe lack of social rental housing. At the end of 2009, there were only 136,000 housing units in the public rental sector, less than 4 percent of the country's housing stock. Expansion of this rental supply is constrained both by scarce public financial resources and a lack of government involvement.

The actual need for social rental units is estimated at around 300,000 households. Census data from 2001 and 2011 demonstrate that there are 500,000 privately owned empty housing units in Hungary.

Habitat's advocacy initiative

Habitat Hungary partnered with Metropolitan Research Institute to develop social rental agencies that would rent privately owned, previously empty housing units to people in need.

The proposed agencies would mediate between private landlords and renters, providing an implicit guarantee for the landlords for regular rent payment and proper use of the rental unit, and priority access for low-income renters, supplemented by rental allowance.

On the demand side, a high number of households have entered the private rental sector, but they often rent poor-quality housing at a relatively high price. There have been successful attempts to house members of at-risk groups in private rentals with social support.

On the supply side, a number of private landlords have already participated in some temporary programs targeted at vulnerable groups, so their participation is anticipated, especially if tax rules for social housing can be changed to be more favorable in the mid- or long term. Previous social rental agency programs have proved that private landlords will accept high-risk tenants if there is an intermediary organization that provides payment guarantees to cover possible damage to the flats.

Under the agreement, Habitat Hungary is responsible for the advocacy of the social rental agency as a new driving force in social housing, and for the overall management of the project. MRI is responsible for planning and implementing the project, including cooperating with participating municipal governments, the participating institutions (to be selected in the preparation phase of the project) and the expert team (lawyers and municipal social housing experts).

The project's ultimate goal is to have the social rental agency model become an official part of the Hungarian social housing system.

Advocacy outcomes

Four cities (Békéscsaba, Nyíregyháza, Kecskemét, and Szombathely) have agreed to join the project and support local research to determine the demand, supply and institutional environment of potential social rental agencies in the local context. Habitat Hungary also has contacted the cities of Pécs, Székesfehérvár and Debrecen. Six of these cities have sent a formal letter of intent to participate. These cities will form the first tier of the project, which a team of experts will work closely with.

An advisory committee has been set up with experts representing leading NGOs, banks and government institutions. This committee is consulted regularly on different aspects of the project and will support some of the advocacy work related to the introduction of social rental agencies.

The project is envisioned as long term, with a goal to set up a model for a pilot social rental agency project in 2013.

Lessons

- You need solid research to develop an evidence-based advocacy program.
- Most of your advocacy success might come from reactive actions, so be prepared to be flexible and grab windows of opportunity.
- Publishing research and communicating in a regular and consistent way raise your profile as an expert and contribute to general brand building.
- You have to work with very high-level professionals (research and communications) to deliver.
- Funding is available for advocacy initiatives at institutional donors, but you have to build a relationship of trust with them.

Appendix 1:

Additional advocacy resources

HFHI's Government Relations and Advocacy Office will keep an updated list of online resources on My.Habitat to support and complement this guide.

Go to my.habitat.org/kc/advocacy.

Appendix 2:

Standards of Excellence advocacy initiatives

Background:

Standards of Excellence is a key initiative designed to assemble the full set of operational and programmatic standards that govern the work of Habitat for Humanity International's national organizations and affiliates into a single, easy-to-use platform. SOE2 is a reflection of HFHI's commitment to establish clear and effective operating standards for national organizations and affiliates, and to use the latest technological tools to track Habitat's performance against these standards in the most efficient way possible.

The goals of the Standards of Excellence are:

- To facilitate national organizations with self-identification of strengths and weaknesses.
- To identify communities of practice from which national organizations can receive support to improve operations in a particular sector.
- To simplify processes for national organizations, specifically reducing redundancy across reporting requirements.
- To align affiliation requirements across departments.
- To benchmark national organization performance within and outside of the Habitat family.
- To recognize national organizations performing at the cutting edge and beyond.
- To provide data to boards of directors to help them make decisions and build organizational capacity.
- To assist area offices in developing programming to best benefit national organizations.
- To incorporate industry standards into Habitat criteria and apply them in program design.

Importance and rationale of the advocacy standards:

For the first time, HFHI has developed standards specifically for advocacy. These standards are intended to guide all national organizations that are or will be implementing advocacy activities. Although the standards fall into the "optional category" of SOE, all national organizations implementing advocacy activities should take these standards seriously and work to meet the minimum requirements.

National organizations should review these standards closely and work to understand their focus and intent. At this time, there are three basic standards:

STANDARD 1: The national organization undertakes advocacy, public policy or lobbying with the support of the national board (or equivalent), in alignment with HFHI and in compliance with applicable law.

With any new initiative at a national organization, it is important to ensure your board is informed and aware of your planning. Your board should also support your advocacy work; board members are excellent resources for information, contacts and policy advice on key issues.

It is equally important that your advocacy be in alignment with HFHI. Although in most cases HFHI will not take positions on local and national issues outside the United States, it is still important to ensure consistency on policy matters. It is always a good idea to check in with your area office advocacy contact and HFHI's Government Relations and Advocacy office before taking a controversial position.

Finally, although there are a small number of countries where advocacy might be illegal, in most cases, nongovernmental organizations are able to engage in advocacy. It is common, however, for countries to have restrictions or limitations on what exactly may be implemented. Thus, it is always important to work to understand the legal framework that might affect any plans you have related to advocacy.

STANDARD 2: The national organization develops and implements its advocacy, public policy and lobbying with systematic research and planning.

This standard is included to highlight the importance of having a system in place at the national organization for developing an advocacy plan, which includes using research, data and evidence to back up the positions you plan to take. Research and evidence will not only help make your efforts more influential and substantial, but also help ensure that you are focusing on policy solutions that will have the impact you want.

It is also important to recognize that research and data collection do not need to be costly. Universities, think tanks, official government reports and your own internal data are often readily available and easily accessible. Spending a few hours conducting research on specific issues will greatly enhance your effectiveness.

STANDARD 3: The national organization undertakes its advocacy activities through participation in the appropriate national- and local-level discourse on its advocacy priorities.

In almost all advocacy situations, participating in coalitions, networks, policy dialogues and debates is essential for success. The very nature of influencing policy requires a diverse set of voices to engage in the process. This standard is included to highlight this fact and work to ensure Habitat for Humanity-affiliated organizations are working together with others, in coalition, on policy and advocacy strategies.

The advocacy Standards of Excellence exist to guide affiliated organizations in thinking about the fundamental steps necessary for implementing strong advocacy initiatives. These standards should not be confused with guidance on strategy but should be viewed as the essential elements to have in place as you work to influence policies and systems. We strongly encourage you to review the full set of standards, including the indicators, at my.habitat.org/soe.

Appendix 3:

Housing as a human right

The right to adequate housing is included in many international human rights documents. Most notable are the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (see Article 25.1) and the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (see Article 11.1).

The most helpful and comprehensive background document is a [joint fact sheet](#) between UN-HABITAT and the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights. It explains what the right to adequate housing is, illustrates what the right means for specific individuals and groups, and then elaborates upon states' obligations. It concludes with an overview of national, regional and international accountability and monitoring mechanisms.

Additional background

During the 1990s, the right to adequate housing gained additional recognition among the human rights community, and many governments adopted or revised housing policies to include various dimensions of human rights. The Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in 1996 harnessed this momentum. The outcome of the conference was the [Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda](#), which reaffirmed the commitment to better standards of living and the realization of the human right to adequate housing.

In May 1997, the Commission on Human Settlements (today the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT) adopted [Resolution 16/7](#) on "the realization of the human right to adequate housing." The resolution recommended that UN-HABITAT and the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights create a joint program to assist countries with their commitments to adequate housing. In April 2001, the Commission on Human Rights adopted resolutions 2001/34 and 2001/28, which also called for a joint program on housing and human rights. These resolutions helped establish the United Nations Housing Rights Program, which seeks to develop standards and guidelines, elaborate on existing international legal instruments, support enhanced compliance by governments, and develop a system to monitor and evaluate housing rights.



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