

Urban programming case study: Brazil

Zero Eviction Campaign

Model of intervention: Diversifying Housing Tenure

Country Overview of Urban Housing

In Brazil, 75% of the population, or 163 million people, face housing challenges, according to Fundação João Pinheiro (2024). 24.8 million people (6.2 million households) face housing deficits, such as excessive rent burdens, shared and overcrowded living arrangements. Besides that, 106 million people (26.5 million households) face inadequate housing conditions, including deficiencies in construction, infrastructure, and land tenure. Deficiencies in water and sanitation infrastructure are the most impactful of the housing inadequacies, affecting more than 60 million people (15 million households), especially in Brazil's North and Northeast regions. Those living in inadequate conditions also fear losing their homes: while at least 1.3 million people are facing threats of evictions (Campanha Despejo Zero), another 14 million people lack tenure security, and can be the next ones facing threats of evictions (Fundação João Pinheiro, 2024). Compounding this existing housing issue, the effects of climate change in cities continue to aggravate the scenario, such as the loss of homes due to landslides and floods.

Detailed Overview of Project Area/Problem

Habitat Brazil not only focuses on construction programs but also actively advocates for public policies that promote and defend the human right to adequate housing, with a particular emphasis on security of tenure, access to water and sanitation, and climate adaptation. Aiming to address the root causes of the housing crisis and hold governments accountable, Habitat Brazil works on several fronts: building a solid evidence base for advocacy, raising public awareness through mass media and documentaries, and conducting missions to assess and report on housing-related issues such as forced evictions, WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) violations, and socioenvironmental disasters.

The organization also supports community-based initiatives that combat eviction threats and improve WASH conditions in local territories, while strengthening local capacity through training and knowledge-sharing efforts. As Habitat Brazil engages in multi-stakeholder dialogues to advocate for policies and governmental measures that drive meaningful improvements in the housing sector, we ensure the long-term effectiveness of our efforts beyond the physical realm of housing.

Project Intervention

Through its holistic programming, Habitat Brazil goes beyond construction by advocating for policies that defend the human right to adequate housing, with a focus on security of tenure, water and sanitation access, and climate resilience. Through its multi-faceted approach, Habitat Brazil raises public awareness, gathers data to strengthen advocacy efforts, and supports community initiatives against forced evictions. The organization's efforts have led to national-level policy changes, suspending evictions for over 300,000 people and securing housing rights for 1.3 million individuals. By empowering women, advocating for basic services, and addressing socioenvironmental issues, Habitat Brazil aligns its work with multiple SDGs, including SDGs 1, 5, 6, 11, and 13, emphasizing that access to adequate housing is a key factor in urban transformation and resilience against climate change impacts.

Effect on Target Groups/ Communities

Housing rights violations impact the most disadvantaged families across multiple dimensions. Low-income families who must rent homes often face tough choices, such as whether to pay rent or put food on the table. The homes they can afford are frequently in precarious condition, with some families forced to share spaces with neighbors or relatives or to construct makeshift dwellings. The most vulnerable families typically end up living in areas without essential services, lacking water and sewage systems, proper bathrooms, or safe water storage. Housing inequities are shaped by intersecting factors of gender, race, class, and region, as evidenced by statistics showing that 72.4% of households in housing deficit earn less than two minimum wages, 66.3% are non-white, and 62.6% are headed by women. Women and children disproportionately bear the brunt of inadequate housing: they are exposed to health risks from waterborne diseases due to poor sanitation, deplete their limited income on drinking water to avoid illness, and often spend up to 20 hours a week fetching water, sometimes even during the night. Additionally, women face gender-based violence risks when using insecure bathrooms or shared facilities. Many families live in hazard-prone areas due to limited housing options, making them vulnerable to losing their homes in socioenvironmental disasters, further connecting housing struggles with climate change. For women, eviction—whether by landlords, private sector interests, or government agents—exact a particularly harsh toll, compounding hardships before, during, and after they lose their homes.

Project Innovation

Building on these pillars, Habitat Brazil has contributed to important changes in national policies and systems. For example, through data production, communication and advocacy efforts, in partnership with another 175+ civil society organizations and groups, the Zero Eviction Campaign influenced a Federal Law and a Supreme Court Decision that suspended forced evictions in the national territory during the Covid-19 pandemic, and now determined the protocols for mediating land conflicts that must include judicial visits in the areas under dispute, consultations with affected communities and the engagement of public authorities in the search for alternatives to evictions. The data, information and communication material produced by Habitat Brazil, in partnership with networks such as the Zero Eviction Campaign and the National Forum of Urban Reform, have already reached over 5 million people, and have helped to position the right to housing and the right to the city in the public debate, to break stereotypes, and to frame the struggle for adequate housing as a response to a human right violation.

The work focused on national policies also impacted the territorial scale, for example, in securing the rights of families under threats of eviction. Over the last five years, Habitat Brazil visited 82 communities in reporting missions in Manaus, Fortaleza, Porto Alegre, Natal, Goiânia, Rio de Janeiro, Belém, São Paulo, Pernambuco, and Paraíba. This local work, aligned with the national changes and frameworks in place, contributed to suspend forced evictions of 312 communities that could have affected 315,240 people. Habitat Brazil continues working to secure the housing rights of the 1,3 million people under threat.

Global relevance of community-level impact

Adequate housing is more than a roof and four walls. It is a gateway to other rights, such as health, education, security, transportation, and the right to water and sanitation.

SDG 1: Working to strengthen the security of low-income settlements against forced evictions with SGD 1, Ending Poverty, particularly indicator 1.4.2: Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land. Through the [Zero Eviction Campaign](#), Habitat Brazil and its allies influenced policy change at the national level, which has a potential for replication in other states and hopefully other countries. Fair conflict mediation has already stopped 312 forced evictions that could have left 315,240 people homeless. Habitat Brazil has also contributed to innovative constructive interventions to increase the housing security of families living under threats of eviction and demonstrate the feasibility of those interventions to inspire public policies such as in Manaus and Salvador.

SDG 5: We believe that gender equality starts at home. Therefore, empowering women to understand and claim their housing rights has been a focus of Habitat Brazil's capacity development efforts. So far, Habitat Brazil has trained 1.806 women and engaged 778 women in debates around gender and the right to the city. Habitat Brazil has also published the study "[Thirsty for Hope: How the Violation of the Right to Water and](#)

[Sanitation Impacts the Lives of Brazilian Women](#)" and is working on a forthcoming study on the impact of forced eviction on women. Women are also target beneficiaries of constructive interventions, particularly women heads of households in the north and northeast regions historically disadvantaged.

SDG 6: Water and sanitation are fundamental elements of adequate housing. Habitat Brazil has enabled over 2.000 housing upgrades and over 500 community solutions to address housing and sanitation needs in marginalized communities both in rural and in urban areas. 4 reporting missions were conducted in the North and Northeast regions, historically disadvantaged areas, to assess and denounce water rights violations.

SDG 11: All the efforts of Habitat Brazil culminate in SDG 11, from the efforts against forced evictions, to improving housing conditions and basic services in favelas, to building resilience in areas exposed to socioenvironmental disasters. We envision that increasing access to adequate housing is a pathway to urban transformation.

SDG 13: Habitat Brazil also works on the intersection between housing and climate change, which become more evident in times of socioenvironmental disasters. While partnerships have helped to restore 140 homes affected by disasters, 3 reports have been published to call upon governments to address housing needs before, during and after disasters.

Moving Forward

Adequate housing is more than a roof and four walls. It is a gateway to other rights that influence an adequate standard of living, such as health, education, security, transportation, and the right to water and sanitation. Habitat for Humanity Brazil will continue to mobilize partnerships to improve housing access and the housing conditions of disadvantaged groups, focused on three priorities:

Housing and tenure security: by preventing forced evictions and influencing housing policies and pilot initiatives, such as to promote affordable housing in recycled property in city centers, to secure housing needs in well-located areas and to ensure urban property serves a social function.

Water and sanitation: by improving households' conditions and access to public systems and by influencing public policies to improve coverage, costs, and quality of water and sanitation services and infrastructure.

Climate adaptation and disaster response: by improving disaster resilience in disadvantaged communities and influencing climate policies to consider housing as a key element before, during and after socioenvironmental disasters.

Visual Documentation

