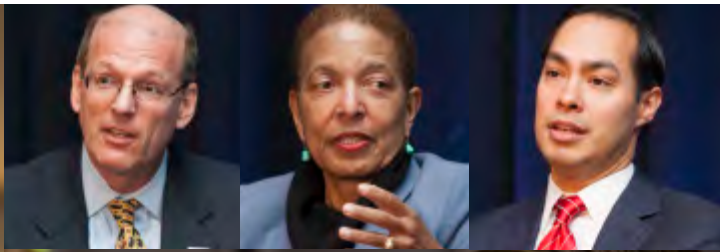




**Habitat**  
for Humanity®



# 2019 STATE OF ADVOCACY USING OUR VOICES

Many people know **Habitat for Humanity** for our outstanding work directly serving communities. To date, we have helped over

**6.8 MILLION PEOPLE**

**AROUND THE WORLD** obtain a **safer place to sleep** at night, along with the **STRENGTH, STABILITY AND INDEPENDENCE** to **build better lives.**

**YET, 1.6 BILLION PEOPLE STILL LIVE WITHOUT ADEQUATE SHELTER.**

**The housing need is far too great to build one house at a time.**

**BUT THAT NEED CAN BE MET,  
IF WE USE OUR VOICES  
AND NOT JUST OUR HAMMERS.**

— Jonathan T.M. Reckford,  
CEO of Habitat for Humanity International

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# WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Habitat for Humanity defines **ADVOCACY** as  
changing laws, policies,  
systems and attitudes

**TO ELIMINATE BARRIERS**

to adequate, affordable  
housing in order to create

a world where everyone

has a decent place to live.

# FOREWORD



At Habitat for Humanity, we refer to the Habitat family — our employees, partner families, volunteers, donors and other supporters of decent housing — as the “hearts, hands and voices” of Habitat. This is a report about our voices.

The voices of Habitat for Humanity are growing considerably stronger as we increasingly recognize the vital role of sound housing policy in ending poverty housing. Over the past year, our advocacy team grew, as did the number of people using their voices to end poverty housing. As a result, we saw many positive changes in the policies that promote decent housing around the world.

Habitat for Humanity is thankful for each of the countless advocacy developments throughout our network during fiscal year 2015, including those mentioned in this report. We have seen progress at every level of government, from local to state to national to global. But we know there is great potential for even more success in the future as our advocacy presence grows.

Advocacy is broader than the work of Habitat for Humanity International and must draw strength from our vast network of affiliates, volunteers and supporters throughout the world.

In early 2016, we are launching Solid Ground, Habitat’s first global advocacy campaign. The Habitat network recognizes the critical need for access to land for housing and will amplify its current efforts through an innovative campaign that will address land policy around the world. In the months ahead, numerous national organizations will launch national campaigns under the umbrella of the global Solid Ground effort and change laws, policies and attitudes that are standing in the way of decent housing.

In the U.S., we continue to advocate for the funding of programs that make it possible for the more than 1,500 U.S. Habitat affiliates to serve more partner families across the country. Recognizing the value of housing for physical, emotional, mental and financial health, not only for our partner families but also for entire communities, our policy priorities will address the deleterious effects of predatory lending on potential homeowners.

I look forward to sharing what promises to be incredible strides in next year’s report. Until then, I urge you to continue to use your voice with Habitat for Humanity. Together, we will see a world where everyone has a decent place to live.

Sincerely,

Christopher Vincent  
Vice President, Government Relations and Advocacy  
Habitat for Humanity International

# HABITAT CARES.

# POLICY IMPACTS.

# 1 PRIORITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS



ESRA MILLSTEIN

Habitat for Humanity International CEO Jonathan Reckford (left); Julian Castro, secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (center); and Renée Glover, then chair of the board of HFHI, participate in a fireside chat during the opening plenary of Habitat on the Hill 2015. More than 200 advocates for decent and affordable housing attended the ninth annual legislative conference.

*“Housing development, without advocacy, is attempting to clap with only one hand.”*

Renée Glover, past chair of Habitat for Humanity International’s board of directors

Habitat for Humanity’s ability to fulfill its vision — a world in which everyone has a decent place to live — is contingent on improving or reforming the policies and systems that limit our ability to serve more families and communities. While the current focus on advocacy may seem new, advocacy has been part of Habitat’s mission from the beginning.

The idea for Habitat was conceived at Koinonia Farm, a cooperative in Americus, Georgia, that focused on racial equality and social justice through faith. Years before Habitat officially began in 1976, Clarence Jordan, the spiritual mentor of our founder, Millard Fuller, wrote an



open letter to the First Baptist Church of Atlanta, urging the church to reform its policy of segregation and welcome worshippers of all races.

Today, Habitat engages in advocacy around the world at every level of government in order to remove barriers to affordable housing and eliminate threats to housing security. This is an overview of our work toward change in the past year.

## PROTECTING U.S. FEDERAL RESOURCES FOR HOMEOWNERSHIP

Among the crucial federal programs that support Habitat's work across the United States, there are three for which, at the time of this report, affiliates are strongly urging U.S. leaders to maintain critical funding: the Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program, or SHOP; the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, or HOME; and National Service.

### SHOP

SHOP is a small, unique program that supports the work of nonprofit organizations that employ the self-help homeownership model. To date, the Habitat network has housed over 60,000 people and completed close to 17,000 homes using SHOP funds. SHOP funds are used to defray the cost of land acquisition, along with property and infrastructure costs, which are some of the most difficult activities for housing nonprofits to finance. At the time of this writing, the FY2016 appropriations process is still underway, but the network's efforts have yielded support in both the Senate and House FY2016 Transportation-HUD appropriations bills for \$10 million for SHOP, which would successfully maintain the same level of funding as in previous years.

### HOME

The HOME program has also supported numerous affordable housing developments. Overall, the HOME program has created more than 1.1 million affordable homes in the United States, including through building new homes and repairing existing homes. HOME funds have also helped

## HOME in California

Many Habitat affiliates use HOME funds for land acquisition. Throughout California, for example, Habitat affiliates use HOME funds to acquire land and build public infrastructure to support production of additional affordable homes. HOME is particularly critical for the state as, since the dissolution of redevelopment and elimination of state funds for affordable home production, HOME is the only remaining source of funds that California affiliates can use to acquire land. As one Habitat affiliate in California explained, "We match each HOME dollar with \$7 in private funding from corporations, faith groups and individuals to build our homes. In 2014, we built and renovated 110 homes in L.A. alone, making us the largest nonprofit residential developer, according to the L.A. Business Journal."

more than 283,000 families through tenant-based rental assistance. And if that's not exciting enough, every \$1 million in HOME funds creates or preserves approximately 18 jobs. Despite being such a valuable program, funding for HOME keeps eroding. In FY2011, \$1.6 billion was allocated to HOME. In FY2015, the program received only \$900 million. The president's FY2016 budget asked Congress to increase HOME funds to \$1.06 billion. But in late June 2015, the Senate subcommittee reviewing spending levels recommended just \$66 million to HOME, a whopping 93 percent cut to FY2015's already record low funding level. As a member of the HOME Coalition, Habitat has joined with other organizations around the country to fight the proposed cuts.

### NATIONAL SERVICE

National Service, also known as the "Domestic Peace Corps," is a series of programs overseen by a federal agency called the Corporation for National and Community Service, which

Over the past 20 years, Habitat AmeriCorps members have served 24,000 families, engaged 3.3 million community volunteers, and provided 15 million hours of service. In 2015, Habitat had 500 AmeriCorps members serving in 35 states, encompassing more than 140 communities.

offers Americans of all ages the opportunity to serve their country and build American communities through service. As one of the original organizations to engage with National Service programs, including AmeriCorps, Habitat recognizes how the programs benefit our organization, the AmeriCorps members themselves, and American taxpayers, as well as local governments.

National Service faced serious challenges this year as federal lawmakers on Capitol Hill who misunderstand the programs threatened to cut the budget of the CNCS. As we do every year, Habitat encouraged lawmakers to keep the agency funded so that affiliates and AmeriCorps members working with them can continue to benefit from the program, support initiatives like Habitat ReStores, and reach more partner families.

Habitat supports expanding and enhancing National Service programs, and calls for funding programs such as AmeriCorps National and VISTA, which provide Habitat and other community organizations with vital, low-cost human resources. AmeriCorps members gain work and life experience with Habitat, while Habitat grows with vital and affordable staffing resources. Further, National Service programs

AmeriCorps National members provide direct services to communities, serving affiliates in construction, client services, youth programs and volunteer services.

VISTA members lead affiliate capacity-building efforts, including partnership development and fundraising.

are a value to the taxpayer. With Habitat covering approximately half the cost of each service member, we get results on the ground at a much lower cost than direct government services. What's more, National Service programs fill the gap between the services that communities need and what state and local governments are able to provide and can afford.

## PROMOTING LONG-TERM HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

While government resources play a vital role in Habitat's work, government policies and regulations often have an even deeper impact on Habitat's daily work. In the U.S., housing construction and mortgage lending and regulation have become extremely complicated in the wake of the housing crisis and Great Recession. Habitat's Government Relations and Advocacy team works hand-in-hand with its Legal team to provide affiliates with the needed support to comply with regulations and to seek relief from them when necessary and appropriate.

### DONATED APPRAISALS

Appraisals inform homeowners of the value of their home and also assure Habitat affiliates of longer-term affordability and financial sustainability for their partner families. Donated appraisals are an opportunity for the financial community to contribute to affordable housing and enable Habitat to allocate funds to other critical services. With appraisal costs sometimes reaching more than \$1,000, donated appraisals allow Habitat affiliates to conserve funds to serve additional qualified families.

After the housing crash of 2008, U.S. policymakers passed the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act to avoid future financial crises and to protect consumers from predatory lending. Although reform was needed, a provision in the law required that fee appraisers be paid "customary and reasonable" fees, which risked severe unintended consequences for Habitat affiliates.

*“This common-sense bill will ensure that all Habitat for Humanity affiliates can fulfill their mission to help qualified families in need without unnecessary government regulations. I’ve seen firsthand the good work being done by the organization, and my bill makes a small change that will have a large positive impact for those families relying on Habitat homes.”*

U.S. Senator Rob Portman

Without congressional action, Habitat affiliates could be liable for as much as \$20,000 per day for accepting donated house appraisals. In response, U.S. senators Rob Portman, R-Ohio, and Michael Bennet, D-Colorado, along with U.S. representatives G.K. Butterfield, D-North Carolina, and Mark Meadows, R-North Carolina, introduced legislation that would allow Habitat affiliates to continue to accept donated appraisals without entailing liability. In another encouraging development, Senate Banking Committee Chairman Richard Shelby, of Alabama, included the language of the Portman bill in broader legislation approved by the committee and, during a hearing on “Regulatory Burdens to Obtaining Mortgage Credit,” entered into the Congressional record a letter from Habitat addressing the potential cost to Habitat affiliates of new appraiser independence requirements. As of the time of this writing, the broader bill contains a number of much more controversial items, but Habitat’s GRA team remains hopeful that Congress will soon agree on compromise legislation that addresses this serious risk of affiliate liability.

### HOUSING TRUST FUNDS

- Through support from HFHI, Habitat for Humanity South Dakota and Habitat for Humanity of Virginia both achieved significant victories toward securing public funding for affordable housing. In South Dakota, this included a statewide Housing Opportunity Fund in 2013

to provide \$1.9 million in awards to support 21 projects, including construction of 20 single-family homes and 50 multifamily apartments, and rehabilitation of 70 single-family homes. In Virginia, the statewide housing trust fund was given an \$8 million allocation by the Legislature.

- In 2015, the Ohio Senate issued a version of the state’s budget bill that would have cut funding for the Ohio Housing Trust Fund in half by eliminating two vital programs for Habitat affiliates: the Ohio Housing Trust Fund Grant, which provides approximately \$200,000 annually for Ohio affiliates (\$10,000 per home), and the Community Housing Impact Preservation Grant, which provides \$400,000 for affiliates to serve low-income families. Thanks to Habitat for Humanity of Ohio’s advocacy and to champions in the Ohio House of Representatives, the funding was renewed in conference committee.

### TAX EXEMPTIONS

- Advocacy in Florida resulted in the two-year renewal of a valuable tax credit for low-income households through enactment of HB 33, a credit that supports approximately 20 percent of all new Habitat builds in the state. Habitat for Humanity Florida expects that the credit will impact around 350 homes and save \$18 million next year.
- In South Carolina, significant advocacy efforts paid off in savings of \$500,000 annually (approximately \$3,600 to \$5,000 per home built and anywhere from \$5,000 to \$60,000 per affiliate) for the state’s 36 affiliates through enactment of HB 3568. The bill, signed into law in June 2015 by Governor Nikki Haley, grants a tax exemption on construction materials for nonprofits that build homes with low-income people. Habitat played a major role in both drafting and ensuring the passage of the bill, which applies to all homebuilding nonprofits in the state. The passage of the bill followed a successful legislative day in Columbia, the state capital, where approximately 60 Habitat affiliate representatives, all sporting matching Habitat shirts, met with their state representatives and

attended the Senate Finance Committee meeting where the bill was discussed. The legislation received nearly unanimous support in both the state House and Senate.

- As a result of a concerted effort by Habitat for Humanity Oregon, 30 affiliates in Oregon will save a total of \$200,000 annually through enactment of HB 2690-A. Ratified in June 2015, the enacted bill provides Habitat affiliates an exemption from paying property taxes for up to 10 years on vacant land that will be used to build homes with low-income families. Habitat Oregon spearheaded the effort with advocacy support from affiliates across the state and financial support of an advocacy grant from HFHI. A few months prior, Oregon affiliates had held their first state-level lobby day.
- Thanks to advocacy by Habitat for Humanity Virginia, after July 1, 2015, any Virginia local government may waive delinquent taxes on real property in exchange for the owner's donating that property to Habitat or another similar nonprofit organization.
- When the Macedonian parliament passed new tax legislation that threatened Habitat for Humanity Macedonia's ability to serve partner families, the national organization undertook an advocacy campaign to address the problematic proposal. The legislation introduced new categories of taxable expenses for entities not supervised by the central bank that, if enacted, would require Habitat Macedonia entities to pay 10 percent of the amount of their December 31, 2014, loan portfolio (currently US\$ 3.1 million) to the national public revenue office. This tax would dramatically increase the cost of Habitat Macedonia's lending operations, decrease the number of families it could serve, and lead ultimately to its total closure.

To avoid that result, Habitat Macedonia, along with several nongovernmental organizations and foundations, proposed amendments to the legislation and prepared a position paper that was sent to the Ministry of Finance. As a result, the Macedonian Parliament amended the

legislation and exempted the NGOs from the tax obligation. Had the problematic legislation not been corrected, the 1,100 clients currently served by Habitat Macedonia and the over 4,270 people served by all four NGOs in the coalition would have been negatively impacted.

### ENCOURAGING ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Lower-income families face a disproportionate energy burden. In the U.S., they spend between 17 percent and more than 50 percent of their incomes on energy while higher-income households average just 4 percent. Lower-income families also typically live in older homes that lack adequate insulation, have appliances that are less energy-efficient, and contain outdated heating and cooling systems. Unfortunately, those who would benefit most from energy upgrades are often the least able to afford them.

This year saw positive developments, including the reintroduction of energy efficiency legislation in the U.S. Senate and innovative developments in Europe, both of which Habitat strongly supports.

Recognizing significant deficiencies and challenges in the Bulgarian housing sector, Habitat for Humanity Bulgaria began advocating in 2011 for the development of smarter housing policies. The goal was to persuade the Bulgarian government to address the lack of housing units, the shortage of subsidies for certain families, and the deteriorating and energy-inefficient housing available.

In 2014, Habitat Bulgaria formed a national coalition for the improvement of housing conditions and submitted six formal proposals for the modification of housing programs. So far, two proposals have been accepted and are expected to result in an allocation of US\$470 million to a redesigned national program that will finance the renovation of 1,302 condominium buildings and benefit the lives of almost 108,000 people in 46,872 homes. This is so far the greatest advocacy success in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Habitat for Humanity Macedonia, with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development, introduced the subject of energy efficiency into Macedonian high schools. Habitat Macedonia had helped develop documents

## More than “bricks and sticks”

The cost of building a home is much more than the materials used to construct it; the “bricks and sticks” of the home itself are just one fraction — and usually a small one, at that. The costs of a home also include the land on which it will be built, appraisals, permitting fees and property taxes, to name a few. Although these factors may seem invisible, they can have a major impact on Habitat’s ability to serve partner families.

Once the home is built, ensuring that it is affordable includes more than just a reasonable mortgage. If a family cannot afford the mortgage and energy bills and still have enough for other necessary expenses, then the home is not affordable for that family. Lowering energy consumption is one way to stretch funds further and keep housing both decent and affordable.

In Bulgaria’s bitter winters, Habitat builds, renovates and advocates with energy costs and consumption in mind to keep housing affordable. This can be a huge improvement over the aging, drafty living spaces that dominate this eastern European country. Mario (pictured) and his siblings will grow up healthier within the warm walls of their Habitat house.



that caught the attention of several governmental offices, including the Minister of Education and Science, who later signed the approval for the new energy-efficiency-related curricula. With the topic incorporated into the 17 Macedonian high schools that offer construction engineering, electro technology and machine technology occupational programs, students in their final year can graduate more aware of the myriad benefits of energy efficiency.

With funding from USAID, Habitat for Humanity International's Europe, Middle East and Africa area office is managing a project called Residential Energy Efficiency for Low-Income Households, or REELIH. The REELIH project aims to demonstrate sustainable models for continued investment in energy efficiency in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Armenia. Through the REELIH project, Habitat will promote policies that advance access to affordable and energy-efficient housing in these two countries and in the region. Policymakers, civil society representatives and sustainable energy enthusiasts gathered in Brussels, Belgium, in June for the European Union's Sustainable Energy Week, an initiative begun in 2006 by the European Commission. A team from EMEA, together with partners from Hungary and Bosnia-Herzegovina, participated in the event and promoted policy positions highlighting three factors that are key to successful residential energy efficiency projects: engaging homeowners, using the right financing model and creating the right ecosystem of stakeholders for success.

### **MAKING COMMUNITIES INCLUSIVE, SAFE, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE**

After three years of extensive planning, consultation and negotiations, 193 countries came together in 2015 in support of a new universal and integrated framework for global development, unprecedented in its scope and breadth of commitment. The final outcome document, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in late September 2015.

The document sets forth 17 goals — known as the “Global Goals” — designed to guide global development over the next 30 years and end poverty by 2030. Each goal includes several targets to guide and measure progress toward its realization. Recognizing the impact of rapid, global urbanization, Goal 11 calls on governments to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.” The first target under this goal states that by 2030, the world must “ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.”

Habitat was deeply involved in the planning process to ensure the inclusion of cities and housing in the global agenda and will continue to advocate on this issue, as achieving Goal 11, along with the other 16 goals, requires a focus on serving expanding populations in the world's cities and collaboration of the public, private and social sectors.

### **THE WATER FOR THE WORLD ACT**

Water, sanitation and hygiene, or WASH, improvements are among the most cost-effective housing investments to improve health outcomes and reduce poverty around the world. However, many in the world — nearly 700 million people — don't have access to safe water, and 2.5 billion lack access to proper sanitation. Each year, 700,000 children (around 2,000 each day) die from preventable diarrheal diseases because they do not have access to clean water. Ninety percent of those children are younger than 5.

Thanks to advocacy efforts by a strong coalition of international organizations, including Habitat, the U.S. Congress recognized the value of WASH improvements and passed the Water for the World Act. This piece of bipartisan legislation focused on maximizing existing investments in lifesaving water programs and putting those monies to their most effective use. The bill enjoyed wide bipartisan support at the time of its passage and was signed into law in December 2014.

A young boy stands under water flowing from a new well built as part of a water, sanitation and hygiene project in Mkak Village, Cambodia. Habitat advocates for policies that promote access to water because having a clean, readily available source of water for drinking, washing and cooking is vital to ensuring families around the world have a healthy future.



**HABITAT  
CARES  
ABOUT  
HOUSING.**



**POLICY  
IMPACTS  
HOUSING.**

## 2 SOLID GROUND

*“Without land, there can be no housing. And without looking at the issue of land, there can be no meaningful discussion about how to solve the problems of housing for the poor.”*

United Nations

What element is most essential to Habitat for Humanity’s ability to help any family live in safe, decent, affordable housing? It’s something that’s obvious, but many people may never give it much thought: land.

Lacking access to land often lies at the heart of the lack of decent housing, depriving the poor of the most basic physical, economic and psychological security of adequate shelter. One billion slum dwellers struggle on a daily basis with tenure security, meaning they cannot prove they have a right to live where they live and thus face constant fear of unjust eviction. Approximately 75 percent of the land on which people live around the world isn’t formally registered as being owned.

Habitat is dedicated to helping families most in need of housing, but first those families must have access to land on which to create a home. Solid Ground, Habitat’s first global advocacy campaign, was created precisely to address this fundamental issue.

Habitat’s work to address land issues spans several continents while accounting for the needs and contours of local communities. Habitat for Humanity Cote d’Ivoire (in English, “Ivory Coast”), for example, has taken the lead in Africa in positively affecting policies on land tenure and title. In 2013, Habitat Cote d’Ivoire initiated discussions with the Ivorian government to improve the process of awarding land titles. That process, which in some parts of

the world can be a minor administrative inconvenience, was a major obstacle to decent housing in Cote d’Ivoire, where it often took nine months or more for a document to be approved after an application was submitted. Earlier this year, as a result of Habitat’s efforts, land title delays have been reduced to a maximum of three months. At last count, more than 15,000 people and 3,000 families already have received their land titles, and thousands more are expected to benefit in the years ahead.

Habitat for Humanity is also addressing land tenure in the Latin America and Caribbean region, including in Brazil, Haiti, Honduras and El Salvador. In Brazil, Habitat for Humanity Brazil is building support for laws and policies that will minimize evictions in urban settlements and empower people to defend their rights to land. The 4 million residents of the state of Pernambuco, for example, will benefit from Habitat Brazil’s advocacy to ensure that people involved in land conflicts have a means to claim secure land tenure. With support from Habitat for Humanity Great Britain and UKAID, Habitat Brazil presented and successfully approved three resolutions that will help prevent and mediate land conflicts.

The model used in Pernambuco was so successful that it inspired the creation of entities responsible for protecting families involved in urban conflicts in other Brazilian states and at the federal level. Further, the increased understanding of the impact of lack of land rights also reached the Brazilian judiciary — all the way up to the president of the Justice Court — and other ministries, resulting in the formation of a task force to analyze and accelerate action on nearly 3,000 cases and of a working group to identify and address the main barriers to justice for adverse possession actions. Finding solutions to procedural roadblocks in land-related cases could benefit around 1.5 million families.

Imagine if it took nine months just to get a title to your property! In Cote d’Ivoire, it did — until Habitat for Humanity intervened.



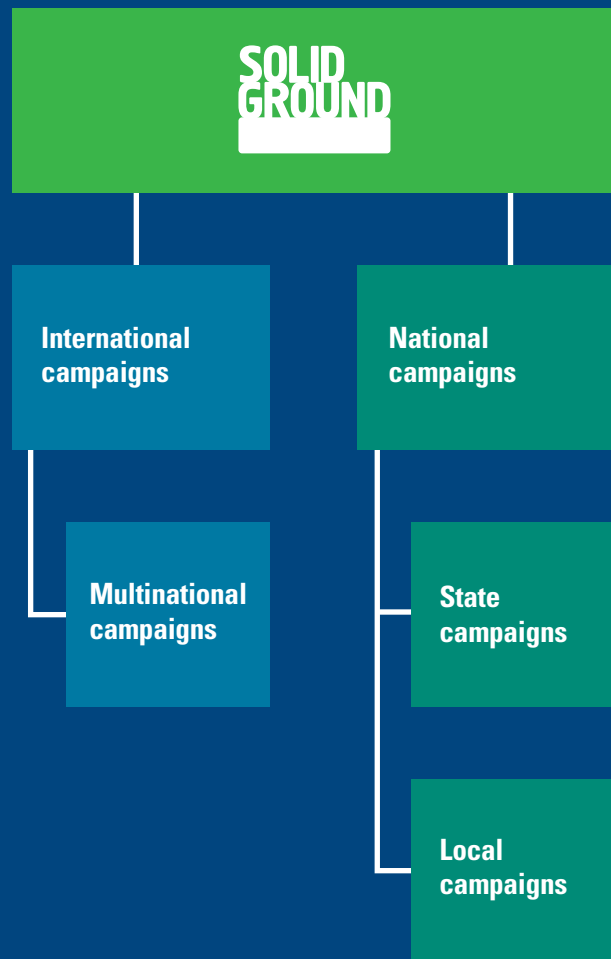
**Solid Ground: The solution**

**Solid Ground’s vision** is a world where everyone has access to land for shelter.

**Solid Ground’s mission** is to change land policies and systems to ensure that more people around the globe can have a decent home.

**Solid Ground** will realize this goal by activating and coordinating the mobilization of existing and new allies to motivate policymakers to enact and implement policies that will advance access to land for shelter.

**Solid Ground** is focused entirely on access to land, with four subthemes: Secure Tenure, Gender and Property Rights, Slum Upgrading, and Disaster Resilience. Habitat is currently influencing land policy on many different levels, and Solid Ground will reflect this diversity. You can think of Solid Ground as an umbrella that will unify our global activities and elevate our advocacy efforts. Solid Ground will include multiple national campaigns along with the overarching global effort.



Sixty-eight million people in Brazil live without secure land tenure, meaning that they are at constant risk of being forcibly removed from their homes at any time.

In Honduras, Habitat for Humanity Honduras continues to steadily increase the number of municipalities in the country that have housing policies in place. As of June 2015, nearly 100 municipal housing policies had been approved, which translates to a potential impact on nearly 1.5 million Hondurans. To keep this momentum going, the Habitat national organization has a full-time advocacy staff of eight, six of whom are assigned to partner organizations to assist in following Habitat Honduras' advocacy methodology. The team promotes and oversees the public policies in municipalities that have adopted housing policies and fosters change in other municipalities that have not yet done so.

Next door in El Salvador, Habitat for Humanity El Salvador is leading the multistakeholder initiative that successfully

advocated for the formulation of a Habitat and Housing National Policy. The policy tackles several complicated topics, including governmental housing subsidies for women and vulnerable groups, housing governance, and access to land. For its efforts, Habitat El Salvador has been awarded the Best Practice Dubai International Award. The honor recognizes Habitat's role as chair of the national committee that drafted the new housing policy and involved many institutional and civil society representatives in the process.

In Asia and the Pacific, Habitat for Humanity Philippines recognized a significant shortage of affordable housing in urban areas and the particularly harsh impact on low-income families and underprivileged groups, and began working to influence housing policy at both the national and local levels.

At the national level, Habitat Philippines monitors policy enforcement, including Section 9 of the Filipino Constitution, which guarantees basic housing rights to citizens. That constitutional provision requires that urban land reform and housing be undertaken in cooperation with the private sector. Among other practical measures, the law states that any corporation building housing units is required to allocate 20 percent

Habitat's 2016 Shelter Report, focusing on gender and property rights and providing policy recommendations to move toward gender equality in access to land, was published on World Habitat Day, Oct. 5. You can find a copy of the report on [habitat.org/advocate](http://habitat.org/advocate).



of the total development cost toward socialized housing. Unfortunately, as is true in many parts of the world, written law must be enforced if it is to have its intended impact. Habitat Philippines recognizes the challenges in enforcing the law and is diligently monitoring enforcement, speaking out on this issue and building relationships with key policymakers to ensure that the call for housing is heard.

At the Affordable Housing Opportunities in Southern Africa event organized near Cape Town, South Africa, in October 2014, Habitat EMEA, in collaboration with Habitat South Africa and Habitat Zambia, led two side-events focused on meeting housing needs in the region. The first session highlighted innovative approaches Habitat has undertaken, such as housing microfinance, advocacy, community development, and housing of orphans and vulnerable groups. The second session brought together a number of partners, including Slum Dwellers International and African Monitor, to discuss how access to land can contribute to affordable housing in Africa.

In November 2014, a Habitat delegation attended the Conference on Land Policy in Africa, organized by The Land Policy Initiative, a joint initiative of the African Union Commission, African Development Bank and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

At the European Development Days in Brussels in June 2015, which is the annual gathering of European leaders, development practitioners and partners, Habitat EMEA hosted a panel session addressing access to land for shelter, which prompted the European Commission to make a public commitment to preparing a policy response to the issue of land.



**Jagdish Bairwa, 48, and his family have benefited from the private latrine they built in their compound in Rajasthan, India, with help from Habitat for Humanity. Bairwa's oldest son, Rameshwar, suffers from polio and depended on others to take him into fields before the latrine was built. Such water and sanitation projects are very different from Habitat's construction and home rehabilitation work in the U.S., but both provide significant health improvements for families. Habitat advocates for sound policies that impact all of the many elements of safe, decent and affordable housing.**

**HABITAT CARES  
ABOUT HOUSING  
FOR ALL AND  
RECOGNIZES THAT...**

**POLICY IMPACTS  
WHETHER  
EVERYONE HAS  
DECENT HOUSING.**

# 3 VOICES FOR DECENT HOUSING

**Voices are the core of Habitat for Humanity's advocacy.** A homeowner's voice engaging a local lawmaker, a policy expert's voice educating a member of Congress's chief of staff, a Habitat delegate's voice persuading the United Nations to prioritize housing — these are all examples of how we use our voices to create a world where everyone has a decent place to live.

**The ways we use our voices range widely.** In-person meetings with policymakers; spreading excitement about housing policy through social media; writing reports that provide informed, balanced recommendations; sharing insights at conferences — our approach accounts for the need to engage a variety of audiences on a range of topics in a variety of settings.

**The more voices calling for decent housing for all, the better.** Working in coalition with other nonprofit organizations, partnering with the private sector, fostering a collaborative relationship with government entities — in our advocacy, there is a role for everyone, from a layperson to an expert, who shares our goal to end poverty.

## MOBILIZING ADVOCATES TO USE THEIR VOICES AND ENGAGING POLICYMAKERS TO SUPPORT SMART HOUSING POLICY

In January 2015, U.S. President Barack Obama addressed the state of the nation's housing market and unveiled new policies to boost homeownership for the middle class. Before the speech, Habitat advocates in the United States blanketed social media networks with a call for the administration to increase access to credit for Americans of all income levels. After the speech, we applauded the administration for prioritizing housing and also called on U.S. leaders not to overlook the importance of supporting homeownership opportunities for all Americans ready for the responsibilities of homeownership.

The following week, U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julián Castro spoke about homeownership at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., making specific reference to the work of Greater Des Moines

Habitat for Humanity (Iowa) and outlining HUD's initiatives to expand access to credit for housing. As Castro and the Obama administration emphasized the importance of homeownership and the role it plays in the economic recovery, the voices of Habitat continued to remind our leaders that responsible, prepared potential borrowers of all income levels should have the opportunity to become homeowners if the nation is to see a full economic recovery.

In mid-February, more than 200 advocates from around the United States traveled to Washington, D.C., to join Habitat leaders and supporters for the ninth annual Habitat on the Hill legislative conference. During these days of action, attendees heard about the housing market and its role in a robust economy from housing experts, including

### Using taxes to make affordable housing less taxing in California

Visiting your lawmakers can be fruitful in unexpected ways. Starting next tax season, California Habitat affiliates will benefit from an idea that came about on Habitat for Humanity California's legislative day in 2014, when Habitat representatives had traveled to Sacramento to advocate on a different topic. The notion of allowing an individual to designate on his or her tax return that a specified amount be donated to the Habitat for Humanity Fund arose during a conversation with Assembly member Reggie Jones-Sawyer during that visit and later became Assembly Bill 1765.

Seeing this as an option to help address the lack of state investment in affordable housing, Habitat for Humanity Greater Los Angeles and Habitat California launched an advocacy effort to encourage supporters to ask Governor Jerry Brown to sign AB 1765. The bill garnered wide support and was signed into law in September 2014. The new tax check-off is estimated to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not more, for Habitat affiliates in California.



HUD Secretary Castro and members of the House of Representatives from both major American political parties (or, as the saying goes, from “both sides of the aisle”). After a series of workshops to bolster local and organizationwide advocacy efforts to promote smart housing policy, attendees headed to Capitol Hill to urge their members of Congress to support programs and policies that help thousands of lower-income families across the country become successful homeowners, including SHOP and National Service. Additionally, in light of the recent announcements by the Obama administration, Habitat advocates used their voices to support increased access to credit for working families needing loans that are the right size for their budgets to help them become responsible homeowners in safe and decent homes.

During Habitat on the Hill 2015, the second annual global advocacy awards were presented to the Habitat affiliates and national organizations that had undertaken the most innovative and impactful advocacy efforts. Among the winners was Habitat for Humanity Twin Cities (Minnesota), which, in partnership with the University of Minnesota Habitat for Humanity campus chapter, raised voices for decent housing to the tune of \$100 million.

Habitat Twin Cities rebranded its advocacy program to “Housing Heroes,” complete with a “Housing Hero” mascot and logo. Advocates with the affiliate sported green T-shirts at the Minnesota Capitol when, in partnership with a coalition called Homes for All (or H4A), they successfully advocated for \$100 million for the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency. It is estimated that this amount, the largest capital investment for housing in Minnesota’s history, will fund 4,000 units, 78 rental and homeownership projects, and create 5,700 new jobs, benefiting thousands of Minnesota families.

The 2015 advocacy award winners also included Habitat for Humanity Orange County (North Carolina), which used its voice to spur action with a “Penny for Housing” campaign after the recession hit and funds for affordable housing disappeared in the affiliate’s area in North Carolina.

Home to a state university and a major health center, Orange County is one of the most expensive places to live in North Carolina. To address the area’s affordable housing

## Checkmate to stalemates

Habitat’s vision is a world where everyone has a decent place to live — regardless of color, creed, age, gender or any other factor, including political affiliation. Our advocacy reflects our nonpartisan approach as we encourage all policymakers to make decent housing a priority. Habitat for Humanity Northern Ireland, for example, joined the “Make It Work” campaign, a broad civil society initiative that encourages political parties in the Local Assembly to overcome a stalemate in the political process and leave sectarian politics behind. In December 2014, political leaders signed the Stormont House Agreement to address some of the most difficult issues from Northern Ireland’s past and publicly proclaimed appreciation for the impact that that campaign had during negotiations.

deficit, Habitat Orange County proposed a smart idea: allocate a single penny from Chapel Hill’s property tax rate to affordable housing. The “Penny for Housing” campaign garnered a wide range of supporters. As a result of their efforts, the Town Council included nearly \$800,000 for affordable housing in its FY2015 budget, or approximately 1 cent of each dollar of property taxes. This money was allocated by reprioritizing expenditures, not by increasing taxes.

In April 2015, Habitat for Humanity Poland launched its Public Forum for Housing Policy project with support from an \$80,000 grant from the Norwegian Fund. The aim of the project is to mobilize citizens in shaping housing policy. In a few months, the project has already conducted nationwide quantitative surveys on housing and housing needs in Poland, along with a first-of-its-kind qualitative survey among all authorities addressing housing policy at the local level. Habitat Poland is also working to create an online platform for civic and expert engagement in public debate about housing that will launch in fiscal year 2016.

To raise awareness about poverty housing in Guatemala, Habitat for Humanity Guatemala is making housing needs visible. Through advertising campaigns, press releases, public relations, and radio and television interviews, the national organization is using its voice to reach broad audiences. Habitat Guatemala is also training local committees in advocacy approaches in order to influence laws and policies that can end poverty housing across the country.

Although using our voices is a year-round effort, days like World Habitat Day, observed on the first Monday of October, provide a particularly good opportunity for increasing awareness. Recognizing this, Habitat for Humanity Hungary held an event highlighting the severe housing problems faced by children in Hungary. For example, close to one-third — 620,000 children — live in moldy and unhealthy housing. Nearly 200,000 live in homes without electricity, and 170,000 live in homes without adequate toilet facilities.

Habitat Hungary's three-day street campaign attracted attention from key public figures and the media to this issue. As part of the campaign, exhibitions on poverty housing and children were placed at busy pedestrian areas in Budapest. In each area was a small house, painted entirely black, on which passersby added small messages on white sheets listing the things that a child's home should provide. Message by message, the public turned the houses white.

Three celebrities participated in the event, including a poet who shared a moving piece written just for the occasion. The event also allowed for virtual participation

through a mobile app, and many people posted messages to add to the collection. Habitat Hungary estimates that the media coverage reached 2.8 million people.

For World Habitat Day 2014, much of Habitat's global network joined together to encourage our audiences to use their voices to call for housing to be a priority in the United Nations' Post-2015 Development Agenda. Habitat for Humanity Northern Ireland, for example, ran a social media campaign that reached more than 40,000 people.

In 2015, the Czech government is following up on 2013 campaign promises to create "social rental housing," thanks to the efforts of the Platform for Social Housing, a coalition Habitat for Humanity EMEA supports based on a memorandum of understanding. The group published priorities for the new law on social housing, and the new concept incorporates 13 out of these 15 priorities. By 2017, a new law should take effect that would require municipalities in the Czech Republic to identify the housing needs of their citizens and ensure those needs are met.

In late April 2015, when a devastating earthquake hit Nepal, Habitat supporters put not only their pocketbooks to good use but their voices as well. First, Habitat sent a letter thanking the U.S. Congress for its swift response in deploying resources, including USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team, logistics coordination through the Department of Defense and Congress' continued support of USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. Then we invited our supporters to join us in encouraging Congress to maintain a long-term focus on reconstruction.

In early May 2015, nearly 500 housing enthusiasts attended the second annual Housing Forum for Latin America and the Caribbean in Monterrey, Mexico, to address, in the words of Habitat CEO Jonathan Reckford, "the ripple effects created by inadequate shelter" and "both challenges and opportunities for more sustainable urbanization." Perhaps the most enthusiastic of the attendees was Estela Condori, who is living proof that smart advocacy works. In 2010, Doña Estela became involved with Habitat for Humanity Bolivia through an advocacy project designed to improve access to land and property rights for Bolivian

## Youth voices

Now in its fifth year, Habitat Youth Build (now the Habitat Young Leaders Build) has grown into a multimonth campaign engaging voices from 15 to 30 years old across the Asia/Pacific region — and this year, the Latin America and Caribbean region as well. In the Asia/Pacific region, 657,576 volunteers from 15 countries participated and more than 12,761 families were served.

## Smart advocacy includes smart media

To raise awareness about poverty housing in Guatemala, Habitat for Humanity Guatemala is making housing needs visible. Through advertising campaigns, press releases, public relations, and radio and television interviews, the national organization is using its voice to reach broad audiences. Habitat Guatemala is also training local committees in advocacy approaches in order to influence laws and policies that can end poverty housing across the country.

women and their families. Thanks to that project and the women leaders involved, she explained to a reporter at the forum, Bolivian law was changed to require that land be registered in the names of both husband and wife, helping to ensure that women will not be evicted from their homes.

After recounting her role as a leader in her community in Bolivia, Doña Estela encouraged all women at the forum to join in advocating for housing rights and to lead the way in their respective communities. With a hand in the air, a sparkle in her eye and an ever-present smile on her face, Doña Estela declared, *“Mujeres lideres, adelante!”* (meaning “Women leaders, forward!” or “Let’s go!”)

While the Housing Forum in Mexico was underway, the Habitat network as a whole joined in a global activity with the action/2015 coalition, a network of more than 1,800 organizations. By the end of fiscal year 2015, the coalition had mobilized over 22 million people to unite for change, calling for action on poverty, inequalities and climate change. On May 8, 2015, Habitat led the global effort to take action for housing — or *vivienda* in Spanish. On Twitter, the daylong campaign made approximately 58,000 impressions, along with a strong showing of support on Facebook and other platforms.

In the last two weeks of May, more than 400 AmeriCorps members traveled to New Orleans, Louisiana, for the 2015

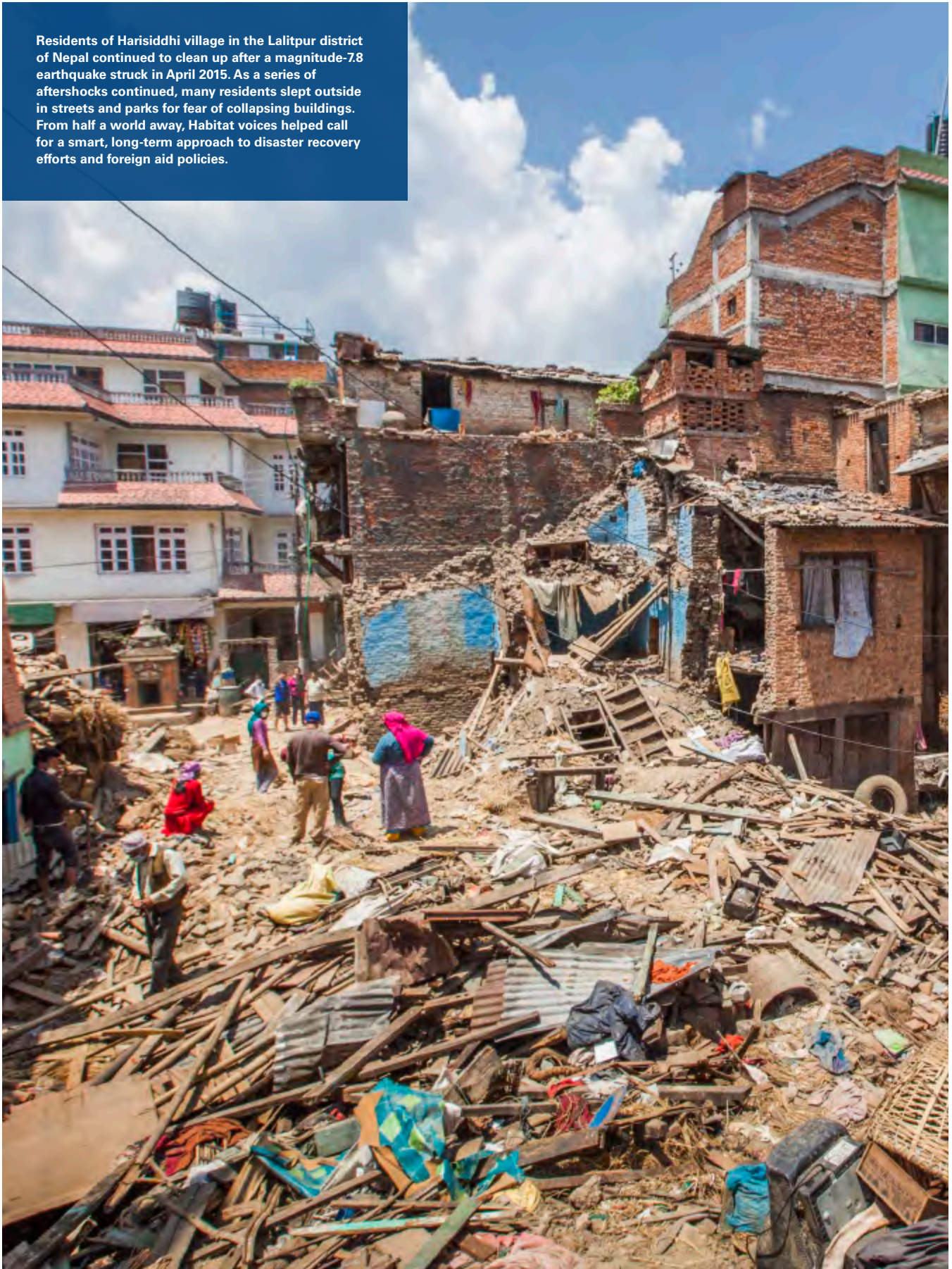
AmeriCorps Build-a-Thon, an annual event that engages communities and volunteers in weeklong blitz builds to support communities most in need. This year’s event marked the 20th anniversary of AmeriCorps, a U.S. National Service program, and the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, the devastating storm that swept through the U.S. Gulf Coast in 2005.

AmeriCorps members have played a crucial role in the emergency response and rebuilding efforts throughout the Gulf Coast; in the 10 years since Hurricane Katrina destroyed or severely damaged 126,000 homes, close to 40,000 AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members have served in the Gulf region. Among the many key benefits that National Service members provide to organizations like Habitat for Humanity is their ability to help attract, organize and retain volunteers. In the Gulf Coast region, for example, those 40,000 service members have engaged more than 648,000 volunteers.

While Habitat AmeriCorps members, alumni, corporate sponsors and community members came together with New Orleans to build 10 homes in 10 days in partnership with 10 families, the rest of the country supported them with a call to lawmakers to continue funding the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal organization that oversees National Service programs, including AmeriCorps. The devastating cuts proposed to the agency during the appropriations process came as a surprise to many. As a longtime partner of the AmeriCorps program, Habitat recognizes the benefits that National Service brings to individuals and entire communities. For this reason, National Service remains a high priority on Habitat’s advocacy agenda every year (see more, page 7).

Supporters of decent housing are using their voices around the world. In the process, Theo, the face of Habitat’s advocacy efforts, is learning to speak many languages. As the star of Habitat’s “Use Your Voice” video explaining what advocacy is and how our voices can support decent housing, Theo now appears on websites and in classrooms around the world speaking English, Spanish, Portuguese and Korean, to name a few. The video, which debuted at Habitat on the Hill 2014, recently earned Silver Awards for Media Innovation both for the stop-motion video itself and the social media strategy to promote it.

Residents of Harisiddhi village in the Lalitpur district of Nepal continued to clean up after a magnitude-7.8 earthquake struck in April 2015. As a series of aftershocks continued, many residents slept outside in streets and parks for fear of collapsing buildings. From half a world away, Habitat voices helped call for a smart, long-term approach to disaster recovery efforts and foreign aid policies.



Slightly over one year after its launch, the Blight out of Sight campaign of the Macon Area Habitat for Humanity celebrated significant results that exceeded its original goal. The affiliate launched the advocacy campaign to address the blighted properties that were endangering the Lynwood Estates neighborhood in Macon-Bibb County, Georgia. As it turns out, Blight Out of Sight extended beyond Lynwood Estates; on March 27, 2015, the Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority approved a bond resolution for \$14 million that will go toward blight initiatives in the county. The funds will be used to demolish some of the 4,000 abandoned houses in the city, build new sidewalks and street lights, and lay the foundation for a soccer field at Macon Charter Academy.

Further up the U.S. East Coast, Habitat for Humanity of North Carolina held its first statewide advocacy day in April. The state support organization, one of 30 operating across the U.S., organized the event, where advocates gathered to promote sound housing funding policies and support usury limits on payday loans.

More than 70 representatives from Habitat affiliates around the state participated in the event and held more than 75 meetings with their elected officials. Their asks were straightforward and reasonable: support robust funding for the North Carolina Housing Trust Fund and oppose the Consumer Access to Credit Act, which would increase the cost of consumer finance loans for the most vulnerable North Carolinians.

Habitat supporters raised awareness about the need for decent housing throughout North Carolina by engaging their lawmakers and many others at the General Assembly in a variety of activities, including wall framing for a Habitat home and writing messages of hope on studs that will be used in Habitat homes. The most popular event was a hammering contest between members of the North Carolina General Assembly to determine the “Fastest Hammer on the Mall,” with over 30 legislators participating in the House vs. Senate Hammering contest. The friendly competition was a fun and memorable activity that drew attention from legislative staff, lobbyists and the media, and gave Habitat participants the opportunity to see their legislators in a relaxed atmosphere.

## Who says smart advocacy can't use humor?

The need for decent housing is a serious matter. But that doesn't mean we can't be a bit cheeky as we use our voices. In fact, a project undertaken by Habitat for Humanity Australia demonstrates that a bit of humor can go a long way. To raise awareness about the need for adequate housing



in the Asia/Pacific region, Habitat Australia created a mock real estate website to take a satirical look at the region's housing crisis. On the [Real Value Housing](#) site, one can find a lakeside property with a bracing sea breeze and your own private stagnant water source.

Concerned by the Australian government's lack of attention to urban shelter poverty in Asia and the Pacific, Habitat Australia created the website as part of a research-based advocacy campaign. In addition to the website, the campaign has included building a coalition with other urban-focused groups, holding public events, increasing visibility of the issue through opinion pieces, and heavy use of digital media.

## RESEARCH AND REPORTS ON HOUSING POLICY

Habitat for Humanity recognizes the value of data-driven advocacy. After all, smart advocacy efforts are driven by credible data. We also understand the importance of sharing insights in order to inform policies that impact housing. Facts explain why a policy issue matters, and the more those facts are available, the more informed and effective public policy can be. Over the past fiscal year, Habitat has produced several reports to inform housing-related policy and undertaken research projects based on our work in the field. A small sample includes:



**LEVEL THE FIELD: ENDING GENDER INEQUALITY IN LAND RIGHTS**

Having access to secure land and property rights is a foundational issue for women in the developing world. For many women, the issue of secure land rights hits in the most personal spaces — that of their community and household, having a direct impact on their relationship with neighbors, partners, children and other family members. The security of one’s home affects many daily decisions, large and small. Habitat for Humanity International’s 2016 Shelter Report explores the essential nature of secure land rights and the way they cross-cut so many issues, presenting a substantial opportunity: Strengthening and enforcing secure land rights for women can help achieve myriad other development goals.



**LESS IS MORE: TRANSFORMING LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES THROUGH ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

Habitat for Humanity International’s 2015 Shelter Report focuses on the importance of energy efficiency, particularly for low-income communities. The report explores innovative approaches to weatherization and energy efficiency, such as private-public partnerships, to improve single-family and multifamily goals.

**FROM SLUMS TO SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES: THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF SECURE TENURE**

Produced in collaboration with Cities Alliance and in conjunction with the Solid Ground campaign, the issue paper by Habitat for Humanity’s Asia/Pacific area office was presented to government and local stakeholders during their regional Housing Forum. The paper addresses how security of tenure is critical to addressing the growth of urban slums, and offers recommendations for housing policy in order to transform slums into sustainable communities.

**PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HYOGO FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION IN SOUTH AMERICA**

Thanks to funding by DIPECHO, Habitat for Humanity Argentina contributed to a report titled “Perspectives Towards the Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in South America.” The report, which was based on a

**#ServeAYear**

Over the past 20 years, Habitat for Humanity AmeriCorps members have served 24,000 partner families, engaged 3.3 million community volunteers, and provided 15 million hours of service. As one of the original organizations to engage in U.S. National Service programs, Habitat recognizes the value of National Service and is proud to be an inaugural partner in an exciting new effort called Serve A Year.

The movement is a cultural campaign that is changing the way people in the United States think about serving their communities. Serve A Year’s goal is to make a year of service the expectation, not the exception. Writers in Hollywood are participating in the campaign by incorporating AmeriCorps into the story lines of young characters on shows ranging from “The Middle” and “Modern Family” to “Parks and Recreation” and “Melissa & Joey.” The campaign launched in late March 2015 with an announcement on “Jimmy Kimmel Live!”

regional consultation with Vision from the Frontline and led by Practical Action in alliance with numerous global non-governmental organizations in 10 South American countries, addresses the progress of implementing the global framework for disaster risk reduction.

To further document the findings, after consultations and discussion events in national and local forums with government, academic and civil defense entities and others, Habitat Argentina jointly published “A Local Perception of the Advancements on Disaster Risk Management Policy Implementation.” After a meeting with the National Department of Civil Protection, Red Cross Argentina, and the International Committee for the Nations, the main findings of the *Visión de Primera Línea* (or firsthand view) report will be included in the next national guide for disaster risk management. At the local level, the consultation prompted participation by several municipalities, which are expected to develop municipal action plans informed by Habitat Argentina’s analysis and reports.

### **REVIEWING INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Despite decades of massive housing investment by the government of South Africa, a huge number of people still live in severely deficient conditions in informal settlements. With support from the Ford Foundation, Habitat for Humanity of South Africa has undertaken a project that includes developing models for informal settlement upgrading through both desk research and action research. Informed by this ongoing research, Habitat South Africa has developed six policy positions and is also jointly promoting other positions with nongovernmental organization partners, including a proposal for the City of Cape Town.

### **RECOMMENDING A NEW HOUSING SUBSIDY SYSTEM IN HUNGARY**

Over the past year, Habitat for Humanity Hungary has been involved in several policy-monitoring activities and in continual policy dialogue with the government. Habitat Hungary developed its policy proposal regarding

the abolishment of the central housing subsidy and the state-sponsored debt management support and recommended the reintroduction of a central, more socially targeted housing subsidy system. It also began monitoring the changes that took effect in March 2015 and published both a brief study assessing the changes in the housing subsidies in a sample of municipalities and a critical analysis of the 2016 state budget with a focus on housing, which was presented to the media and sent to the government.

### **CIVIL SOCIETY MONITORING REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL SOCIAL INTEGRATION STRATEGY**

Habitat for Humanity EMEA partnered with several other distinguished organizations such as Open Society Foundation, Central European University’s Department of Public Policy, European Roma Rights Centre, Roma Education Fund and the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation to prepare for the third time the Civil Society Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the National Social Integration Strategy, a Europe-wide monitoring initiative to influence EU policy implementation. Habitat Hungary contributed with research and quality control of the housing chapter.

### **HANDBOOK FOR IMPROVING THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF ROMA THROUGH EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL AND INVESTMENT FUNDS**

Habitat EMEA, together with Metropolitan Research Institute and Open Society Foundation, reviewed and commented on the Handbook for Improving the Living Conditions of Roma through European Structural and Investment Funds prepared by the World Bank for the European Commission. The handbook should inform EU policymaking in the years ahead. Among the positions that Habitat promotes is the desegregation of the Roma in concentrated poverty neighborhoods.

**THAT'S WHY  
HABITAT ADVOCATES  
FOR SMART  
HOUSING POLICY.**



# 4 LOOKING AHEAD

*“Go out on a limb. That’s where the fruit is.”*

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter

The voices joining Habitat for Humanity’s call to end poverty housing through smart policies are growing stronger every day. In the year ahead, we expect to see incredible impact at the local, municipal, state, national and global levels.

## HABITAT III AND IMPLEMENTING THE GLOBAL GOALS

Habitat III, the third United Nations conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, will take place in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016. This conference takes place once every 20 years, with a goal to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable urbanization and produce a forward-looking and action-oriented document called the “New Urban Agenda.”

Habitat III is expected to bring together cities, governments, civil society, the private sector, educational institutions and interest groups to review urban housing policies in the context of an increasingly urban world. Habitat III will be the first U.N. global summit since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (also known as the Global Goals). It offers a unique opportunity to discuss the important challenge of how cities, towns and villages are planned and managed, and to shape the implementation of new global development and climate change goals.

Habitat for Humanity International will be among the development and policy experts from around the world attending Habitat III. To date, the Habitat network has been engaged in the lead-up to Habitat III through four key channels: civil society engagement, national committees, preparatory meetings and the Housing Policy Unit.

- **Civil society leadership:** As it did in April 2014 at the seventh World Urban Forum, Habitat will take a leading role on behalf of civil society organizations at Habitat III. Habitat has been elected to represent civil society in the Habitat III dialogues, and is gathering input from relevant stakeholders, including at events like the regional housing forums.
- **Preparatory meetings:** Habitat has taken part in the numerous events leading up to Habitat III, including presenting recommendations during key U.N. preparatory meetings in New York City and Nairobi, Kenya. Additionally, Habitat has hosted multiple events to engage stakeholders around Habitat III, including the regional housing forums.
- **National committee membership:** Habitat for Humanity International is participating in the United States National Committee for Habitat III, which will produce a national report to contribute to the conference. A number of Habitat’s national organizations have also provided input to the development of their respective national reports.
- **Housing Policy Unit co-chair:** As part of the preparation process to Habitat III and the development of the New Urban Agenda, UN-HABITAT has established 10 Policy Units, which comprise 20 experts each. The objectives of these units are to identify best practices and put forth recommendations for the conference. Habitat for Humanity International will co-chair the Housing Policy unit with the International Development Bank.

## FRAMING THE FUTURE IN THE 2016 ELECTION

The next presidential election is heating up already in the United States, and the Habitat network is part of the movement to ensure that housing is a key issue in the national dialogue. “Framing the Future” is the theme of Habitat’s 10th annual Habitat on the Hill legislative conference, which will take place in early February 2016, and the general sentiment of our advocacy efforts as we focus on the housing challenges ahead, the policy solutions to address them, and

equipping housing advocates with the tools to shape the future of housing.

Habitat recognizes that to maximize our impact in communities around the country at the local, state and federal levels, we must advocate for smart housing policies that expand access to adequate housing. With numerous examples of advocacy successes throughout our network, we will continue to prioritize advocacy as a major component of Habitat's comprehensive approach to expanding access to adequate housing and improving communities. Our legislative priorities reflect the wide range of services that the Habitat network provides in the United States and around the world.

## U.S. COUNCIL ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

The Advocacy Committee is one of the six committees of Habitat's U.S. Council, the planning and policy-recommending body comprising U.S. affiliates and established to guide the growth of Habitat for Humanity's work in the United States. In 2015, the Advocacy Committee was reinvigorated with new leadership and membership from 16 U.S. Habitat affiliates and state support organizations that come from every region of the country. The committee plays an active role in supporting and influencing a wide range of Habitat's advocacy priorities and activities, along with building the advocacy capacity of the Habitat network.

Advocacy Committee members have chosen to focus on four areas that will have the greatest impact in the coming years, and have formed four subcommittees to support these areas:

1. **Affiliate Advocacy Engagement:** This subcommittee will explore ways to strengthen operational advocacy capacity at affiliates and state support organizations. It will also address networkwide messaging and mobilization, with a specific focus on collaboration among affiliates and Habitat for Humanity International.
2. **Metrics:** This subcommittee will generate recommendations to help the U.S. affiliate network measure advocacy successes. To achieve this, the committee will first study the current landscape of how HFHI and Habitat affiliates measure advocacy in order to create a common framework for a discussion. The committee will also review external resources to benchmark against peers. Finally, the committee will work to align, improve or enhance the existing Habitat advocacy metrics already being collected for the new strategic plan by HFHI.
3. **Research:** This subcommittee will generate recommendations for research topics and white papers that will help Habitat on a number of fronts, including by providing a deeper research foundation for Habitat's public policy positions.
4. **Habitat International Advocacy Policy and Operations:** This subcommittee will address Habitat network policy as it relates to advocacy and government relations. It will inform, advise, monitor and evaluate Habitat's U.S.-focused policy agenda to help improve or create policies relating to Habitat's networkwide advocacy operations, along with HFHI's advocacy policies.

With the renewed and focused enthusiasm and energy among the committee members, we expect to see great strides in advocacy among the U.S. network in the coming years.



# WHY WE BUILD is as important as WHAT WE BUILD.

Our collective presence in front  
of legislators, advocating for  
affordable housing solutions and  
sound policies, means that for

more than **1.6 BILLION PEOPLE  
WORLDWIDE**

who lack adequate shelter,

**THERE IS HOPE** for a decent  
place to live.

Advocating on behalf of those  
living in poor conditions is a  
priority for our organization.

— Jonathan T.M. Reckford,  
CEO of Habitat for Humanity International



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