



A comprehensive housing ecosystem approach in Monrovia

Innovative, affordable housing solutions in any context require evidence-based community-, market- and policy-level solutions that stem from a deeper analysis of the entire housing ecosystem. This includes understanding the housing market conditions; the policy environment; and the social, economic and environmental realities that communities face. Relevant assessments that identify constraints and optimize opportunities are essential for supporting the implementation of sustainable housing interventions, as is establishing strategic people-public-private partnerships.

Comprehensive urban housing programs help improve the living conditions in vulnerable and low-income communities, and systemic market and policy interventions in targeted geographic areas lead to greater outcomes and demonstrate the transformational impact of housing.

HOUSING OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

In Liberia, Habitat for Humanity hosted PASSA trainings and implemented a PASSA process focused on disaster risk response and engaged with firms to facilitate housing microloans and the production of alternative construction materials and technologies, such as clay bricks, hydro-form roofing tiles, and construction blocks made of recycled plastic.

Habitat worked with the government to shift housing policies and programs to support slum upgrading with access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene through boreholes, biogas eco-sanitation toilets, solid waste management and hygiene promotion. Habitat's interventions through the Liberia Country Program have contributed toward an enhanced market and policy environment that provides increased access to housing products and services for low-income and vulnerable households. Altogether, this work has resulted in:

- Improved living conditions, health status, resilience and reduced threat of evictions for slum dwellers.

COMMUNITY-LEVEL INTERVENTIONS

- Hazards, risks and vulnerability assessments.
- Focus group discussions with communities.
- Implementation of Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness, or PASSA.
- Water, sanitation and solid waste disposal management.
- Development of a community hall.
- Hygiene and sanitation training.

MARKET- AND SECTOR-LEVEL INTERVENTIONS

- Market assessments to identify ways to improve housing products and services for low-income consumers.
- Solicitation of firm-led innovations in housing finance and construction products.
- PASSA training of trainers.

POLICY-LEVEL INTERVENTIONS

- Development of slum upgrading, affordable housing policy framework and voluntary gender-responsive relocation guidelines.

- Systemic changes in planning, budgeting and service delivery for urban slum communities.
- Integration of partners, sectors and spaces through various roundtables and forums.
- Establishment of the Slum Upgrading Unit with the National Housing Authority.
- Enhancement of policy and market conditions to create a more enabled environment for the delivery of affordable housing.

A COMMUNITY-FOCUSED APPROACH

Community-led development is central to Habitat’s Global Urban Approach. Through a housing ecosystem analysis, including slum settlement profiling conducted by Slum Dwellers International, Habitat gained a deeper understanding of community needs and priorities. Seventy percent of the urban population lives in slum settlements around greater Monrovia, which was originally constructed for 500,000 people but currently has 1.2 million residents. Therefore, 152,000 people are in need of new housing, and an additional 144,000 homes require renovation. Land in Monrovia is neither expensive nor in short supply, but only 20% of the highest income group can afford new houses. The ambiguous process of acquiring and servicing land – and the transactional costs associated with it – have acted as major barriers to land access and security of tenure.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The Liberia Country Program, led by Cities Alliance in collaboration with the government of Liberia, provides an ideal platform for Habitat for Humanity to operate in the country, especially in the absence of a national organization on the ground. Habitat works closely with the National Housing Authority, which acts as its implementing partner in-country. For this five-year program, Habitat for Humanity has partnered with UN-HABITAT, Slum Dwellers International, WIEGO and World Bank to facilitate access to adequate and affordable housing for low-income households. Key focus areas include **community mobilization** and **facilitation**, development of a **national urban policy** and **city development strategy**, and engagement of **informal traders**.

Habitat also cultivated relationships with the Monrovia and Paynesville City corporations while working to develop a **slum upgrading and affordable housing policy framework**. The framework provides a comprehensive overview of the opportunities, risks, challenges and gaps around the delivery of adequate, affordable housing in Greater Monrovia, and was used to identify immediate and long-term housing and upgrading interventions for the pilot tests currently in progress.

PROGRESS IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Liberia’s urban population is just over 50%, with a large majority of that population living in slums. When disaster strikes, slum dwellers are left at a significant disadvantage, as their access to basic services and overall infrastructure is weak or nonexistent. Physical, social and economic vulnerabilities are further exacerbated by ineffective programming at the community level.

Habitat’s work in Liberia contributes to more **inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable communities and cities** by addressing the following Sustainable Development Goals:

Goals 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11 and 13 by facilitating systemic change and improvements to address key blockages impacting the delivery of adequate and affordable housing.

Goal 17 by enabling multisector development partners to coordinate efforts and collaborate with national-, local- and community-level stakeholders toward a collective vision for the city.

