

Chapter 6: Policy recommendations



Principles and recommendations for improved tenure security

The United States government, through development assistance funding and other appropriate channels, must increase resources to support the poor's access to secure tenure around the world. This is particularly important in informal and slum communities where security of tenure will not only strip away a key barrier to improved housing, but will support other key social and economic benefits for the world's poor. The U.S. government should set specific and measurable goals supporting the poor's access to secure tenure. A special focus must be given to informal and slum communities.

Habitat for Humanity on secure tenure

Tenure security is a vital part of a multi-prong approach to improve housing conditions for the poor. It more effectively fights poverty when implemented gradually, and in tandem with basic services such as water and sanitation.

- Efforts to improve tenure security should prioritize the most vulnerable populations—the urban poor, women and children, and those affected by disasters.
- Education, advocacy and awareness of individual rights are key to improving tenure security for the poor, especially for these populations most at risk.

National and local laws that create a framework for granting tenure security, including an accessible, transparent and accountable land administration system to combat corruption and inefficiency in government, are vital to increasing tenure security. Tenure security also is important to rehabilitation and reconstruction after a disaster and should be a top priority in disaster response.

Habitat for Humanity urges the U.S. government to help ensure tenure security for people around the world by:

Increasing awareness, in the U.S. Congress, of the urgent need for tenure security, which could include:

- Holding House and Senate hearings with panels of experts on tenure security, with a specific focus on urban areas and slums, to increase awareness of members of Congress and to highlight ways the U.S. Congress can address this issue.
- Creating a congressional commission to research tenure security, and make recommendations on how Congress can and should address the issue.
- Passing a resolution affirming the importance of tenure security in countries around the world.
- Passing authorizing language to focus on the issue of tenure security within U.S. foreign assistance programs.

Increasing focus within U.S. foreign assistance on tenure security, which could include:

- Increasing staff at USAID, the State Department, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation who are dedicated to the issue of secure tenure, with a specific focus on land, housing and slums.
- Increasing the capacity of the Urban Programs office at USAID.
- Creating or designating a high-level position to coordinate issues within and across agencies relating to tenure security.
- Allowing local NGOs working on tenure security to design and implement innovative approaches.

- Creating an index to measure national housing policies in an effort to create an incentive and framework for improved housing policies.
- Developing an annual report to document the U.S. government's progress on addressing tenure security.
- Allowing for flexibility in programming that recognizes the importance of secure tenure and how it can directly impact other development efforts such as health and education programs.

Increasing diplomatic pressure on other countries to address the issue of tenure security, which could include:

- Using the U.S. government's leverage with national governments to promote tenure security as a crucial ingredient for good governance and democratic practices, to improve protection for residents of their countries against forced eviction, and to put clear systems and processes in place.

Until the issue of secure tenure is successfully addressed, millions around the world will continue to be displaced, unable to secure adequate shelter or claim land and housing that is rightfully theirs. Breaking the cycle of poverty can be done. Strengthening tenure security is an enormous step in the right direction.



