



The Housing Rights Index

A Policy Formulation Support Tool

The Housing Rights Index: A Policy Formulation Support Tool

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HS Number: HS/036/19E

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PRINTING: UNON, Publishing Services Section, Nairobi, ISO: 14001:2004-certified.

THE HOUSING RIGHTS INDEX

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Housing Rights Index is developed to support training and capacity building activities and is intended for the use of policy makers and urban practitioners to be able to analyse the realisation of the right to adequate housing adequacy in their city. This guide is accompanied by an excel workbook that helps the user to assess the achievement of the seven dimensions of housing adequacy in their city in a dynamic and visual manner. This tool enables users to understand and think holistically about the realization of the right to adequate housing and associate its different dimensions with urban and housing policies. The HRI requires participants to complete sets of questionnaires- promoting detailed analysis of scarcity of adequate housing- and the scoring of the user's policy analysis is visualised through radar/ diamond charts.

The HRI was tested for the first time at a Housing Practitioners Lab organized within the framework of the training course *'Innovative Approaches to Deliver Affordable Housing Options in Asia'* which took place from 19-29 November 2018, organized by UN-Habitat in partnership with the International Urban Training Centre (IUTC) in Korea. Nearly 30 participants attended the training, including mayors, deputy mayors and senior officials from Asian national bodies and cities. The tool succeeded in identifying shortcomings and enabling participants to discuss and design transformational policies, programmes and strategies that promote supply of adequate housing options.

The final draft of the HRI was shared with experts from UN-Habitat and partners, peer-reviewed by: Tessy Aura, Human Rights Officer, UN-Habitat Programme Division; Cihan Baysal, Housing Rights Researcher and Advocate, Istanbul Urban Defence Initiative; Ricardo Correa, Executive Coordinator, the Bento Rubião Foundation; Maartje van Eerd, Assistant Professor Housing and Social Development, Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS) of Erasmus University Rotterdam; Bahram Ghazi, Human Rights Officer, Development and Economic and Social Issues Branch (OHCHR); Helen Macgregor, Programme Leader, Development Action Group, Cape Town; Kirtee Shah, Chairman and Chief Architect, KSA Design Planning Services, Ahmedabad.

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INTRODUCTION

The Housing Rights Index (HRI) is a decision-support tool developed specifically for the use of housing practitioners and policy makers who are involved in the Housing Practitioners Labs and tailor-made training developed and conducted by UN-Habitat. It is based on the right to adequate housing¹ as enshrined in international human rights instruments² and included in the Habitat Agenda (1996)³ and the New Urban Agenda (2016)⁴. It is understood as the right of every individual and community to gain and sustain a safe and secure home in which to live in peace and dignity.

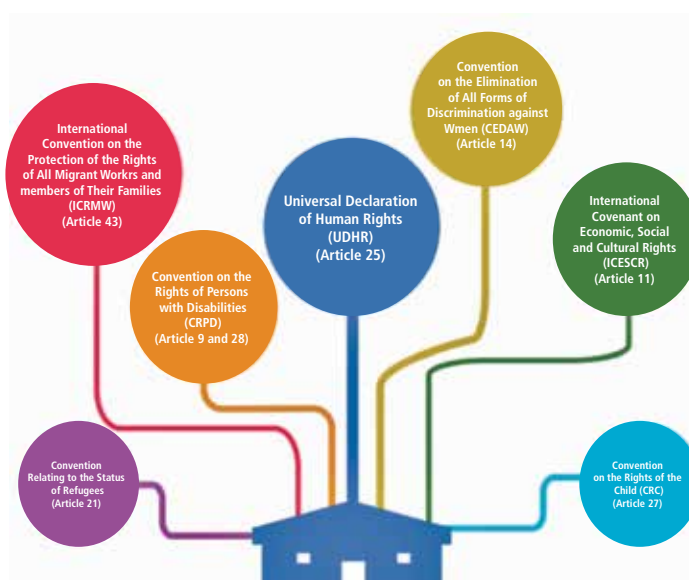


FIGURE 1 Human Rights Instruments Codifying the Right to Adequate Housing ⁵

¹ OHCHR/UN-Habitat (2008). Fact Sheet on the Right to Adequate Housing. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf; UN General Comments No. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing and No. 7 (1997) on forced evictions.

² ICESCR (1966), The right to adequate housing: forced evictions. *'The right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions'* (ICESCR 1966, art 11.1)

³ UN (1996), Habitat Agenda, 2nd UN Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II.

⁴ UN (2016), New Urban Agenda, 3rd UN Conference on Housing and Urban Development, Habitat III.

⁵ UN Habitat (2017), Human Rights in Cities Handbook Series Volume 1. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/InformalSettlements/UNHABITAT_HumanRights-BasedApproch.pdf. Image taken from pg.10

The tool has both pedagogic and policy development roles. On the one hand, the deployment of the index will enhance the user's understanding of the practical meaning of adequate housing rights and enable a better understanding of the policy and practical implications of the seven elements of adequacy that defines the right to adequate housing. On the other hand, the tool supports the user's assessment of the housing sector with a specific look at the extent to which adequate housing rights are recognized, respected, realized and protected in his/her city.

Indeed, the present and former Special Rapporteurs, and numerous treaty bodies, have stressed on the importance of needing reliable and clear data and indicators to assess the progress made by different regions towards the realisation of the right to adequate housing⁶. The HRI responds precisely to this call. By default, while employing the tool in the analysis of the housing policy achievements in his/her city or country, users will be able to unveil which of the elements of the housing rights are poorly or adequately realized.

The visualization and scoring of the user's policy analysis will reveal an index which will support the design of future policy interventions to improve the realization of housing rights in his/her city or country, addressing the identified shortcomings and strengthening existing positive results. It goes without saying that both the analysis and scoring are in principle based on qualitative analysis, but the more in-depth analysis, documentation and literature researched are reviewed to sustain the use of the HRI and the scoring of the seven dimensions of adequacy, the more accurately the outcome will reveal the real challenges in housing policy and practice in a given city or country. This will inform debate, help to raise questions and support the design of policies and strategies to mitigate and/or change the situation.

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