



AFFORDABLE LAND AND HOUSING IN AFRICA



UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

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Volume 3

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ADEQUATE HOUSING SERIES

In the vast majority of countries access to affordable land and housing is a critical contemporary challenge. While in different countries and regions the specificities of the challenge vary, the universal truism is that it is becoming increasingly difficult for the vast majority of urban residents to obtain and retain adequate and affordable land and housing.

The first four volumes in the Adequate Housing Series canvas the state of affordable land and housing in four regions facing major affordability difficulties: Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, and Europe and North America (member countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe).

Each volume firstly explores the major trends in housing conditions, availability, quality and tenure modalities. Following this, each volume analyses housing policy responses to address growing affordability problems and the improvement of substandard housing conditions. Lastly, key recommendations for local, national and international policy initiatives that can increase the provision of affordable housing in the respective regions is provided.

This flagship series is coordinated and produced by the Housing Policy Section of UN-HABITAT and to date the following volumes have been published:

Volume 1: Latin America and the Caribbean



Volume 2: Asia



Volume 3: Africa



Volume 4: Europe and North America



FOREWORD

The first four volumes in the Adequate Housing series respond to the urgent need for a global assessment of the state of land and housing. While countless studies, research projects, and reports have been undertaken on individual housing needs, projects, and programmes, no contemporary studies have compared and contrasted housing conditions, policies, and approaches on a regional or global scale.

This series fills this gap. The four volumes focus on the land and housing situation in four regions facing considerable challenges and affordability problems: Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, and Europe and North America. They present a comparative documentation of the historical trajectory, major contemporary trends, and best practices in land and housing provision in each region.

Although the size and overall characteristics of the housing sector does vary markedly across these regions, and indeed their countries, common to all is the fact that obtaining and retaining housing that is adequate and affordable is a serious problem for a large proportion of the population.

Unfortunately housing affordability remains a challenge and it is worsening due to, among other factors, the economic effects of the global financial crisis and the increasing severity of disasters and conflicts, which both place an additional strain on already stretched land and housing resources. This series and its messages and recommendations are therefore timely.

These regional studies represent a significant step forward in investigating the state of the global housing challenge. A detailed examination and comparison of, as well as critical reflection on access to housing at the local, national and regional levels is the first and important step towards designing policies to improve access to affordable housing opportunities and to bring solutions to scale. This will help in preventing city expansion on the basis of informal land development and informal housing supply. The four volumes represent a significant body of research, documentation, and critical review that I believe will be of value to those involved in the housing sector.

Dr. Joan Clos



Under-Secretary-General
of the United Nations and
Executive Director, UN-HABITAT





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The provision of affordable land and housing at scale remains a challenge to most countries, especially those in Africa. While the continent is the most rural region in the world, it is urbanising fast. Every day for the coming fifteen years, Africa's cities will have to accommodate an average of extra 40,000 people. Urbanisation will continue to place immense strain on affordable urban land and housing provision in the coming decades.

This publication canvases the state of affordable land and housing in Africa. In the publication, land is treated as one of the inputs to the housing sector. It provides a background and history to affordable housing in Africa; discusses current housing needs, quality, tenure modalities and building typologies; and reviews recent approaches to increasing the affordability and accessibility of land and housing supply.

The publication explores why adequate housing is simply not available or affordable for the majority of urban Africans. Certainly, incomes are too low. But just as important is the fact that housing sector inputs are too expensive, in particular land and finance which are the two primary constraints on affordable housing in Africa. While several African countries are making tangible efforts to address the demand for land for various purposes and needs, in other countries urban land supply for housing is insufficient, poorly managed, and regulated to serve the interests of high-income households. Conventional housing finance in Africa is undeveloped and inflexible and seldom

The publication finds that with the exception of few countries such as South Africa, Mali and Ethiopia there is little evidence of affordable large-scale land and housing provision in Sub-Saharan Africa. Housing programmes either do not exist, do not produce affordable housing, or are insufficient in scale relative to demand. In North Africa, however, several countries have demonstrated a noteworthy improvement in affordable housing and slum upgrading over the last two decades. Furthermore, many African governments are gradually adopting and implementing policies and strategies aimed at making housing habitable, affordable and accessible which offers some promise for expanding access for low-and middle-income households.

Pro-poor, proactive action by African governments to provide and scale-up affordable land and housing is crucial to reverse the trend that new migrants settle in largely informal, non-serviced housing because there are few other affordable housing options available to them. The supply and affordability of key inputs to housing (for example land, finance, and building construction costs) need to be systematically and simultaneously improved through the development and implementation of supportive institutional and regulatory frameworks.

Scaling up affordable housing provision has the potential to contribute to national economies, create jobs, improve the construction industry, and improve the living conditions for the

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