

# SUSTAINABLE HOUSING FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES

A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES



**UN HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

## **SUSTAINABLE HOUSING FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES:**

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First published in Nairobi in 2012 by UN-Habitat.

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**HS/073/12E**

**ISBN: 978-92-1-132488-4**

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UN-Habitat also acknowledges the individuals who contributed to the development of this publication during an Expert Group Meeting held in Nairobi, Kenya in December 2011: Carmen Antuna, Maïke Christiansen, Skye Dobson, Oliver Frith, Philippe Garnier, Curt Garrigan, Pekka Huovila, Daniel Irurah, Michelle Malanca, Martin Mulenga, Maria Nyström, Michael Ramage, Kurt Rhyner, David Sanderson, Claudia Schneider, Martin Suvatne, Diana Urge-Vorsatz, Pauline Wangui, Said Yahya.

Programme support: Helen Musoke and Christina Power.

Cover photo: Urban view in Istanbul, Turkey © Matthew French/UN-Habitat.

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

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*Planned urban expansion in Morocco. © Matthew French/UN-Habitat.*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a rapidly changing and urbanising world, the provision of adequate and affordable housing remains a key priority for all governments. However, the concept of housing requires a new understanding to effectively and synergistically address the pressing issues of slums prevention, the urban divide, economic and human development, and climate change. No longer regarded as simply a roof over one's head, housing today plays a crucial role in achieving sustainable development – as envisaged by the idea of sustainable housing.

Sustainable housing is, however, yet to gain its due prominence in developing countries. It is rare that the social, cultural, environmental and economic facets of housing are addressed there in an integrated policy. In many developing contexts, the so-called pro-poor housing programmes often provide accommodation of poor standards, in remote locations, with little consideration to the residents' lifestyle and livelihood strategies. In others, rapid housing developments create amplified carbon footprint and further negative impacts on the environment. Yet in most developing cities, decent and safe housing remains a dream for the majority of the population, while government considers affordable housing as merely a social burden.

*Sustainable Housing for Sustainable Cities* outlines key concepts and considerations underpinning the idea of sustainable housing

and provides a comprehensive framework for designing sustainable housing policies and practical actions. Although sustainable housing is often considered from a predominantly “green” perspective (resourcesaving, greenhouse gas reduction), this report advocates a more holistic approach, which recognises the multiple functions of housing – as both a physical and social system – and which seeks to enhance and harmonise the environmental, social, cultural, and economic dimensions of housing sustainability. Thus, along with the solutions for the built environment (resource and energy efficiency, environmental, ecological and health safety, resilience to natural disasters), sustainable housing policies should deal with the affordability, social justice, cultural and economic impacts of housing, and contribute to making healthy residential neighbourhoods and sustainable cities.

It is only through sustainable solutions that the tensions between urban growth, climate change, poverty alleviation, affordable housing provision, and access to quality residential services, clean energy and environmental conditions can be mitigated, while the potential of housing for improved economic prosperity and social development can be further unlocked. Well-designed, inclusive and participatory housing policies and programmes have much to offer to this end.



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