

# A POLICY GUIDE TO RENTAL HOUSING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Quick Policy Guide Series - Volume 1



### **'Quick Housing Policy Guides' Series**

As the scale of the housing challenge in the developing world increases at an alarming pace, the need for real action to address affordable housing supply is becoming increasingly critical. To deal with this challenge governments and local authorities need up-to-date knowledge on global housing policy approaches in order to formulate effective policy instruments. Therefore, the objective of the Quick Policy Guides series is to present, in an easy-to-read format, concepts, policy approaches, tools, and recommendations to facilitate policy development for addressing the growing housing challenge. The ongoing series is coordinated and produced by the Housing Policy Section of UN-HABITAT and to date the following volumes have been published:

**Volume 1:** *A Policy Guide to Rental Housing in Developing Countries*

**Volume 2:** *Enabling Shelter Strategies: Design and Implementation Guide for Policymakers*

A POLICY GUIDE TO  
**RENTAL HOUSING**  
IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

<b>Principal Author:</b>	Alan Gilbert
<b>Team Leader:</b>	Claudio Acioly Jr.
<b>Contributors:</b>	Clarissa Augustinus, Remy Sietchiping, Ulrik Westman, Rasmus Precht, Matthew French, Christophe Lalande and Claudio Acioly Jr.
<b>Programme Assistant:</b>	Helen Musoke
<b>English Editor:</b>	Matthew French and Roman Rollnik
<b>Design and Layout:</b>	Gideon Mureithi
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United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT),  
P.O Box 30030,  
Nairobi 00100,  
KENYA  
[info@unhabitat.org](mailto:info@unhabitat.org)

## PREFACE

In cities and towns around the world a significant proportion of residents are tenants. For various reasons millions of people in developing and developed countries rent, rather than own, the housing unit in which they dwell. For instance, low-income households who cannot presently meet the expense of home ownership, recent urban migrants who prefer centrally located rental accommodation that gives them flexibility, young people who value mobility, and individuals who choose to spend their money on other priorities rather than home ownership are only a few of the characteristics and motivations of tenants.

For millions of people rental housing provides a significant source of income. While there are commercial, public-sector, social, and employer rental property landlords, in cities of the developing world the largest group of landlords are the small-scale landlords who supply rental accommodation, often as part of their self-built house, to generate a regular source of income and provide financial security during old age.

Rental housing has remained a neglected area of national housing policy which has instead focused, often exclusively, on promoting home ownership. Consequently, rental housing has been overlooked with very few governments implementing any kind of policy to help develop or regulate this form of housing.

Yet rental housing is a key component of a well-functioning housing market. While renting is not the panacea to solving the housing challenge in the developing world, it does constitute a significant and vital housing tenure option that should be promoted alongside, not in competition to, home ownership.

This guide clearly illustrates the need to place rental housing on the urban housing agenda. Policies must be developed to harness the opportunities for rental housing to contribute to making better cities. In order to improve national and local housing policies which recognise and facilitate the development of rental housing, the many myths and stereotypes surrounding rental housing need to be debunked. This guide is therefore an important contribution to succinctly outlining the value of rental housing and its role in creating well functioning housing markets that can improve the living conditions for all sectors of society.

I am convinced that this guide will help housing practitioners, policy makers, academicians and housing rights activists in their work to promote adequate housing for all. I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to all those who have contributed to the preparation of this guide.

Dr Joan Clos  
Executive Director  
United Nations Human Settlements  
Programme (UN-HABITAT)

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