

THE FIRST NATIONAL HOUSING SYMPOSIUM

JUNE 21-22, 2024

BACKGROUND:

Ethiopia's housing sector is crucial for economic growth and development, facing critical challenges such as rapid urbanization, high housing costs, and inadequate infrastructure. Currently, only 21.6% of the population lives in urban areas, but projections indicate that 42.3 million people will reside in Ethiopian cities by 2037, necessitating robust and effective housing solutions. There is an estimated need for 471,000 new urban houses annually by 2025. Government-sponsored programs like the Integrated Housing Development Program (IHDP) have built approximately 400,000 units since 2005, but these efforts fall short, especially for the lowest income quintiles who cannot afford these units (World Bank, 2019).

Cooperative housing schemes have targeted middle-income groups and civil servants, yet many remain unoccupied due to financial constraints. The private sector plays a vital role in the rental market, providing about 75% of rental units. However, rental costs are high, with tenants paying over half of their monthly income as rent (Center for Affordable Housing Finance, 2021; Ministry of Urban Development and Infrastructure, 2021). Furthermore, a significant portion of the urban population lives in informal settlements, with 70-80% of urban dwellers residing in slums. Most houses are constructed from mud and wood, many being single-room and substandard (World Bank, 2015; Central Statistics Agency, 2007).

Given these challenges, Habitat for Humanity Ethiopia in partnership with the Ministry of Urban and Infrastructure and other stakeholders will hold the 1st National Housing Symposium, under the theme, **"Building Homes, Empowering Lives: Advancing Inclusive Housing for Sustainable Development."**

The symposium emerges against the backdrop of pressing challenges within the nation's housing sector, intricately linked to its economic growth and overall development. It provides a platform for stakeholders to collaborate on solutions. It fosters dialogue, knowledge sharing, and partnerships to address housing challenges comprehensively.

The symposium aims to facilitate dialogue, knowledge sharing, and the exchange of best practices to address the multifaceted issues within Ethiopia's housing sector. The symposium will enable stakeholders to gain insights into the complex issues affecting housing provision. It will foster partnerships and alliances to drive meaningful and sustainable change, focusing on inclusivity and sustainability in housing development.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVENT:

Objectives of the symposium:

- a) To facilitate the exchange of best practices, research findings, policy frameworks, laws, action programs, coordination models, and innovative ideas among participants to enrich the collective understanding of housing challenges and potential solutions in Ethiopia.
- b) To identify critical policy gaps and challenges in the housing sector and work towards inputting actionable recommendations to address them effectively.
- c) To foster collaboration and networking opportunities as well as new connections among stakeholders to enhance joint efforts in advancing housing initiatives across the country.

Theme: Building Homes, Empowering Lives: Advancing Inclusive Housing for Sustainable Development.

PURPOSE:

The symposium aims to facilitate dialogue, knowledge sharing, and the exchange of best practices among various stakeholders. It seeks to identify priorities and foster partnerships to drive meaningful and sustainable change in the housing sector.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

The symposium targets a diverse group of stakeholders totaling 70-80 participants, including:

- Government representatives (national and regional levels)
- Academia (researchers, scholars, educators)
- CSOs/NGOs (community engagement and advocacy)
- Industry stakeholders (developers, architects, engineers, construction firms)
- Community representatives (residents, housing advocates, civil society organizations)

FOCUS AREAS OF THE SYMPOSIUM:

In this symposium, scholars and practitioners are expected to present best practices, innovative housing solutions, or research findings in one or more of the symposium's focus areas. The discourse on housing finance in Ethiopia spans various dimensions, ranging from the dichotomy between housing ownership and rental options throughout its past, present, and into the future. An integral facet involves creating accessible housing microfinance solutions tailored for vulnerable groups. Additionally, addressing systemic inequities involves considerations of housing, land access, and property rights. Effective housing construction project management remains a crucial focus in Ethiopia. Meeting the growing housing needs of the youth and responding to the increasing demand for housing are paramount concerns.

The urban landscape is further shaped by initiatives such as slum upgrading and ensuring access to basic services. Sustainability comes to the forefront in the discussion on building and recycling climate-resilient housing for vulnerable groups. Another vital aspect involves empowering women through their land and housing rights. Finally, exploring entrepreneurship and innovation, particularly in alternative building materials and green financing, contributes to the multifaceted approach to housing development in Ethiopia.

FORMAT AND TOPICS OF INTEREST:

The symposium will feature:

Paper Presentations: Followed by plenary discussions and breakout sessions.

Topics of Interest Include:

- **Topic 1: Understanding Urbanization, Housing Demand and Supply in Ethiopia:**
 - Urbanization trends, housing demand dynamics, role of urban planning, housing supply landscape, challenges in the housing sector, opportunities for intervention.
- **Topic 2: Urban Land Policy, Legal Frameworks and Practice Overview:**
 - Historical context and evolution, policies and legal frameworks, land tenure systems, land use planning and zoning, urban land administration and management, challenges, emerging trends, and future directions.
- **Topic 3: Advancing Housing Management: Harnessing ICT Beyond Production:**

- ICT in housing management, property information systems, housing finance and mortgage systems, tenant management and services, smart housing technologies, data analytics and decision support, accessibility and inclusivity, interoperability and integration.

SYMPOSIUM ORGANIZING TASKFORCE

Recognizing the common agenda of addressing the housing issue, a taskforce comprising seven institutional members and technical working groups was formed. The organizers and taskforce members included: Habitat for Humanity Ethiopia (HFHE), Ministry of Urban and Infrastructure (MUI), UN Habitat, Policy Studies Institute (PSI), Goh Betch Bank, Addis Ababa University-Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building Construction and City Development (AAU EIABC), and Association of Ethiopian Micro Finance Institutions (AEMFI).

The symposium organizing taskforce plays a key role in ensuring the success of the event. The taskforce is responsible for overall coordination to ensure seamless planning, execution and program development.

KEY MESSAGES:

Urbanization and Population Growth:

- Urbanization rates in Ethiopia are among the lowest globally, but they are rapidly increasing.
- Currently, only 21.6% of the population lives in urban areas.
- Projections indicate that 42.3 million people will reside in Ethiopian cities by 2037.

Housing Demand and Supply:

- The demand for housing is immense, with an estimated need for 471,000 new urban houses annually by 2025.
- The country currently has around 4.5 million housing units, of which 74% are substandard and 30% require replacement.
- Despite efforts, housing supply remains insufficient, with only 165,000 units supplied annually from 2008/9 to 2013/14.