

## Asia-Pacific Housing Forum 8 December 7 – 9, 2021

### Theme: Building Forward Better for Inclusive Housing

#### INTRODUCTION

For more than a decade, the Asia-Pacific Housing Forum has gathered under one roof major stakeholders engaged in seeking solutions to affordable housing issues and promote decent housing as a driver of economic development. Since the inaugural conference in 2007, more than 7,200 participants have not only shared common ground but also presented diverse views through insightful plenaries and engaging discussions. The seventh Asia-Pacific Housing Forum in September 2019 was the largest-ever with more than 2,300 participants across the main events, side events and preliminary lead-up events at country level.

The eighth Asia Pacific Housing Forum will take place between **December 7 – 9, 2021** in Bangkok, Thailand, with the theme **“Building Forward Better for Inclusive Housing**. The regional housing forum is part of a Global Housing Forum series organized by Habitat for Humanity in collaboration with other organizations and institutions. The first regional forum was held in Latin America and the Caribbean between May 17-21, 2021. Other regional forums will be held in Europe and Eastern Europe (November 2021); and in Africa and the Middle East (2022). Several preliminary events will also be held in the lead up to the main housing forum. This includes country level housing forums in India, Philippines, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Cambodia and Vietnam to be held between August and October 2021 as well as preliminary events to be held between November 30 – December 3, 2021 that include a Youth Congress, Innovations Awards and land tenure and land value capture training course. Please see timelines in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Timelines for the Asia Pacific Housing Forum

The main topics and connecting thread in all four regional Forums will revolve around actions on adequate housing and cities that enable a sustainable recovery pathway in the context of COVID-19. The events will be leveraged to promote innovations, share promising solutions, and enable more connectedness and collaboration among stakeholders to improve policies and practical solutions that improve access to safe, adequate and affordable housing for all.

Due to the current global pandemic situation, the event will be held either fully virtually or as a hybrid format. If hybrid, participants will have the opportunity to join virtually or physically, and all measures will be taken to ensure the safety of all participants.

Participants will include government representatives, business leaders, policymakers, development partners, academics, urban planners, architects, property developers, key representatives from international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, social enterprises, housing finance organizations, technology companies, youth organizations, researchers, advocates, and others.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Inspire a new vision for a more inclusive, healthy, and resilient cities and human settlements.
- Strengthen anchoring of international commitments to SDGs and climate change into national and municipal priorities.
- Build collaboration between organizations with the capacity to impact and scale up the low-cost, affordable housing sector in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Recognize and act on the importance of housing as a driver of inclusive economic growth, resilience and sustainability in human settlements.
- Promote, celebrate and reward innovative and high impact affordable housing initiatives in the Asia Pacific region.

#### **THEME**

The theme of the Asia-Pacific Housing Forum “**Building Forward Better for Inclusive Housing**” highlights the urgent need for solutions in building truly sustainable and affordable housing considering the devastating impact of COVID-19 which has made visible and exacerbated housing challenges globally. Even before COVID-19, barriers, gaps, and exclusions across political, social, economic, and environmental systems severely limited opportunities for many to live in adequate housing.

As countries face the repercussions of the pandemic, the housing sector can be a key element for economic, social, and environmental recovery. Likewise, assuring housing availability for all can lighten the economic and social challenges resulting from the pandemic. New perspectives and innovations for housing are needed. “Building forward better” thereby alludes to systems and

practices that enable greener, safer, more resilient, and inclusive housing solutions that go beyond a simple rebuilding.

How housing policies and practices can support this recovery will be covered in the four thematic tracks of the Asia Pacific Housing Forum. These tracks have been developed after extensive consultations with housing sector players and careful analysis into the most pressing global and regional issues concerning access to adequate and affordable housing:

- Building Resilient Cities and Communities
- Innovative housing solutions and technologies
- Advancing sustainability in the housing sector
- Financing Affordable Housing

## **PLENARIES, TRACKS AND TOPICS/SESSIONS**

### **Plenary 1: Housing as an economic driver for building a sustainable economy**

Emerging economies that seek to improve their economic outlook in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic may be significantly under-estimating how important the building and construction sector is for their economies. Housing construction and renovation contributes significantly to the economy and job creation among the poor. The sector also generates demand for materials and related services. It is also a key sector for implementing national climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. Policy frameworks and stimulus programmes for sustainable housing increases the ability of households, community, governments, and the private sector to invest. This is of particular relevance in developing economies with huge informal housing markets. Strategic interventions can help speed up economic recovery and improve access to housing at lower incomes. They also allow building standards to be implemented as part of construction and operation, both in terms of environmental aspects and health and safety. This session will highlight how inclusive strategies and stimulus policies directed towards housing can support community and economic resilience and sustainability during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

### **Plenary 2: Leveraging inclusive Partnerships to deliver Affordable Housing at scale**

Creative and inclusive partnerships between the public sector, private sector and civil society organizations have proven to be crucial in addressing the affordable housing challenge. These partnerships prioritize housing solutions that are affordable, sustainable, and adapted to local needs. The most successful ones leverage the strength of each partner and are built on a shared vision that puts people at the center of solutions. Nonetheless, forging effective multi-stakeholder relationships requires a deep analysis of partner's capacities and underlying motivations and a high level of trust. Join this session to gain insights from organizations on promising practices and lessons learned in addressing collaboratively the challenge of providing affordable housing at scale.

### **Plenary 3: Boosting Inclusive governance and cross-sectoral collaboration**

The interconnected crises resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the ever-present effects of climate change are multi-dimensional, and present wide-ranging social, economic, and environmental challenges for countries and communities. Providing healthy, safe, secure, and affordable housing to growing populations will only be possible if public efforts (inter-governmental, horizontal and vertical) are aligned and the most vulnerable given a voice in design and implementation processes. There is need for governance systems that are guided by a whole-of-society approach and adopt inclusive, participatory, and partnership-based decision-making processes. Join this session where experts will share perspectives of how effective multi-level multi-stakeholder governance and cross-sectoral collaboration are central to addressing the urgent need for adequate and affordable housing.

### **Plenary 4: Integrating housing in national development strategies and recovery plans**

Around the world, 1.6 billion people live without adequate shelter and in the Asia Pacific region, an estimated one third of urban dwellers live in slums or slum-like conditions (ESCAP and UN-Habitat, 2015). Effective responses to the housing challenge will yield benefits beyond the housing sector itself, as housing drives urban development and is a key sector for generating employment and economic growth. It also directly impacts the health and wellbeing of the population and has a direct impact on environmental sustainability. This session will provide a platform for the high-level exchange of experiences and views on the progress and challenges related to the implementation of sustainable housing and urban development in the Asia-Pacific region. It will serve as a call to action for both national and local governments to ensure that housing is at the center of urban agendas and is integrated in national development strategies, as well as in recovery plans.

#### **Track 1: Building Resilient Cities and Communities**

Cities and communities in the Asia Pacific region are experiencing impacts of rapid urbanization and climate change. At the same time, cities have also become the epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic. Future climate change and sustainability initiatives will also begin from cities. Building inclusive, healthy, resilient, and sustainable cities requires intensive and coordinated policy responses and investment choices at both national and local levels in partnership with communities. This track focuses on how city leaders can gain new insights and possibilities for transformation and shape the recovery efforts by working across divisions and in partnership with local community and business leaders.

#### **Fostering inclusive cities through slum upgrading**

People living in overcrowded slums and informal settlements are provided poor quality infrastructure, unconnected to trunk systems. COVID-19 has exacerbated their substandard living conditions and simple preventive measures such as handwashing and social distancing are a luxury in such areas, threatening more than one billion people worldwide. Those living in slums and informal settlements are also most vulnerable to the economic consequences of widespread lockdowns – as work in the

informal economy is impacted. Majority of the poor also use their homes as a place of work. Integrating slums within city plans can foster inclusive development. This session will discuss neighbourhood upgrading through provisioning of inclusive infrastructure, housing improvements, and other strategies to promote spatial, social, and economic inclusion of people in informal settlements.

### **Securing land, housing and property rights for all**

Housing accounts for more than 70 percent of land use in most cities, yet 1 billion people in cities around the world lack secure land rights. Where security of tenure exists, families are more likely to invest in their home and neighbourhood improvements, leading to positive human and community development. This security is also of particular importance in the context of sustainability; thriving communities are needed to strengthen wellbeing aspects in public policy and let go of the growth-focus of past decades. Secure tenure also empowers communities to demand basic services from their governments like electricity, water and sanitation. Cities around the world are implementing innovative approaches to addressing insecure land and property rights faced by residents especially those in informal settlements. This session will highlight innovative tools and approaches for making secure tenure a reality for all. It will also highlight how community, local geospatial and demographic data collection on land, housing, and socioeconomic data of residents empowers vulnerable communities to advocate for recognition, push back on evictions and marginalization, plan for disasters and health crises, and work with local authorities to access public and private services to advance economic and social well-being.

### **Building resilience through provision of urban infrastructure and basic services**

Infrastructure and basic services are the foundation and delivery vehicle of a functional and resilient urban environment. They also sustain and improve the health, livelihood, and general living environment of urban residents. However, many cities in the Asia-Pacific region face inadequate urban services and deficits in basic urban infrastructure such as water, sanitation and wastewater management, solid waste management, energy and transport. Inadequate urban infrastructure and urban basic services was already a huge challenge before the COVID-19 pandemic hence sustaining and improving the provision of and access to urban infrastructure and services is vital. More than ever, effective services and quality infrastructure are required in cities, especially in slums and informal settlements, and for the poor and vulnerable communities. During this session, a panel of experts will discuss priority actions needed to ensure access to quality affordable infrastructure and basic services for all.

### **Improving access to housing for women and vulnerable groups**

Gender equality in property rights is a critical human rights issue and a key driver of overall economic development. However, women continue to have limited rights to healthy, safe and adequate housing. COVID-19 highlighted the deep social and economic inequalities of our societies which disproportionately affect women and other vulnerable groups. A UN report on [COVID-19 and women and girls](#) also revealed a spike in domestic violence during lockdowns. This session will discuss

women's role in economic development and future prospects of families and communities and how access to adequate housing for women can be strengthened. It will also highlight how gender equality can be mainstreamed in initiatives to address housing to achieve sustainable urbanization.

### [Track 2: Innovative housing solutions and technologies](#)

Demand for housing continues to outpace supply as the world's population expands and materials costs rise making it more challenging to build affordable homes. Current housing development plans have proved inadequate and thankfully there is a recognition that new innovations can be instrumental in responding to the lack of quality homes. This track will explore ways in which the growing need for affordable housing solutions can be addressed using innovative housing policies, solutions and technologies.

#### **Advancing entrepreneurial shelter solutions**

Market-based solutions complement governments efforts in addressing the mounting challenges of affordable housing demand. To achieve scale and close the existing housing gap, private sector markets must be catalyzed to provide affordable finance options for low-income segments and develop innovative affordable construction technologies and materials. Startups have proven to be quite successful in cracking open challenging problems and can be a key driver in meeting the housing needs of low-income markets. During this session, start-ups and entrepreneurs from Southeast Asia and from the Andean region of South America will share lessons learned on what it takes to enter the affordable housing sector and their contributions to closing the gap.

#### **Low-cost affordable housing technologies**

Many low-income and middle-income families dream of owning a home but are generally unable to access the housing market due to prohibitive costs. Ways in which construction costs can be cut down is through using alternatives to the conventional methods and inputs. The effective utilization of locally available building materials, minimizing design waste and good management practices for new and incremental building should also be taken into consideration for housing to be not only affordable, but also sustainable. This session will discuss the need for adoption of cost effective, innovative and environmentally friendly technologies that can enable construction of houses at an affordable cost.

#### **Enhancing sustainable design and construction skills through digitalization and innovative technologies**

Across all types of businesses, it has become clear that the world will look different as we move beyond the COVID-19 crisis. The construction sector has adapted, and industry players have shifted to remote ways of working as they seek to survive and thrive. Designers and engineers are relying even more heavily on digital collaboration and contractors are using online tools for various activities. Strengthening the sector's resilience to external shocks has become a key topic. At the same time, it has become clear that to avert drastic climate change impacts, new forms of construction and building need to be developed and mainstreamed that prioritize energy efficiency and circularity. This 'new

normal' requires an upgrade on the skillset of developers, architects, construction workers and material producers along the value chain. During this session, experts will discuss how digitalization and innovative technologies can be harnessed to enhance design and construction skills in order to foster a construction sector that is capable of integrating today's priorities of sustainability and resilience.

### **Addressing housing vulnerabilities through rental housing**

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the lack of affordable, healthy and secure housing options for urban poor and migrant workers in cities. In countries like India, rental housing is gaining emphasis as a response to the needs of the urban poor and migrant communities who rely almost exclusively on rental housing. Many low-income households prefer rental housing since they often cannot afford expenses associated with homeownership or prefer to live close to areas offering income generation opportunities. Despite rental housing being an essential and preferred option for millions of people in cities of the developing world, it has remained a neglected area of many national housing policies which often focus on promoting home ownership. At the same time, legal frameworks need to reflect that affordable housing should not be a fully commercialized good and renters' rights need to be protected to assure social inclusion. This session will examine options for strengthening rental housing policy, legal and regulatory frameworks to formalize and create inclusive rental markets and diverse approaches to delivering affordable rental housing in accessible locations.

### **Track 3: Advancing sustainability in the housing sector**

Rapid economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region has lifted many countries out of poverty. This has come at the cost of increased use of natural resources, growing greenhouse gas emissions and waste generation.

Globally, natural resources and ecosystems are under pressure, and, as a result, the frequency and intensity of natural catastrophes and other external events have been increasing. The way we live is unsustainable, as several planetary boundaries are already crossed or within reach. While per capita ecological footprints in the Asia-Pacific region are still low compared to the western hemisphere, it is urgently required to rethink models of consumption and production, as growth in the region is ongoing and urbanisation trends continue while national biocapacity is in many countries already exceeded. anywhere. There is the need to reintegrate our economic system and built environment into natural ecosystems. In the Asia-Pacific region, there is the unique opportunity to build systems that serve human needs while being cognisant of planetary boundaries, offering locally adapted solutions.

The building and construction sector, including residential buildings, is a large contributor to still growing greenhouse gas emissions and the depletion of resources, as their construction, usage and demolition are not optimized for resource use or circularity. In addition, buildings and urban spaces influence many other consumption and production decisions. Achieving greater circularity and

sustainability, while prioritizing human needs and wellbeing, necessitates the rethinking of entire sectors, including in the housing sector. Urban planning and legal frameworks for building and construction need to more strongly integrate sustainability considerations. This track will examine the multiple functions of housing as both a physical and socio-cultural system, as well as ways in which the environmental, social, cultural, and economic dimensions of housing sustainability can be harmonized to ensure sustainable and equitable cities.

### **Greening the housing value chain**

The urban population in the Asia Pacific region is growing faster than in any other region. The region is home to four of the of the top ten carbon dioxide emitting economies, and ten of the most polluted cities in the world. It is estimated that 11% of global annual carbon emissions are generated by construction, renovation and demolition. These embodied or “upfront” carbon emissions result from materials and construction processes along building lifecycles (World Green Building Council, 2019), So how can we meet the aspirations for safe, adequate, affordable housing for our growing population without destroying the environment? Join us in this session as experts discuss how greening the entire value chain of building a home can help reduce costs and impacts in the short and long term. The session will consider resource-efficient and circular housing design and materials, as well as the required infrastructure and government policies to promote their uptake.

### **Housing for Resilience**

Globally, over a billion people – about one out of every 7 people – have no access to decent quality housing. Of them, nearly 600 million, or 60%, live in Asia, in informal or otherwise poor-quality housing. The Pandemic has laid bare the fragile relationship between people’s living environment. Since it is the often case during times of crises, the housing policy debate has come to the fore, and many questions are being asked about the past actions – and inactions – of governments and development institutions that may have fueled the housing issue. This Housing for Resilience knowledge product is a first step towards developing a housing sector strategy for the Asian Development Bank and its developing member countries to spur meaningful contribution to the ultimate goal of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. During this session, the ADB Housing for Resilience knowledge products will be launched. Panelists will also discuss the need for effective housing strategies against the background of shocks and stressors caused by disasters and pandemics such as COVID-19.

### **Developing sustainable solutions to assure adequate housing for all**

Currently, housing and building policies, and therefore construction and buildings in the Asia-Pacific region, need to be urgently revised to be in line with policy commitments resulting from the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals, as stated in Global ABC’s Regional Roadmap for Buildings and Construction in Asia. Importantly, housing determines access to employment and basic services, including health services, food, and education and is relevant for the realisation of universally



shared human values like social connection and community representation. A transformation of the sector that enables sustainability while providing adequate housing can only be brought about if this is prioritized in planning at national, urban and local levels. Policy interventions need to cover new buildings and construction as well as existing ones, where the use phase and renovation and modernization play a role. Policies need to take into account the entire lifecycle of buildings, from construction to use phase to demolition. Interventions can come in many forms, for example as building codes, but also by investments and incentive-setting as part of long-term urban development and climate strategies. New housing futures can be shaped by innovative solutions such as shared equipment and living spaces, as elements of a sharing economy. Join this session to learn more about where priorities should lie and which existing solutions need scale-up and replication.

### **Rethinking the Urban Space**

In terms of sustainable lifestyles, cities offer huge opportunities but also pose challenges. Due to their population density, they allow for efficient provisioning of needed services, social connection and innovation. To contribute to livable and sustainable communities, urban spaces need to succeed in balancing the built environment and natural systems, as well as private and public spaces. Public spaces in many cities have been commercialised. As cities have been profoundly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, this has highlighted the need to rethink cities' development in different dimensions - social, cultural, economic, and environmental. The pandemic has also laid bare how spatial inequality is manifested in the form of slums/informal settlements, exposed the latent inadequacies, and demonstrated the power of self-help and community innovations. In addition, peri-urban areas could serve as an inspiration on how community organisation can provide solutions to these challenges. This session will delve into ways diverse urban actors can work collectively to make cities greener, more liveable and designed around health, safety and well-being of residents.

### **Track 4: Financing Affordable Housing**

Financing affordable housing is still a major issue in most Asia-Pacific countries as they struggle to house their rapidly growing populations. Adequate financing structures and funding are therefore critical to addressing the affordable housing challenge. This track will examine financing instruments of different actors in both public and private sectors for funding affordable housing.

### **Leveraging public sector mechanisms for affordable housing financing**

The session will highlight the need for investments in the housing sector considering its contribution to nations' GDPs and how it serves as an economic sector in itself. The session will cover the need for public sector mechanisms, such as land-based financing instruments, subsidies, credit guarantees, and policy tools for promoting affordable and equitable access to housing. It will simultaneously draw on the lessons and insights from countries successfully adopting such public policy instruments.

### **Use of financial technology solutions to expand access to affordable housing**

A fast-evolving healthy financial ecosystem can lead to a new generation of financial intermediaries that harness technology's power, employ new business models, adopt innovative and leaner customer

acquisition and credit assessment processes. These developments within the broader financial inclusion space warrant the case for looking for additional distribution channels that hold the potential of furthering the cause of safe, secure, and affordable housing among low-income households. The session will discuss a few of the partnerships in this space and highlight how financial technology solutions increase access to housing finance among low-income families and help improve housing conditions.

#### **Promoting best practices in housing and cash transfer programming**

Cash transfer programming is increasingly being used as humanitarian response tool for providing in-kind assistance to people affected by disasters. A cash program aims at reestablishing shelter and settlements, either through facilitation of construction or support for community self-recovery. Understanding the role of local markets and how market systems can be optimized to ensure resilience of the market to withstand a disaster and its capacity to respond to a disaster is vital in a successful cash program. This session will discuss how cash can be used as a response tool to facilitate self-recovery processes within communities in reaching standards for building back better and building resilience for future disasters.

#### **Innovative cooperative housing financing options**

Co-operative housing represents an important part of the housing market in many countries. Their prime objective is to provide good quality and affordable housing in the interests of their members, and not to maximize profit for developers or shareholders. They are thus able to provide housing at costs that are below the price of a similar home in the open housing market. Despite their important role in providing affordable housing, housing cooperatives face numerous challenges such as unfavorable conditions in the financial and housing markets, and inadequate legal framework. Join this session to hear how different groups are using innovative financing tools to raise capital for their cooperative housing initiatives.

**PLEASE SEE DRAFT PROGRAM IN THE NEXT PAGE**



**DRAFT PROGRAM**

<b>SIDE EVENTS (November 29 - December 3, 2021)</b>			
<b>DAY 1 (Side Events) – November 29, 2021</b>			
Land Tenure and Land Value Capture Training Course (2hrs)			
<b>DAY 2 (Side Events) – November 30, 2021</b>			
Youth Congress (2 hrs)	Land Tenure and Land Value Capture Training Course (2hrs)		
<b>Day 3 (Side Events) – December 1, 2021</b>			
Innovations Awards (Category 1, 2 & 3) – 3hrs	Land Tenure and Land Value Capture Training Course (2hrs)		
<b>DAY 4 &amp; 5 (Side Events) – December 2-3, 2021</b>			
Land Tenure and Land Value Capture Training Course (2 hrs per day)			
<b>MAIN HOUSING FORUM (December 7-9, 2021)</b>			
<b>DAY 1 (Main Housing Forum)</b>			
<b>Opening Plenary</b>			
<b>Plenary 1: Housing as an economic driver for building a sustainable economy</b>			
<b>NETWORKING BREAK</b>			
<b>Building Resilient Cities and Communities</b> 1. Fostering inclusive cities through slum upgrading	<b>Innovative housing solutions and technologies</b> 1. Advancing entrepreneurial shelter solutions.	<b>Advancing sustainability in the housing sector</b> 1. Greening the housing value chain	<b>Financing Affordable Housing</b> 1. Leveraging public sector mechanisms for financing affordable housing

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<b>NETWORKING BREAK</b>			
2. Securing land, housing and property rights for all	2. Low-cost affordable housing technologies	2. Housing for Resilience	2. Use of financial technology solutions to expand access to affordable housing
<b>DAY 2 (Main Housing Forum)</b>			
<b>Plenary 2: Leveraging inclusive Partnerships to Deliver Affordable Housing at scale</b>			
3. Building resilience through provision of urban infrastructure and basic services	3. Enhancing sustainable design and construction skills through digitalization and innovative technologies	3. Developing sustainable solutions to assure adequate housing for all	3. Promoting best practices in housing and cash transfer programming
<b>NETWORKING BREAK</b>			
<b>Plenary 3: Boosting Inclusive governance and cross-sectoral collaboration</b>			
<b>NETWORKING BREAK</b>			
<b>NETWORKING DINNER AND INNOVATIONS AWARDS WINNERS ANNOUNCEMENT</b>			
<b>DAY 3 (Main Housing Forum)</b>			
<b>Plenary 4: Integrating housing in national development strategies and recovery plans</b>			
4. Improving access to housing for women and vulnerable groups	4. Addressing housing vulnerabilities through rental housing	4. Rethinking the Urban Space	4. Innovative Cooperative housing financing options
<b>NETWORKING BREAK</b>			
<b>Closing Plenary</b>			

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