



International Housing Coalition

Supporting Housing for All in a Rapidly Urbanizing World

# International Housing Coalition

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### WORLD HABITAT DAY 2011

#### EVENTS IN WASHINGTON D.C.

The United Nations designates the first Monday of every October as World Habitat Day. World Habitat Day was created as a day to reflect on the state of our towns and cities and the basic right of all to adequate shelter. This year World Habitat Day was celebrated on October 3, 2011. While the UN Global Celebration was hosted by the Government of Mexico, many organizations around the world organized local World Habitat Day events throughout October.

The United States Senate recognized World Habitat Day by introducing a resolution supporting the goals of World Habitat Day. Co-sponsored by Senators John Kerry [D-MA], Daniel Akaka [D-HI], Benjamin Cardin [D-MD], and Richard Durbin [D-IL], the resolution underscores the importance of a sustainable urban development strategy. Senate Resolution 285 can be found [here](#).

Several events took place in Washington D.C. during the week of October 3, 2011 in recognition of World Habitat Day. On October 6, 2011, the Brookings Institution hosted an event on *Rebuilding a City: The Dos and Don'ts in Post-Disaster Urban Recovery*. This event discussed the challenges of urban disaster recovery and featured IHC founding sponsor Habitat for Humanity International ("HFHI"). The discussion focused on shelter, urban planning, long-term reconstruction, and disaster risk reduction. On the evening of October 6, HFHI held a dinner event which emphasized Habitat's post disaster recovery work in Haiti.

IHC also recognized World Habitat Day with its own event, "*Informal Settlements in the U.S.: Sharing Lessons Learned at Home and Abroad*," on October 7, 2011. Details on this event are covered elsewhere in the newsletter.

## **IHC PUBLISHES PAPER ON GENDER, PROPERTY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **PAPER PART OF ONGOING INTEREST IN GENDER FOR IHC**

Researchers agree that women in developing countries generally have less access to shelter, income, water, food, education and healthcare when compared to men, leading to what is often called the "feminization of poverty." It is not a coincidence that women today make up 70 percent of the population living on less than \$1 a day and hold only a small fraction of all titled land in the developing world. Gender equality in property rights is not only a critical human rights issue but also a key driver in overall national economic development.

Women face barriers in accessing land and shelter from multiple sources. Formal discriminatory laws, customary practices, gender expectations, marriage proceedings, and physical intimidation can all keep women from participating fully in the housing market. This hinders development in two ways: first, it harms the country as a whole when women cannot contribute to often fragile economies by owning property, home businesses, and accessing credit. Second, it harms women and their families; secure tenure has been linked to increased security, health, and education for the entire family, especially in vulnerable women-headed households. Women in urban areas are uniquely affected; lack of access to land forces many urban women into the informal sector with sparse protection and security for them and their families.

Gender and Property Rights: A Critical Issue in Urban Economic Development explores gender property and development, providing specific recommendations for professionals and donors, as well as research questions that could further the development community's understanding the issue.

The paper may be accessed online on the [IHC website](#).

## IHC PUBLISHES PAPER ON CLIMATE CHANGE

### PAPER HIGHLIGHTS THE REQUIREMENTS AND CHALLENGES OF URBAN ADAPTATION

The IHC recently released *Adapting to Climate Change: Cities and the Urban Poor*. This paper, authored by Peter Feiden, IHC consultant, discusses global climate change, its effects on cities, and disproportionate effect on urban poor.

In the next 50 years global climate change will visibly affect many parts of the world, with a disproportionate effect on urban and slum areas. Increased flooding due to rising sea levels could lead to land loss and displacement of homes and businesses in coastal and low-lying areas. This loss would eliminate sources of wealth, shelter and income of inhabitants. Frequent drought due to increased temperatures could reduce access to water forcing occupants to flee their location or live in destitute conditions due to inadequate and stressed water and sewage services. In some areas, lack of water has already reduced productivity of land for agricultural use. Other areas could experience increased and extensive damage to buildings and infrastructure due to increased incidence of severe storms. The poor, and developing countries in general, are often without the financial and technological means to adapt to these changing conditions and alleviate the growing effects of global warming.

*Adapting to Climate Change* also explores some of the barriers in adapting to these changes as well as the opportunities for different players to engage. Further deterioration of urban conditions can be prevented if governments, private investors, and researchers work to integrate climate change into future plans and policies. Cities are encouraged to improve their capacity to adapt to climate change. Local and international governments, and private donors and investors, are challenged to assist and support existing efforts in urban adaptation to global climate change, while researchers are challenged to think of innovative solutions to these problems.

The paper was distributed to congressional, government, and NGO contacts and may be accessed online on the [IHC Website](#).

## IHC EVENTS IN FALL 2011

### IHC HOSTS WORLD HABITAT DAY PANEL AND GENDER DISCUSSION WITH PARTNERS

The IHC co-sponsored two educational events in October 2011. The IHC recognized World Habitat Day by hosting the event, "*Informal Settlements in the U.S.: Sharing Lessons Learned at Home and Abroad*" on October 7, 2011 at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. The discussion focused on the informal settlements along the U.S.-Mexico border and the lessons learned from informal settlements around the world. The program was moderated by Chris Herbert, Director of Research, Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University, and featured Julian Baskin, Senior Urban Specialist, Cities Alliance; Caroline Wanjiku Kihato, Visiting Scholar, Institute for the Study of International Migration, Georgetown University; and Joe Beldin, Deputy Executive Director, Housing Assistance Council. The panelists, in sharing lessons learned, established that informal settlements have unique needs subject to each settlement's location, territory and inhabitants. Panelists encouraged project designers and implementers to take time to engage the community to get a better understanding of the residents and their needs. The panelists agreed that a better understanding of the benefits and opportunities of informal settlements will lead to a better understanding of how to address the needs of these residents at home and abroad. A webcast is available to view on the Wilson Center website [here](#).

On October 25, 2011, the IHC, along with the International Center for Research on Women ("ICRW"), the Urban Institute, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation ("MCC"), sponsored an event discussing the intersection of gender, property rights, and economic development. Carol Rabenhorst, Senior Legal Advisor to the Urban Institute and author of the IHC's recent paper, "Gender and Property Rights: a Critical Issue in Urban Economic Development," gave an overview of this paper. Other panelists included Rick Gaynor, Director of Property Rights and Land Policy and the lead of the Land Practice Group at MCC, who gave an overview of MCC's efforts to integrate gender into their compacts and evaluations. Krista Jacobs, economist at ICRW, and Caren Grown, Senior Gender Advisor at the U.S. Agency for International Development both presented their own research on women and asset ownership. The filmed version of this panel will be available soon on the IHC website.

## IHC CHAIRMAN RECEIVES NAHRO AWARD

### BOB DUBINSKY AWARDED THE 2011 JOHN D. LANGE AWARD

The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) awarded Bob Dubinsky its John D. Lange award for his work at the IHC and previous work with USAID, ICMA and HUD. Dubinsky is the current Chairman of the IHC board and formerly served as the IHC President and CEO. The award was presented to him by International Committee chairperson, Betsy Morris, on October 24, 2011 at NAHRO's annual convention in St. Louis. In receiving the award Dubinsky stated:

"We have made great strides in improving housing conditions in the United States over the past forty-fifty years, but in the developing world a billion people live in slums. Not only is it in the national security and economic self-interest of the U.S. to help developing countries address the problems of urban slums and poverty but it is the right thing to do."

Mr. Dubinsky joined the list of distinguished recipients of this award, including Peter Kimm, former IHC board chairman, who received the award in 2001.

During the NAHRO convention Dubinsky briefed its International Committee on advocacy issues related to assistance for housing and urban development and was a panelist at the International Committee's conference breakfast discussing urbanization and its implications for the developing world.

NAHRO is a professional membership organization comprised of approximately 23,000 housing and community development agencies and officials throughout the United States who administer a variety of affordable housing and community development programs at the local level. The John D. Lange Award recognizes a person in the housing and community development field who has made an outstanding contribution toward international understanding and exchange of international experience. NAHRO is also a member of the IHC.

## JOIN THE IHC COALITION

### BECOME A MEMBER OF THE IHC

Join the IHC and help support its advocacy, education and research program. Membership dues are only \$200 for 2011. To join go the IHC web site [www.intlhc.org](http://www.intlhc.org) and click on Support the IHC.