



THE HOUSING BAROMETER

A tool to support a rapid housing
sector review

The Housing Barometer: a tool to support a housing sector review

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United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

P. O. Box 30030, 00100 Nairobi GPO KENYA

Tel: 254-020-7623120 (Central Office)

www.unhabitat.org

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The Housing Barometer draws on the Practical Guide for Conducting Housing Profiles by UN-Habitat. It has both a pedagogic and a research purpose. The tool was created with the dual goal to support the realization of the housing profiles and to support the housing sector analysis, stimulating holistic and integrated thinking, and strengthening the users' understanding about the complexity of the housing sector and the interlinkages between the various attributes and sub-sectors of housing.

The tool was tested for the first time in the training course “Innovative Approaches to Deliver Affordable Housing Options in Asia” which took place from 19-29 November 2018, organized by UN-Habitat in partnership with the International Urban Training Centre (IUTC) in Korea. Nearly 30 participants attended the training, including mayors, deputy mayors and senior officials from Asian national bodies and cities. The Housing Barometer was tested in countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, Philippines and Vietnam. It was further tested in January 2019 by the participants of the Housing Specialization of the Master Programme in Urban Management and Development organized by the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies-IHS, Erasmus University of Rotterdam.

The final draft was shared with experts from UN-Habitat and partners and was peer-reviewed by Anaclaudia Marinheiro Centeno Roszbach, Coordinator Latin America and the Caribbean, Cities Alliance; Inês da Silva Magalhães, former National State Secretary of Housing of the Ministry of Cities of Brazil; Luis Bonilla Ortiz-Arrieta, Operational Director TECHO, Santiago, Chile; Marielos Arlen Marin, Ph. D. Candidate in Regional Planning, University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA; Matthew French, Housing and Urban Development Expert, Program Manager, Revitalising Informal Settlements and their Environments (RISE), Monash Sustainable Development Institute; Kecia Rust, Housing Finance Specialist and Head of the Centre for Affordable Housing Finance in Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa; Dr Wolfgang Amann, head of the IIBW – Institute for Real Estate, Construction and Housing Ltd. (Institut für Immobilien, Bauen und Wohnen GmbH), Vienna, Austria; Monica Ramirez, Director Housing and Human Settlements, Latin America and the Caribbean, Habitat for Humanity International, Costa Rica; Mariana Barrera, economist, National Director for Innovation and Sustainable Development of the National Secretariat of Urban Infrastructure of the Ministry of Interior, Public Works and Housing of Argentina; Ester van Steekelenburg, Housing and Urban Management Expert, Head of Urban Discovery, Hong Kong; Dr. Viviana Fernandez, architect and professor at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of Chile, former staff of the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism of Chile; Doris Andoni, Housing Expert and former Executive Director of the National Housing Agency, currently Head of the Housing Unit of the Ministry of Finance and Economy of Albania; David Sims, senior economist, consultant to UN-Habitat, principal author of the Housing Profile of Vietnam and Tunisia; and Fernando Duarte Callizo, director of TECHO. The peer-review process provided excellent and insightful expert knowledge which improved the final product that is presented herein. Their inputs and commitment to improving the tool is greatly appreciated.

Supervisor: Claudio Acioly Jr

Task Manager: Beatriz González Mendoza

Principal Authors: Claudio Acioly Jr and Beatriz González Mendoza

Peer Reviewers: Anaclaudia Marinheiro Centeno Roszbach, Inês da Silva Magalhães, Luis Bonilla Ortiz-Arrieta, Marielos Arlen Marin, Matthew French, Kecia Rust, Wolfgang Amann, Monica Ramirez, Mariana Barrera, Ester van Steekelenburg, Viviana Fernandez, Doris Andoni, David Sims and Fernando Duarte Callizo.

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PREAMBLE

The Housing Barometer is a tool to support a rapid analysis of the housing sector. It provides a quick overview of the housing sector that feeds directly into the housing policy formulation process. The Housing Barometer relies on qualitative assessments rather than data and empirical evidences. It expresses the perceptions of policy makers, decision makers and housing practitioners about the performance of the various subsectors of the housing sector. The result of housing sector analysis through the Housing Barometer gives an immediate visualization of the performance of the housing sector by means of the scoring given to each dimension and sub-sector of the Housing Sector in the context that it is being utilized.

The Housing Barometer is a practical tool that draws on the housing sector analysis methodology as outlined in the Practical Guide for Conducting Housing Profiles¹.

The Housing Barometer enables an easy diagrammatic visualization of the weaknesses and strengths of the housing sector in a given city/country, and as a result provides a basis for further policy discussions. It is illustrated as a housing sector diamond (the geometric figure) that suggests areas for further analysis and possible policy response. The Housing Barometer is therefore a problem-solving tool helping in the identification of the problem areas or policy shortcomings that need attention.

The housing sector diamond or radar chart – the visualization and geometric figure – expresses the results of the scoring system tagged to values given to a series of questions made about land supply, infrastructure provision, the construction industry, the house finance industry, urban planning, supply of labour, rules and regulations and so on. Low scores will indicate areas that need policy interventions and indicate where additional data, research and evidences will need to be collected in order to support the design of the evidence-based housing strategy. High scores mean that policies are in place and resulting into positive outcomes. It goes without saying that the normative view of the housing sector – as defined in the Practical Guide for Conducting Housing Profiles – is the foundation of the Housing Barometer.

From the outset, it is important to highlight that the performance of a country's housing sector is a complex issue. The analysis requires grounded research on housing, land and real estate markets, institutions, public policies, outcomes and social-economic processes that have a direct impact on cities and towns and on the quality of life of the inhabitants. Thus, the Housing Barometer is a supporting tool and does not replace the comprehensive analysis of the housing sector which is outlined in the 'Practical Guide for Conducting Housing Profiles' from which the standardisation of indicators and questionnaires are derived.

The outcome of the analysis provided by the Housing Barometer is to a certain degree an interpretation of the Housing Sector performance. By no means it replaces the need for empirical evidences, market surveys and policy research that must be carried out for an in-depth analysis of the housing sector in a given country and the formulation of a housing policy response. Finally, the Housing Barometer was designed with a dual goal of serving on the one hand the broad housing industry community in their quest to analyse and understand the structure and functioning of the housing sector, and on the other hand to serve as pedagogic tool to support Housing Practitioners Labs which are part and parcel of capacity building carried out by UN-Habitat in the housing field.

1 UN-Habitat (2011). Practical Guide for Conducting Housing Profiles. Nairobi: UN-Habitat.

PART I

Background, Context and Relevance of a Housing Barometer

2. THE MEANING AND DEFINITION OF HOUSING

Housing is an integral element of a country's economy². Its backward and forward linkages with other parts of the economy strictly bond people's needs, demands and social processes with the supply of land, infrastructure, building materials, technology, labour, and housing finance. These linkages allow housing to act as an essential engine for sustainable development and poverty reduction in both society and the economy³. Operating within an overarching governance of the housing sector, a framework defined by institutional and regulatory systems that enable society to build homes and neighbourhoods, housing has an inescapable physical manifestation through the building of houses, dwellings, shelter, accommodation, site and services and/or residential units. Without a functioning housing sector, urban centres cannot be established or developed. A functioning housing sector offers appropriate, affordable housing and sustainable patterns of urbanisation – which are critical for the future of our ever-urbanising planet⁴.

The success of a well-functioning housing sector involves various elements and components applicable to every housing stakeholder measured by the ability of the sector to deliver affordable housing options in scale and diversity in size, location, standard, price and typology. A housing policy, therefore, is built on and integrates a systematic analysis of the supply and demand side of the sector, the responsibilities and relationship between the various stakeholders and institutions operating within the governance framework⁵. The Housing Barometer serves the purpose of rapidly analysing the housing sector prior to the realization of the Housing Profile and the in-depth market and sector analysis that precedes the design of well-intended policies.

3. WHAT IS THE HOUSING BAROMETER?

The experience with undertaking the Housing Profile in various countries demonstrates the need to quickly unveil problem areas of the housing sector prior to initiating the comprehensive analysis of data, information, and participant's observations that sustain the housing sector analysis employed by the Housing Profile Methodology. The Housing

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