



## PRESS STATEMENT BY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY MALAWI ON WORLD CITIES DAY 2023

Habitat for Humanity Malawi joins the United Nations and other partners in celebrating the World Cities Day 2023, on October 31 under the theme “***Financing a sustainable urban future for all***”. This theme highlights the need for adequate and innovative financing mechanisms to ensure that all people have access to decent and affordable housing in well-planned and inclusive cities.

As a non-profit Christian organization affiliated to Habitat for Humanity International, Habitat for Humanity Malawi is part of the Home Equals global advocacy campaign, dedicated to achieving policy change, at all levels, to ensure that people living in informal settlements have equitable access to adequate housing. 8.7% of Malawi’s population (1.7 million people) live in slums and informal settlements. The informality of their settlements limits their access to basic services, land tenure security, climate resilience and civic participation to engage and demand service provisions in their localities. We believe that housing is a critical component of sustainable urban development, as it improves the health, safety, education and economic opportunities of families and communities. As such, we advocate for policies and systems that support the right to adequate housing for everyone, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

More than 1 billion people around the world live in slums and other informal settlements, and that figure continues to rise. They account for more than half of the 1.8 billion people who lack adequate housing globally, according to the UN. Habitat for Humanity and our partners are launched the five-year Home Equals campaign in May 2023 with an aim to change policies at the local, national, regional, and global levels so that residents of informal settlements have a safe, secure place to call home.

Over the next five years, the Home Equals campaign seeks to improve the lives of 15 million people living in informal settlements through policy change at the municipal, national, and regional levels. Through secure tenure, empowered participation, improved climate resilience and access to basic services.

Demystifying and localizing the Home Equals Campaign in Malawi, Habitat for Humanity Malawi would like to shift the development paradigm and focus on the urban setup. Currently working with the Lilongwe City Council in Area 27, an informal settlement, the project aims to affect development control, planning and infrastructure development in improving the quality of life of the residents of informal settlements. The project is working to level out challenges hampering equal access to land and adequate housing and related services, through participatory and community-centred processes. Attaining security of land tenure through participatory land use planning that will cater for the needs of the urban poor and rectify the deplorable living conditions of slum and informal settlement residents. The project serves as demonstration to provide an evidence-base for Habitat for Humanity Malawi advocacy through the campaign.

On World Cities Day 2023, we call on governments, private sector, civil society, and other urban stakeholders to join us in unlocking transformative investment in urban planning that are consistent with present day challenges in the housing sector. We acknowledge diverse views that upgrading and integration of informal settlements as too big and expensive. Instead, many still resort to the alternative of eviction, demolition, and relocation. On the other hand, we appreciate that communities in informal settlements can be sceptical of upgrading initiatives because of their past experiences.

The campaign is committed and deep rooted in the spirit of co creation. We are committed to working with internal actors and change agents in raising voices, addressing information asymmetries and inequalities so that people are adequately and uniformly informed about their cities and actively engage and demand better services. We consider the project as being incremental that begins with smaller, local actions which will break down the scale of the challenge.

Call to action:

We urge government, private sector, civil society, and other urban stakeholders to:

1. Prioritize the home as a lever for equitable human development, improve developmental outcomes, generate economic growth and care for the environment.
2. Take a comprehensive approach to housing in informal settlements that considers tenure security, basic services, climate resilience and empowered participation of residents.
3. Elevate informal settlement upgrading as a means of achieving international development.
4. Prioritize knowledge and data by, about and for informal settlement communities in a way that connects data to decision-making.
5. Adopt a participatory and integrated approach to urban development, involving all relevant levels and sectors of government, as well as the communities themselves.

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6. Explore innovative and inclusive financing models, such as public-private partnerships, community savings groups, microfinance, land value capture and social impact bonds, among others.

We invite you to learn more about our Home Equals Campaign at [www.habitat.mw](http://www.habitat.mw) or [www.habitat.org/home-equals](http://www.habitat.org/home-equals). and to follow our social media channels for updates on our activities and events during the Urban October campaign. You can download the template sign here: <https://www.habitat.mw/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Home-Equals-Placard.docx> to make your own. Have a think about what home equals for you and take a photo of yourself holding your sign. Simply tag @habitatforhumanitymalawi, hashtag #HomeEquals #UrbanOctober and share on your social media, to encourage others raise their voice for those who don't have a safe place to call home.

Together, we can build a world where everyone has a decent place to live. Happy World Cities Day!