

Sustainable Development Policy

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Unit	International Program, Habitat for Humanity Australia		
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Introduction

HFHA considers sustainability as the continuing benefit to communities from project activities long after the completion of the project cycle. HFHA is committed to reducing poverty by building strength, stability and self reliance with communities through collaborative delivery and management of adequate and affordable housing and housing support services such as water and sanitation facilities.

The HFH Theory of Change is core to the principals of sustainable development, as it provides the high-level direction that unifies and drives Habitat for Humanity toward long-term contribution and impact. The Theory of Change also provides the framework for evaluation and shared accountability for achieving meaningful impacts and outcomes. To achieve its vision of a world where everyone has a decent place to live, Habitat for Humanity must address systemic failures that causes inadequate housing to persist and grow. For a family to be successful on their housing journey, the root causes of inadequate housing must be considered. Truly addressing the drivers of inadequate housing means applying a housing ecosystem approach. The housing ecosystem comprises all the social norms, formal and informal institutions, and disruptive trends and events that influence how people are able to act to make changes that they value in their housing situation. At the centre of the housing ecosystem are the people HFH wants to serve.

HFH occupies a unique place within the housing ecosystem, working as a system leader that engages others and builds coalitions to bring about positive change. HFH partners with people, private, public sector and civil society to reduce inequities in the housing ecosystem with interventions aligned with the HFHI Global Strategic Plan.

The people-centered approach to development is a model of partnership that empowers people. The result is a more equitable housing system in which more people live in adequate, affordable and sustainable housing.

The Theory of Change shows how HFHA's work contributes to longer-term impacts. Adequate housing is a foundation for people to thrive, with dignity, security and resilience. Evidence demonstrates that improvements in housing can lead to better health and open up a wide range of life opportunities, significantly enhancing the lives of vulnerable and excluded people in particular.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that HFHA international program activities are guided by the principles of sustainable development and represents the organisation's commitment to sustainability in international development. It will also serve as a practical guide to inform and develop relationships with partner organisations and local communities.

Policy Statement

HFHA believes the key elements for sustainability include:

- Placing people at the centre of all our work and highlighting their role in defining and realising the ways they will improve their lives;
- Examining the root causes of inadequate housing, from the power imbalances caused by systemic bias to stressors and shocks;
- Apply a housing ecosystem lens to our work, helping HFHA understand the factors that support or hamper people on their housing journey;
- Linking HFHA specific programmes with the larger outcomes and impacts envisioned.

Practical considerations for project sustainability may include (but are not limited to):

1. Community driven and owned activities and outputs.
2. A strong enabling environment for scalability and replication of project activities without ongoing HFH or other external support.
3. Capacity development and strengthening support for communities and partners.
4. Quality of infrastructure built (materials, design and cultural appropriateness).
5. Support structures (community and/or government) and skills for maintenance of facilities.
6. Ethical supply chains, sourcing materials from sustainable sources.

HFHA is dedicated to carrying out and supporting initiatives that implement and promote sustainable development. HFHA will work in partnership with local organisations (as per the HFHA Partnerships policy) to:

- Value the importance of local knowledge.
- Identify all primary stakeholders and seek their perspectives and experiences.
- Encourage the active participation of families and communities, including vulnerable and marginalised groups, in all stages of the project cycle including identification/prioritisation, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.
- Identify and evaluate social and environmental risks and impacts of the project.
- Promote initiatives which have been identified through engagement with the local community that address real prioritised needs identified locally.
- Promote and provide means for adequate engagement with affected communities throughout the project cycle on issues that could potentially affect them and to ensure that relevant social, environmental and other sustainability-relevant information is disclosed and disseminated.

- Promote skills transfer and capacity development and strengthening, including for maintenance and future construction management.
- Promote the contributions of home partners and other project beneficiaries through ‘sweat equity’ (contribution of their time to the process of community development) and the formation of local community savings groups where appropriate.
- Match the cost and design of housing solutions with home partners’ ability to contribute to, maintain or repay, as necessary.
- Where loan schemes are included as part of the program, preserve the viability and integrity of HFH’s housing finance programs by ensuring careful family selection based on ability to repay a housing loan and appropriate lending cost structures designed to ensure both affordability and sustainability.
- Source and use low-cost, sustainable and local building materials and appropriate technologies wherever possible for the construction of adequate and secure housing and WASH solutions for vulnerable communities, taking into account local culture, climate, specific social conditions and vulnerability to natural disasters.
- Improve access to land, property, finance, adequate shelter and basic services for vulnerable communities.

Policy in Practice

HFHA will work in partnership with local organisations to ensure that:

Pre-project

- The HFHI Theory of Change is considered during project design, including a applying people-centred approach, examining the root causes of inadequate housing, applying a housing ecosystem lens to our work, and linking our specific programmes with the larger outcomes and impacts we envision.
- HFH staff are appropriately trained and experienced in applying sustainable development principles.
- Sustainable development will be encouraged by ensuring that project proposals are checked against sustainable development guiding principles, using HFHA project appraisal templates.
- Environmental factors in communities are considered in the development of the project design to minimise potential negative impacts on the local environment and livelihoods of families and communities, ensuring they are protected for future generations.
- Project budgets include dedicated Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) resources for the design and implementation of MEAL systems, to enable the measurement and reporting of outcomes and impacts throughout the project lifespan and the dissemination of lessons learnt to identified stakeholders.

During project

- Where applicable, local community members are trained in construction to increase availability of local skilled labour and to ensure resilient building

techniques are used so that current and future buildings are durable, functional and resilient to disasters.

- Program staff and local counterparts understand and support the principles of sustainable development and seek expertise when required.
- All projects engage the local target communities and are aimed towards long-term sustainable development.
- Buildings and infrastructure are made of quality, locally sourced materials where appropriate to ensure that the infrastructure is durable and of high quality.
- HFHA projects follow the *HFHI Minimum Housing Quality Standards* for guidance on the quality of housing and construction as well as guidance on incremental housing engagement with families.
- Technical assistance, along with capacity development and strengthening support are provided to partners in the delivery of projects as identified by the partners themselves through needs assessments.

Post-project

- Monitoring, reporting and evaluation activities include ongoing analysis of the sustainability of development outcomes and use lessons learnt to strengthen HFHA program approaches, as well as strengthening the wider sector by sharing knowledge and learning with broader stakeholders.
- HFHA engages local partners, the private sector and the government to create a strong enabling environment for the scalability and replication of HFHA project objectives beyond the end of the project cycle.
- Local communities and/or government are engaged in HFHA projects and provide regular maintenance of the infrastructure following completion of the project.

References:

- HFHA Partnerships Policy
- HFHA Capacity Development and Strengthening Policy