



**Let's make the
invisible billion
visible to the G7.**

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Home is more than a place to live. Home equals better health, safety and security, and the foundation for a better future.

But for the “invisible billion” — the more than 1.1 billion people living in slums or informal settlements — home equals something drastically different.

They endure overcrowded conditions that often threaten their health and safety. Limited access to essential services such as electricity, sanitation and clean water exposes them to life-threatening diseases. Unstable homes leave them vulnerable to extreme weather and climate change. Lacking property rights, they live in constant fear of eviction. And for women, who already face inequities in health and economic opportunity, the dangers are even more severe.

This isn't fair, and it isn't right. The “invisible billion” hold boundless potential, yet they are too often denied the opportunity to thrive.

Without urgent action, the number of people living in these conditions will continue to grow. The time to act is now.

In May 2025, leaders of the world's largest industrialized economies will gather at the G7 Summit in Canada to tackle global challenges. As the world's biggest contributors to development assistance, these leaders must prioritize improving the lives of one-eighth of the global population — the “invisible billion” who live in informal settlements.

The G7 has the power to help remove the structural barriers that prevent these communities from accessing adequate housing. They can:

- Prioritize programs and policies that ensure housing for the most vulnerable, in particular people living in informal settlements.
- Dedicate foreign assistance to improving homes in informal settlements.
- Champion upgrading projects that adopt a feminist approach, addressing the unique needs of women and girls.

Improved housing leads to reduced poverty, better health and higher educational attainment, especially for women and girls. These ripple effects uplift entire cities and countries, advancing sustainable development globally.

Together, we can help make the “invisible billion” visible to the G7 by asking them to change the equation so that home equals an opportunity for a better future.

I join Habitat for Humanity and others worldwide in urging the G7 members to take action to improve the lives of the more than 1.1 billion people living in slums and informal settlements.

The Canadian government, as the host of the G7 Summit in 2025, has a unique opportunity to champion adequate housing for vulnerable populations, especially women and girls.

Aligning with Canada's leadership on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health and quality education for girls, adolescent girls, and women, Canada can elevate adequate housing as a contributor to health, education and livelihood outcomes for women, girls and vulnerable populations, by:

1. **Promoting policy coherence for development:** Prioritizing housing and urban development across domestic and foreign policy agendas of G7 countries would create synergies towards sustainable development at home and abroad. By promoting policy coherence across different sectors, housing issues will get embedded in gender, health, climate and urban G7 working groups.
 - *Action: Ensure the Canadian Presidency of the G7 continues to convene the Sustainable Urbanization Ministerial meeting in 2025; and convene a new joint Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Affairs and Housing/Urban Ministries.*

2. **Advancing accountability of adequate housing in Official Development Assistance**
data: Unfortunately, the available data on housing and urban development programs from G7 countries is incomplete and inaccurate. Progress made with the ODA gender marker should inspire the development of a similar instrument to enhance development actions and accountability of funding flows for adequate housing.
 - *Action: Establish a task force to monitor ODA levels directed at adequate housing and informal settlements.*
 - *Action: Request the OECD to invest and update its understanding of “adequate housing and informal settlements” in ODA’s data architecture.*

3. **Championing innovative slum upgrading projects with a feminist approach:** Canada should champion pilot projects in key countries, particularly in Africa and the Indo-Pacific region, that invest in comprehensive settlement upgrading to improve health, education, income/livelihoods, safety and climate resilience, with a gender lens that empowers those most vulnerable.
 - *Action: Support the implementation of the Global Action Plan for slum transformation led by UN-Habitat by investing in strategic projects with a gender equity approach.*