

The Forum

promoting dialogue among Habitat for Humanity's worldwide partners

The value of advocacy for Habitat for Humanity

By Jenny Russell

The advocacy work of Habitat for Humanity is designed to identify and address the fundamental causes of insufficient housing worldwide, and thus dramatically increase people's access to affordable housing.

Using the "one house at a time" model, Habitat has built nearly 300,000 houses in 30 years. Habitat can increase exponentially the number of families we serve by adding advocacy to our successful building efforts. Joining with other anti-poverty organizations, HFHI has already had a dramatic impact on housing policies, programs and funding sources.

THE OFFICIAL HFHI DEFINITION OF ADVOCACY IS, "CHANGING SYSTEMS, POLICIES AND ATTITUDES TO ACHIEVE DECENT HOUSING FOR ALL." THIS INCLUDES, "WORKING TO INFLUENCE PUBLIC OPINION AND TRANSFORM SYSTEMS THAT LEAD TO THE CREATION AND PRESERVATION OF HOUSING FOR ALL, TOWARD THE GOAL OF ENDING POVERTY WORLDWIDE."

Habitat's affiliates, SSOs (state support organizations) and national organizations have launched critical advocacy initiatives with partners and families in the United States and abroad, consistent with HFHI's 2006–11 Strategic Plan, which states, "By 2011, HFHI will help lead the transformation of systems that impact affordable housing" (Goal 3).

Advocacy has many different connotations. Lobbying and raising awareness are major components of advocacy, but HFHI also considers it important to focus on broader change, including education, grass-roots organizing, coal-

THE BEST NONPROFITS BOTH ADVOCATE AND SERVE. THEY COUPLE POLICY REFORM WITH PROGRAMS OR DIRECT SERVICES TO CREATE MORE IMPACT. ULTIMATELY, THE TWO ACTIVITIES REINFORCE EACH OTHER.²

tion-building, media communications and assessing impact. The official HFHI definition of advocacy is, "Changing systems, policies and attitudes to achieve decent housing for all." This includes, "working to influence public opinion and transform systems that lead to the creation and preservation of housing for all, toward the goal of ending poverty worldwide."

Though they are essential aspects of Habitat's mission, fund raising and educating others about Habitat's work are not considered advocacy at HFHI; nor is lobbying for specific candidates or political parties.

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EZRA MILLSTEIN

Makeshift housing in Alaska—where plastic sheeting is sometimes all that’s available to shield a family from the brutal cold—dramatically illustrates the need for reform in the United States.

Habitat’s advocacy work is grounded in our Christian values. Habitat takes seriously the call of Christ to be in ministry with the poor and transforms this belief into efforts to alleviate poverty worldwide. We believe that Habitat can best respond to Christ’s call to end poverty by using its reputation, influence, commitment and knowledge to contend with the challenge of housing and the poor and impress upon the world the importance of this critical issue.¹

There are many ways to advocate with Habitat:

- Organize an activity to raise awareness and advocate, addressing the worldwide problem of poverty housing for World Habitat Day on Oct. 6, 2008.
- Support HFHI’s U.S. advocacy campaign in 2009 focused on security of tenure by sending the Government Relations and Advocacy (GRA) Office stories about your work on land titling, property grabbing or other tenure security work in your country to share with U.S. government officials.
- If you’re a U.S. citizen, sign up for the online tool to send letters to members of Congress about Habitat’s legislative priorities.
- Attend the annual Habitat on the Hill legislative and advocacy conference.

- Work with Habitat’s national office to research local housing policies, develop a “wish list” of policy changes, build a coalition and create a plan to advocate for solutions.
- Look at the Government Relations and Advocacy page of My.Habitat for tools and resources. 

Jenny Russell is the managing director of advocacy at HFHI’s Washington office. She can be reached at JRussell@habitat.org.

¹ Advocacy Management Team Report and Recommendations, October 2005, p. 6.

² *Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits* by Leslie Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant, which highlights Habitat for Humanity.

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Editor:

Anita Mellott

Copy editor:

Teresa Weaver

Graphic designer:

Tonya D. Wright

Portuguese and Spanish translations:

Translation Station, Inc.

Adviser:

Karan Kennedy

Distribution manager:

Nancy Barnes: NBarnes@habitat.org

Editorial policy:

We welcome the submission of articles, photos, news items and ideas. For more information, please e-mail TheForum@habitat.org or AMellott@habitat.org.

Mission statement

“The Forum” exists to enable the worldwide partners of Habitat for Humanity International to accomplish its mission by providing a means to:

- Promote discussion, the exchange of ideas and best practices, and knowledge sharing;
- Share concerns and challenge our standard ways of doing things; and
- Explore different methodologies and issues relating to housing and poverty worldwide.



121 Habitat St., Americus, GA 31709-3498 USA

It's a long row to hoe, but we'll get there

By Jonathan Reckford



Habitat for Humanity alone will never build enough houses to overcome the vast scourge of poverty housing in our world. That's why we have to look broadly and creatively at how best to reach more families, while closely adhering to our mission and core principles.

Our longstanding second mission principle is: "Advocate on behalf of those in need of decent shelter." It says that, as an integral part of our work, we commit to communicating the needs of all people

for safe and decent shelter, thereby engaging in deliberate efforts to leverage change within society to eliminate restraints that contribute to poverty and poverty housing.

Wherever we might be working around the world, Habitat partners will always be found building and repairing homes. But even as we do that, we also want to short-circuit the forces that draw—and keep—families in poverty housing.

I've told the story before of the old farmer hoeing rocks out of his garden at the bottom of a steep hill. He knew, of course, that nothing could grow in the rocky soil. Yet every time he removed one rock, two more would tumble down the hill to take its place. After the better part of the day hoeing tirelessly in his garden, he decided to climb the hill to see what was causing the stones to tumble his way in the first place.

Similarly, the housing crisis across the globe is outpacing our efforts to build more homes. And so, through advocacy, we want to "climb the hill" to address the root causes forcing families into substandard conditions. In fact, Goal 3 in our strategic plan calls on us to do exactly that: to help transform the systems that have an impact on affordable housing.

Our advocacy team, with input and collaboration from many other Habitat partners worldwide, has identified two priorities on which to focus their efforts in the coming months: housing trust funds in the United States and land tenure, the lack of which poses a tremendous barrier in many other parts of the world.

Departments within Habitat for Humanity International are pursuing their own advocacy efforts as well, including Global Village and Youth Programs, which last April coordinated Act! Speak! Build! Week, an annual effort to mobilize students as advocates.

I know many of you are incorporating advocacy opportunities into your own efforts, and I encourage you to continue. If you haven't already, please consider becoming an online advocate by visiting www.habitat.org/gov and signing up for Action Alerts—along with some 27,000 others who've already taken that step. It's an easy way to speak up on behalf of those whose housing plights go too often unheard.

Let's keep building. Let's keep hammering and laying block, creating and strengthening new partnerships to create more access to housing. But let's also advocate with equal vehemence—because if we want in the end to leave a deeper impact worldwide, advocacy is one clear path to help get us there. 🏠

Jonathan Reckford is CEO of Habitat for Humanity International.

From the editors

Is Habitat for Humanity a movement or a franchise? Such questions came up frequently in philosophical debates during Habitat's rapid expansion in the late 1990s. In a constantly changing world, we are forever defining and redefining who we are – ever mindful that we need to stay focused on our mission of "decent homes in decent communities."

In truth, the answer to that initial question is not a simple "either ... or," but a much more complex "both ... and." We are both a movement and a franchise. An important piece of Habitat's ultimate goal is to put "shelter on the hearts and minds of people in such a powerful way that poverty housing and homelessness become socially, politically and religiously unacceptable in our nations and world." And at the same time, our approach is to work with local communities to accomplish the "building of houses" as well as "building the brand" of Habitat for Humanity.

This issue of *The Forum* explores the topic of advocacy. Paradoxically, advocacy is both a new effort and a foundational part of who we are as an organization. The articles in this issue discuss many of the challenges that face Habitat as we define what advocacy is and refine how we measure it.

It's important as well to celebrate advocacy efforts that are beginning to bear fruit in the United States and around the world. 🏠

Anita Mellott and Karan Kennedy



Advocacy plays a key role in Habitat's history

By Jennifer Lindsey

“Habitat for Humanity was founded on a simple premise with a radical goal: work in partnership with those in need of adequate shelter to build simple, decent houses for all. It started with 42 half-acre house sites at Koinonia Farms in Americus, Georgia, and grew into an international organization with a presence in about 90 countries. Throughout the organization's history, Habitat has advocated for a better world – expressing God's love by putting faith into action and helping those in need.”

That paragraph is taken from the Advocacy Task Force Report and Recommendations presented to Habitat for Humanity's International Board of Directors in 2005 that led to the inclusion of advocacy in HFHI's current strategic plan.

It is a fitting beginning to a look at the history of advocacy in our ministry. The founding documents of the Koinonia Partnership Ministries highlight three prongs: communications, instruction and application.

“By communication,” the document states, “we mean the sowing of the seed, the spreading of the radical ideas of the gospel message; the call to preach the good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.”

As a continuation of this message, Habitat for Humanity's ultimate goal includes the proclamation that “all of our words

and actions are for the ultimate purpose of putting shelter on the hearts and minds of people in such a powerful way that poverty housing and homelessness become socially, politically and religiously unacceptable in our nations and world.”

“CALL UPON AND MOBILIZE INDIVIDUALS AND INSTITUTIONS TO IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES THAT PRODUCE AND PRESERVE AFFORDABLE HOUSING.”¹

Indeed, since the founding of Habitat for Humanity International in 1976, we have expressed our mission as working toward two goals: building houses with people who otherwise could not own their own home; and making it a matter of conscience worldwide that substandard housing is morally, socially, religiously, politically and economically unacceptable.

The latter goal manifests itself in many ways throughout the Habitat world: On build sites and board rooms, we reach out to supporters, volunteers, partners and friends to educate, engage and urge action to end poverty housing.


And so, although advocacy has come under many headings in our history, it is at the very core of who we are and what we do. In more recent years, advocacy has been mentioned by name in organizational plans and programs. The 2000-05 HFHI strategic plan included advocacy in its four strategic directions: “Through powerfully and appropriately communicating the needs of all people for safe and decent shelter, HFH engages in deliberate efforts to leverage change within society resulting in the elimination of the external restraints that contribute to poverty and poverty housing.”

Finally, the 2005 advocacy report quoted above became the pillar of Goal 3, Objective 3:2 of Habitat for Humanity International's 2007-11 Strategic Plan: “Call upon and mobilize individuals and institutions to implement policies and practices that produce and preserve affordable housing.”

As a result of these more intentional actions to make advocacy an official element of our ministry, HFHI now has an advocacy department with a strong and growing staff dedicated to building capacity throughout the Habitat world to advocate for better housing for all. But, just as they taught at Koinonia Farms so many years ago, we all are responsible for sowing the seeds. 🏠

Jennifer Lindsey is senior director of international and advocacy communications at HFHI. She can be contacted at JLindsey@habitat.org.

¹ Goal 3, Objective 3:2 of Habitat for Humanity International's 2007-2011 Strategic Plan



Rolling out advocacy activities within HFHI

By José Quinonez

The Government Relations and Advocacy (GRA) Office has been rolling out advocacy activities to each area office in HFHI in a four-step process:

1. *Mapping advocacy information in each area:* The concept is to collect and share all experiences in advocacy work developed by HFH national offices within the area. This allows the area office and the GRA Office to identify strategies that can be replicated, not only within that area, but in other geographic regions as well.
2. *Sharing of best practices:* Building on the mapping exercise, the GRA Office proposes developing a “Best Practices Sharing” session to capture, disseminate and share work, methods, processes and initiatives focused on advocacy, message development and advocacy planning. As part of this session, the national office advocacy staff, area office advocacy staff and the GRA Office will have an opportunity to define needs, develop performance measurement impact indicators, and adapt and share best practices to ensure program replicability and quality. This work will allow for peer discussion and review of how advocacy initiatives could be better implemented in the area. In addition, learning from national office staff about their measuring tools and impact indicators will enhance HFHI’s advocacy metric system.
3. *Conducting advocacy training:* The GRA Office is developing a five-module training program to help national offices and area office staff understand the different aspects of advocacy work. The training program can be conducted in two forms: GRA staff could deliver the training to area and national office staff, or

selected area office staff could be trained so they could replicate the training in the area. In addition, the GRA Office is in the process of updating its “Advocacy Toolkit” to make it more applicable to national offices.

4. *Selecting and providing some financial support to advocacy pilot projects:* For many of our pilot programs, the GRA Office issues calls for proposals that seek to generate innovative and promising ideas from national offices/branches, affiliates and/or support organizations. The GRA Office places priority on solicited mechanisms such as published requests for proposals (RFPs), but unsolicited proposals may be considered at any time during the year if the activity does not fit under the solicited mechanism.

HFHI’s GRA Office supports advocacy efforts that lead to change and allows us to serve more families. National offices/branches, affiliates and/or support organizations that seek funding for their advocacy activities should contact the GRA Office to get more information about the advocacy work at HFHI. 🏠

José Quinonez is the associate director of Advocacy Training at HFHI’s Government Relations and Advocacy Office in Washington. He can be reached at JQuinonez@habitat.org.

Public awareness vs. advocacy

By Steve Little

In order to understand why the substandard housing is such a difficult issue to address, we need to travel upstream to find the systemic causes. The big Sunflower River in Clarksdale, Mississippi, offers some inspiration.

When I was a kid, my father taught me that when you're in a canoe traveling downstream and you come to a "Y" in the river, you can go either way. It doesn't matter. One way might be more difficult; the other more scenic, but when you're traveling downstream, the river will always come back to itself.

Traveling upstream is a different matter.

If you're traveling upstream, paddling against the current, and you have two different directions to choose from, chances are good that those two diverging paths will take you to very different places.

I suppose that's an illogical place to start an article about the differences between advocacy and public awareness. But that life-lesson from my childhood – bug-bitten and hoping my dad could guide us back home – helps me see the difference.

Habitat for Humanity was founded as a "downstream" organization. It doesn't matter where we came from or what church we attend or what language we speak. Regardless of the paths we chose, we find ourselves living together in community with our neighbors. Some of those neighbors need a better place to live. To paraphrase our founder, if we can agree on a hammer and we can agree on a nail, we ought to be able to figure this mess out.

And we have. Hundreds of thousands of people live a better life because of our downstream efforts.

But as our ministry grew, we recognized that what happens upstream has a great impact on our community. We've realized that if we can influence the currents – the systems

– that bring poverty housing into our midst, we will change the situation much more efficiently than by our building efforts alone.

As we contemplate the different tributaries that flow together to form the world's housing crisis, we quickly become overwhelmed.

Some of those upstream systems are easy to comprehend. Local zoning laws that dictate enormous and elaborate houses obviously limit affordable housing opportunities for lower-income families. (As a matter of fact, the exclusion of low-income families is frequently the reason those laws are developed in the first place.)

IF WE CAN INFLUENCE THE CURRENTS – THE SYSTEMS – THAT BRING POVERTY HOUSING INTO OUR MIDST, WE WILL CHANGE THE SITUATION MUCH MORE EFFICIENTLY THAN BY OUR BUILDING EFFORTS ALONE.

Other systems are more difficult to grasp – security of tenure issues in most of the southern hemisphere, for example. If an entire community could be evicted at any moment, it's difficult for families there to justify investing their precious resources into improved housing.

The end result is a vicious cycle: A family in a shack won't improve their housing for fear of losing the investment. But the lack of an adequate house increases the possibilities that

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Public awareness vs. advocacy

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the family will be forcibly removed from the land.

Many, many systems contribute to the situation. Some of them are so simple as to be overlooked. A hardware store won't accept a credit card from a local bank – but that particular credit card is the only one available to local families desperate for construction supplies. Or possibly a neighborhood fruit vendor has the option of buying bananas from a corporation that offers its fieldworkers some sort of housing benefits.

Systems that maintain poverty's status quo are all around us.

Other articles in this publication will outline some of the ingenious strategies that our colleagues have designed to influence the sources of the housing crisis. According to Habitat's Government Relations and Advocacy Office, based in Washington:

“Advocacy is changing systems, policies and attitudes to achieve decent housing for all. This includes actions that include a specific ‘ask.’ These ‘asks’ should promote practical housing policy solutions.”

Agreed. We need to encourage the public to support these activities, which have been designed to stem the flow of inadequate housing.

But if that's all we're asking the public to do, we are greatly remiss.

Habitat for Humanity has only just begun to map the complicated and convoluted currents that result in children growing up in shacks. As one, solitary organization, we will never be able to influence and control all of the necessary systems to eradicate the problem.

And so, in addition to asking the public to support our advocacy initiatives, we encourage the public to look at the issue from their own unique perspective. We want everyone who hears our message to ask their own questions and to change the systems that they have influence over.

That's public awareness. Through our educational and communications initiatives, people are invited to deepen their understanding of the problem from a different point of view. We encourage them to dream – and to develop their own initiatives. We want them to begin their own long journey, and find their own tributaries.

But the first step is to let people know that the systems that produce inadequate housing aren't necessarily half a world away. And to address those systems, you don't necessarily need a law degree.

The first step is to persuade people to turn around and look upstream, and wonder what's just around the bend. 🏠

Steve Little is director of public awareness for HFHI's programs in Latin America and the Caribbean. He can be contacted at SLittle@habitat.org.

We believe ...

The Public Awareness Department in Latin America is a combination of the LA/C area office's communications functions, as well as its volunteer mobilization functions.

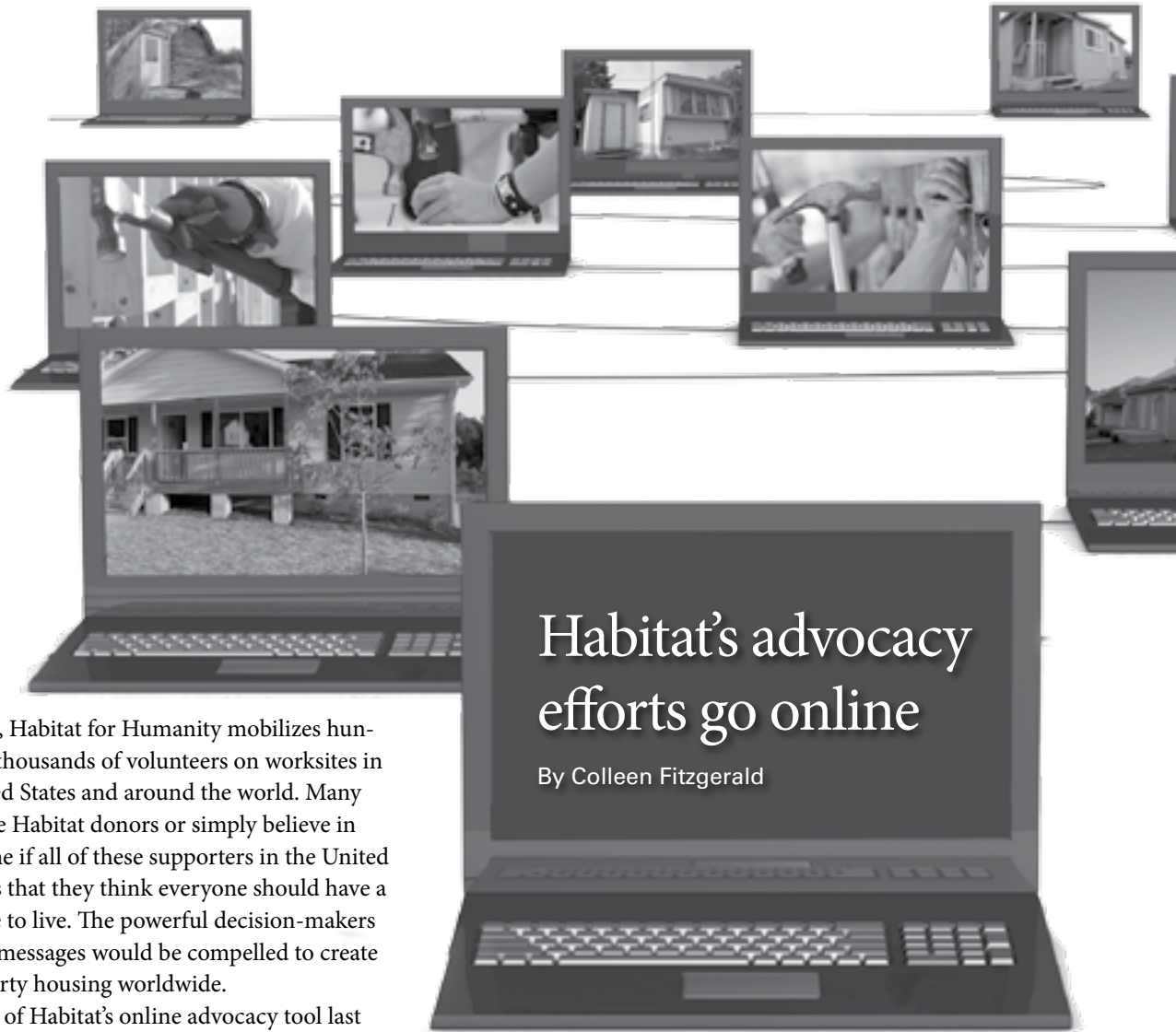
The unique combination recognizes the fact that our communications with the public should never end with simply telling someone our story. Our communications should always be geared toward transforming our target audiences into advocates,¹ actively working to eliminate poverty housing.

Many of our most important supporters got their first introduction to Habitat as volunteers. Arguably, those volunteers – even the ones who never again set foot on a Habitat site or never donate resources to our organization – carry with them a newfound understanding of the importance of an adequate home and its impact on a family. Even though we might not see it, those believers continue to positively affect the world for the rest of their lives.

That's what we believe. According to our department's manifesto:

- We believe the world can change.
- We believe that adequate housing is a human right, and that by fulfilling that right, we will create the conditions that will lift families out of poverty, and provide individuals with the resources they need to become all that God intends them to be.
- We believe that Habitat for Humanity's greatest opportunities lie within its volunteers and community members.
- We believe that every Habitat for Humanity volunteer has the potential to radically change the world's housing situation in ways that we have not yet imagined, and in communities where we have not yet reached.
- We believe that our role within this ministry is to tell the stories of the invisibles; to shine a light into the hovels and homes of the underprivileged; and to inspire others to do what they can to change the situation, according to their own particular context.
- We believe we will succeed. 🏠

¹ According to the New Oxford American Dictionary, “advocate” means “a person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy.”



Every year, Habitat for Humanity mobilizes hundreds of thousands of volunteers on worksites in the United States and around the world. Many more individuals are Habitat donors or simply believe in our mission. Imagine if all of these supporters in the United States told Congress that they think everyone should have a simple, decent place to live. The powerful decision-makers who received these messages would be compelled to create policies to end poverty housing worldwide.

With the launch of Habitat's online advocacy tool last year, we are moving closer to this goal and giving U.S. supporters one more way to be involved with the mission. Affiliate staff members, volunteers and other supporters can use this online tool to send e-mails to their representatives in Congress and become advocates for Habitat for Humanity's legislative priorities. With every message that is sent to Congress, advocates are helping ensure that more people have an affordable place to live — with or without Habitat's assistance.

Advocacy is an integral part of Habitat's mission and is one of the four goals of the HFHI Strategic Plan 2007-2011: "HFHI will help lead the transformation of systems that impact affordable housing." The online advocacy tool gives us the means to speak truth to power and moves us closer to this goal of transforming systems.

How can you become an advocate? Members of the general public and U.S.-based HFHI staff can visit www.habitat.org and click on "Be an Advocate" on the homepage. HFHI staff members who are not U.S. citizens can sign up to receive the advocacy action alerts via e-mail and stay informed about Habitat's legislative priorities.

U.S. affiliate staff, volunteers and donors can advocate by

Habitat's advocacy efforts go online

By Colleen Fitzgerald

visiting www.AdvocateWithHabitat.org today. This new Web page has been created specifically for HFH affiliates and support organizations, so you can be assured that no one who takes action at www.AdvocateWithHabitat.org will receive fund-raising materials from HFHI as a result of doing so.

Once you have taken action or signed up to be an advocate, you'll start receiving advocacy action alerts. When important housing-related legislation comes up for a vote in Congress, HFHI will alert you via e-mail to request that you take action and make your voice heard.

Recent successes

In the summer of 2007, Habitat completed an online campaign that helped recruit more than 8,500 volunteers to advocate for post-disaster housing legislation in Congress. In addition to rebuilding the U.S. Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina, Habitat advocated for better government policies relating to the housing needs of families affected by disasters.

Habitat's new advocates used the online tool to e-mail

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Habitat's advocacy efforts go online

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senators and encourage them to support legislation that would establish a National Commission on Children and Disasters. The commission would include a housing expert who could make recommendations to the president and Congress that would help ensure vulnerable families are able to find housing after another disaster strikes. In December 2007, the Kids in Disasters Well-being, Safety and Health (WISH) Act of 2007 was passed by Congress and signed by the president. This is a tremendous victory, and Habitat will continue to support efforts that change systems, policies and attitudes

that move us toward achieving decent housing for all.

Since this first online effort, our advocacy network has expanded to include more than 28,000 supporters who push for action on a variety of national and international issues. Thousands of advocates have now taken action in support of the GROWTH Act (Global Resources and Opportunity for Women to Thrive Act). This act creates an "incentive fund" within the U.S. Agency for International Development to actively encourage economic opportunity projects in developing countries that incorporate women's needs. It provides women with a range of tools to lift themselves out of poverty by:

- Enhancing women's land and property rights.
- Helping women to start and grow businesses.
- Helping women get better jobs and make women's jobs better.
- Helping ensure that the benefits of trade reach poor women.

Advocacy is already supplementing our mission of building houses with those in need and allowing us to serve even more families. If you'd like to learn more about Habitat's advocacy efforts, visit www.habitat.org/gov. If you haven't done so already, take action today by using Habitat's online advocacy tool! 🏠

Colleen Fitzgerald, associate director of grassroots advocacy, has worked for HFHI for three years. Before coming to Habitat, she worked on Capitol Hill for a U.S. senator. She attended Pennsylvania State University, where she was involved in the campus chapter of Habitat. She can be contacted at CFitzgerald@habitat.org.



'A Place to Be ...' on World Habitat Day

By Arlene Corbin Lewis

Originally declared as the first Monday of October in December 1985 by the United Nations General Assembly, World Habitat Day recognizes the state of human settlements and the basic need for adequate shelter for all.

This year, Habitat for Humanity International is preparing for Monday, Oct. 6, like it never has before. In a coordinated effort to raise awareness and encourage action, HFHI staff members have begun distributing a toolkit that outlines ways in which Habitat affiliates and national offices can get involved through public awareness and education, advocacy and even fund raising.

Items such as World Habitat Day T-shirts and posters will be available, and there are plans to release on Oct. 6 a comprehensive study about the crisis of secure tenure around the world.

Habitat's theme for World Habitat Day 2008, "A Place to Be..." was chosen to highlight tenure security issues around the world, focusing on the legal, financial, social or cultural constraints that make it difficult for some people to be secure in their own homes.

"This is a particularly special day of the year," said Habitat CEO Jonathan Reckford, "on which Habitat for Humanity can and should join the rest of the world to highlight the need for, and the importance of, housing and collectively to develop ideas and solutions that will ultimately move more families into decent shelter."

It is Habitat's goal that one day World Habitat Day will have the same significance and impact as World AIDS Day or Earth Day. With some effort and momentum, more and more people will be reminded on the first Monday every October of the need for adequate and accessible housing worldwide. And more and more will feel compelled to help address those needs throughout the year. 🏠

Arlene Corbin Lewis (Acorbinlewis@habitat.org) is associate director of communications for HFHI's Government Relations and Advocacy Office in Washington.



Reaching hearts and minds in Poland

By Barbora Cernusakova

During the past 15 years, the focus of Habitat for Humanity Poland was building houses with families in need to improve their living conditions. The level of need in this Eastern European country is outrageous – 6 million out of 38 million live in substandard housing conditions.

“Such a high number of people suggests the problem is a structural one,” said Dorota Binkiewicz, manager of HFH Poland’s advocacy campaign. “Although the help of HFH Poland certainly made a difference, we could not help feeling like we are a drop in the ocean.”

Impassioned to change that, Binkiewicz undertook a project with an ambitious goal: to promote and help implement a sustainable national housing policy. A systematic policy at both national and local levels should address two main housing problems in Poland: lack of affordability and poor-quality, substandard housing.

Poland is a rare example in East-Central Europe: It’s a nation that recognizes the right to housing in its Constitution, thus making authorities accountable to satisfy the housing needs of the citizens. However, this right suffers from a lack of enforceability – a situation HFH Poland is now tackling.

The first step was setting up an advocacy coalition called “Roofs Over Heads.” After the first meeting in 2005, a few organizational sessions followed. NGO partners involved in housing and social inclusion issues – including SOS Children Villages, CARITAS and Barka Foundation – have started to meet regularly. HFH Poland was the leader and facilitator of the coalition-building process.

“It was during these discussions that we realized we need a strategic solution, a systematic change,” said Binkiewicz. This part of the advocacy work was not easy, she added, as the prevailing attitude among Polish NGOs is that they have

to compete with each other for funding, media space and supporters.

“In the end, however, we managed to identify the common goal and see that if we work together, we will all benefit,” Binkiewicz said.

The call for a nationwide affordable housing program was soon supported by research that helped identify several housing-related issues. One of the most prominent findings was the lack of housing solutions for people who cannot afford to pay market prices for housing.

“There are whole groups within the population who will simply never be able to get a mortgage,” said Binkiewicz. “They come across as: ‘non-bankable.’”

These people are often doomed to life in substandard housing conditions. During her time with Habitat for Humanity, Binkiewicz has often witnessed firsthand the dreariness of their plight.

“I met several families experiencing overcrowding – a family with two children living in one room of 8 square meters [86 square feet],” Binkiewicz said. “Both of the parents were working, but they still could not afford to buy a house, and did not receive any help from the municipality either, as there are hundreds of families on the waiting lists for public rental housing.”

There are several vulnerable groups affected by the housing need in Poland, and the policies attempting to address the issue need to be tailored to the specific group.

“At the moment we are working on the identification of the vulnerable groups, such as graduates from the orphanages, elderly, single parents, etc.,” said Binkiewicz. “And we are outlining various policy solutions for each particular group.”

After the first eight months of the project, the advocacy coalition is working well. It has established contacts at the Ministry of Infrastructure, as well as at the office of the Prime Minister, secured media patrons for a public awareness campaign, and is enlisting the expertise of several housing experts.

At the same time, HFH Poland itself has already learned some hard lessons in the advocacy field.

“We started with a lot of enthusiasm, but the work was quite a bit intuitive at the beginning,” Binkiewicz said. “We felt that we should do something, but it was not always easy to see how to get ‘there.’ Progressively, we have reached a point where we just had to start being programmatic: to identify clear and measurable goals, objectives and activities that will lead us to it.

“We have learned to be patient and flexible,” she said. 🏠

Barbora Cernusakova is former advocacy manager for Habitat for Humanity International in Europe and Central Asia.

Raising awareness and making progress in Latin America and Caribbean

By Maria Luisa Zanelli and Rodolfo Ramirez



Two important root causes of inadequate housing in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are high rates of urbanization and high land prices in relation to income.

In response, advocacy efforts in the region have taken a three-pronged approach:

- Working to strengthen capacities of families and community-based organizations in advocating for housing rights, secure tenure, access to public resources and respect for cultural values of indigenous populations.
- Advancing the roles of civil society networks and local leadership in designing and managing regulatory frameworks and public policy.
- Participating in forums and conferences that raise awareness and address the root causes of poverty and poverty housing.

These efforts have produced tangible results in Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, Argentina and Chile. For example, HFH Brazil joined forces with the National Forum for Urban Reform (FNUR) to help pass a law that recognizes popular entities as housing promotion agents and provides community-based associations, social movements and popular cooperatives access to state financial resources. Within the framework of this law, the Program for Social Production of Housing was formulated and approved, and Brazil's National Fund for Social Interest Housing (FNHIS) was created. The program has designated R\$100 million (more than US\$60 million) to these entities so they can directly implement social interest housing projects and initiatives during 2008.

In Honduras, the initiative of the Cooperative Housing Network (REDVISOL), which includes Habitat Honduras, together with the Honduran Council for Cooperative Housing (COHVISOL), created the Program for Cooperative Housing and Credit Solidarity (PROVICCSOL). This program allows NGOs and cooperatives to channel public funds for the self-managed construction of social housing to benefit low-income families.

In addition, Habitat volunteers in Brazil raised awareness of the housing deficit with a public relations campaign that included videos about sprawling *favelas* in Sao Paulo, among other features. A project with the Swedish Cooperative Center will promote access to adequate housing in urban



EZRA MILLSTEIN

Thirty families make precarious homes in a *favela* known as Dos Trilhos (Two Tracks) in Goiania, Brazil, wedged in an old cargo rail gulch. Such conditions make it imperative to put on the hearts and minds of people worldwide that substandard housing is unacceptable.

Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala. The project for 2008 will focus on Guatemala.

Additional forums, conferences and awareness-raising activities include:

- Joint promotion and participation of Habitat for Humanity Latin America/Caribbean, RENASEH, Habitat Brazil, FNUR and the Ecuadorian Social Contract for Housing in the fifth Conference for Social Housing in Chile.
- Promotion of the participation of Habitat for Humanity LA/C, Habitat Bolivia, RENASEH, Habitat Brazil and FNUR in the Latin American Social Studies Congress in Ecuador.
- Participation of Habitat Brazil, Habitat LA/C and Habitat's Government Relations and Advocacy Office in the third National Cities Conference in Brazil.
- Participation of 10 NGOs and Habitat LA/C in the World Conference on the Development of Cities in Brazil.

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Building and advocating go hand-in-hand

Carter Work Project volunteers boost housing initiative

By Arlene Corbin Lewis

While thousands of volunteers converged upon the Mississippi Gulf Coast this year for the Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project (CWP), those who could not make it were encouraged to pick up a pen instead of a hammer.

As Habitat embraces advocacy as a natural extension of its mission, more and more people in the United States are signing up to advocate with Habitat on critical issues that have an impact on the ministry. Recently, after an exhaustive process, the need for a national housing trust fund was identified as priority issue for Habitat.



STEFFAN HACKER

Volunteers Christopher Cross (left), a stonemason from Northern Ireland, and Mark Schlichting, a Delta employee from Sharpsburg, Georgia, work together setting trusses on the second day of building at the 2008 Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project in Pascagoula, Mississippi.

And with that, a national housing trust fund campaign was born.

Housing trust funds work. Already they have proven their success at both the local and state levels. That's why affordable housing advocates, a bipartisan group of congressional leaders and others support the creation of a housing trust fund, with dedicated funding to produce and preserve rental homes that the lowest-income people in the United States can afford.

HOUSING TRUST FUNDS WORK. ALREADY
THEY HAVE PROVEN THEIR SUCCESS AT
BOTH THE LOCAL AND STATE LEVELS.

With the credit crunch and the foreclosure crisis, along with inadequate wages and high costs of living, it is increasingly difficult for low-income working families to secure stable and affordable housing.

The serious need for a national housing trust fund was not lost on those who chose to advocate on this issue during the CWP. During the May 12-16 build on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, worksite volunteers, affiliates and HFHI staff members were all asked to mobilize around the issue of a national housing trust fund. The state and local versions of these funds, which exist in more than 170 areas nationwide and generate more than \$1.6 billion a year to support critical housing needs, offer much-needed low-interest loans and grants to affordable housing developers.

To help rally people around this effort, e-mail alerts were distributed, postcards for Capitol Hill were collected, and volunteers were given the message that a national housing trust fund will not only help Habitat serve more families throughout the United States but also give communities the ability to create jobs and increase the local tax base.

Habitat's supporters heard the message loud and clear. By the end of the project, hundreds of CWP volunteers had signed postcards in support of a national housing trust fund and the millions of people in need of safe and affordable homes. And using Habitat's online advocacy tool, nearly 3,400 individuals sent e-mails to their representatives in

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Building and advocating go hand-in-hand

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Thousands of volunteers from all over the world traveled to the Mississippi Gulf Coast in May 2007 to build and rehabilitate houses in Biloxi, Pascagoula and Gulfport with families who are still suffering from the effects of the 2005 hurricane season.

Congress, urging them to support a national housing trust fund.

Legislators on Capitol Hill heard the message, too: The Housing and Economic Recovery Bill of 2008, which created the National Housing Trust Fund, passed out of Congress quickly in July and was signed by the president.

Supporters both on and off the worksite at Carter Work Project 2008 helped make this victory possible with their letters, calls and online visits to legislators.

Such an effective mobilization of thousands of volunteers at a construction event exemplified the idea that Habitat needs to use a dual approach – building homes and advocating for solutions – in order to reach our goal of eliminating poverty housing worldwide. 🏠

Arlene Corbin Lewis is associate director of communications for HFHI's Government Relations and Advocacy office in Washington. Prior to joining Habitat in October 2007, Arlene worked for an anti-discrimination and civil rights organization. She can be contacted at: acorbinlewis@habitat.org.



Highlights of Habitat on the Hill

By Colleen Fitzgerald

In June, more than 130 representatives from Habitat affiliates in the United States traveled to Washington, D.C., for the second annual Habitat on the Hill conference. Hosted by HFHI's Government Relations and Advocacy team, the conference introduced Habitat's worldwide advocacy efforts to affiliates as they start or continue their own efforts to keep housing high on the national agenda.

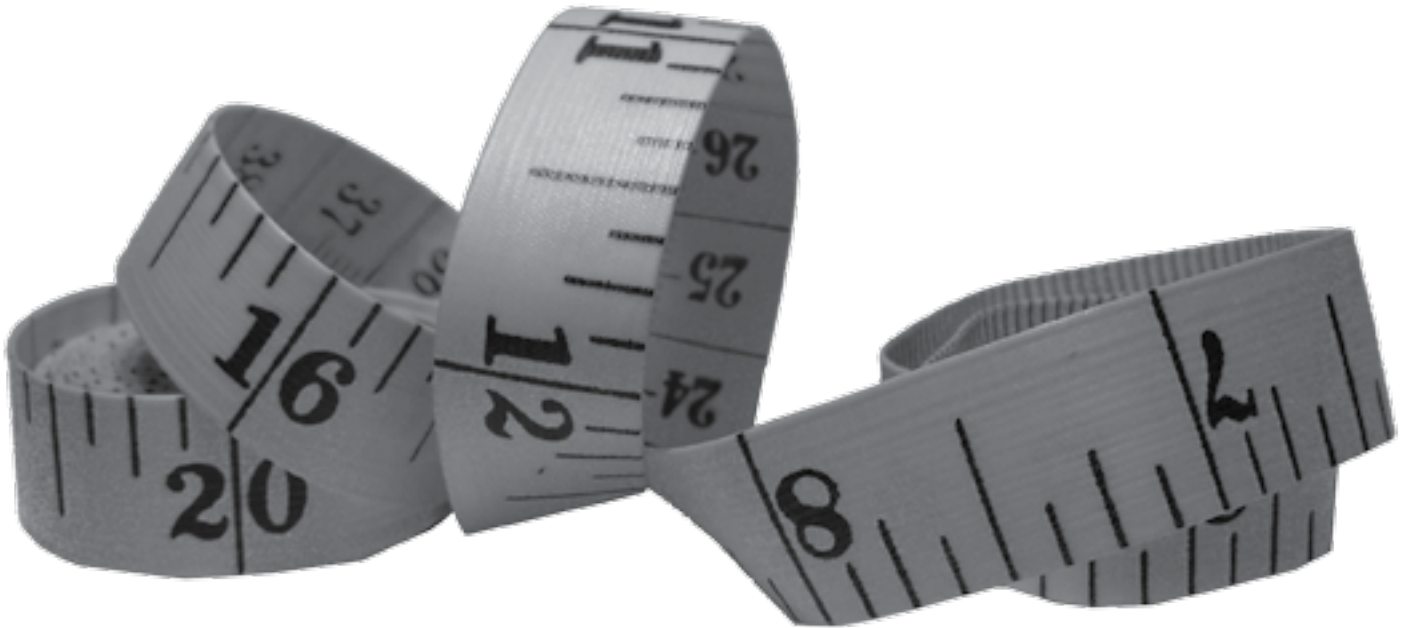
At the three-day conference, participants heard motivational presentations from several industry professionals, including: Leslie Crutchfield, co-author of the best-selling book "Forces for Good," and Mark Shriver, vice president and managing director of U.S. programs for Save the Children.

Attendees also participated in sessions covering topics such as secure tenure, national housing trust funds, communication strategies, advocacy planning and lobby law.

On one day of the conference, participants joined Habitat CEO Jonathan Reckford on the Hill to meet with legislators and their staff members to talk about the importance of a national housing trust fund. Some 350 meetings took place in a single afternoon. The effort did not go unnoticed, given the defeat of Senate amendments to HR 3221 that would have eliminated the housing trust fund from the legislative package.

In his closing remarks, Save the Children's Shriver reminded the group that it only takes one person to start a movement that can reach thousands. It's a powerful message and one that participants can take to their affiliates as they bring the concept of advocacy home. 🏠

Colleen Fitzgerald (CFitzgerald@habitat.org) is associate director of grassroots advocacy for Habitat for Humanity International.



Reaping the rewards and measuring results

By José Quinonez

Like many organizations, Habitat is trying to advance a particular social agenda: in this case, housing. To this end, like many other organizations, we have to couple our direct services (building houses) with public policy research and advocacy efforts (on affordable and adequate housing issues).

And, like many organizations, after thousands of dollars are spent, we have to consider the question: Did the time and resources invested on advocacy have an impact?

WHILE IT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO PROVE IMMEDIATE IMPACT IN ADVOCACY, PROGRESS CAN CERTAINLY BE MEASURED, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE CAN DEFINITELY SHOW LONG-TERM IMPACT.

Measuring advocacy/policy change is a difficult task, since all the external factors in a policy reform process cannot be controlled. In some cases, evaluators use control groups to isolate external forces in order to understand if the implemented program itself is the only reason that change occurred. But in terms of policy research, reform and advocacy, this simple way of looking at control groups represents its own set of difficulties and can limit evaluation of impact.

While it may be difficult to prove immediate impact in advocacy, progress can certainly be measured, and more importantly, we can definitely show long-term impact. I

suggest that depending on the advocacy initiative—and the conceptual model in which a set of advocacy tactics are grounded—the impact of advocacy can be both short-term (expected outcomes) and long-term (expected results).

After reviewing a broad range of impact categories and sample indicators of progress from other organizations with strong advocacy records (World Vision, Oxfam America, CARE and Save the Children), the same types of desired outcomes emerge. Grouped into four categories, I am sharing these not to duplicate or correct any other existing sources, but rather to consolidate, emphasize and confirm what appear to be the important areas of measuring change in advocacy and policy work.

- **Social indicators:** These are used to measure changes in the social level of the people affected by the intervention, i.e., access to services, affordable housing, education, secure tenure, health, gender equality, adoption of new practices, etc. Social-change outcomes are most likely to occur after several other changes have happened, such as public awareness, policy adoption, etc.
- **Economic indicators:** These are often a subproduct of the social indicators and are used to measure changes in the economic level of the targeted population (often as a direct result of a change in the social level), i.e., access to credit and loans. As with social indicators, economic outcomes occur after other changes have happened as a result of the advocacy initiative.
- **Organizational capacity indicators:** These are used to measure changes in the skill set, staffing and leadership, organizational structure and systems, finances and strategic planning among nonprofit organizations and formal coalitions that plan and carry out advocacy and policy work. Organizational capacity outcomes describe

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Reaping the rewards and measuring results

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the level of self-organization, social control, and distribution of benefits, decision-making processes and leadership levels that the targeted population and the implementing agency may be acquiring as a result of the advocacy initiative.

- Policy change indicators: These are used to measure changes in policies, decision-making processes, social participation, attitudes and systems as a direct result of advocacy and lobbying activities, i.e., changes in adequate and affordable housing laws, changes in rent control systems, secure tenure, etc.

Even if there is not a change in a particular policy as a result of the advocacy initiative, there are many intermediate results and outcomes that can be measured. Despite whether there is a change in a particular policy or not, there can be changes in awareness and increased agreement on the definition of a problem (i.e., common lingo). There can also be changes in beliefs and attitudes and, more importantly, changes in attitudes and values (social and economic outcomes).

An intermediate result of any advocacy initiative, regardless of the result in policy change, can be an improvement of the organizational management of organizations carrying out advocacy and policy work, as well as an improved ability to form strategic alliances. This is often coupled with improved organizational stability (organizational capacity outcomes). Finally, advocacy initiatives often involve policy research that most times results in the development of “white papers” that tend to expose problems with a current policy, often providing a tool for educating policy-makers and in some cases creating a watchdog function (policy change outcomes). 🏠

José Quinonez is associate director of advocacy training at HFHI's Government Relations and Advocacy Office in Washington. As a part of the Organizational Learning team, Quinonez has cross-functional responsibilities in advocacy planning, training and facilitation in the United States and internationally. He has a master's degree in international administration from the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont. He has extensive experience in monitoring and evaluation; short- and long-term participatory training; and organizational and community capacity-building. His e-mail address is JQuinonez@habitat.org.

Raising awareness and making progress in Latin America and Caribbean

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Favela dos Trilhos in Goiania.

- Participation in the Roundtable on Social Housing and Challenges of the Millennium Development Goals, with the participation of Habitat Bolivia, Habitat Chile, RENASEH and government authorities.

As a continued effort to promote involvement in advocacy on a regional level, Habitat for Humanity LA/C has formed a consultation committee of NGOs, which has participated in decisions regarding regional strategies and content. Among the joint actions developed are mapping of initiatives and the organization of the first Seminar on Capacity Building for NGOs and Partners, held in coordination with the GRA Office in February 2008 in Brazil. Now under way is the design of a workshop on lessons learned, baselines and verification of training needs. 🏠

Maria Luisa Zanelli (MZanelli@habitat.org) is manager of the Advocacy/Partnership Project in Habitat's Latin America and the Caribbean office. Rodolfo Ramirez (RRamirez@habitat.org) is director of the Housing and Human Settlement Department in the LA/C office.

Who's Who in Advocacy at HFHI

Government Relations
and Advocacy Office

From Various HFHI
Departments

Elizabeth Blake, senior vice president of government affairs, advocacy and legal

Arlene Corbin Lewis, communications associate director

Daniel Petrie, public policy research assistant

Chris Vincent, director of congressional relations/international affairs

Christopher Ptomey, director of congressional relations

Colleen Fitzgerald, associate director of grassroots advocacy

Jane Katz, director of international affairs and programs

Jeanette Stoltzfus, administrative coordinator and project assistant

Jenny Russell, managing director of advocacy

John Snook, director of state and local relations

Jose Quinonez, associate director of advocacy training

Susan Cortis Hill, director of public policy

Hilary Harp, associate general counsel

Rodolfo Ramirez, director of housing and human settlement program, Latin America/Caribbean

Maria Luisa Zanelli, LAC advocacy manager

Eddie Byrd, director of communications and advocacy, Europe/Central Asia

Faith Zahn, youth and advocacy coordinator

Jennifer Lindsey, senior director of international and advocacy communications