

## SOLID GROUND

### What is Solid Ground?

Solid Ground is a global advocacy campaign of Habitat for Humanity to address access to land for shelter.

### Why Land and Property Rights?

Access to land lies at the heart of ending poverty - without land, there can be no housing and housing is the key to stability and opportunity.

In the United States, property rights are protected under the Constitution and provide a foundation for life, liberty and prosperity. In contrast, many in the developing world, especially women, lack these basic rights.

Expanding and clarifying land rights are proven to increase economic growth, address inequalities and reduce poverty in developing countries. An established, fair system of land rights also increases opportunities for investment, developing businesses and growing wealth.



### Facts about Land Rights

- **1 billion people** around the world who lack secure tenure
- **70 percent** of land in the developing world is unregistered.
- **Women's savings are up to 35 percent** greater when they have stronger property rights

### U.S. Government Investment in Land

#### Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC):

To date, MCC has invested nearly \$300 million in land programs across 15 countries. The agency has upgraded or established nearly 400 land administration offices, trained over 70,000 stakeholders and formalized land rights for over 300,000 people. In Lesotho, for example, as a condition of contracting with MCC, the country passed the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act. This law enhanced gender equity in land ownership and transactions, allowing married women to own, inherit, buy and sell land for the first time.

#### U.S. Agency for International Development:

USAID actively works in 24 countries to strengthen land rights, investing approximately \$300 million. Fifteen of these projects will specifically benefit women. In Vietnam, for example, USAID is training community-based paralegals to conduct land rights awareness-raising activities as well as provide legal counseling to individuals, mitigate land disputes and offer referrals to navigate the existing legal structures.

In addition to our work in the United States, Habitat for Humanity works in more than 70 countries around the world. Since 1976, Habitat has helped more than 6.8 million people gain strength, stability and independence through housing. This includes traditional home construction, rehabilitation and repair, as well as upgrading informal settlements, responding to natural disasters, facilitating housing microfinance loans and advocating to improve access to decent and affordable shelter, including by reforming land policies.

### Example: Cote d'Ivoire

Recently, Habitat for Humanity Cote d'Ivoire took the lead in positively affecting policies on land tenure in Cote d'Ivoire by reducing the amount of time it takes to acquire a land title. Thanks to HFH Cote d'Ivoire's advocacy efforts, instead of nine months or more, the maximum wait is now three months. Over 15,000 beneficiaries and 3,000 families already have received their land titles, and thousands more are expected to benefit this year. Solid Ground will build on such successes and improve access to land for shelter for millions of people around the world.



### Example: Bolivia

Falicia Yavira lives in Cochabamba, Bolivia. When her husband passed away, she was at risk of losing their home simply because her name was not listed on the property title. Fortunately for her five children, she joined the Women's Network for Secure Land Tenure, a local advocacy group formed with the support of Habitat for Humanity Bolivia and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development. In 2012, Yavira and 29 other women in the network traveled to the capital of Bolivia to advocate for fairer laws. As a result of their work, several changes were made to Bolivian property law, including a provision that now states that property must be registered in the names of both spouses.

### Learn more

Imagine being evicted from your home for no reason. What if you couldn't own property because you're a woman? Or perhaps you could, but only in cramped quarters with a leaky roof and no water. And how would you recover from a natural disaster if you couldn't return to the land on which you lived?

Ask your Foreign Policy Legislative Assistant to contact us to learn about the campaign and how your office can support Solid Ground.