Policy Brief Series

Recommendations for WUF13: Localization Driving Inclusive, Resilient, and Affordable Housing

April 2026

Introduction and Context

The Thirteenth World Urban Forum (WUF13) is a critical political and technical milestone for advancing housing, urban transformation, and implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), putting housing at the center of sustainable urban development. The Forum will contribute to the 2026 High-Level Meeting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda as well as to the SDG 11 review at the 2026 High-Level Political Forum, providing another unique opportunity to **address the housing crisis by** placing **localization as a core pillar for sustainable development.**

Housing serves as a strategic entry point for territorial systemic transformation, translating global commitments into tangible, people-centered impact at the local and territorial level**.** However, housing sits at the heart of today's interconnected crises — economic, social, climatic, political, and, in many regions, conflict — and crisis-related. More than 2.8 billion people face inadequate housing conditions, including **1.1 billion living in informal settlements** and over 300 million experiencing homelessness [1]. Rapid urbanization, rising living costs, food insecurity, rapidly increasing climate – risks and weather-related disasters, [2] and widening inequalities are intensifying pressures on territories, eroding social cohesion and trust in institutions. In many regions, conflict and displacement further shape housing systems — driving housing destruction, rapid population movements, pressure on services, and rising informality.

Against this backdrop, **housing is not merely a sector — it is a cornerstone of the social contract**, foundational to dignity, stability, and opportunity. Adequate housing underpins access to safety, climate resilience, health, tenure security, basic services, food security, education, employment, and social inclusion. Housing strategies must therefore address both expanding adequate housing supply and upgrading existing informal settlements. When housing systems fail, inequalities deepen; when they succeed, they strengthen trust, participation, economic vitality, and resilience.

Finally, housing is also a core instrument across crisis response, recovery, and long-term development, particularly in displacement-affected and fragile contexts and a prerequisite for achieving Durable Solutions — enabling safety, tenure security, access to services, livelihoods, and social cohesion. Indeed, in fragile, conflict — and climate-affected contexts, housing systems are directly shaped by displacement dynamics, the destruction of housing stock, and the expansion of informal settlements as a result of internal or cross-border movement. Across displacement-affected contexts, housing represents the largest and most critical gap in achieving Durable Solutions. In Nigeria, for example, where there is already an estimated 15-million-unit housing deficit, housing 3.7 million internally displaced persons would require up to 600,000 housing units.

---

[1] UN-Habitat (2025) Annual Report.
[2] Climate disasters have doubled over the past two decades, affecting more than 4 billion people (CRED and UNDRR, *The Human Cost of Disasters: An Overview of the Last 20 Years (2000–2019)* (Geneva 2020) and weather-related disasters triggered ~220 million displacements in the past decade (~60,000 per day) (IDMC, *GRID 2024: Global Report on Internal Displacement* (Geneva 2024).

A Localization Lens on Housing

Localization bridges global agendas with local needs, priorities and capacities. In the context of the housing crisis, localization requires a **systems-based approach to territory**: housing must be treated not as a stand-alone sector, but as a **driver of integrated territorial transformation,** linking land, infrastructure, services, economic opportunities and jobs, climate resilience, urban and peri-urban agrifood systems. This includes strengthening land governance systems — such as land-use planning, land administration, tenure security, and land-based financing — critical determinants of housing affordability, supply, and sustainability.

Localization also requires **effective multilevel governance**: coordinated action across national, regional, and local levels, where national policy frameworks – including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) – are aligned with local planning, implementation, and financing, supported by coordinated, accountable partnerships. This is especially critical in fragile, crisis- and displacement-affected territories, where housing needs evolve rapidly and require flexible, locally led responses linking emergency, recovery, and long-term development.

Moreover, localization is strengthened through peer-to-peer capacity building among territories, as well as through global-local policy dialogue and technical cooperation, supported by regional mechanisms, such as the UN Regional Economic Commissions.

Effective housing solutions must therefore be context-specific, locally co-created, and territorially grounded, supported by enabling governance, finance strategies, and accountability systems. Achieving this requires:

- A shared long-term vision for territorial transformation anchored in local leadership and development priorities;
- Strong multilevel governance and multi-stakeholder coordination, enabling co-development, not only local delivery;
- Strategic territorial planning and policy coherence, aligning housing with land, services, economic development, and climate action; and
- Aligned public – private-community collaboration and transformative financing strategies, mobilizing key local actors around shared territorial priorities, including implementation-ready housing pipelines, supported by regulatory certainty and productivity gains — enabling scalable, sustainable financing.

Operational tools for SDG Localization and financing can help translate these principles into action. Frameworks such as the **Localization Blueprint** provide guidance and a replicable methodology to develop **investment-ready, territorially anchored SDG programs,** aligning housing priorities with long-term territorial strategies and integrated financing and investment pathways with mechanisms such as the **Integrated Local Financing Frameworks (ILFFs)**. Complementary tools such as the **SDG Localization Marker 2.0** operationalize localization by embedding criteria into program design and financing eligibility, strengthening transparency and accountability through measurable indicators and monitoring. Together, these tools connect planning, financing, implementation, and monitoring and align public and private financing with territorial priorities, and guaranteeing that policies, finance, and initiatives are **locally led, inclusive, and SDG-aligned.**

Opportunities for Alignment

WUF13 and its resulting Baku Call to Action will provide an opportunity to bring LRGs and territorial stakeholders together to:

- Leverage **housing as a strategic entry point** for crisis response, resilience, inclusive development, climate action, food security, and urban transformation;
- Embed **localization as a core implementation pathway** within WUF13 processes and outcomes, including for the implementation of national frameworks such as NDCs, integrating localization within the Baku Call to Action;
- **Strengthen institutional recognition of LRGs**, communities, and local actors as indispensable partners and leaders in policy design, financing, implementation, and monitoring, including in the development of integrated local financing strategies and investment pipelines, as well as in crisis response;
- Ensure housing strategies are displacement-aware and mobility-sensitive, integrating displacement dynamics into land-use planning, infrastructure provision, and service delivery. This includes addressing informal and transitional settlements where many displaced congregate, and ensuring that housing solutions support both displaced and host populations;
- **Leverage regional platforms**—including those convened by Regional Commissions—as spaces for policy dialogue, peer learning, and knowledge exchange across countries and cities facing similar housing challenges;
- **Promote scaling up of proven implementation-ready-locally led housing solutions, financing models and governance approaches** through structured South–South, North-South, and triangular cooperation, peer learning, and city-to-city exchanges; and
- Connect WUF13 outcomes with broader global commitments and multilateral processes — including **the New Urban Agenda Mid Term review and High-Level Meeting of the New Urban Agenda, the SDG 11 review at the HLPF, and NDCs** — ensuring coherence and continuity across implementation frameworks.

Beyond WUF13, these processes can support implementation through technical cooperation, capacity-building, regional cooperation mechanisms and knowledge platforms, helping translate the Baku Call to Action into national and local reforms and investment programs, ensuring that global housing commitments translate into locally prioritized shareable and scalable solutions. The Baku Call to Action has the opportunity to set a clear direction by anchoring local leadership, coherent policy frameworks, innovative finance, and community-centered approaches as core implementation pathways to address the housing crisis, accelerate the delivery of the SDGs, and strengthen resilient, inclusive urban futures. The recommendations below provide concrete actions across leadership, governance, partnerships, finance, accountability, and local data systems.

Recommendations

1. **Strengthen Local and Regional Governments as Lead Actors in Housing** – Building on the outcomes and commitments coming out of FFD4, the WSSD2 and COP30and looking ahead to WUF13 as a catalyst for implementation, position LRGs as **institutional drivers of SDG localization [3], with housing as a strategic entry point for territorial transformation with a systemic approach.** Strengthen the institutional, technical, and financial capacities of LRGs to co-design, coordinate, finance, implement, and monitor integrated housing strategies that link land, infrastructure, tenure security, access to basic and social services, livelihoods and decent jobs, food security, and climate resilience, in partnership with national governments, UN Country Teams, communities, and local stakeholders. LRGs should convene and steer multistakeholder partnerships that support implementation at scale, aligning national frameworks with local needs, priorities and capacities as well as translating global commitments into people-centered territorial transformation roadmaps. Coordinating LRGs with national governments and supported by regional and global platforms, including UN Regional Commissions, this approach strengthens policy coherence and enables effective multilevel implementation. This includes supporting LRGs in translating national frameworks, including NDCs and NAPs, into locally implementable housing and territorial strategies.

2. **Anchor Housing in a Renewed Social Contract** – Position housing as a cornerstone of a renewed social contract and a **key for protecting human rights** – advancing dignity, stability, social cohesion, equality, and trust in institutions – while also recognizing it as a **driver of economic development**. Link housing to access to basic and social services, job creation, local supply chains, economic opportunities, education and health, tenure security, climate resilience, territorial agrifood systems that strengthen food security, while positioning affordable housing as a resilient long-term investment. This is particularly important in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, where access to adequate housing is closely linked to social stability and cohesion as it strengthens trust between communities and institutions. Support context-specific housing strategies co-created with communities and aligned with national policies, building on implementation frameworks such as the Localization Blueprint, help territories translate shared long-term visions into coherent policy pathways and investment-ready programs. [4]

3. **Foster Local Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and Inclusive Governance for Housing Solutions** – Strengthen multilevel and multi-stakeholder partnerships under the leadership and coordination of LRGs by bringing together local and national governments and their networks, the private sector, academic, civil society, youth, financial institutions, and development partners to **co-create and co-deliver housing solutions at scale**, aligned with long-term territorial strategies. Move toward long-term investment and delivery pipelines that prioritize communities most in need, leveraging WUF13 and related global platforms to elevate locally-led commitments and partnerships. This is particularly critical in fragile and conflict-affected settings, where LRGs face heightened pressures from displacement, reconstruction needs, and constrained institutional capacity. Ground partnerships in **participatory, rights-based approaches** that reflect lived realities and **safeguard inclusion — especially for women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, displaced populations, residents of informal settlements, informal workers, communities affected by crisis and reconstruction, and marginalized groups.** The Baku Call to Action should promote **enabling frameworks and incentives** for responsible private sector engagement, support youth- and community-led innovation, and align partnerships around shared long-term territorial visions.

---

[3] In line with the Secretary-General's Action 55(e) and the Doha Declaration outcomes of the World Social Summit on strengthening engagement of local and regional governments in global processes; see UN-Habitat, Doha Declaration highlights WUF13 as key platform for regional engagement: https://wuf.unhabitat.org/news/doha-declaration-highlights-wuf13-key-platform-regional-engagement.
[4] Relevant international and regional frameworks – such as the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing, Housing2030, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, and related principles on sustainable and high-performance buildings – can further support policy alignment and implementation.

4. **Strengthen Accountability and Transparency in Housing Delivery to Renew Trust** – Strengthen accountability mechanisms that rebuild **trust and legitimacy** by making housing commitments measurable, transparent, and responsive to communities. Promote participatory monitoring and community-led feedback loops, and track progress using localization tools and indicators — such as Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and the **SDG Localization Marker 2.0** — that capture whether housing strategies deliver integrated outcomes across basic services, inclusion, livelihoods, food security, and resilience. Share results through peer learning across cities and territories to accelerate scaling and replication of implementation-ready solutions.

5. **Mobilize and Align Financing with Local Housing Priorities** – Align **financing frameworks** with local-level priorities and leverage other innovative mechanisms to expand access to adequate, affordable housing and enable delivery at scale. Mobilize resources for affordable housing, including upgrading informal settlements, strengthening tenure security, expanding access to **basic services**, and investing in **climate-resilient infrastructure**. Building on FFD4 outcomes and the Seville Platform for Action (SPA), strengthen fiscal decentralization, enhance local fiscal capacity and revenue systems, and promote enabling regulatory frameworks for inclusive housing investment. Advance territorially anchored financing strategies, such as ILFFs, to enable local governments to plan, finance, and deliver integrated housing solutions. Mobilize blended territorial investment packages that crowd in private capital by combining public, development, and private finance, supported by predictable regulatory environments, risk-sharing mechanisms, and productivity-enhancing construction approaches. Align financing with land-use planning and land-based financing instruments to support sustainable housing supply and affordability, and align subsidies, incentives, and regulation with locally defined strategies to ensure predictable, transparent flows – especially in informal settlements and underserved communities. This is particularly important in fragile and conflict-affected settings, where financing must also support recovery, reconstruction, and service restoration while strengthening local institutional and fiscal capacity under constrained conditions.

6. **Strengthen Localized Housing Data and Evidence for Policy and Implementation** – Strengthen the production and use of **localized housing data systems and observatories**, including disaggregated affordability data, spatial and land information systems, and indicators related to infrastructure, services, climate resilience, and energy efficiency. Link these systems to VLRs, national monitoring frameworks, and SDG reporting to support evidence-based policymaking, transparency, and accountability across all levels of governance. Promote interoperable and coordinated data systems to ensure that local data informs national policy and global reporting. Support **digital tools, geospatial platforms**, and local observatories to track housing needs, inform planning, and guide investment decisions. Encourage peer learning and knowledge exchange across cities and regions — including through regional platforms and collaboration with UN Regional Commissions and partners — to strengthen data capacities. Ensure that localized data informs global review and accountability processes, including the ten-year review of the New Urban Agenda and the SDG 11 review at the High-Level Political Forum, with WUF13 serving as a key moment to connect local evidence to global commitments and follow-up.