



PRESS RELEASE

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Study finds 5.3 million Central American families in need of decent housing

Habitat for Humanity and INCAE identify homes that need to be rehabilitated in order to improve the quality of life of its occupants.

QUITO, Ecuador (October 18, 2016) – In Central America, over 5 million families live in inadequate housing that lacks sanitation, drinking water, secure tenure, walls, flooring or roofs built with adequate materials. This is known as qualitative housing deficit.

Such data is part of the comparative study “The State of Housing in Central America,” conducted by [Habitat for Humanity](#) and INCAE Business School’s Latin American Center for Competitiveness and Sustainable Development ([CLACDS](#)).

“Housing plays a critical role in the development and well-being of families,” said Monica Ramirez, Housing and Human Settlements Director of Habitat for Humanity Latin America and the Caribbean. “Adequate housing can provide the strength, stability and self-reliance they require to build a better future, and this is why we wanted to learn in greater depth about the housing situation in the isthmus.”

As one of CLACDS investigators, Porfirio Guevara, explained: the qualitative deficit found highlights the Central American housing sector’s tradition to focus on financing and new home construction programs, and to a lesser extent, on improving existing homes.

“We analyzed and compared five qualitative deficit components in each country: type of home (for example, whether it is a *cuartería* or a ranch), ownership rights (secure tenure), quality of materials (floor, roof, walls), access to drinking water and sanitation,” said Guevara.

The study revealed that from the 5.3 million homes requiring improvement, most correspond to low-income families in percentages ranging from 65 percent to 87 percent in the different countries. Likewise, qualitative deficit is mainly urban in Costa Rica and Panama, while it is a rural phenomenon in Guatemala and Honduras.

“In most countries, the housing deficit issue is an urban phenomenon, except in Guatemala and Honduras where the tendency is reversed and is associated to heavy migration from rural to urban areas during the last years, which has accentuated such phenomenon,” said Guevara.

Guevara considers there are several reasons for this deficit, but the main one lies in each country’s institutional structure: “In general, there is no long-term policy in Central America regarding social



housing. There is poor coordination among the different housing system agents; it is fractioned, many institutions have duplicated functions and this affects effectively combating deficit.”

About Habitat for Humanity

Driven by the vision that everyone needs a decent place to live, Habitat for Humanity began in 1976 as a grassroots effort. The Christian housing organization has since grown to become a leading global nonprofit working in nearly 70 countries. Families and individuals in need of a hand up partner with Habitat for Humanity to build or improve a place they can call home. Through financial support, volunteering or adding a voice to support affordable housing, everyone can help families achieve the strength, stability and self-reliance they need to build better lives for themselves. Through shelter, we empower. To learn more, visit habitat.org

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SOME FACTS REVEALED BY THE STUDY:

- Panama and Guatemala show the highest indicators regarding type of inadequate housing.
- In lack of secure tenure, Nicaragua has the greatest qualitative deficit with 46% of homes suffering this problem.
- El Salvador has the highest percentage (25%) of low quality roofs.
- Honduras has the highest percentage (31%) of low quality walls.
- Guatemala has the highest percentage (29%) of low quality floors.
- In regards to drinking water, El Salvador shows the highest deficit (27% of homes).
- Guatemala shows the highest deficit in sanitation infrastructure (44% of homes).
- Costa Rica shows the lowest percentages in all indicators (type of home, quality of materials, drinking water and sanitation).