

Luis Triveno ~ How Latin America's Housing Policies Are Changing The Lives Of Urban Families

In an effort to harness the benefits of urbanization and improve the living conditions of the urban poor, Latin American countries have experimented with housing subsidies. Now that the region has several decades of experience under its belt, it is time to look back and ask: Have subsidies worked? What kind of impact have they had on the lives of lower-income residents? Moving forward, how can cities pay for ongoing urban renewal?

To address those questions and share their experiences, officials in charge of designing and implementing national housing policies in eight countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay, and Peru) recently met in Washington DC, along with representatives from the World Bank, [Cities Alliance](#), [the Urban Institute](#), and [Wharton's International Housing Finance Program](#).

Looking into the future, while the discussions covered a lot of ground, at least three major issues caught my attention.

1. How to align the national level policies and programs with local level decision making in urban planning and management?

Each country's housing policy has its own unique scale, context, political circumstances and measure of progress, but a number of common challenges were clear: How to implement national housing policies when working with local governments with very diverse technical and financial capacities; and avoid and/or manage the costs of urban sprawl (both formal and informal)? The Urban Institute synthesized the [US experience working with block grants](#) channeled from Washington to local governments for community development and housing so that participants could see what best fits their realities. Although the contexts are different, all governments were interested in learning from what has worked (or has not).

Read more: <http://blogs.worldbank.org/how-latin-america-s-housing-policies>