



Responding and Rebuilding

A REPORT ON HABITAT FOR HUMANITY'S RESPONSE | February 7, 2005

Our response

Habitat for Humanity International's initial response plan calls for transitional and permanent housing projects in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand to house some 25,000 families in a first-phase effort and tens of thousands of families in the long term. Habitat for Humanity offices in each of the affected countries are also working to develop plans based on existing partnerships and ongoing assessments of needs.

The immediate priority is to help families move out of the overcrowded, disease-ridden and crime-infested camps and other temporary shelters and into transitional housing. The timeline for the building of transitional housing will differ in each country, depending on the circumstances. New houses are already under way in Sri Lanka, and repairs are under way in India.



“All face this disaster, so all must help each other and work together to build houses. Some homeowners have lost everything, but you can have something now. If anyone is willing to work with us, we will not let them down.”

-- Rohitha Fernando,
affiliate development
coordinator, Habitat
for Humanity Sri
Lanka

Over time, HFHI will begin working with families in transitional housing to build more permanent structures with additional rooms. HFHI's existing Save and Build program will be one initiative used in this effort. With Save and Build, up to one dozen families save together until there is enough money to build or expand one house. This money is often matched by HFHI or the local affiliate in order to begin building more houses. The savings cycle continues until every family has a permanent home. This enables families with the smallest of incomes to pay for the construction of their own home and it builds community cohesion and support.

Supplementing these building initiatives, HFHI will develop Building and Training Centers in the affected countries. These centers will provide technical expertise and assistance to families, Habitat affiliates and partners in the first stages of construction. Eventually, the centers could become permanent training centers to teach people how to make their own homes and how to make and use affordable building materials such as earth blocks, roofing tiles, doors, windows and frames.

Habitat for Humanity estimates these efforts will cost approximately US\$25 million over two years to house the initial 25,000 families. To satisfy this urgent need, HFHI headquarters is coordinating a global resource development plan among its national organizations worldwide. Corporate and other donations committed and received from around the world total US\$20 million to date.

Country-by-country look at plans:

Sri Lanka

Habitat for Humanity Sri Lanka is part of C-Net, an alliance of 10 Christian organizations working to provide transitional shelter. Other alliance members are Christian Children Fund of Canada, Christian Reform World Relief Commission, LEADS, Mennonite Central Committee, World Concern, World Vision, Shelter for Life, Y-Gro and ZOA.



Building is under way in Galle for families who have title to their land. Habitat is providing some of the raw materials and skilled masons. Other materials include debris gathered by homeowner families and volunteers.

Countrywide, the alliance initially plans to build 20,000 transitional houses, 10,000 of which will be supported directly by Habitat. The long-term goal is to provide transitional housing for 100,000 families currently without homes. HFH Sri Lanka is the largest homebuilder in the country, after the government, and could be responsible for half that total.

Rebuilding of Habitat homes has begun in Batticaloa and Galle, on the eastern and southern sides of the island. Seventy-five houses are under way in Batticaloa and 50 in Galle, eight of which are being built by volunteers from the US Embassy build team in Colombo.

A recent meeting at Kabalana village near Galle brought together more than 75 villagers to learn about Habitat for Humanity's plans for rebuilding. Reconstruction work has begun on 10 houses in the community and 98 families have submitted applications to partner with Habitat to rebuild.

The transitional house plan is a 250 square foot, single-room structure with a roof and a veranda or covered living and work space. It includes minimum sanitary facilities. A second room could be added later to enlarge the home as funds become available.

The new homes are being built on existing foundations that are deemed secure. Staff and volunteers are using undamaged blocks, tiles and other materials from the destroyed homes, whenever possible. However, the majority of construction and the materials will be new. Even under normal construction circumstances, HFH Sri Lanka programs are adept at using recycled and otherwise available natural resources such as gravel, stone and timber.

The Batticaloa Building and Training Center is running three shifts a day to produce 3,600 concrete blocks every 24 hours. The center was established by the Batticaloa affiliate five years ago as a way to keep building costs down. Today, it is proving a source of much-needed materials for the reconstruction and a way for Habitat families who lost wage-earners to earn money. HFH Sri Lanka plans to build additional Building and Training Centers in four other locations to ensure long-term sustainability for the reconstruction project. The Batticaloa facility will serve as a model for similar HFH centers in India, Thailand and Indonesia.

The Galle affiliate plans to build up to 3,000 houses in the coming year, many of them on 18 acres of land recently donated to the organization. Other houses will be built on existing foundations of houses that were destroyed. Roughly 130 Habitat houses in the area were destroyed by the tsunami. Up to 12 Habitat homeowners lost their lives, one leaving three orphans.

Until the Galle Building and Training Center is complete, however, supplies are running short for continued building. Although the preference is to work with local suppliers, the affiliate is going to larger companies to get the quantity of materials needed to keep the building on track. Donations of river sand from other Habitat affiliates in areas that were not affected by the tsunami are on their way. And other non-profit organizations have offered the use of trucks to bring blocks from Colombo or sand from other inland locations. The Building and Training Center, including a block-making operation, will provide needed supplies and an income for homeowners.

India

Repair work is under way on 500 houses in the tsunami-affected areas of Kanyakumari and Kerala. All 500 houses will be repaired for approximately US\$300 per house. Six village sites have been identified for new building to begin as soon as April.

HFH India plans to provide First Shelter housing for up to 6,000 families in the first building phase. To move families toward more permanent housing, the organization has developed a concept core house featuring a single room and an adjacent cooking area and space for an additional room. This concept will be presented to government, corporate and non-governmental organization partners for discussion. The specifics of the design could change according to local conditions, including options to build twin units or units of four homes,.

HFH India also plans to build up to six Building and Training Centers as a key part of its tsunami reconstruction initiative. Four will be located in Tamil Nadu, Nagappattinam; Kanyakumari; Pondicherry and Tuticorin. Two more could be in the adjacent states of Kollam in Kerala and in Andhra Pradesh. The centers will be staffed initially by Habitat staff and specialist volunteers, including site supervisors, engineers, architects, project managers, volunteer coordinators and others. They will provide construction and design expertise and training to support building by Habitat teams, families and partner organizations. Each center could serve up to 1,000 families in the first stages and up to 2,000 with additional staffing. The Pondicherry and Kankumara centers are scheduled to open in March.



Families are living in a temporary relief camp amid their destroyed thatch dwellings as they await the building of new homes.

After immediate needs are met, the centers can be transformed into more conventional centers, focusing on sustained production of low-cost building materials, skills training and local fund raising through sales of excess output.

Thailand

Habitat for Humanity Thailand is working with a consortium of Christian international non-governmental organizations and Thai churches to fund and build 1,000 transitional houses in Krabi and Phang Nga. Repairs on an additional 1,000 houses in Bank Sak are also planned.

Habitat for Humanity will be the implementing agency for the building, operating out of Building and Training Centers in each location that will serve up to five villages each. The Phang Nga center is expected to open this month.

The transitional houses are two-room structures made of soil blocks with micro-fiber tiles on the roof. Additional living space can be added on over time.

Within six months the Building and Training Centers should be supporting the rebuilding and repair of up to 50 houses per month.



A young girl waits in a temporary housing area as her mother prepares dinner.

Indonesia

In Indonesia, the hardest-hit country, Habitat's national office is working in Aceh, at the northern tip of Sumatra Island, and on Nias, an island to the west of Sumatra.

Habitat plans to open the first of as many as four Building and Training Centers on Sumatra within the next month. The first center will open in Medan in mid-February. Employees from Habitat for Humanity Philippines, with expertise in steel frames and concrete-interlocking block technology, arrive this week to provide support and advice.

A satellite center will be established on Nias. As in Sri Lanka, the centers will be a base for Habitat staff and volunteer experts in design, engineering, construction and volunteer mobilization. They could also house facilities of partner organizations focusing on community and livelihood issues. The centers could support hundreds and later thousands of families with expertise and assistance.

There are already commitments to fund the building of an initial 1,000 homes, including 300 in Banda Aceh and the 300 in Nias. Initial plans are to provide temporary light-gauge steel houses consisting of basic structures and a roof to provide immediate shelter for those left homeless by the tsunami. The first 300 units are likely to be the pilot for a new build project in Banda Aceh funded by a local property association and the country's central bank. The units can be disassembled and moved to new sites, once land ownership has been secured, to be made into semi-permanent structures using local wood for internal walls. The first of these steel frame houses are under way in Nias to train local staff and provide homeowners with a sample house to view.

To contribute to these efforts:

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