

Country profile

SRI LANKA



Habitat for Humanity in Sri Lanka

Habitat for Humanity aims to provide simple, decent and affordable housing to people in need in Sri Lanka. Established in 1995, Habitat for Humanity Sri Lanka has enabled more than 19,000 low-income families to break the cycle of poverty with decent housing.

The housing need in Sri Lanka

By the time the nearly 30-year conflict in Sri Lanka ended in May 2009, many homes, schools and other infrastructure were destroyed, particularly in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. According to the United Nations, about 160,000 houses were damaged or destroyed in the Northern Province alone. Earlier, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami wiped out about 100,000 houses.

The country's National Housing Development Authority estimates a shortfall of one million houses which it seeks to address through a five-year housing program from 2011-2015. The need is still great. In Sri Lanka's commercial capital, Colombo, more than half of the population lives in informal settlements with limited access to clean water and safe sanitation.

How Habitat addresses the need in Sri Lanka

Habitat provides small interest-free loans to help families build or renovate their homes in stages. Families contribute their own labor, or sweat equity, toward building or renovating their homes. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami paved the way for HFH Sri Lanka to help nearly 3,000 families rebuild their homes. In May 2013, a large-scale housing project funded by the Indian government for internally displaced persons in Sri Lanka was launched. Habitat is to build 3,000 houses and repair 600 homes in the Eastern Province. Corporations such as Coca-Cola, GlaxoSmithKline, Brandix, MillenniumIT and ODEL provide funding and staff as voluntary builders for Habitat projects while students from international and local schools and universities are also strong supporters.

COUNTRY FACTS*

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| Capital | Colombo; Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte (legislative) |
| Population | 21.9 million (July 2014 est.) |
| Urbanization | 15.1 percent live in cities |
| Life expectancy | 76 years |
| Unemployment rate | 17.3 percent |
| Population living below poverty line | 8.9 percent (2010 est.) |
| Access to improved water sources | 93.8 percent (2012 est.) |
| Access to improved sanitation facilities | 92.3% of population (2012 est.) |

*Sources: World Factbook

HABITAT FACTS

When Habitat started in Sri Lanka
1995

Families served*
More than 19,000

Volunteers hosted*
More than 3,300

Housing solutions
Incremental building
Environmental and energy-saving initiatives
Disaster response
Building Training Centers

* Cumulative figure since 1995



Disna Mangalika Perera (left) and her daughter Harshana celebrated their new home in Negombo in August 2012. They boiled milk until it overflowed, symbolizing abundant blessings.



● Capital and National Office
● Habitat projects
▲ Satellite
◆ Habitat Resource Center (HRC)

Housing finance

HFH Sri Lanka provides affordable homes through housing finance services. To build a new house in stages, a family can apply for a loan of 50,000 Sri Lanka rupees (about US\$380) which is expected to be repaid within four years. After the initial loan is repaid, another loan can be taken out until the house is completed. For house repairs or renovations, a family can take out a loan of 25,000 Sri Lankan rupees and repay it in two years.

Disaster Response

After heavy flooding in December 2010, Habitat was able to assist nearly 1,700 families in the Eastern and Central Provinces through the distribution of emergency shelter kits and clean-up kits. More than 20 families received core houses while another 100 families were given transitional shelters. HFH Sri Lanka is also working with 180 internally displaced families in Mannar district, Northern Province, and rebuilding homes with another 4,000 displaced families in the Eastern Province.

Improving families' self-reliance

Since 2001, HFH Sri Lanka has trained 2,000 households in the use of the solar cooker. Solar energy, in contrast to wood or coal fire used in cooking, reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Women have more time for other household chores and work because they do not have to keep an eye on the food as it cooks. HFH Sri Lanka has also distributed more than 7,000 seedlings of trees such as teak, mahogany, jak and tumbuk to families since 2005. With fruit and vegetable seeds given by HFH Sri Lanka, families can start home gardens which yield produce to supplement their food intake and reduce expenses.

Research and advocacy

HFH Sri Lanka aims to influence government policies and practices through housing research and advocacy efforts, and hosting legal clinics and workshops, among others. Habitat raises awareness and provides information through its Land Rights Project and the Adequate Housing Indicators Booklet. HFH Sri Lanka has enabled 150 families to resolve land ownership issues under the Land Rights Project.

Meet a Habitat family

With her husband's and young daughter's ill health, it is difficult to imagine how Muniyandi Shanthi could stay upbeat. Shanthi lives with her family in Pathayamwatte village, Negombo, in the Western Province. Her husband, KMF Suvendra, and her four-year-old daughter suffer from epilepsy but the family could not afford to pay for medicine. Suvendra had to stop fishing and work in a local factory for daily wages of US\$3. To save money, the family moved out of their one-room rental house and lived in a wooden shack which they built themselves. HFH Sri Lanka's first special build in Negombo in August 2012 changed Shanthi's family's lives. Shanthi worked with international volunteers to build a 28-square-meter house with hand-made soil blocks, tiled roof and a verandah. Now, her family gets clean water from a tube well and has a toilet outside the house. "We would never have been able to build a decent home if it were not for Habitat for Humanity."

What you can do

DONATE, VOLUNTEER or TITHE to help families break the poverty cycle through decent homes. To learn more about Habitat projects in Sri Lanka, please contact us.

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(Top) Muniyandi Shanthi and her children in their old wooden shack.
(Bottom) Habitat volunteers helped to construct a new house for Shanthi and her family during Rebuild Sri Lanka.