



Responding and Rebuilding

A REPORT ON HABITAT FOR HUMANITY'S RESPONSE | January 20, 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 transitional houses will consist of a permanent one-room structure with a veranda and sanitary facilities. 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.



A young girl in Tamil, India, looks out to the sea that took thousands of lives and livelihoods in the December 26 tsunami.

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 from around the world total US\$8.6 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.

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.



Save and Build group member W. Somawathi stands on her Habitat house foundation in Galle, Sri Lanka. She lost her husband in the tsunami and is suffering from asthma. Habitat will begin building a new house for her, her son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter before the end of the month.

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 would include minimum sanitary facilities. A second room could be added later to enlarge the home as funds become available.

Rebuilding of Habitat homes has begun in Batticaloa and Galle, on the eastern and southern sides of the island. 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.

More than 300 families have already applied to the Batticaloa affiliate for a new home. To meet the demand, the Batticaloa Building and Training Center is running three shifts a day to produce 3,600 concrete blocks every 24 hours. The center recently delivered 10,000 blocks to Habitat homeowners, and another 20,000 blocks are ready to be used.

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.



A tsunami survivor takes time to beautify his temporary tent, provided by Habitat for Humanity. "While we're here, we might as well do as much as we can to make the best of it," he said. Habitat for Humanity in Sri Lanka is working to get people out of the temporary tents and into transitional housing as soon as possible.

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, as well as individual 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.

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

Although HFH Thailand does not have activities in the tsunami-affected south, it is joining the national reconstruction effort. HFH Thailand is part of a consortium of Christian international non-governmental organizations and Thai churches planning to fund and build 1,000 transitional houses in Krabi and Phang Nga. Habitat for Humanity will be the implementing agency using two Building and Training Centers. The Phang Nga Center is expected to open in February.

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.

More than US\$2 million may be available to finance this first phase in HFH Sri Lanka. Local businesses in Sri Lanka and foreign companies have pledged as much as US\$750,000. Overseas donors, many of them Sri Lankan expatriates in Europe and North America, are also making pledges. Habitat for Humanity is expecting to match funds for some aspects of the construction.

India

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

"You can stand in the middle of Banda Aceh and look five miles in any direction and see total devastation everywhere you look. The needs are tremendous."

--Steve Weir
Vice President
HFHI-Asia/Pacific

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 early to mid-February. 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.

HFH Indonesia will also build model core houses using local styles and materials in 19 displacement camps to gauge interest in the designs from families in the camps who want to begin rebuilding on their land. The model houses will be used in the short-term as clinics and offices in the camps.

To fund these efforts, HFH Indonesia has received pledges of around US\$650,000 from Indonesian and foreign businesses, as well as churches.