



## Why Europe & Central Asia Need Your Help

Habitat for Humanity Europe & Central Asia is spread across 12 time zones and two continents. Just over a decade ago more than half of the countries we work in were under communist rule. More than 98 million people in this region live on less than \$2 per day, that's over 20 per cent of the total population of the area. Millions of people lack access to clean water, sanitation and heating systems (in some areas winter temperatures can drop below -30 Celsius). The fall of the Soviet Union led to large scale unemployment, mass migration to ill equipped urban centers and severe deterioration in the housing stock that was once maintained by the government. This has led to severe over-crowding in small, dilapidated apartments which lack even basic amenities.



### ARMENIA

Substandard housing is all too common in the Armenian capital of Yerevan and surrounding regions.

- More than 50% of Armenia's families in this area live in deteriorated housing with cramped quarters and limited water and heat
- Two of the most common examples of poverty housing in Armenia are half-finished homes and domiks
  - When families are forced to abandon the dream of completing their home due to financial hardship, they often live in the unfinished basement or cellar. This is basically a large hole in the ground with a dirt floor and makeshift roof
  - Others live in domiks, which are metal containers that were brought to Armenia as part of the relief effort following the devastating 1988 earthquake. Many families have been living in these containers for more than a decade. Domiks are unbearably hot in the summer and only makeshift stoves fight off the extreme cold in the winter.

## HUNGARY

As a former member of the Eastern bloc, Hungary is grappling with deep scars of communist economic and social policies. Behind the many positive reforms, overcrowded housing without proper sanitation is still the reality for too many low income families in Hungary.

- According to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 1.2 million people live in overcrowded conditions
- Single-room apartments are frequently shared by multiple families
- Out of the almost 4 million homes in Hungary, more than 1 million live in houses without piped water
- Many homes have no sewage systems
- Over 670,000 lack a flush toilet

## KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan is one of the poorest of the former Soviet republics, with few natural resources. After the collapse of Soviet communism, Kyrgyzstan cut a variety of social benefits, leaving families with fewer resources to pay for housing. Access to basic services such as water and sewage is limited in Kyrgyzstan, especially for impoverished people and those living in rural areas.

- It is estimated that only 20 percent of rural households have access to running water in their homes
- Seeking relief from rural poverty, many people have moved to informal settlements on the fringes of Bishkek and other large cities, where they lack secure tenure and decent housing. Some settlements are built in areas where severe flooding can occur.
- Nearly 70 percent of Kyrgyzstan's population lives in substandard housing or is homeless
- It is not unusual for three generations to be crowded into a single room with no heating or water supply
- As of 2006, approximately 39.9 percent of the population lives on less than \$2 a day.

## MACEDONIA

With a gross national income per capital of around \$3,090 in 2006, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYR Macedonia) is a lower middle-income country located at the crossroads of important transport routes connecting Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

- Macedonia's unemployment rate is among the highest in Europe, reaching 36 percent in 2004
- The number of people living below the national poverty level has exceeded 25 percent
- About 80,000 households lack long-term housing solutions
- Approximately 70,000 units, or 12 percent of the stock, are substandard and need to be replaced or rebuilt
- Approximately 36 percent of houses are not attached to the sewage network
- 12 percent of houses are without a kitchen and 15 percent of homes do not have a toilet
- About 320,000 people – 15 percent of Macedonia's population – live in a total of 80,000 illegally-constructed buildings
- The capital city of Skopje hosts squatter settlements of about 120,000 citizens

## POLAND

As a former member of the Eastern Bloc, Poland has to deal with the legacy left by communist economic and social policies. Despite tremendous reforms, overcrowded and damp housing without proper sanitation is still the reality for too many of Poland's low-income working families.

- Nearly 12 million Poles – almost a third of the population – live in overcrowded homes
- Research indicates that almost one in four apartments in Poland should be condemned
- In need of more than 1.5 million affordable apartments just to meet the current demand
- Currently, one in eight houses do not have a kitchen and share a toilet with an entire floor of apartments or do not have one at all

## PORTUGAL

Portugal emerged from decades of dictatorship after a military coup in 1974. A series of provisional governments ran the country until a parliamentary election was held in 1976. Poverty housing is spread throughout the country.

- 65 percent of families live in dilapidated housing, with 8.5 percent living in shacks
- Two distinctive kinds of housing are spread across the country:
  - In the interior, the “hidden poverty” with typical Portuguese houses that have a small orchard that hides disgraceful housing conditions
  - In the big cities, the shacks

## ROMANIA

The second largest country in Central and Eastern Europe with a population of 21.6 million, Romania is also one of the poorest countries in Europe.

- More than 15 percent of the population lives below the poverty line with approximately 2.4 million Romanians living in extreme poverty
- 1.2 million Romanians struggle to secure daily needs
- Much of Romania's housing stock is low-quality and deteriorating because of a lack of maintenance
- A family of eight is more likely to live in a two-room flat than in a home with four rooms or more
- More than 10,000 blocks of apartment flats erected before 1980 need serious renovation to their infrastructure, heating systems and roofs
- Two-thirds of Romania's poor live in rural areas despite the country's substantial potential in agriculture, forestry and fisheries

## **TAJKISTAN**

Tajikistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia with a population of 7 million, and a per capital income of US \$410 a year, or just more than US \$1 a day. Tajikistan remains the poorest and most economically fragile of the former Soviet countries.

- In 2005, almost six of every 10 people in Tajikistan live in extreme poverty, with more than 80 percent of the population living below the poverty line
- Unfinished homes are scattered across Tajikistan while existing housing stock deteriorates due to neglect
- Families live in houses made of raw brick or clay with dirt floors
- It is common for several generations to live together in tiny apartments where heating and sanitation are often absent and water must be drawn from communal wells
- Homes are not only decaying and unsanitary, but were not built to withstand the regions frequent earthquakes

**For more information on the need in Europe & Central Asia or for Global Village trips to Europe & Central Asia, please contact:**

**Tanya McMurdo**  
**Program Coordinator**  
**Europe & Central Asia**  
**[tmcmurdo@habitat.ca](mailto:tmcmurdo@habitat.ca)**  
**Tel: (519) 885-4565 Ext 254**