



## PART V: LOOKING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

Responding effectively to the 2004 tsunami was one of the most difficult challenges Habitat for Humanity had ever faced. The most important lesson to emerge from Habitat's efforts was the value of an integrated response. In all four countries, Habitat used eight central components: community-based strategies; on-site reconstruction; a core house model; resource centers as hubs to deliver housing; coordination with other groups; focusing on need; use of volunteers; and planning for the future.

The impact of Habitat for Humanity's interventions went beyond thousands of individual families securing proper houses and being able to start to rebuild their lives. There were other impacts such as investments in local economies; sourcing from local businesses; and developing livelihood programs especially in building trades. Habitat helped create building blocks for the future well-being of many communities and regions.

Through rebuilding after the tsunami, Habitat learnt that it was possible to offer grant-based funding on a large scale while encouraging sweat equity contributions from families.

Over the medium- and long-term, the transition to regular programs based on mortgages and housing microfinance has added a sustainability element to Habitat's work in and around tsunami-affected communities. Repayments from loans help Habitat to reach many more families over time.<sup>62</sup>

Habitat's response created momentum and systems that became a springboard for growth in regular Habitat programs. In India, for example, Habitat for Humanity built some 4,500 houses between 2005 and 2007. Through scaling up in post-tsunami reconstruction, HFH India was able to commit to build some 3,700 houses for tsunami-affected families in 2008, 2,500 in 2009 and a further 3,300 in the year ending June 2010. On a larger scale, HFH India's success with tsunami response created the momentum for an expansive new national campaign called *IndiaBUILDS*. The goals of this program, promoted by Indian movie star John Abraham, are to mobilize contributions of US\$100 million from Indians living within and outside of the country, and to improve housing for 50,000 families, benefitting 250,000 of India's poorest people.

From its experiences after the tsunami, Habitat for Humanity has taken increasingly active roles in rebuilding after natural disasters, helping to redefine the relationship and links between short-term relief shelter needs and longer-term permanent housing solutions. More recently, in the autumn of 2009, Habitat's response to flooding in the Philippines and Vietnam, a tsunami in Samoa, and two earthquakes in Indonesia used strategies developed since December 2004.

The Indian Ocean tsunami left a permanent mark on the communities in its path. Engaging in the recovery compelled Habitat for Humanity, like many other organizations, to rethink and restructure its approach to rebuilding after disasters. To meet these challenges, Habitat prioritized flexibility, tailoring its program to the specific needs of each community and region in which it worked. It also stayed open to learning from mistakes, constantly weaving lessons learned into program improvements. By building its reconstruction experience into the fabric of community life, Habitat raised the odds that its impact will be felt for many generations to come. □