

Country profile: RUSSIA



Country facts

Capital:
Moscow

Main country facts:
Declared independence in June 1990

Population:
More than 140 million

Urbanization:
73 percent live in cities

Life expectancy:
66 years

Unemployment rate:
8.4 percent

Population living below poverty line:
16 percent

Habitat facts

When the program started:
2002

Highlights:
U.S. philanthropist Dr. Huss sponsored the first new house built by volunteers and families in 2004.

Families served:
More than 60

Global Village volunteers hosted:
More than 70

Housing solutions:
New house construction
Apartment renovation
Energy efficiency upgrades

Habitat for Humanity in Russia

Habitat for Humanity was invited to work in Russia by a group of enthusiastic supporters from Ulan-Ude, the capital of the autonomous republic of Buryatia in eastern Siberia. The affiliate started work there by buying and renovating two dilapidated apartments and one half-built house. Habitat Ulan-Ude is negotiating long-term cooperation with local authorities on solving substandard housing problems on a more expansive scale.

The housing need in Russia

Most Russians live in multistory housing blocks that may have up to 300 apartments. In some dormitory-type buildings, several families share one toilet and have sinks instead of showers for washing. Overcrowding is widespread, and many extended families live in one tiny apartment.

Mortgages are becoming more widely available, but even middle-class families often cannot afford the lofty interest rates commercial banks charge. Low-income families have almost no hope of ever owning a home, as the state cut short construction of social housing units.

About 150,000 homes in Russia become uninhabitable each year because of lack of repairs. Most were constructed 40 or 50 years ago and have seen no upgrading for the past 20 years. It is expected that within 10 years the need for repair and reconstruction will reach an alarming level.

How Habitat addresses the need

Habitat in Ulan-Ude currently focuses on helping families to protect homes during harsh Siberian winters by installing new plastic triple glazed windows in their houses and apartments; these interventions drastically improve the energy efficiency of the homes.

Here is a current example of a Habitat project in Russia:

Upgrading energy efficiency

Many families in Russia live in substandard housing conditions. Most of the apartments have rotten wooden windows that allow 80 percent of the heat to escape and thus many suffer in the harsh Siberian winters.

According to the Russian Ministry of Construction, out of 100 percent heat loss in non-energy efficient homes 80 percent of the loss comes from inadequate windows. To prevent this and to improve energy efficiency of homes, Habitat for Humanity in Ulan Ude is helping to install new, completely insulated plastic windows. This way extended families living in the houses can also make better use of space due to balanced distribution of heat and do not have to concentrate in one or two rooms.

Each family will repay their mortgages in low monthly installments for a period of two years. These repayments will then go into Habitat for Humanity's Revolving fund, which will be used to do more renovations in future.

Meet a Habitat family

Roman and Oksana Khandazhapovs and their daughter, Anna, used to share an apartment with Roman's parents before they learned about Habitat from a friend. They applied to Habitat and soon moved into a new apartment, where they have been living for more than five years.

Roman says: *"Our life has changed dramatically, and we are now the happiest family in the world! We found new friends. Our daughter has the luxury of her own room where she can play and study. We can also visit our parents very often, as they live close by."*

Oksana says: *"I loved furnishing our new apartment and creating a real home for my husband and my children. I am so grateful to Habitat for giving us an opportunity to build a new life."*

In 2008, the Khandazhapovs welcomed another baby daughter to their family, and they are now enjoying their Habitat home all together.



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CONTACT

Connor Hanan
Program Development Officer

Habitat for Humanity
Europe&Central Asia
e-mail: chanan@habitat.org
tel: +421 911 045 840

Barbora Fričová
Marketing Specialist

Habitat for Humanity
Europe&Central Asia
e-mail: bfricova@habitat.org
tel: +421 911 045 836

Habitat for Humanity International is a global charity dedicated to eliminating poverty housing. Since its foundation in 1976, Habitat has built and renovated more than 400,000 houses worldwide, providing simple, decent, affordable shelter for 2 million people.

In Europe and Central Asia Habitat for Humanity International works with families in need in 23 countries, building and repairing houses, offering housing microfinance services, improving water and sanitation, working on disaster response and advocating for affordable housing. In this region, Habitat has served more than 11,000 families together with volunteers and homeowners. Find out more at www.habitat-europe.org.