



## Habitat for Humanity in Myanmar

Habitat for Humanity's involvement in Myanmar arose after Cyclone Nargis struck on 2nd May 2008. Some 145,000 people were reported to have perished and more than 50,000 others were listed as missing in one of the worst storms in decades to affect the country. Damage was estimated at US\$10 billion. In July 2008, international non-government organization World Concern started an integrated multi-sector disaster recovery program in 30 villages in Labutta township, in the devastated Ayeyarwaddy delta, 200 km. southwest of the former capital Yangon. Habitat for Humanity became one of World Concern's partners in a phased program to facilitate early recovery and restore access to food, water, shelter, income and healthcare.

## Housing needs in Myanmar

Myanmar is among the poorest countries in Southeast Asia with almost one-third of its more than 54 million people living in poverty. According to AusAID estimates, ongoing conflicts between the government and ethnic minority groups have resulted in between 500,000 people and up to one million people fleeing to neighboring countries. Three years after Cyclone Nargis, the United Nations estimated that some 375,000 people or 75,000 households in southern Myanmar needed assistance with housing. A survey by the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction showed that at least 62 percent of households in the delta still lived in shelters that are not disaster resistant.

## How Habitat for Humanity works

Starting in May 2008, Habitat and World Concern built and repaired more than 1,700 basic houses in 18 communities in the Ayeyarwaddy delta. Habitat's principal contribution was providing experts in design, construction and project man-

## HABITAT FACTS

Families served this year<sup>1</sup>

**46**

Families served to date<sup>2</sup>

**1,746**

<sup>1</sup>New houses, rehabilitations and repairs in the year to June 30, 2011

<sup>2</sup>New houses, rehabilitations, repairs and other assistance

agement as part of the Seattle-based World Concern's Cyclone Emergency Response and Recovery project. Habitat also helped to supervise the construction of jetties and the repair of roads through a cash-for-work program funded by World Concern.

Habitat's approach was to build basic cyclone-resilient structures that exceed United Nations standards for strength and space. The houses used strengthened timber-frames and were built on lightweight concrete stilts. Walls and floors were made from woven bamboo, and roofs were fitted with galvanized iron sheets. Each house came with a latrine and water catchment system. Families also had solar lamps which can be recharged at charging stations in each community.

Habitat provided technical supervision, training, materials and logistics. Families were encouraged to work on their houses, but paid workers undertook most of the construction. Habitat coordinated the logistics and transport of construction materials that were often purchased in Labutta and shipped up to five hours away to the villages where they were needed.

# COUNTRY FACTS



**POPULATION:** 54,584,650 (July 2012 est.)

**CAPITAL:** Naypyidaw

**LAND AREA:** 676,578 sq km

**ETHNIC GROUPS:** Burman 68%, Shan 9%, Karen 7%, Rakhine 4%, Chinese 3%, Indian 2%, Mon 2%, other 5%

**LANGUAGES:** Burmese

**RELIGIONS:** Buddhist 89%, Christian 4% (Baptist 3%, Roman Catholic 1%), Muslim 4%, animist 1%, other 2%

**LITERACY:** 89.9% (2006 est.)

**URBANIZATION:** 34% (2010)

**ACCESS TO IMPROVED WATER SOURCE:** 71% (2010)

**ACCESS TO IMPROVED SANITATION FACILITIES:** 81% (2010)

*Sources: The World Factbook, World Bank*



As part of the program, six multi-purpose “safety” buildings were built as a shelter from future flooding or other natural disasters. Each is able to accommodate and protect up to 300 people.

Habitat continued to provide funding support to World Concern during the two-year second phase of the program. Communities were also trained to reduce their risks during disasters and to earn a sustainable livelihood. By the time phase two was completed, in April 2011, Habitat’s involvement had assisted an estimated 7,000 families \_ or about 26,000 people \_ in 52 villages.

A World Concern report highlighted the high level of community participation in rebuilding houses, from “identification of beneficiaries to site planning, site cleaning and support in providing and training of workers”. At least 200 skilled and unskilled village workers received on-the-job training on how to build cyclone-resilient houses.

## Partners

Habitat’s work in phase two of World Concern’s post-Cyclone Nargis rebuilding program received funding from the Jersey Overseas Aid Commission, part of the UK-related Channel Islands, and the Hong Kong Christian Council. In 2010, HFH Australia supported the project with funding from Baptist World Aid for building 102 basic or “core” houses.

Habitat is exploring the possibilities of other partnerships with World Concern in Myanmar.



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