



## HABITAT FACTS

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

**10**

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

**541**

<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

### Key Activities

- Providing decent and affordable housing for families with urgent needs, especially for returning refugees and internally displaced persons.
- Improving water and sanitation access for local communities.
- Building classrooms with international donor support.

### Habitat for Humanity in Afghanistan

Habitat for Humanity Afghanistan began its program in the northern province of Balkh in 2002. Habitat provided First Shelter homes to meet the demands of families in desperate need of immediate shelter. With no mortgage repayments required for First Shelter homes, costs were kept low by involving families and communities in construction. First Shelter homes used traditional mud bricks, mud and straw plastering, wooden doors and windows. Each house measured about 36 square meters. The buildings were designed to include two areas where people can live and work, earning a living by carpet weaving for example, with a traditional domed roof to enhance temperature control.

### Housing needs in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is among the poorest countries in the world. Government estimates showed that four in 10 people live below the national poverty line. The incidence of poverty is more severe in rural areas. About 45 per cent of rural people and the nomadic Kuchi people are poor, as compared to 27 per cent of the urban population.

Since the fall of the Taliban government in 2001, there has been an increase in demand for housing. An estimated five million refugees have returned from neighboring countries. Others who are displaced within Afghanistan have also returned to their own towns or cities.

The steady flow of refugees has exacerbated the problem of inadequate housing in the capital Kabul and other cities such as Jalalabad, Mazar-i-Sharif and Kandahar. Official government figures indicate that at least three million of the five-million strong population in Kabul are living in illegal and unplanned houses.

The influx has pushed up the prices of land and construction materials. These pressures are particularly acute in urban

areas where three in four Afghans live in poverty. Lack of clean water is common. Electricity is intermittently available in urban areas and non-existent in most rural areas.

Although a banking system exists, housing loans are rarely granted. It is not uncommon for property titles to be contested, causing numerous disputes.

### How Habitat for Humanity works

Habitat for Humanity Afghanistan first started a Save & Build program in Yaka-Toot village near Mazar-i-Sharif, the capital of Balkh province. Under this model, 10 to 12 families form a group to save for the cost of building houses. When they have saved enough for the cost of one house, Habitat and its partners contribute the cost of another two houses and construction begins. The group repeats the savings cycle until all the member families have been housed.

Save & Build was extended to the villages of Ali Abad and Turabi, just east of Mazar-i-Sharif in 2005. The savings groups each comprised an average of 17 families. Construction began in July 2005 and, by December 2011, more than 220 houses had been completed. Each house comes with a toilet and families are each given an 80-liter plastic container for storing water.



# COUNTRY FACTS

**POPULATION:** 30,419,928 (July 2012 est.)

**CAPITAL:** Kabul

**LAND AREA:** 652,230 sq. km.

**ETHNIC GROUPS:** Pashtun 42%, Tajik 27%, Hazara 9%, Uzbek 9%, Aimak 4%, Turkmen 3%, Baloch 2%, other 4%

**LANGUAGES:** Afghan Persian or Dari (official) 50%, Pashto (official) 35%, Turkic languages (primarily Uzbek and Turkmen) 11%, 30 minor languages (primarily Balochi and Pashai) 4%, much bilingualism

**RELIGIONS:** Sunni Muslim 80%, Shia Muslim 19%, other 1%

**LITERACY:** 28.1% (2000 est.)

**URBANIZATION:** 23% (2010)

**POPULATION LIVING IN ABSOLUTE POVERTY:** 36% (2010)

**ACCESS TO IMPROVED WATER SOURCES:** 48% (2010)

**ACCESS TO IMPROVED SANITATION FACILITIES:** 37% (2010)

*Sources: CIA World Factbook, World Bank, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights*

HFH Afghanistan also constructed classrooms and improved access to water and sanitation facilities in a local school in Ali Abad, Mazar-i-Sharif.

## Volunteers

HFH Afghanistan is currently not hosting international volunteers. It hopes to welcome Global Village teams when the political situation stabilizes.

## Partners

HFH Afghanistan has partnered with Wesley College, Melbourne, through HFH Australia. With the college's funding support, HFH Afghanistan built a school building in a local community in Mazar-i-Sharif which can accommodate 300 students each day.



## Habitat Highlights

- ▶ **December 2011:** HFH Afghanistan helped to finish the construction of 15 houses in the Ali Abad community in Mazar-i-Sharif with financial support from Habitat for Humanity East Bay, a U.S. affiliate. Afghan families had first begun building the houses but were unable to complete the construction due to a lack of funding.
- ▶ **December 2010:** Habitat held a joint dedication ceremony to mark the handover of 23 houses built for the Amani community as well as a three-classroom, Australian-funded school for the Turabi community. Both communities are located in Mazar-i-Sharif, in northern Afghanistan.
- ▶ **March 2010:** HFH Afghanistan dedicated two classrooms benefiting about 200 students in the Ali Abad community. Habitat also built new toilets, repaired existing ones, installed new sinks and provided water, via a pipe, from a well.
- ▶ **June 2007:** Habitat completed construction of 184 new houses for Save & Build groups in Ali Abad and Yaka Toot villages, east of Mazar-i-Sharif.
- ▶ **May 2007:** A group of Swedish soldiers based in Afghanistan donated US\$2,000 toward the Save & Build project in Ali Abad community.
- ▶ **November 2005:** A group of Canadian soldiers based in Afghanistan donated US\$4,800 to help Afghan school teachers in Mazar-i-Sharif to accelerate home construction.
- ▶ **June 2005:** Home partners produced 240,000 mud bricks for their homes in Yaka-Toot and Ali Abad villages.
- ▶ **2003/2002:** Some 365 families in the northern Balkh province were provided with First Shelter homes in Salbarun and Timorak villages.



Habitat for Humanity Afghanistan

PO Box #52 First Street Tekhnikom-i-neft-o-gaz Mazar-I-Sharif, Afghanistan Phone: +93 700 500 758 / +93 789 500 758

Email: fnazmy@hfhi-afghanistan.org Website: habitat.org/asiapacific

## Meet a Habitat family

For Juma Khan and his family of five, a Habitat home marked the beginning of permanence as they ended their days of moving from one rented place to another.

Juma and his family lived in rental places for five years before they moved into their Habitat house. He said: “It was very difficult for us. We had to bear with high rent and harassment from the landlord when we could not pay the rent on time. Once the rental lease expired, we had to move out quickly. It took weeks and even months to look for a new place to rent. When we found a place, the rent was usually high and our daughters had to travel farther to go to school. Moving our belongings from one place to another place added to the cost.”

Their financial burden was lifted when they moved into their Habitat house in July 2007. Juma used to pay 3,000 Afghani (US\$60) in monthly rent. He now repays 600 Afghani every month for his Habitat house. Typical of the houses which Habitat builds in Afghanistan, Juma’s house lets in more light and is elevated to prevent dampness. Juma’s daughters – Khadija, Ruqia and Rubabah – study in a brighter and healthier environment. The five-minute walk to their school is also a boon.

It is still not easy to find work. Every day, Juma cycles 13 km. downtown where daily wage laborers gather to wait for work. There are days when he waits for hours on end, only to return home feeling defeated.

His wife Layeqah used to weave carpets at home but the family had to sell the loom in early 2009 because they had fallen on hard times. Like other home-based carpet weavers, she relied on middlemen who brought raw materials to the weavers and paid them when the carpets were completed. Layeqah usually took about four months to weave a six square meter carpet for which she would be paid about 12,000 Afghani. But payment was often delayed, sometimes up to six months after the work had been done. The money was also insufficient for the family’s needs.



Juma’s family turned to shelling peas instead. Each person gets 20 Afghani (about 40 US cents) for shelling 4.5 kilograms of peas per day. The family’s average income is about 7,000 Afghani a month including Juma’s wages when he finds work. Although Juma’s three daughters – aged between 11 and 15 – are still young, they wish to learn carpet weaving to ease their parents’ financial burden. Their mother, however, wants them to finish their education.

In the long run, Juma hopes to have a steady source of income. Nonetheless, he recognizes the benefit of a safe and decent house. He has peace of mind leaving his family at home when he goes out in search of work. “We are very grateful to Habitat for Humanity for giving us such a gift,” said Juma.

