



## AT A GLANCE

Families served to date<sup>1</sup>

# 10,960

Families served this year<sup>2</sup>

# 2,719

<sup>1</sup>New houses and rehabilitations

<sup>2</sup>New houses, rehabilitations and repairs  
in the year to June 30, 2010

— Updated January 2011 —

**S**INCE the end of three decades of civil war in May 2009, Sri Lanka has been gradually leaving the past behind. Things are looking up with the tropical island called the “Pearl of the Indian Ocean” attracting development projects and investment.

There is however much catching up to do. Policies to alleviate poverty and development efforts by the government and international non-governmental organizations were hindered by the years of civil conflict. According to the latest available government figures for 2009, 7.6 percent of the population or about 1.5 million people are living below the national poverty line.

In addition to civil conflict, development efforts have been set back by natural catastrophies from the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which left 100,000 people homeless, to widespread flooding in early 2011 which affected the north and east. Recent United Nations figures, for example, showed that 160,000 houses in northern Sri Lanka were in need of repairs or had to be rebuilt as people displaced by civil conflict return to their home areas.

Sri Lanka has a highly rural population with only one-in-five people living in towns and cities. Rural dwellers frequently lack access to water, sanitation, electricity, communications, roads and other infrastructure and services. The rural poor often live in makeshift shacks constructed with mud and discarded materials that offer scant protection from the weather and surrounding wildlife. Children living in these unsafe structures – which are damp, moldy and need constant maintenance – are often sick.

Shelter conditions for urban dwellers are no better. The influx of rural workers seeking jobs in the capital city of Colombo has contributed to the growth of slums. The United Nations cites a shortage of affordable low-cost housing for low-income earners as a major reason for the growth of such informal settlements. According to UN-HABITAT, more than half of the 2.3 million people living in Colombo live in slums. Overcrowding is common. A five-member family in such areas has to make do with an average of less than 32 sq. m. (350 sq. ft.) of space. Typically, slum residents do not have legal rights to the land they occupy.

The government has two major initiatives to address substandard housing: the Million Houses Program and Urban Basic Services Program. These programs draw on community-based organizations to leverage off local participation in shelter and infrastructure improvements. The government has also granted tenure to slum residents and increased investment in infrastructure. Still, more needs to be done: government statistics for 2010 showed that the country faces a shortage of some 1.2 million homes.

Habitat for Humanity began operating in Sri Lanka in 1994, through affiliates. The model later evolved into a series of Habitat Resource Centers that support satellite centers and individual projects in four regions.

The former affiliate, now satellite center, in Anuradhapura pioneered Habitat’s housing microfinance scheme, Save & Build, in 2000. This sees groups of about 12 families saving toward the cost of one house. When that amount is reached, Habitat matches their efforts with a loan to build two more houses, thus allowing three houses to be built. The cycle repeats until each group member has a house. Loan repayments are recycled into a fund to help other savings groups.

HFH Sri Lanka builds two-room core house of about 24 sq. m. in size. Under the incremental building model, once the initial mortgage is repaid, a second loan is taken out to finance a second section – either a third room or a verandah – increasing the size to 32 sq. m.

To reduce construction costs, savings group members make bricks as well as gather raw materials. Habitat houses are kept affordable through the help of volunteer labor.

Since the tsunami, HFH Sri Lanka has hosted more than 1,000 volunteers. More than 50 teams worked on post-tsunami reconstruction sites and more than 70 Global Village teams have built on regular sites. Specialist construction teams, and 35 corporate teams sent by HFH Great Britain in partnership with UK-based group, communitychallenge, were among those who worked on post-tsunami projects. For the past year or so, HFH Sri Lanka has once



# COUNTRY FACTS

POPULATION: 21,513,990 (JULY 2010 est.)

CAPITAL: Colombo

LAND AREA: 65,610 sq. km.

ETHNIC GROUPS: Sinhalese 73.8%, Sri Lankan Moors 7.2%, Indian Tamil 4.6%, Sri Lankan Tamil 3.9%, other 0.5%, unspecified 10% (2001 census provisional data)

LANGUAGES: Sinhala (official and national language) 74%, Tamil (national language) 18%. Other 8%

RELIGIONS: Buddhist 69.1%, Muslim 7.6%, Hindu 7.1%, Christian 6.2%, unspecified 10% (2001 census provisional data)

LITERACY: 90.7% (2001 CENSUS)

URBANIZATION: 15% (2008)

POPULATION LIVING ON US\$1.25 A DAY: 14% (2000)

ACCESS TO IMPROVED WATER SOURCES: 90% (2009)

ACCESS TO IMPROVED SANITATION FACILITIES: 91% (2009)

Sources: CIA World Factbook, World Bank

again been hosting regular international build teams of Habitat volunteers.

Habitat also partners with non-government organizations such as World Concern, World Vision, Tearfund and Christian Aid, local microfinance institution SEEDS, as well as the United States Agency for International Development, and church groups. 🏠

## HFH SRI LANKA Highlights

▶ HFH Sri Lanka is responding with clean up kits and emergency shelter kits after January 2011 floods along the country's eastern seaboard and nearby districts that affected more than one million people.

▶ HFH Sri Lanka completed a partnership with ODEL in December 2010 to celebrate the fashion retailer's 20th anniversary in business. The ODEL 20/20 project saw ODEL Foundation fund the construction of 10 houses for families affected by the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. ODEL's staff also helped to build another 10 Habitat houses in other parts of Sri Lanka.

▶ In December 2010, HFH Sri Lanka hosted "Breakfast of Champions" to encourage volunteerism among local and multinational business corporations. Guests included senior executives from the local operations of Singapore Airlines, Swiss-headquartered cement company Holcim, HSBC, Standard Chartered Bank, container shipping line APL, a subsidiary of Singapore's Neptune Orient Lines, London Stock Exchange as well as CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency). Local corporations were represented by Colombo Stock Exchange, stockbroker Bartleet Group of Companies, apparel exporter Brandix, multinational conglomerate Hayleys, tire manufacturer CEAT, and Horana Plantations.

▶ To mark World Habitat Day in October 2010, HFH Sri Lanka partnered with the Stitch Movement, a local initiative to encourage youth volunteerism and activism in the country, to organize a one-kilometer barefoot walk. Held at Vihara Maha Devi Park in central Colombo, the walk served to create awareness of the poverty housing situation in Sri Lanka.

▶ In June 2010, HFH Sri Lanka partnered with the International Indian Film Academy to build 100 homes for people displaced by decades of conflict in a village in Vavuniya district, northeast Sri Lanka.

▶ Otara Gunawardene, the founder of Sri Lankan fashion and lifestyle retailer ODEL, became a goodwill ambassador for HFH Sri Lanka, in January 2010. Earlier, she and another HFH Sri Lanka goodwill ambassador, India-based actress Jacqueline Fernandez, volunteered on the Thailand site of the five-country 2009 Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project.

▶ HFH Sri Lanka launched "The Indicators to Measure Adequate Housing 2009" to mark World Habitat Day in October 2009. The report was the result of two years of research and inputs from the government, local and international NGOs, the UN and academic institutions.

▶ In August 2009, HFH Sri Lanka completed 63 transitional shelters in Menik Farm Welfare Center in Vavuniya in the north. The center was set up by the government to house internally displaced persons.

▶ In January 2009, HFH Sri Lanka held a ceremony for partners, donors and potential supporters to mark the 10,000th family served to be served. The family came from Moratuwa.



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