

Poland

Habitat for Humanity in Poland

Habitat for Humanity Poland was established in 1992 as the first Habitat branch in Europe. It has offices in Warsaw and Gliwice and so far it has helped over 1,300 families in Poland.

The housing need in Poland

There is a serious housing shortage with Poland having the lowest rate in Europe of number of homes for its population (1000:360), according to the national statistics. The deficit of housing units is between 600,000 and 1.5 million. Approximately 15 percent of the population lives in poverty housing, defined as a lack of roof overhead and/or living under substandard conditions (with no bathrooms and toilets, no central heating or technically unsafe buildings), and 44.8 percent of Poles are living in overcrowded conditions while the EU average stands at 17 percent (Habitat Poland Housing Report 2015). The severe housing deprivation rate is high at 10.1 compared to 5.2 EU average (Housing Europe 2015). Poland ranks in the bottom third of OECD countries in terms of housing conditions for children (average rooms per child and children in homes that lack basic facilities). The most common waiting period for social housing in Poland is between 2 and 7 years; however, the situation where it exceeds 10 years is not uncommon.

How Habitat addresses the need in Poland

Habitat for Humanity activities in Poland include constructions of new affordable houses, renovations of condominium blocks and advocacy initiatives. Renovation projects have been completed throughout the country in partnership with homeowners' associations and they involve both local and international volunteers as well as beneficiaries in their building work. Habitat Poland's advocacy initiatives focus on achieving system changes within government policy that will benefit the most vulnerable. Currently Habitat Poland is advocating for legislative changes to increase access to housing for people most in need with a focus on social rental housing. It is also working to raise public awareness and mobilize the general public around the housing issue in Poland and pushing key debates such as fuel poverty, housing poverty and housing first into social and political spheres.



COUNTRY FACTS*

Capital	Warsaw
Main country facts	Joined NATO in 1999, joined EU in 2004
Population	38.52 million
Urbanization	60.5 percent
Life expectancy	77.6 years
Unemployment rate	10.5 percent
Population living below poverty line	17.3 percent

*Sources: CIA World Factbook

HABITAT FACTS

When Habitat started in Poland
1992

Individuals served in FY16
255

Individuals potentially impacted through advocacy efforts in FY16
371,000

Volunteers hosted in FY16
680

Housing solutions

Renovations and repairs, incl. condominiums; Self-built housing cooperatives; Model projects for vulnerable groups; Advocacy: e.g. for social rental agencies



Emergency Renovations for Individual Families

The program is focusing on the needs of individual families who live in poor housing conditions in the Warsaw area and the South-West of Poland. Habitat Poland provides technical assistance for home improvement works, along with non-profit loans and volunteer labour. To date, the program has benefitted 54 families, including nine families in Warsaw through the partnership with Procter & Gamble who donated 50% of renovation costs. The rest was contributed by the beneficiaries and held in Habitat's revolving fund to assist future families.

'Trampoline' project - a new model of supported housing for young adults leaving foster care

There are approximately 80,000 young people who live in foster care in Poland. When they turn 18, they have to leave foster care despite not being adequately prepared for independent life. No housing assistance is currently offered and, as a result, many end up in homeless shelters. The 'Trampoline' project involves the development of seven apartments in unused attic space, which are rented to young people at a low and affordable rate for up to 2 years. This supports their transition from foster care to autonomous living.

In addition to housing, beneficiaries have been provided with finance and energy efficiency training, as well as some assistance with first employment opportunities. The project offers a model solution addressing the time gap between young people's departure from foster care institutions and the time they can access social housing. The beneficiaries contributed to the renovation works at the attic alongside international volunteers and local corporate volunteers, which proved to be very rewarding for all involved.

'Self-Build Housing Cooperative' pilot project

Habitat Poland is creating a solution for families with poor credit rating through a self-build housing cooperative initiative. In the pilot project, Habitat Poland is supporting a cooperative consisting of 8 families who collaborate in order to build a multi-family building. The families have already bought a plot of land on the outskirts of Warsaw. Habitat Poland is now guiding the group through the legal and financial arrangements, including the process of securing a mortgage. When the construction phase of the project begins in early 2017, Habitat Poland will help to lower the cost of works by engaging volunteers and obtaining in-kind donations from corporate partners.

Meet a Habitat family

Agnieszka, Andrzej and their three children (Angelika, 17; Adam, 12; and Laura, 5) moved to a public housing apartment in November 2014, after many years of waiting. Even though the municipal authorities replaced old windows and repaired the electrical wiring, the apartment still required extensive renovations. Ms Agnieszka and Mr Andrzej managed to do some works on their own: they replaced the central heating pipes, renovated the living room and the kitchen. However, they could not make the apartment fully habitable due to insufficient funds. They occupied only one room until Habitat Poland helped them to complete the renovation. The other two rooms were repaired, in addition to the bathroom, which also required an urgent intervention. The entire family worked alongside Habitat Poland's staff and volunteers, helping with works on the flooring.

What you can do

You can help Polish families improve their living conditions by taking one or more of the following actions:

DONATE

USD \$: habitat.org/donate/poland

VOLUNTEER

Join one of the scheduled Global Village trips to Poland or lead your own. For more information go to:

<http://www.habitat.org/emea/get-involved/gv-trip-schedule>

TITHE

Establish a strong and rewarding tithe partnership to help build houses globally! Quote **813700, POLAND** on your checks sent to: Habitat for Humanity International, Attn: Affiliate Tithe, 121 Habitat St., Americus, GA 31709



To learn more about Habitat projects in Poland, please contact us.

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