

# Japan



## Habitat for Humanity in Japan

Habitat for Humanity International opened an office in Japan in 2001 to handle the increasing number of Global Village volunteers from Japan and to provide guidance to several campus chapters that had been formed. In November 2003, Habitat for Humanity Japan was officially registered as a non-profit organization. Habitat Japan's main activities are in mobilizing volunteers for overseas builds and local disaster response efforts as well as raising awareness of Habitat's work. When disasters strike, Habitat Japan also appeals for funds to support rebuilding efforts in the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere.

## The housing need in Japan

In Japan, employment issues are often linked to housing issues. When people lose their jobs, they may face difficulties in paying rent or they have to move out from the company dormitories where they live. Without a secure job, it is not easy for them to find a new home. The lack of a permanent address can, in turn, be a hindrance to job seekers. Other issues affect those who are known as the "housing poor" in Japan. Despite having jobs with minimum wages, the elderly and single parents are unable to rent rooms because of a perceived lack of stability by the landlord.

## How Habitat addresses the need in Japan

Very poor households struggle to pay rent and face the risk of losing their homes. Their living conditions may deteriorate since they have no means for upkeep. Habitat Japan helps these households to resolve their housing issues through connecting them with experts for advice, improving their living conditions and other means. In response to the Kumamoto earthquake in 2016, Habitat Japan mobilized about 100 campus chapter members across the country to support affected families through assisting the operations at the disaster volunteer center.



Campus chapter volunteers showed support for the Habitat Young Leaders Build 2016 campaign by holding a fundraising race in Saitama prefecture.

## COUNTRY FACTS\*

<b>Capital</b>	Tokyo
<b>Main country facts</b>	Gained independence in 1947
<b>Population</b>	Over 126.7 million
<b>Urbanization</b>	93.5 percent live in cities
<b>Life expectancy</b>	85 years
<b>Unemployment rate</b>	3.2 percent
<b>Population living below poverty line</b>	16.1 percent

\*Source: World Factbook

## HABITAT FACTS

**When Habitat started in Japan**  
2003

**Volunteers engaged in FY16**  
1,248

**Housing solutions**  
Fundraising for rebuilding; supporting disaster response efforts; Global Village program; youth engagement



## Fundraising for rebuilding

In 2006, Habitat for Humanity Japan became a member of Japan Platform, a non-profit organization that pools government funds and private donations to support disaster response efforts of Japanese non-governmental organizations. Funding from Japan Platform and other sources were channeled through Habitat Japan for disaster response efforts in Bangladesh, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Nepal, and domestically in the earthquake-affected Tohoku region.

## Supporting disaster response efforts

Habitat Japan launched its first disaster response project after a devastating earthquake and tsunami hit the Tohoku region, northeastern Japan, in March 2011. Habitat mobilized volunteers to clear debris, and repair damaged houses and community centers. Following the April 2016 earthquakes in Kumamoto, Habitat Japan mobilized youth volunteers to disseminate information on the revitalization of homes while supporting operations at the Nishihara Disaster Volunteer Center.

## Global Village program

More than 1,200 volunteers from Japan worked on Habitat builds in the Asia-Pacific region for the financial year ended June 30, 2016. Habitat Japan also mobilizes volunteers to address the housing needs of vulnerable groups in partnerships with local governments and non-governmental organizations.

## Youth engagement

Habitat Japan engages with young people through 33 campus chapters with a total of 1,500 members. Students advocate and raise funds, as well as take part in Habitat builds overseas. Campus chapter members are also strong supporters of the Habitat Young Leaders Build campaign that rallies young people to volunteer, fundraise and speak out for the need for decent homes as a way out of poverty and toward self-reliance.

## Meet a Habitat family

The April 2016 earthquakes in Kumamoto prefecture, southwestern Japan, turned Sumire Takemura's world upside down. Although Sumire, who lives in neighboring Oita prefecture, was not hurt when the April 14 quake struck, she had to flee from her house when a stronger quake hit on April 16. She also urged her grandparents who were living in Kumamoto to do the same.

"After those quakes, I was too shocked to understand what had happened in my hometown, and it was too painful to see the damaged home where I had grown up," said Sumire.

"As I was born and raised in Kumamoto, I should do anything I can for Kumamoto!" Sumire thought. She acted on her resolve by joining a pilot volunteer team mobilized by Habitat for Humanity Japan, comprising her fellow members from the Habitat campus chapter at Ritsumeikan Asia-Pacific University. They worked in Nishihara, Kumamoto, to help clear debris from several damaged houses on May 7 to 8.

While she was there, Sumire came across a woman who was watching her damaged house being torn down. Despite talking to the woman, Sumire felt helpless as that was all she could do. However, the woman smiled and thanked Sumire at the end of their conversation. "I have to share my story, and what I experienced as a volunteer. That is what I can do for Kumamoto and the people there now."



Sumire Takemura joined a Habitat volunteer team to clear debris, among other work, in earthquake-affected Kumamoto following the April 2016 earthquakes.

## What you can do

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

### DONATE

[habitatjp.org/en/support/donatemoney](http://habitatjp.org/en/support/donatemoney)

### VOLUNTEER

Join one of the scheduled Global Village trips to one of the Habitat projects around the world or lead your own. For more information go to: [habitatjp.org/en/join/gv](http://habitatjp.org/en/join/gv)

To learn more about Habitat projects in Japan or in other parts of the region, please contact us.

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