

Country profile

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. HFH 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, HFH Japan also appeals for funds to support rebuilding efforts in the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere.

The housing need in Japan

In Japan, government aid has helped reduce the number of homeless people from 16,018 in 2008 to 6,541 in 2015. Japan, however, has a rapidly aging population. By 2025, one in five people will be above 75 years old. It is estimated that about 40 percent of them will live on their own. Among the younger generation and female-headed households, unemployment and poverty are becoming more visible although these issues are less pervasive compared to other higher income countries. About 14 percent of female-headed households say that they encounter many challenges to adequately improve their living conditions.

How Habitat addresses the need in Japan

In response to the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, HFH Japan sent volunteers to worst-hit Iwate and Miyagi prefectures to help families rebuild their lives. Habitat's campus chapter volunteers continue to engage with families in the affected areas. Annually, other Habitat campus chapters will come together to commemorate the March 2011 earthquake through cleaning up neighborhoods and other activities.



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

COUNTRY FACTS

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| Capital | Tokyo |
| Population | 126.9 million (July 2015 est.) |
| Urbanization | 93.5 percent lives in cities (2015) |
| Life expectancy | 85 years (2015 est.) |
| Unemployment rate | 3.3 percent (2015 est.) |
| Population living below poverty line | 16.1 percent (2013 est.) |
| Access to improved water sources | 100 percent (2015 est.) |
| Access to improved sanitation facilities | 100 percent (2015 est.) |

Source: World Factbook

HABITAT FACTS

When Habitat started in Japan
2003

Families served*
More than 690

Volunteers hosted**
More than 970

*Cumulative figure

**For financial year ended June 30, 2015

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 HFH Japan for disaster response efforts in Bangladesh, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Nepal, and domestically in the earthquake-affected Tohoku region.

Supporting disaster response efforts

HFH 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, HFH Japan is mobilizing youth volunteers to disseminate information on the revitalization of homes while supporting operations at the Nishihara Disaster Volunteer Center.

Global Village program

More than 970 volunteers mobilized by HFH Japan built homes with Habitat families in the Asia-Pacific region for the financial year ended June 30, 2015. The most popular destinations included the Philippines, Indonesia and India. HFH Japan also works with the local governments as well as local non-governmental organization partners to address the housing needs of vulnerable groups by mobilizing volunteers.

Youth engagement

HFH 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 galvanize 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

DONATE or **VOLUNTEER** to help families break the poverty cycle through decent homes. To learn more about HFH Japan's work, please contact us.

Habitat for Humanity Japan

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