

# Country profile

# SINGAPORE



## Habitat for Humanity in Singapore

Habitat for Humanity Singapore began operations in response to the urgent reconstruction needs following the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004. Since its inception, HFH Singapore has continually mobilized volunteers under the Global Village program for building projects and disaster response efforts in countries such as Indonesia, China and India. In Singapore, the Project HomeWorks program seeks to improve the living conditions, safety and sanitation facilities of a growing number of vulnerable elderly people across the island. To date, a total of 21,213 volunteers have worked on over 1,100 builds in the Asia-Pacific region and 1,673 local home improvement projects. HFH Singapore is also involved in fundraising and advocacy initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region and other parts of the world.

## The housing need in Singapore

Before the Singapore government established the Housing & Development Board (HDB) as the country's public housing authority in 1960, only 9 percent of the population was living in low-cost public housing. Today, more than 80 percent of Singapore's population lives in high quality HDB flats and approximately 90 percent of these residents own their flats. In 2012, the Singapore government announced that there were over 35,000 vulnerable elderly living alone. This number is likely to increase to 61,000 by 2020 and 83,000 by 2030. Living conditions for these elderly people, who typically reside in one-room flats, are poor as many are unable to care for themselves.

## How Habitat addresses the need in Singapore

The Project HomeWorks program was conceived to improve the living conditions of the elderly, the sick and the disabled living in one-room flats all over the island. Volunteers are mobilized to clean up homes, make minor repairs and ensure facilities meet safety standards. Since 2006, 8,601 volunteers have participated in 1,673 home improvement sessions. In addition, HFH Singapore raises awareness of the need to eliminate substandard housing through high-profile events such as Bare Your Sole. An annual charity walk, Bare Your Sole enables participants to empathize with impoverished families who often go without shoes. This event also raises funds to support Project HomeWorks.

HFH Singapore has partnered with several corporations, charitable foundations and non-governmental organizations. Singapore-based celebrities such as Paul Foster, Eunice Olsen, Corrinne May and Anita Kapoor lend their support as HFH Singapore's ambassadors. Members of campus chapters, a few of which have been established in local tertiary institutions, also volunteer, raise funds and advocate for Habitat.

## COUNTRY FACTS

<b>Capital</b>	Singapore
<b>Population</b>	5.7 million (July 2015 est.)
<b>Urbanization</b>	100 percent lives in cities
<b>Life expectancy</b>	85 years (2015 est.)
<b>Unemployment rate</b>	2 percent (2015 est.)
<b>Access to improved water sources</b>	100 percent
<b>Access to improved sanitation facilities</b>	100 percent

Source: World Factbook

## HABITAT FACTS

**When Habitat started in Singapore**  
2004

**Families served\***  
More than 1,670

**Volunteers hosted\***  
More than 21,210

*\*cumulative figure since 2004*

### Housing solutions

- Global Village volunteer builds
- Project HomeWorks
- Bare Your Sole
- Disaster response



## International volunteer builds

Teams of volunteers from Singapore are regularly sent on Habitat's Global Village trips to build homes in the Asia-Pacific region and other parts of the world. To date, HFH Singapore has mobilized more than 12,000 volunteers who took part in more than 1,100 building projects. Popular destinations include Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam. Due to its close proximity, HFH Singapore has embarked on sustained developmental projects in Indonesia's Batam island.

## Project HomeWorks

The Project HomeWorks program was launched in 2006 in order to improve the living conditions of elderly people residing in one-room flats across the island. Volunteers dedicate their weekends to cleaning, refurbishing and making minor repairs to these homes as well as to befriending the elderly. Since 2006, over 1,600 HomeWorks sessions have been conducted. The complementary Youth@HomeWorks program provides mentorship to youth volunteers in Project HomeWorks.

## Bare Your Sole

Bare Your Sole is an annual barefoot charity walk to raise awareness about the plight of impoverished communities in the Asia-Pacific region. Since the event was launched with 300 participants in 2009, it has gained visibility and momentum over the years. The seventh edition of the barefoot walk took place in May 2015 and saw a record number of more than 6,000 participants. Collectively, the event has raised a total of S\$1.85 million (US\$1.4 million) to support HFH Singapore's work domestically.

## Disaster response

The first teams of Habitat volunteers from Singapore were sent to worst-hit Aceh, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Funding support from Singapore Red Cross enabled HFH Singapore to rebuild homes in Aceh as well as in Sichuan, China, and West Sumatra, Indonesia, following the 2008 and 2009 earthquakes respectively. HFH Singapore has raised a total of S\$30 million (US\$22 million) for post-disaster reconstruction efforts around the world and supported the construction of 2,500 houses and 20 water projects in the Asia-Pacific region.

## Meet a Habitat family



Tim Nichols (left) bonded with Kok whose home he helped to clean up, along with others during a Project HomeWorks session.

Kok used to be active in his younger days working as a housekeeper aboard ships that sailed the way. Now 84, the unmarried man living on his own has diabetes which makes it difficult for him to maintain his small apartment.

Of the volunteers who helped Kok under HFH Singapore's Project HomeWorks, one in particular bonded with the elderly man. Communication was mostly non-verbal but Tim Nichols, originally from Canada, was able to convince Kok to discard stagnant water to prevent the breeding of mosquitoes.

Tim said: "I certainly have a soft spot for Uncle Kok. He always lights up when the volunteer crew shows up. A part of what tugs at my heart is that many of these elderly folks almost seem to have accepted their station in life — at times, almost like they've lost the will to fight. This is something that has truly touched me, and inspired me try to change his outlook."


Grateful for the help he has received, Kok hoped that the volunteers will continue to visit him.

## What you can do

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

## Habitat for Humanity Singapore

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More than 6,000 people supported Bare Your Sole 2015.