

## Country profile

# SRI LANKA



### Habitat for Humanity in Sri Lanka

Habitat for Humanity Sri Lanka aims to provide decent and affordable housing to people in need in the country. Established in 1995, Habitat for Humanity Sri Lanka has enabled more than 23,000 low-income families to build strength, stability and self-reliance through shelter.

### The housing need in Sri Lanka

Despite great advances made by housing programs in Sri Lanka, the housing need across the island is great. Many families displaced by the nearly 30-year conflict in Sri Lanka — which left homes, schools and other infrastructure destroyed — are still in need of permanent and secure housing. Many of these families live in shacks made of tin sheets. In Sri Lanka's commercial capital, Colombo, a large proportion of the population lives in crowded, informal settlements with limited access to clean water and safe sanitation.

Housing for workers in the estate sector for tea, rubber and coconut is another area of concern. The poverty level among the estate workers is higher than the national average, making it impossible for families to gain access to secure shelter. Families living on plantations in the Central Province are also vulnerable to landslides during the monsoon months.

### How Habitat addresses the need in Sri Lanka

HFH Sri Lanka provides low-cost housing solutions and housing-related technical assistance as well as improved access to water and sanitation facilities. It also advocates for adequate housing for all and disaster preparedness. Habitat homeowners contribute their own labor, or sweat equity, toward the construction of their own homes.

Almost 3,000 families were supported in building their homes that were destroyed after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. In May 2013, a large-scale housing project funded by the Indian government for internally displaced persons in Sri Lanka was launched with HFH Sri Lanka aiming to build 4,000 homes in the Eastern Province. As part of a 14-million-euro (more than US\$15 million) project funded by the European Union that was launched in January 2016, HFH Sri Lanka will employ the homeowner-driven approach to enable families in the North and the East to construct permanent homes. In addition, 100 houses will be constructed for estate workers with funding from the Indian government.

Corporate partners such as Tokyo Cement, Lafarge-Holcim, GlaxoSmithKline, Brandix, MillenniumIT and ODEL have lent their support to housing, and water and sanitation projects, with their staff volunteering on projects. Students from international and local schools and universities are also strong supporters.

## COUNTRY FACTS

<b>Capital</b>	Colombo; Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte (legislative)
<b>Population</b>	Over 22 million (July 2015 est.)
<b>Urbanization</b>	18.4 percent lives in cities (2015)
<b>Life expectancy</b>	Nearly 77 years (2015 est.)
<b>Unemployment rate</b>	4.2 percent (2015 est.)
<b>Population living below poverty line</b>	8.9 percent (2010 est.)
<b>Access to improved water sources</b>	95.6 percent (2015 est.)
<b>Access to improved sanitation facilities</b>	95.1 percent (2015 est.)

Source: World Factbook

## HABITAT FACTS

**When Habitat started in Sri Lanka**  
1995

**Families served\***  
More than 23,000

**Volunteers hosted\***  
More than 4,400

\*cumulative figure

### Housing solutions

- House construction
- Water and sanitation
- Environmental and energy-saving initiatives
- Disaster response



## House construction

HFH Sri Lanka works with families to build affordable, incremental housing. Typically, a “core house” of about 32.5 square meters (350 square feet) is constructed with a larger foundation laid so that houses can be expanded by homeowners when funds are available. The homeowner contributes to the design of the home and chooses the material and suppliers while HFH Sri Lanka provides technical support and construction expertise. Families are also trained in environmentally friendly construction technologies and in house life cycle management and maintenance.

## Water and sanitation

HFH Sri Lanka helps families gain access to clean water, adequate sanitation and proper hygiene through the construction and repair of water and sanitation facilities and the provision of WaSH training in communities. A water and sanitation project funded by Jersey Overseas Aid Commission in the Central Province will provide clean water to 600 people.

## Environmental and energy-saving initiatives

Since 2001, HFH Sri Lanka has trained 2,000 households in the use of solar cookers. Seedlings of trees such as teak, mahogany, jak and tumbuk as well as fruit and vegetable seeds are distributed to families. This enables families to start home gardens which yield produce to supplement their food intake and reduce expenses.

## Disaster response

HFH Sri Lanka helps disaster-affected families through the distribution of emergency shelter and clean-up kits. Transitional shelters and core houses may also be provided at a later stage. HFH Sri Lanka’s largest disaster response program involves the construction of homes for people displaced by the civil war in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. In May 2016, widespread flooding and landslides following Cyclone Roanu have displaced tens of thousands of people. HFH Sri Lanka plans to build 100 houses for flood-affected families.

## Meet a Habitat family

Thiraviyanathan Susiladevi and his wife lived in a tin sheet shelter with their four children, aged 16 to 25 years, and his elderly mother. To Thiraviyanathan, who had lost everything in the war, having a permanent house with more than one room was a distant dream.

The tin sheet shelter that his family called home was cramped, unbearably hot for most of the year and wet during the monsoon season. The children also did not have any space in which to study. Ravaged by the war, Thiraviyanathan and his family had no sense of security in their shelter.

He recalled: “Life was very difficult but what could we do? We lost everything and we didn’t have any money to build a house like this.”

His resignation turned to joy when he learned that he would receive a grant from the Indian government to build his own home. With Habitat for Humanity Sri Lanka lending its technical expertise, he was able to complete building his new house. Thiraviyanathan and his family moved into their new house in November 2015.

As the head of his household, Thiraviyanathan is finally at peace knowing that his family is safe and happy. Relieved, he commented: “We now even have a place to have our daughter’s wedding.”



As the head of his household, Thiraviyanathan (right) is glad that he can finally provide a secure place for his family to live.

## What you can do

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

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