

# Country profile: KYRGYZSTAN



## Country facts

**Capital:**  
Bishkek

**Main country facts:**  
Gained independence in August, 1991

**Population:**  
Almost 5.5 million

**Urbanization:**  
36 percent live in cities

**Life expectancy:**  
69 years

**Unemployment rate:**  
18 percent

**Population living below poverty line:**  
40 percent

## Habitat facts

**When started:**  
1999

**Highlights:**  
In 2006 Habitat Kyrgyzstan Cane Reed project received the World Bank award

**Families served:**  
more than 3,800

**GV volunteers hosted:**  
more than 370

**Housing solutions:**  
New houses  
Renovations  
Finishing half-built homes  
Energy-efficient upgrades and winterization  
Water and sanitation  
Housing for vulnerable groups

## Habitat for Humanity in Kyrgyzstan

Habitat for Humanity Kyrgyzstan was established in 1999. A few years later, it started an innovative building method incorporating locally grown cane reed as a construction material. This project won a World Bank award in Washington D.C. in 2006. Currently, Habitat for Humanity Kyrgyzstan focuses on renovations of condominium buildings, finishing of half-built homes and winterization or providing affordable loans to families with mentally disabled family members.

## What is the housing need in Kyrgyzstan

After the collapse of the Soviet system, Kyrgyzstan cut a variety of social benefits, leaving families with fewer resources for housing. Access to basic amenities such as water and sewage is limited, especially for impoverished people and those living in rural areas. Seeking relief from poverty, many families moved to informal settlements on the fringes of Bishkek and other large cities, where they lack secure tenure and decent housing.

Nearly 70 percent of the population lives in substandard homes or is homeless. It is not unusual for three generations to be crowded into a single room with no heating or water. People with mental disabilities, such as autism, are among the poorest and most marginalized in Kyrgyzstan. They have trouble obtaining and keeping paid work because of stigma associated with mental health issues and additional responsibilities on family members to offer care. As a result, most of them cannot improve poor housing situations.

## How Habitat addresses the need

Habitat activities in Kyrgyzstan range from new house builds, completion of half-built homes, renovation to condominium block buildings, and installation of ecologically safe toilets in rural communities. In cooperation with the Open Society Institute, Habitat provides decent homes for families where one or more members have mental illnesses.

Here are some examples of Habitat projects in Kyrgyzstan:

### ***Building and renovation of homes and condominiums***

Condominium repair and renovation is a successful established project that since 2006 in Kyrgyzstan alone helped more than 2,000 families to find safer and decent shelter. Habitat for Humanity Kyrgyzstan works with condominium associations to identify and repair the most serious problems, which usually are the result of a lack of maintenance of common areas.

### ***Energy efficient cane reed housing***

Local traditional cane reed homebuilding technology allows families to save big amounts on energy costs. It is an environmentally-friendly and affordable option for the low-income families that most need it, especially with the 40% of Kyrgyzstan population living below the poverty line. Habitat Kyrgyzstan works with the local government and helps with the building by providing the materials, professional labor and technical advice.

### ***Repairs and home winterization***

Many houses in Kyrgyzstan were built without proper insulation systems. People use solid fuel, burning coal and wood to inefficiently keep their houses warm. Homeowners spend more money on fuel instead of food, which also adds to global warming. Habitat for Humanity Kyrgyzstan aims to provide energy efficient insulation of the houses for low-income families by using low cost, local and natural materials.

### ***Addressing barriers to social inclusion***

Without means of earning income or adequate social assistance, many mentally and physically disabled people live in apartments that are in desperate need of renovation and lack space for all family members. Habitat is helping with affordable loans to renovate and upgrade apartments and thus help towards the social inclusion of this marginalized group.

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## **Meet a Habitat family**

Sasykulov Jalil (41) and his wife Nazira (39) have three daughters: Tolukaym (11) Sezim (9) and Myrzaym (3) and are expecting their fourth baby soon.

For the last 7 years, the family has been renting two rooms in a shared house. Although there is hot water in the adobe house it is rather old and has small rooms. One room serves for all the purposes - as a living room, a study room, a room for the kids to play in and for the sleeping. Before they lived in this shared house the family had to live in a hostel.

In 2005, the family got a piece of land from the municipality so they could finally start building their own house. However, they could not afford to complete the building. Habitat offers affordable help for the family of Sasykulov; one that will hopefully enable the expanding family to move to their completed house by winter time.

Nazira believes that thanks to Habitat their life will be filled with 'love and joy'.



## **CONTACT**

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## **DONATE**

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Habitat for Humanity International is a global charity dedicated to eliminating poverty housing. Since its foundation in 1976, Habitat has built and renovated more than 400,000 houses worldwide, providing simple, decent, affordable shelter for 2 million people.

In Europe and Central Asia Habitat for Humanity International works with families in need in 23 countries, building and repairing houses, offering housing microfinance services, improving water and sanitation, working on disaster response and advocating for affordable housing. In this region, Habitat has served more than 11,000 families together with volunteers and homeowners. Find out more at [www.habitateurope.org](http://www.habitateurope.org).