

Country profile: MACEDONIA



Country facts

Capital:
Skopje

Main country facts:
Gained independence in September 1991

Population:
More than 2 million

Urbanization:
67 percent live in cities

Life expectancy:
74 years

Unemployment rate:
35 percent

Population living below poverty line: 30 percent

Habitat facts

When the program started:
2004

Highlights:
In 2008, Habitat's IBOD members broke ground for a new project in Veles.

Families served:
More than 1,700

Global Village volunteers hosted:
More than 700

Housing solutions:
New homes
Renovations and repairs
Energy-efficient upgrades
Improvement of water and sanitation
Housing microloans

Habitat for Humanity in Macedonia

Habitat for Humanity Macedonia began work in 2004. From the outset, it piloted several projects. The Home Improvement Fund was named among the three most innovative development projects worldwide by the Global Development Network, a World Bank-affiliated institution. At the same time, the Water Supply and Sanitation project, executed in partnership with local authorities, served almost 100 families in the first two months of its operation.

The housing need in Macedonia

Macedonia has come a long way in its transition from a centrally planned system to a market economy after the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. However, much remains to be done to create strong, private-sector-led growth and well-paid jobs. About 80,000 households lack long-term housing solutions, and 12 percent of the housing stock is substandard. The average age of buildings in Macedonia is 30 years, and because of poor maintenance, most are in need of immediate replacement or renovation.

Living conditions for the rural poor are especially bad. The primary need is access to water and proper sewerage. Housing conditions are particularly grave for Roma households. About 320,000 people, almost 15 percent of Macedonia's population, live in illegally constructed buildings. The capital city, Skopje, hosts squatter settlements of about 120,000. It has the largest Roma community in Europe, which lives in a ghettolike environment.

How Habitat addresses the need

Habitat Macedonia has developed diverse projects to alleviate the housing need. It strove to create various models to reach a greater number of families and improve the aging housing stock, largely through innovative financial mechanisms.

Here are some examples of Habitat projects in Macedonia:

Home Improvement Fund and Roma Housing Fund

Habitat for Humanity Macedonia, in cooperation with a local microfinance partner, set up a Home Improvement Fund offering affordable, short-term home improvement loans. Similar model was applied for the Roma Housing Fund project which is serving the vulnerable Roma communities in five different municipalities on the outskirts of the capital Skopje.

Water supply and sanitation for the underserved

Almost 23 percent of rural communities in Macedonia have no access to clean water. Some municipalities invested into extending pipelines for water and sanitation. However, thousands of families are still not connected to the networks as they have no money to pay the installation fee. Habitat Macedonia offers needy families loans to connect households to portable running water and sanitation pipelines.

House building

Many families in Macedonia live in overcrowded homes together with parents or grandparents and cannot afford new apartments. To address the need, Habitat has started construction of an entire housing complex in Veles, an industrial city in the center of the country. In its second phase, the project plans to assist 78 families in building new homes.

Energy efficient homes

Habitat Macedonia will provide 50 low-income families with small loans for minor repairs, such as window or door replacements that will maximize energy efficiency of their homes. Even these small repairs can contribute towards better living conditions of these families. 'Green', atmosphere-friendly homes will lower the heating costs of the families and decrease energy loss significantly which will show especially on the health of the family members during the winter.

Meet a Habitat family

Zaklina and Zoran Damjanovski with their two boys – Petar and Mario - are renting a 3-room flat on the top floor of a house. Their flat is nice and in good condition, yet they are looking forward to finally having their very own house with the help of Habitat. Both parents believe that this will mean a better living environment for the boys and are also excited to be living closer to their other relatives.

Sonja says: *“The Habitat program in Veles is an excellent opportunity to solve the housing concerns of our family specifically and help with the housing crisis here in Veles. We have worked hard on the build site with the international volunteers and cannot wait to finally move in .”*



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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.habitat-europe.org.