

How do we measure what counts?

By Steven Weir

The first objective of HFHI's current strategic plan is to exponentially increase the number of "families served." This wording is consistent with our long-standing mission to eliminate poverty housing, but is a strategic change from the way we "count" our progress against that objective. It is in part recognition of the enormity of the task, the increasing complexity of working in urban environments and our drive to serve lower income families. Increasingly Habitat's role is only one component of holistic community development that requires multiple interventions and players to ensure both family and community sustainability.

WHAT HAS NOT CHANGED AND WHAT WE MUST HOLD ON TO IS OUR CORE MISSION.

Mission alignment

What has not changed and what we must hold on to is our core mission: "We have chosen, as our means of manifesting God's love, to build adequate and durable homes with those in need of shelter, carrying out the belief that safe and affordable housing is a basic human right and a fundamental component of dignity and long-term well being for every person on earth." *HFH Mission Principles, explanation for principle #3, Focus on Shelter.*

Habitat's development strategy emerged 30 years ago out of an experiment in a small farming community in rural Georgia — Koinonia Farm. It was then transplanted to a rural community in Zaire with similar results. The early years benefited by a replication strategy that focused on single family rural and suburban communities. The agrarian cultures in emerging countries around the world were fertile ground for Habitat's simple, but powerful formula.

However, as Habitat's support has grown into urban and peri-urban communities in more than 100 countries, the range of land tenure, legal frameworks and contextual complexity demand a corollary range of sophisticated intervention strategies to ensure affordability and broad community engagement.

Hurricane Katrina and the Indian Ocean tsunami have radically changed the global expectations of Habitat's supporters. How do we account for the thousands of volunteers who helped communities prepare the foundation for housing development through clearing debris and mucking out flooded homes? We know that disaster mitigation will ensure that families will not have to rebuild post-disaster. Each year 20,000 families lose their home to fires in Nepal. With improved wiring and proper kitchen design, most of these rebuilding efforts would be eliminated.

New metrics are needed to reflect the shift to a full range of family and community shelter support strategies.

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Scalability: Millard Fuller, the founder of Habitat, often challenged affiliates not to slip into a “lottery for Humanity” mindset that provided a few middle class houses to a few lucky families. According to the UN-Habitat global report on Human Settlements 2003, trends indicate that “in the next 30 years, the global number of slum dwellers will increase to about 2 billion, if no firm and concrete action is taken.”¹ To be consistent with our vision, we must challenge ourselves to look for ways to increasingly operate at scale.

This may mean reconceptualizing the role of a local affiliate in order to achieve greater efficiency in resource development, finance and construction management at a regional or national level. It may mean that we specialize in the specific parts of the value chain for affordable housing that are currently underdeveloped, leaving areas like lending to partner agencies that are already successfully delivering micro production loans and alternative financing in the communities where we are working. In the U.S. Gulf region, Habitat has relied on partners like the Salvation Army and Lutheran Social Services to provide application screening and ongoing family support ensuring loan-ready families who will continue to be supported through ongoing case management services. Relying on partners to share the burden allows Habitat to better focus on its core competencies.

Helping to train masons and carpenters in affordable construction methodologies, developing sustainable livelihoods for homeowner families through small business startups producing interlocking blocks and concrete tiles where there are poor quality products on the market, and providing material production opportunities for families who want to build their own home over time in a pay-as-you-go program are only a few ways to encourage affiliates to leverage impact and assist greater numbers of families.

Urban context and complex interventions: The first homepartners in urban settings lost their employment because Habitat insisted on using the same sweat-equity requirement used in rural programs. Previous requirements that all Habitat loans be given as a mortgage disqualified many urban families with use permits, but not clear fee simple titles. Early relocation projects were barely occupied as families chose to remain in slums close to their place of employment. All of these are examples of lessons learned from Habitat’s early interventions in complex urban contexts.

The high cost of urban land has driven increased density, multi-family and mixed use development, core houses with progressive and incremental improvements, repairs and renovations along with increased focus on community-based water and sanitation management as a critical part of providing adequate healthy homes in dense urban developments.

PERHAPS THE INTERVENTION STRATEGY WITH THE GREATEST POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE THE HOMES AND LIVES OF SCORES OF FAMILIES IS THROUGH SUCCESSFULLY ADVOCATING FOR CHANGES TO HOUSING POLICY AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS.

Advocacy: Perhaps the intervention strategy with the greatest potential to improve the homes and lives of scores of families is through successfully advocating for changes to housing policy and regulatory frameworks. Issues of land tenure, gender ownership and inheritance laws, land use and urban density regulations, and access to the formal finance sector are only a few of the issues that Habitat affiliates and national organizations have worked to change. Few realize how the increase in the median house size has impacted fire safety requirements that have, in turn, impacted accompanying street design, site development and infrastructure costs. Often strict code enforcement to middle

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Mission statement

“The Forum” exists to enable the worldwide partners of Habitat for Humanity International to accomplish its mission by providing a means to:

- Promote discussion, the exchange of ideas and best practices, and knowledge sharing;
- Share concerns and challenge our standard ways of doing things; and
- Explore different methodologies and issues relating to housing and poverty worldwide.



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and upper class standards keeps rapidly growing informal settlements from engaging in the formal regulatory process which, in turn, leaves them ineligible for water, sanitation, garbage removal, fire response and other vital city services.

What counts?

It has been said that we do what we count. As we consider all of the different types of interventions that are part of the “work” of eliminating poverty housing, what metrics allow us to measure our impact in a way that maintains the identity of Habitat for Humanity as an organization that “builds” and recognize these new building strategies and non-construction interventions that are also important?

The “families served” metric is an attempt to recognize construction interventions that are incremental, improve the life of a family, are affordable for a poorer target group but fall short of a new house. The definitions stipulate that these interventions must result in a “new, renovated or repaired house.”

AS WE CONSIDER ALL OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS THAT ARE PART OF THE “WORK” OF ELIMINATING POVERTY HOUSING, WHAT METRICS ALLOW US TO MEASURE OUR IMPACT IN A WAY THAT MAINTAINS THE IDENTITY OF HABITAT FOR HUMANITY AS AN ORGANIZATION THAT “BUILDS” AND RECOGNIZE THESE NEW BUILDING STRATEGIES AND NON-CONSTRUCTION INTERVENTIONS THAT ARE ALSO IMPORTANT?

As a result, many questions have been raised in the field as to how we will count the many non-construction interventions that have been mentioned in this article as well as in other articles in this issue of “The Forum,” including advocacy initiatives, legal literacy training in LA/C, mucking out of houses in New Orleans or training carpenters and masons.

A global task force is being set up to look at these issues and put forth recommendations for endorsement by HFHI’s board of directors. The task force mandate includes the following:

1. Clarify definitions for construction and non-construction interventions.
2. Develop quality standards for the different types of construction interventions.
3. Review and develop guidelines on reporting



Kim MacDonald

Habitat for Humanity, in partnership with the Leprosy Mission, has built 46 houses in five coastal villages for handicapped people who were affected by the tsunami. Pictured here is Subramani, from the village of Koonimedukuppum, India.

cumulative numbers.

The goal will be to complete the work and implement by the end of June 2008 for fiscal year 2009.

Summary

The success of Habitat’s first 30 years has brought both the opportunity and the responsibility to take a global leadership role in building sustainable communities. The challenge for Habitat will be to continue to demonstrate the love and teachings of Jesus by building simple, decent, affordable housing by engaging the whole community as the foundational strategy to eliminate poverty housing. Yes, we will contextualize what this looks like in communities around the world, we will engage in public policy debates and advocacy, and we will research and develop best practices through our alliances with like-minded partners, but we will retain our legitimacy through continued building.

Every family served, counted by Habitat, will be the result of improved housing conditions for that family. Let us also ensure, by the way we work, that every family served by Habitat can be “counted” on to bring transformational change to our communities. 🏠

Steven Weir is vice president of Global Program Development and Support, and interim area vice president of HFHI’s programs in Asia/Pacific.

¹United Nations Human Settlement Programme: The Challenge of Slums, Global Report on Human Settlements 2003, Earthscan Publications Ltd, London and Sterling, VA., 2003, p. xxv.

Families served

By Jonathan Reckford



As I was traveling in Egypt not long after joining Habitat for Humanity, I was lucky enough to meet Romani, Susanne, and their baby daughter, Doria. They lived in one of Cairo's "garbage communities," where residents earn their living by collecting garbage from the city, bringing it home, recycling it and selling it for profit.

Like their neighbors, Romani and Susanne deserved to live in a decent house, away from the garbage.

They partnered with HFH Egypt and with CEOSS (Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Service). Habitat worked with Romani and Susanne to build a second floor to their house. This way they could sort the garbage below, and then go upstairs to live in a clean environment.

I didn't fully appreciate the impact of this on their lives until I entered the second floor and encountered the remarkable contrast between the two sections of the house.

Their "new" house didn't look like other, more traditional Habitat houses that I've seen around the world. The important thing, however, was that through their partnership with Habitat and CEOSS, Romani, Susanne and Doria fashioned a more decent living environment on terms they could afford. Their situation didn't necessarily demand an entirely newly constructed home.

IF WE ARE SERIOUS ABOUT FULFILLING OUR MISSION MORE COMPLETELY, WE MUST CONTINUALLY LOOK FOR NEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE AND GROUPS WHO SHARE AND COMPLEMENT OUR COMMITMENT TO GOD'S CHILDREN IN NEED.

This edition of "The Forum" addresses a growing conversation among Habitat partners everywhere: Houses built versus families served. What defines each? At what point do we "count" a house a Habitat house? What constitutes a "family served?"

As we stretch our thinking to consider, first of all, the vast need for shelter in our world and, secondly, the enormous task such a need presents, we must also stretch our model to include other means of meeting the housing needs of families surviving in deplorable conditions.

On page 1, Steve Weir explores these issues, providing examples of how and why we must augment our traditional building

model. Notice I say augment, because we don't want to replace it. It has served us well for a long time and will continue serving us for a long time to come.

But it's simply not enough in light of the housing need that every day outpaces the new Habitat houses that we can "count." If we are serious about fulfilling our mission more completely, we must continually look for new relationships with people and groups who share and complement our commitment to God's children in need.

As Steve mentions, these partnerships may surface in the field of micro-finance, for example, or in disaster recovery, as we've learned from our efforts following the tsunami and on the U.S. Gulf Coast. At the end of the day, what's important is not so much that Habitat volunteers build a new home from the ground up, but that we adhere to the core principles that define us, and that families in need move from substandard housing into adequate, safe, solid homes they can afford. When we accomplish this, we complete our mission and fully embody the task God has called us to.

This is not to say that we should stop measuring or counting the number of houses we build. That's certainly one means of quantifying what we do. But, as I recently heard someone say, we also want to "measure what we treasure." And what we treasure most are not the walls and roof that give a house form, but the people inside equally loved by God and equally deserving of a decent place to live.



A Habitat for Humanity house in Matamadeo, the garbage collector's community near Cairo, Egypt.

Doral Chenoweth III

HOUSES BUILT VERSUS FAMILIES SERVED—IT'S NOT AN EITHER/OR SITUATION, NOR SHOULD IT BE.

Houses built vs. families served—it's not an either/or situation, nor should it be. Rather, we should number the houses we build, while at the same time continually seek new opportunities to serve the housing needs of those for whom the traditional way of building simply may not fit.

In whatever shape our efforts unfold, I'm grateful and humbled to work with such compassionate, talented staff, volunteers and family members collectively searching for greater access to adequate shelter.

Jonathan Reckford is CEO of Habitat for Humanity International.



HFH Kenya: A view from the field of families served

By Mark Wooding

This article gives an overview of the direction that Habitat for Humanity Kenya (HFHK) has taken over the past year as a response to the “families served” definition of June 2005.

Background

The HFH Kenya program was started in 1982, and to date more than 2,600 houses have been constructed with families in need (1,600 during the last 7 years), and 33 out of 45 affiliates are active. Between 2000 and 2004, HFHK underwent a radical overhaul in terms of systems, policies and organizational structure.

In April 2005, we asked two key questions:

- How can HFH Kenya get to a current (not 90-day) repayment rate of 95 percent?
- How can HFHK build or renovate 5,000 houses per year?

These questions prompted:

- the initiation of a strategy to systematically improve repayment rates in each region, including the introduction of a bonus scheme to reward field officer performance; and
- an examination of ways to reduce house costs by introducing a smaller house design, house renovations and appropriate technology.

However, despite significant improvements in the repayment rates of many affiliates and a reduction in the average loan cost, it became clear during an exercise with the field officers at a quarterly communication meeting later in 2005, that the maximum output of the program with its current methodology and existing staff but unlimited funds was about 500 houses per year. This revelation was transformative.

The breakthrough came during 2006 with three key inputs:

1. In April, HFHK sent a representative to the “Reaching significant scale and impact” conference in Manila, the Philippines. HFHK was advised to consider using Habitat Resource Centers to transform its housing delivery methodology and to find partners like a Christian microfinance institution to take over the loan appraisal, disbursement and tracking functions. Then, in May, instead of the traditional program evaluation, a “reflection

exercise” using POET (Participatory Organizational Evaluation Tool) with six national office staff and six field officers, showed that HFHK was strong in teamwork and support, and ready to face new challenges, including a scaling-up initiative.

2. Following an exploration of the “families served” policy, field officers became aware of the many other ways in which the program could serve Kenyans. A new strategic plan was developed during the first quarter of FY06, which set out a framework and timescale in which to implement the scaling-up initiatives.

3. Stephen Wanjala was appointed as the A/ME housing microfinance consultant. His many years of experience with a successful microfinance institution enabled him to help the field officers better understand their role in disbursing loans after thorough appraisals and maintaining high repayment rates.

HFHK HAS UNDERTAKEN A NEW APPROACH—ENABLING THOSE WITH LOW INCOMES, BOTH IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS, TO BUILD HOUSES. RATHER THAN ESTABLISHING AFFILIATES ALONG THE LINES OF THE TRADITIONAL HABITAT MODEL, WE ARE NOW IDENTIFYING EXISTING COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS (CBOS) WITH WHOM TO PARTNER FOR SHORTER-TERM PROJECTS.

A new approach

As a result, HFHK has undertaken a new approach—enabling those with low incomes, both in rural and urban areas, to build houses. Rather than establishing affiliates along the lines of the traditional Habitat model, we are now identifying existing community-based organizations (CBOs) with whom to partner for shorter-term projects.

A Habitat committee is set up to represent 30 group members who are interested in improving their shelter. The group is

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trained by our field officer, and the first loans are then disbursed. These first loans, for up to US\$350, are to be paid back within two years, and can be for a repair, a renovation or the first stage of an incremental house. Once the loan is paid back, a second, larger HFHK loan can be accessed for further repairs or renovations, or the next stage of a house. Up to four loans are allowed per family. Applicants are encouraged to save before taking an HFHK loan—a family that has saved US\$350 can add this to the US\$350 from Habitat and thus complete a “shell” house, i.e., foundations, walls and roof with the first loan. This already habitable structure can be completed and/or extended with a future loan. Once all 30 members of the group have improved their shelter and paid their loans, their project is considered completed. If other CBO members come forward later to apply for loans, and there are 30 interested families, then another project is started under a different name and fund code. The same principles will apply to our urban projects, except that loan sizes will be higher due to the increased construction cost in urban areas.

THE KEY IS NOT ONLY HAVING FIELD OFFICERS WHO ARE TRAINED IN SOUND HOUSING MICROFINANCE PRINCIPLES, BUT WHO ARE ALSO ABLE TO GIVE THE RIGHT ADVICE IN A TIMELY MANNER AS PART OF A “TECHNICAL SERVICES” PACKAGE. IT IS THIS SERVICE, EVEN THOUGH CHALLENGING TO ESTABLISH, WHICH ADDS VALUE TO THE LOAN.

This methodology for achieving greater impact and scale may appear straightforward. However, the key to delivering this type of fast-track service to our clients is not only having field officers who are trained in sound housing microfinance principles, but who are also able to give the right advice in a timely manner as part of a “technical services” package. It is this service, even though challenging to establish, which adds value to the loan. In fact, it is what many Kenyan mortgage lenders would like to offer but currently do not.

All HFHK house types are now being split into various loan packages so that the houses can be completed incrementally in several ways. We are in the process of training/recruiting field officers with specific construction skills and knowledge who can advise clients on appropriate construction materials, priorities for repairs and renovations, housing rights and access to land, and facilitate construction workshops.

At the same time, instead of our 33 active affiliates having

Development of Habitat Resource Centers in Asia/Pacific

By Wong Hiew Peng

Habitat for Humanity started helping families in the Asia/Pacific region to build decent and affordable homes in 1983. Three decades later, it was time to take stock of the progress. Habitat’s leadership in the Asia/Pacific region began looking at ways to increase the scale and sustainability of its programs. The traditional affiliate model served Habitat well, and would continue to be an important way for helping families. But to create real scale and sustainability and thereby have greater impact on the misery of poverty housing, there needed to be a better way of doing things, according to Charlie Ayco, director of program development and support at Habitat for Humanity’s Asia/Pacific area office.

A key way to create impact and extend Habitat’s reach to more families is the innovative Habitat Resource Center (HRC) concept. HRCs take a flexible approach to providing building resources and skills to affiliates and their home partners, partner organizations and communities. An HRC involves “the use of appropriate technology, training of volunteers, site managers, and project managers in the ‘Habitat project management way,’ developing vendor programs for access to more affordable basic construction materials, and propagation of ‘best practices’ and ‘lessons learned’ across the entire HFH Philippines family,” said Alberto Jugo, president and CEO of Habitat for Humanity Philippines.

An HRC should be considered as a network of expertise rather than a physical location. “HRC has nothing to do with its physical location, as it is a ‘knowledge business,’” said Jugo.

More importantly, HRCs can be a completely alternate model for Habitat operations in a country. The range of services provided by an HRC varies from country to country.

The services can include but are not limited to:

Construction services: The key resource center service is construction management. Engineers and specialists offer design and architectural services, including earthquake-resistant designs for disaster response projects and multi-

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revolving funds, we now have a central revolving fund managed by the national office and monitored by our 14 field officers at six regional offices. We no longer rely as much on local volunteers on affiliate committees to handle finances, and have revised our affiliate finance manual to close loopholes as part of an internal control review. Finally, we are reviewing our policy of using the cement index as the method of inflation adjustment; cement prices in Kenya have been rising steadily with the country experiencing a sustained construction boom and tying payments to bags of cement is discouraging those on low income from taking our loans.

Where does this leave us with “families served?” All the changes outlined above are designed to help us reach our target group of the poorest of the poor. We are confident that these new approaches will allow us to achieve this goal, but it will be hard work, involving rapid and detailed appraisals of groups and individuals, timely technical advice, efficient tracking systems and loan collection, and a proactive approach to strategic planning as we strive to eliminate poverty housing for 4 million families in Kenya. We intend to move from serving an average of 300 families annually for the last three years to more than 700 in FY08, and are anticipating a number of repeat loans from those same families during FY09, which will be easier to disburse as assessments have been undertaken previously. One-off repairs¹ to a house at 15 percent or less of the normal house cost are easy to

count, as are one-off loans for renovated or “vernacular” houses (local materials for the walls and a loan for the floor, roof and fittings).

Challenges

The challenge comes when deciding whether a family building an incremental house has been served at the start of the process or at the end; how to define the intermediate steps; and whether we can count families who receive training from us and then build their own house, or perhaps buy one of our house plans but get their funding elsewhere.

Other questions arise, such as “Will Global Village teams want to assist several families in a community repair and renovate their houses, rather than assist just one family build their house?” Team members sometimes comment that the house they are building seems to be for a family at the upper end of our target group of the “productive poor,” a disadvantage of the full-house loan. Thus focusing on the shelter needs of a family rather than the delivery of particular housing products to those that can afford them is resulting in greater diversification of available housing solutions and this is of benefit to those on low income. However, in the future this will necessitate more sophisticated “counting” of how those families are served. 🏠

Mark Wooding is the national director of HFH Kenya.

¹ “One-off repairs” mean that once the repair is complete, the family will not return for another loan in the near future (i.e., it is not a program of repairs to be undertaken to rehabilitate a home).

Development of Habitat Resource Centers in Asia/Pacific

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story designs for urban housing needs. In the Philippines, the resource center¹ is noted for the use of the cost-effective concrete interlocking block technology and the lightweight steel frame technology.

HRC staff can also supervise construction and provide expertise in logistics, procurement and transportation. Some resource centers train local workers and homepartner families in construction methods and skills. Others, such as the one in Meulaboh, Indonesia, produce materials like bricks for Habitat homes. Materials produced in excess may be sold to a wider market to generate jobs and income for homeowners.

Skills training: Resource centers train local construction workers in traditional and alternative approaches to masonry, woodwork, painting and other building practices, and they transfer knowledge to local supervisors, enabling them to

AN HRC SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A NETWORK OF EXPERTISE RATHER THAN A PHYSICAL LOCATION. MORE IMPORTANTLY, HRCs CAN BE A COMPLETELY ALTERNATE MODEL FOR HABITAT OPERATIONS IN A COUNTRY.

plan and run complete housing projects. With some training, homepartners are not only able to build their own houses but also help others in the community to construct their homes.

Disaster response: HRCs work with partners and provide project management knowledge and technical resources. This was the model used for reconstruction in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand after the countries were devastated by the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. The HRC in Chennai, South India, continues to build for tsunami-affected families.

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Development of Habitat Resource Centers in Asia/Pacific

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Erin Hooper

The Habitat Resource Center (HRC) in Balakot, Pakistan, has been providing transitional shelters to the survivors of the October 8, 2005, earthquake that killed over 80,000 people in Balakot and neighboring Kashmir. The shelters consist of four curved iron pipes, seven corrugated metal sheets and securing metal straps. Foam padding secured inside the shelter provides insulation against the harsh winter months. Pictured here is 92-year-old Abdul Ghani in his new Habitat shelter.

In the Philippines, the resource center built 330 homes and an eight-classroom school building in Southern Leyte for families affected by massive landslides in February 2006. The resource center completed the work in less than four months. This was accomplished even though the Philippines did not have an affiliate in Southern Leyte, and personnel and construction materials had to make a four- to five-hour journey to reach the build sites.

Housing microfinance: Resource centers may also partner with microfinance institutions or nongovernmental organizations with microfinance expertise to transform entire communities. At HFH Philippines' 1,000-house project in BASECO in Manila, the Center for Community Transformation, Habitat's local partner and a nongovernmental organization (NGO), offers housing microfinance services to Habitat homepartner families.

Habitat for Humanity operates HRCs in countries such as India, the Philippines, Thailand and Vanuatu. In July 2006, HFH Bangladesh also adopted the HRC concept. Two divisional HRCs have been formed in Jessore and Mymensingh, consolidating affiliates' strengths in mobilizing volunteers, collecting repayments, community development and fund raising. The HRC concept has boosted staff morale, increased house building and community mobilization in terms of forming women's savings groups, said Kyle Scott, regional program manager for South Asia. The

HRC concept is expected to be fully functional in Bangladesh by 2009.

In the early stage of its development, the HRC was variously known as a "building center," "building and training center," "building and resource center," or "disaster response technical center." It was after the concept was developed further that the standard title of a Habitat Resource Center was conceived. If necessary, the title can include a special focus, "Habitat Resource Center – Disaster Response."

Inspiration for HRCs

The HRC had its roots in brainstorming efforts to respond to the Gujarat earthquake in India and to work with microfinance organizations in Bangladesh. In 2001 Todd Garth, then regional director for South Asia, explored ways to encourage affiliates to reach scale with limited resources. He found inspiration in the model of community participation and partnership that characterized the success of the Orangi Pilot Project² in Karachi and the Nirmithi Movement³, or building movement, in India, and drafted a concept paper for consideration by the A/P senior management team.

Akhtar Hameed Khan started the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) in 1980 as a Pakistan NGO's response to an informal

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A new concept of service to reach more families

By Manuel Mancuello



Homeowner Antonia Morales in front of her Habitat house.

A recent survey of the housing need in the LA/C region indicates that while 39 percent of the housing deficit will require new houses, the remaining 61 percent can be remedied with repairs. In several countries where the need for repair of current housing stock is greater than the need to build new houses, the LA/C area is serving families that could not be reached before when programs focused on building new houses.

Increasingly, many of the new loans granted in LA/C are for repairs or additions, such as a new room, with the intention of reducing over-crowding and the negative consequences it brings. In Honduras, loans are helping to improve the adobe houses in the indigenous community of Chorti, in Copan. With wall coatings and a change in the roofing materials, the chagas-bearing bug that lives in the hay of the roof or in adobe walls can be eradicated.

Nevertheless, the expansion of programs in LA/C to include a variety of interventions has been approached with caution.

The LA/C program approach is to prioritize the financing and construction improvements that will significantly improve the well-being of families, even though there is also a demand for aesthetic changes in the house. In this sense, it is not the same thing to get a loan to put tile over cement flooring as it is to improve an old adobe wall to avoid the disease-bearing insects. The first case is more aesthetic; the second one is more significant.

Martha Hernandez, country coordinator in the Institutional Development department explains some of the challenges, “In order to understand the difficulties, we should take into account the whole operational system of Habitat was adapted to complete houses: capacities, systems, procedures, etc.”

Habitat has been historically identified by the new houses it builds. Many programs feel that providing partial solutions does not comply with the expectations of dignifying the living conditions of a family. Therefore, incremental solutions are a change

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A new concept of service to reach more families

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Recently completed adobe Habitat house.

in thinking about Habitat and its role in eliminating poverty housing conditions in the community.

HABITAT HAS BEEN HISTORICALLY IDENTIFIED BY THE NEW HOUSES IT BUILDS. MANY PROGRAMS FEEL THAT PROVIDING PARTIAL SOLUTIONS DOES NOT COMPLY WITH THE EXPECTATIONS OF DIGNIFYING THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF A FAMILY. THEREFORE, INCREMENTAL SOLUTIONS ARE A CHANGE IN THINKING ABOUT HABITAT AND ITS ROLE IN ELIMINATING POVERTY HOUSING CONDITIONS IN THE COMMUNITY.

Bernadette Cruz Zoto, program coordinator in Los Tuxtlas, Mexico, concurs, “In this corner of Mexico, we are taking some time because the community has always identified us as builders of complete houses. Just now, there are other organizations that have started to approach us asking for some advice, not only in house construction, but also for the construction of latrines, bathrooms, etc.

“Regarding advisory and supportive services, we have really not had the chance to do anything. But, thank God, people are now starting to relate our work with diverse types of improvements,” she adds.

“In order to move in this new direction,” Hernandez continues, “We have to define or improve the mechanisms, procedures and administrative costs of micro credits, since they are different from the traditional mortgage loans for housing. Likewise, we should strengthen the relationships with those donors who are willing to finance service programs such as technical advisory services, workshops or subsidy facilitation.

“Finally, this new concept of families served also promotes

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A new concept of service to reach more families

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alliances; thus, we can reach more people and involve other institutions that, due to their experience, location or capacity, can accomplish a greater impact,” concludes Hernandez.

In fact, many program activities that improve the quality of life of homeless families have not been “counted” in the past. “For example,” recalls Juan Ochoa, one of two administration and finance coordinators of the area office, “a university in Chile requested advice from Habitat in developing a local housing project. Even though Habitat Chile developed the housing product, because they did not actually construct the houses, the intervention was not accounted for.”



DENISE MUSCHEL

While the need for decent housing in Latin America and the Caribbean increases, Habitat programs in the region continue to bring hope. Pictured here is the Morales family in front of their Habitat house. Miguel Morales says, “We’re happy with our home. Above all, we’re thankful to Habitat for the opportunity to build with them.”

“The project was for the construction of 50 houses. Habitat provided the blueprints and its experience in low-cost house construction. But, at that time, we did not have the concept of ‘families served,’” adds Alfredo Villalta, the finance manager of the area office at that time.

Another non-construction program that improves the lives of families is the financial literacy program. More than 2,000 families in more than 10 countries have had the opportunity to increase responsible management of their finances.

Likewise, Habitat Argentina has developed a legal literacy program, comprised of a cycle of workshops about the different aspects related to obtaining, legalizing and protecting property. (see “The Forum,” Volume 13:3) In Dominican Republic, there is a construction training program, and in Haiti a latrine construction program in alliance with Fonkoze, the largest microfinance organization in Haiti.

As this new role for Habitat is clarified, both internally and externally, there has been an increase in the demand for repairs,

AS THIS NEW ROLE FOR HABITAT IS CLARIFIED, BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY, THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE IN THE DEMAND FOR REPAIRS, TRAINING, TECHNICAL ADVICE AND HOUSING SOLUTIONS IN ALLIANCE WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.

training, technical advice and housing solutions in alliance with other organizations. The door is open for more opportunities but the approach is still cautious. As Hernandez comments, “. . . we are careful in the sense that program interventions need to significantly affect the quality of life of the family.”

Manuel Mancuello is a writer and editor in the Public Awareness department, Habitat for Humanity LA/C.

Correction:



In the article, “His Holiness Karekin II Work Project: A case study” (The Forum, Volume 14:2) we reported that Gohar Palyan was the national director of HFH Armenia. However, in 2006, Gohar Palyan served as volunteer program manager at HFH Armenia and currently serves as project manager for His Holiness Karekin II Work Project and GV program manager.

We apologize for our mistake.

Serving families through Thrivent Builds Neighborhoods

By Rebecca Hix

Habitat's new metrics and goals around serving families rather than building houses, is, I think, the reality and core mission Habitat has always had. At family selection meetings, fund-raisers, and most especially, house dedications, we preach that it is not the houses, but the families that are most important. It is the families who will own those homes, raise their children in those homes and draw closer to what God intends them to be in those homes that matter. With that in mind it seems appropriate that Habitat would change its language to more clearly reflect our focus.

But how do we do that? Counting roofs will always be easier than counting how our ministry impacts people's lives. Being able to evaluate impact is important because it tells the story of transformation and helps us evaluate the stewardship of resources entrusted to us.

TBN'S MISSION IS TO BE A CATALYST FOR NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSFORMATION BY JOINING WITH OTHER FUNDING AND COMMUNITY-BASED PARTNERS TO SUPPORT NEW OR EXISTING INITIATIVES TO REVITALIZE LOWER-INCOME NEIGHBORHOODS.

In this environment of old ideas receiving new emphasis, Thrivent Builds Neighborhoods (TBN) was born. TBN's mission is to be a catalyst for neighborhood transformation by joining with other funding and community-based partners to support new or existing initiatives to revitalize lower-income neighborhoods.

Two key ideas have guided program design:

1. Serving families requires more than building houses. To affect transformation, a comprehensive strategy must be created that affects the many elements of poverty in a neighborhood.
2. Habitat alone can neither eliminate poverty, nor the conditions that create it and sustain it. Therefore a coalition of partners is needed, where each brings a needed core competency to the table.

In order to test these design ideas, four neighborhoods are currently piloting a planning process that will culminate in the creation of a business plan for transformation.



- MorningSide Commons in Detroit, Michigan
- East Baltimore in Baltimore, Maryland
- King Irving & Mondamin in Des Moines, Iowa
- Harambee in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Following the planning phase, each neighborhood will submit its business plan for the potential of US\$1M from TBN to catalyze implementation of their plan.

A program with such significant investment requires rigorous evaluation. We must know both what was accomplished and how it affected families' lives. To do this, TBN is partnering with Success Measures, an outcome-based evaluation module that conducts participatory evaluations of programs to improve neighborhoods and communities. The Success Measures Data System (SMDS) offers:

- 44 indicators to measure the impacts of housing, economic development, and community-building programs at the individual, organization, and community level.
- More than 100 data collection tools corresponding to these indicators on SMDS. These data collection tools include surveys, interviews, observational protocols, focus groups and formats for analyzing program administrative data or public records and data sources.
- A credible method of evaluating quantitative and qualitative data to give a full picture of transformation in a neighborhood.
- A strong training and technical assistance program.

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Serving families through Thrivent Builds Neighborhoods

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TBN is just one of the programs in the Thrivent Builds with Habitat for Humanity alliance, a four-year, \$105-million commitment by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, a not-for-profit Fortune 500 financial services organization with nearly 3 million members in the United States. This commitment makes Thrivent Financial the largest financial and volunteer ally in Habitat's 30-year history.

Under the guidance of Success Measures, TBN has selected three major areas of change that it will study:

1. perception of neighborhood quality of life
2. neighborhood's physical environment
3. empowerment/engagement (community/individual)

As an example of this process, a coalition would track its progress and effectiveness by documenting the *what* (30 houses built, 1 community policing effort put into place) and *how* the neighborhood was impacted.

Because understanding the *how* is more complicated, the four sites will use Success Measures' tools to gather key data. For example, to evaluate the change in perception of neighborhood quality of life, a coalition might use a resident satisfaction survey tool or host a focus group to assess the external perception of the neighborhood.

In combining the qualitative data of surveys and focus groups with quantitative data of activities completed, we begin to un-

derstand impact. The two components together—what was done and the difference it did (or did not) have—help us to understand both how many roofs were put on and how those roofs transformed the lives of those under them.

In the Revelation to John, God proclaims “behold I am making all things new.” Thrivent Builds Neighborhoods is partnering with coalitions to make all things new, both the physical things and, more importantly, how God's children are affected by those things. 🏠

Rebecca Hix is the New Programs team leader for Thrivent Builds with Habitat for Humanity.

For more information on the Thrivent Builds alliance and Thrivent Builds Neighborhoods, please visit www.thriventbuilds.com.

For more information on Success Measures, please visit www.successmeasures.org.



Expanding the reach of families served in the United States

By Susan Dunn-Lisuzzo

Debra Reid, 35, was living in Independence, Louisiana, when Hurricane Katrina struck. After making sure her children were safe, she rushed back toward the storm in order to help rescue large animals. She is seen here inside her Habitat home in Hammond, where she will live with her four children.

“Scaling up,” “building capacity,” “increasing the number of families served,” are phrases heard repeatedly in the halls of Habitat for Humanity International offices around the United States. The concepts can be easily explained to the unfamiliar—that’s the easy part. The difficulty, as always, is in executing the concepts and measuring success toward our goals.

Historically, HFHI in the United States has gathered house production and title contribution data to measure affiliate success. Clearly these items are indicators of activity, but do these numbers tell the whole story regarding Habitat’s work across the country? We build houses, yes, but Habitat for Humanity is not a construction company churning out dwellings for anonymous families. We build families and communities, which requires expending resources and acquiring expertise that far exceeds construction skills.

Measuring “families served,” which HFHI’s 2007-2011 strategic plan calls for us to do, is a paradigm shift for us. Serving families represents a much broader category of activity, and it is much more complex trying to measure activity that does not result in a new home or a mortgage. To meaningfully do so will require a more sophisticated approach to our work. It will take time to develop the nuances of the reporting process and how to do so is a topic of discussion among U.S. leadership.

Below are activities through which U.S. affiliates currently serve families, some of which would be reportable under the July 1, 2005, HFHI Statistical Guidelines: Houses Built and Families Served, but all are important to our mission nonetheless:

Families served through repairs

The number of U.S. families served¹ through repairs continues to increase annually. In 2004, 914 repairs were reported by U.S. affiliates; in 2005, 959; and in 2006, more than 1,200 were reported. Offering low-income homeowners, who are unable due to severe cost-burden to afford professional contractors, this alternative allows additional families to maintain access to adequate housing.

A small percentage of U.S. affiliates manage a repair program as part of their affiliate offerings. One program example is A Brush with Kindness, started by the Twin Cities HFH, Minnesota, “a neighborhood outreach program in which volunteers paint, landscape and provide minor repairs to the exterior of homes for low-income residents — at no cost to the homeowner.”²

Gulf Coast Home Repair program, facilitated by HFHI’s Disaster Response Office (DRO) and the Church World Service Emergency Response Program (CWS ERP), epitomizes serving families through partnership and leveraging the fundamental

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Expanding the reach of families served in the United States

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strengths of each. “Serving in this catalyst role, HFHI will provide funding support in the amount of US \$4,042,000 over the two-year program for home repair initiatives implemented by local Long Term Recovery Committees (LTRCs) and Church World Service member organizations... and [this program] is integrated into the greater scope of Habitat’s reconstruction efforts through Operation Home Delivery.”³

Families served through education

Homeowner education is a critical component of a partner family’s success. Many partners are the first in their extended family to own a home and shifting from a renter to an owner requires learning a new set of skills. According to a recent survey conducted by HFHI’s U.S. Office, 92 percent of the 405 affiliate respondents indicated that family services is extremely or moderately important to their ability to serve an increasing number of families annually. Eighty-nine percent agree that there is a general lack of understanding regarding the amount of family services work required in Habitat.

As part of their family services offerings, Nashville Area HFH, Tennessee, created HomeWORKS, “a collection of classes designed to teach new skills and encourage new habits. From financial management and budgeting to home maintenance and repair, our goal is to equip individuals and families to become more self-sufficient ...”⁴ Tools that are vitally important to long-term success of partner families.

It is one thing to prepare families for homeownership, but it is yet another to help them remain homeowners. A very real threat to low-income homeowners in the United States is predatory lenders who aggressively target families with refinancing offers. Naturally, the refinanced mortgage includes interest, which exponentially increases the monthly payments and leaves a family vulnerable to losing their home. HFHI has prepared a series of tools for affiliates on these issues, and, we’ve found, affiliates need to remain vigilant in preparing partner families in this area.

Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity’s “Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Program provides counseling, advocacy, referrals and occasional financial assistance to families who have fallen behind with their mortgage payments.”⁵ Through this program, families set a course to resolve a financial mis-step that could result in losing their home. Program staff will also work with outside lenders, when the family served is not a Habitat partner.

Families served through referral and partnership

The very act of qualifying a family for Habitat homeownership is a process which utilizes affiliate time and resources.

Southern Crescent HFH in Jonesboro, Georgia, created a tool that allows local community members to anonymously complete an online form to determine program eligibility. “Our

past experience had shown that most people didn’t qualify [for a Habitat home] because of excess debt,” explains Brenda Rayburn, executive director. “After a potential applicant inputs their data, they get either a ‘Good news: You meet the income qualifications. Please attend our workshop’ message or a message that says ‘We have good news and bad news based on the data you provided. The bad news is that you currently have too much debt to qualify, but the good news is that you can fix it,’” adds Rayburn. “Then we provide links to consumer credit counseling.”⁶

Increasingly, Habitat is seeking partnerships with other nongovernmental agencies to effectively administer programs. Again, leveraging the strengths of each partner to create a mutually beneficial relationship; the ultimate beneficiaries are the families served.

One such partnership originated after the 2006 hurricanes in the Gulf Coast of the United States: The Lutheran Social Services of the South (LSSS)/Habitat Family Support Call Center located in Austin, Texas, and operated by the Lutheran Social Services Disaster Response, Inc. According to Mike Weston, family development manager, HFHI, “The call center employs a director and seven qualified, and very capable, case managers...and primarily focuses on pre-selection screening of hurricane-affected families interested in a Habitat homeownership opportunity.”

“The Call Center,” Weston says, “does not simply limit services to the Habitat selection process” but has accomplished the following:

- 194 families have been referred to alternative housing solutions
- 145 families have been referred to other agencies to address immediate need
- 76 families have received referrals to other Katrina Aid Today programs
- 51 families have also been referred to other LSSS-based programs
- Nearly all families who are deemed not yet ready for homeownership are encouraged to participate in credit counseling opportunities and/or income building skills

As we continue to grapple with how best to measure the impact of Habitat in the United States, and our progress toward the goal of serving more families annually, the work of serving families continues daily through the hard work, creative ideas and partnership of HFHI, local affiliates and nongovernmental agencies. The work continues and will continue until every family has a decent place to call home. 🏠

Susan Dunn-Lisuzzo is national communications manager at HFHI.

¹HFHI Statistical Guidelines: Houses Built and Families Served: <http://partnernet.habitat.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/manuals/pnetdoc029251.pdf>

²Twin Cities HFH (Minn.) Web site: <http://www.tchabitat.org/content/category/6/33/28/>
³Crete, Meredith, HFHI and Church World Service expand their partnership in the Gulf, pp. 5-6, The Affiliate Update, 2nd Qtr 2007.

⁴Nashville Area HFH (Tenn.) Web site: <http://www.habitatnashville.org/homeworks/index.php>
⁵Ibid

⁶Willard, Dani, “Is an applicant qualification Web site right for your affiliate?”, pp. 10-11, The Affiliate Update, 2nd Qtr 2007

HFH Romania: The impact of disaster response on families served

By Adrian Ciorna



Steffan Hacker

When the Danube River flooded, Dumitru Ganea's house in Bechet was one of the thousands that became unlivable. Habitat Romania and UNICEF partnered to provide reconstruction materials to the most affected families, and the Ganea family completed one room in time for winter.

“And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, ‘Because I bare him with sorrow.’

And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, ‘Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!’ And God granted him that which he requested.” 1 Chronicles 4:9-10

Background

In December 2004, Romanians were shocked by the Indian Ocean tsunami that caused enormous loss of life and destruction. They were shocked again when interior rivers flooded Romania several times in April, May and throughout August 2005, bringing what we thought then was unparalleled destruction in Romanian history. As a result, HFH Romania undertook its first Flood Recovery Project. In April 2006, the Danube River flooded at levels that were previously unknown in 100 years. Thousands of families lost their homes and thousands more sustained severe damage to their homes, and HFH Romania undertook its second Flood Recovery Project.

Though NGOs, companies, and the public came to us for help, the decision to get involved in disaster response wasn't an easy one for HFH Romania. But our concerns that we were not a relief organization, but a development organization, and that we didn't have the capacity were swept away by the overwhelming need and the support of HFH's E/CA area office and Disaster Response department in Americus.

BECAUSE OF THE DISASTER RESPONSE PROGRAM, ALL THREE AFFILIATES WERE ENCOURAGED TO CONSIDER REHABS AND RENOVATIONS AS PART OF ITS ANNUAL PROGRAMS TO SERVE MORE FAMILIES IN NEED.

The response

Key to both our interventions was the presence of local affiliates—Comănești HFH, Pitești HFH and Craiova HFH—in the affected areas. These affiliates handled the first on-site visits and

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HFH Romania: The impact of disaster response on families served

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the first needs assessment. In addition, the partnership between HFH Romania, the affiliates and the Town Hall/Mayor's Office was critical to the interventions. In the Comanesti HFH and Craiova HFH situations, the affiliates were in their infancy—close to completing their first four new homes in two years of work. Pitesti HFH had completed 18 renovations.

When the first flood recovery project was finished, 145 families were served by HFH Comanesti and another 100 served by HFH Pitesti through new homes and renovations/repairs—more families than would have been served through the traditional Habitat program approach. With the first phase of the second project being finished, 115 families were served. The increased capacity of the affiliates and motivation due to the success of the disaster response program, led them to ask, “Where do we go from here?”

THE DISASTER RESPONSE PROGRAMS
HAVE IMPACTED HFH ROMANIA'S TRADITIONAL HABITAT PROGRAM BY OPENING DOORS FOR MORE FAMILIES TO BE SERVED.

Impact of DR on the HFH Romania program

The disaster response programs have impacted HFH Romania's traditional Habitat program by opening doors for more families to be served.

HFH had favorable media coverage and response in the three counties in which disaster response programs were undertaken, after the completion of the work. The Flood Recovery projects brought us new land grants. Offers of land and infrastructure for 4.5 acres of land came from Mayor Oclei of Bechet. Near Comanesti, the mayor of Moinesti invited the affiliate to build houses and even granted land. As a result, the first traditional program houses are now built there. The mayor of Bacau City, 50 km outside of Comanesti offered us 3 acres of land as well.

HFH Comanesti's flood recovery work of renovations/repairs in FY06 led the affiliate into the Roma/gypsy community—a niche of service this affiliate had never considered before. The realization of the need in such poor neighborhoods produced amazing results in FY07—four new homes and 40 renovations. Forty-five families served as opposed to barely four in their pre-recovery effort.

Because of the disaster response program, all three affiliates were encouraged to consider rehabs and renovations as part of their annual programs to serve more families in need.



Steffan Hacker

The Soviet-era apartments once housed agricultural workers in Oarja, Romania, a rural community about 10 miles outside of the southern city of Pitesti. The buildings, a total of three, had sat mostly empty for at least 20 years when Habitat Pitesti bought them for renovation. Many apartments are already occupied by 20 Habitat partner families, although exterior work continues; the third building is a work in progress and will house 11 or 12 additional families.

In FY08, 60 rehabs and repairs are planned. HFH Craiova built six new homes in FY06 and the first half of FY07. Their disaster response of FY07 helped this affiliate include 10 renovations and repairs in FY08, besides the new home construction planned. The other four affiliates in the country were inspired and added more repairs and rehabs to their annual plan in order to serve more families than just those who are served through new construction.

Another benefit of the two disaster response projects was in the area of fund raising. Companies, businesses and churches that came forward to support us financially during the disaster response program are now supporting our core Habitat program.

Responding to disasters transformed the affiliates. Like Jabez, after prayer, they dared to take the step forward. The affiliates were “protected from evil,” and God expanded their territory. 🏠

Adrian Ciorna is the national director of HFH Romania.



Disasters are part of the reality that Habitat entities face or will face in the future, and can be an opportunity for program extension.

Disaster response and families served

By Mario Flores

Every year, on average, some 275 disaster events occur around the world, many of which affect shelter and housing. Also, at any given time, some 20 complex humanitarian emergencies generated by war and conflict create displacements of large populations. Disasters and conflicts are part of the reality many Habitat for Humanity entities face or will face in the future. In both rapid onset emergencies (such as those created by earthquakes, hurricanes or tsunamis) and slow developing ones (such as drought or civil unrest), the immediate and long-term effects on people, housing and shelter are often significant. A disaster or conflict can lead to an increased demand for housing, placing additional strain on already burdened housing systems for the poor.

RECENT EXPERIENCES IN RESPONDING TO DISASTERS HAVE ALLOWED US TO SEE THE ENORMOUS POTENTIAL TO REACH OUT TO EXPANDED TARGET GROUPS.

Though the effects of disasters and conflicts are horrible, they represent an opportunity for program expansion, strategic positioning and increased visibility within the communities, regions and countries where HFH entities serve. Recent experiences in responding to disasters have allowed us to see the enormous potential to reach out to expanded target groups. At the same time, this is fertile ground to apply innovative approaches and program components that can sustain significant growth in the number of families served in a relatively short time, using program methodologies such as:

- **Community-based disaster response** that includes transitional shelter/housing, shelter kits and other program components oriented to keep families in their own communities and out of temporary, cramped and unhealthy shelter camps.
- **Habitat Resource Centers (HRCs)** that provide materials, services, skills training and resources to support families engaged in self-construction or repair of their disaster-affected house.
- **Alternative approaches** such as core houses, house repair programs and accelerated construction of new housing.

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Disaster response and families served

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These and other program methodologies are suitable for direct implementation by an HFH entity or external implementing organization with Habitat providing technical expertise, funding or both. When there is no Habitat presence in a particular area or when the scale of the disaster overwhelms the capacity of the local HFH entity, or when a nontraditional methodological approach is required, an external implementing organization can provide valuable assistance. Rather than just counting “houses,” tracking the total number of families served with these program methodologies provides a more comprehensive understanding of

HFHI'S NEW POLICY ON FAMILIES SERVED AND THE METRIC FOR DISASTER RESPONSE IS BOTH A CHALLENGE AND AN INVITATION FOR HABITAT FOR HUMANITY TO RESPOND IN A VARIETY OF WAYS ACCORDING TO THE CONTEXT, SIZE OF THE DISASTER, AVAILABILITY OF PARTNERS AND NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.

the impact of Habitat's initiatives in responding to disasters.

HFHI's new policy on families served and the metric for disaster response is both a challenge and an invitation for Habitat for Humanity to respond in a variety of ways according to the context, size of the disaster, availability of partners and needs of the community.

The article on HFH Romania's response to the Danube River flooding (page 16) illustrates how innovative approaches to disaster response can work. Other examples include:

Pakistan: Transitional shelter program

After the earthquake in October 2005, with a sense of urgency to help those affected survive the harsh winter, Habitat implemented a transitional shelter program to keep families in their communities and avoid displacement. The shelter solution consisted of a tubular structure with a corrugated sheet cover that was easy to set up. Habitat also established a Habitat Resource Center (HRC), providing sawmill services to transform timber logs into roof rafters for permanent homes. Habitat for Humanity was able to respond with a viable solution and sustain a stronger presence in Pakistan. Overall, in less than two years, HFH Pakistan went from a fledgling organization seeking registration to an operational organization that has served nearly 3,000 earthquake-affected families.



Kim MacDonald

These Habitat houses are part of a tsunami response program in Indonesia, with about 600 houses completed and a total of 730 planned. Donors for this site include Christian Aid, Danamon, Citibank, General Electric and Baptist World Aid Australia.

U.S. Gulf Coast: Home repairs implemented through partnership

As part of the response to Hurricane Katrina, Habitat partnered with Church World Service (CWS) to provide home repair assistance to 600 families. Under the partnership terms, Habitat provided funding and program monitoring while CWS implemented the repair process. Family selection and case work were conducted by local Long-term Recovery Committees and the repair work was implemented by various disaster services groups and communities under the CWS umbrella, engaging hundreds of volunteers. With Habitat affiliates in the Gulf concentrated on new house construction, the HFHI-CWS partnership has allowed for quick expansion and outreach to serve additional hurricane-affected families.

El Salvador: Accelerated construction program

In December 2006, a seismic swarm in the western part of the country left hundreds of houses damaged. HFH El Salvador set up a quick response to assist nearly 100 families with new housing. The program included a differentiated subsidy component ranging from 10 percent to 60 percent. By accelerating the start

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Development of Habitat Resource Centers in Asia/Pacific Continued from page 8

community's need for sanitation facilities. With its 1.2 million people, Orangi is the largest *katchi abad* (poor people's housing) in Karachi, the biggest Pakistan city. In the absence of government aid, the Orangi community rallied to research and design its own innovative low-cost interventions, financed and constructed completely by the community. Over time, the OPP developed programs in various areas such as health, housing, education support services, microfinance and income generation. More than 94,000 houses were built and 72,000 sanitary latrines were installed.

The OPP does not implement the projects but by providing social and technical guidance, it encourages communities to mobilize local resources and take action themselves.

In a similar way, the Nirmithi Movement started in 1985 when India's first Nirmithi Kendra (building center) was set up in the Quilon district of Kerala by the then District Collector to provide affordable solutions to housing. The building centers aim to disseminate and promote cost-effective and environmentally friendly building technology in India. The building centers also ensure sustainability by manufacturing and marketing cost-effective building materials, as well as providing construction skills training to local artisans. In the space of several years, more than 385 building centers were set up all over India, constructing

homes with an average 30 percent cost savings, and more than 55,000 masons, carpenters, bar benders and plumbers were trained.

Conclusion

As sustainable housing is the centerpiece of Habitat's work, HRCs help forward this aim in ways such as promoting cost-effective, appropriate and environmentally friendly building technology, transfer of such skills to local people, and manufacturing materials for use in construction and sale as a means of livelihood. HRCs are thus instrumental in fulfilling two main goals of Habitat for Humanity's strategic five-year plan—namely exponentially increasing the number of families served annually, and leading the transformation of systems that impact affordable housing. 🏠

Wong Hiew Peng is a writer for HFH in Asia and the Pacific.

¹HFH Philippines calls the resource center the Habitat Building and Resource Center.

²The Orangi Pilot Project was cited as an example integrating stakeholders under the Good Practices Suite, UNESCAP Virtual Conference Web site. Go to http://www.unescap.org/DRPAD/VC/conference/ex_pk_5_opp.htm

³The Nirmithi Movement in India is cited as a best practice in "Best Practices for Human Settlements" presented in the MOST Clearing House Best Practices Database. MOST (Management of Social Transformations) Program is under the United Nations' Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Visit <http://www.unesco.org/most/asia5.htm> and <http://www.unesco.org/most/asia4.htm>

Disaster response and families served

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of the program (26 new houses had been completed as of April 2007), families have been able to resume their lives and avoid displacement to temporary shelter camps.

Lebanon: Habitat Resource Centers and community-based approach

The armed conflict in the summer of 2006 led to additional housing needs and new opportunities to serve. A project is now in place to serve 1,500 families whose houses were damaged or destroyed. The program involves local nongovernmental and community-based organizations to ensure community involvement and participation. With the help of their partners, HFH has established HRCs to offer technical assistance and training for families to repair their own homes, volunteer mobilization to as-

sist with reconstruction, and vouchers or cash disbursements that enable qualified families to purchase materials for core house construction or repairs.

As Habitat for Humanity travels the road to expansion and implementation of new ways of accounting for our work, a holistic and context-appropriate approach to developing these program methodologies is a matter to consider, especially for HFH entities located in disaster-prone areas. Being prepared to implement a menu of services for disaster-affected families (new housing, core houses, transitional housing, repairs, technical services, skills training, shelter kits) is the best strategy to expand program outreach and serve more and more families in need.

Mario Flores is director of Disaster Response at HFHI.