



100,000 floors to play on

Replacing dirt floors
with concrete across
Latin America and
the Caribbean



“Before, with the dirt floor, we had a dusty house,” says Maria, whose dirt floors were replaced with concrete as part of the pilot project of the Pisos S3 program in Guatemala. “My children’s clothes were always dirty and stained, and their toys got dirty quickly, but now they don’t get stained or much dirty. Before they used to get sick a lot with cough, maybe because of the dust. Now, with the new floor, they do not. We like it a lot because my children bring their toys and play there a lot. We are happy with this. We are better now.”

A small change makes a real difference

According to the United Nations’ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 29% of the region’s population lives in poverty and 11.4% lives in extreme poverty. People in these conditions want to make their homes healthier and safer but often lack the funds to make these critical repairs. Approximately 10 million of these houses have dirt floors, causing serious health problems for the people who live in them, especially children and older adults. Dirt floors are breeding grounds for parasites, bacteria and insects that often cause diarrhea, respiratory diseases, anemia, immunodeficiencies, malnutrition and Chagas disease. Children are the most vulnerable population because they crawl, play and walk on the ground.

A change as simple as replacing dirt floors with concrete makes a big impact on health benefits for families, as shown in a study carried out in Mexico by the World Bank and the University of California, Berkeley. The study analyzed data on how household health improved after dirt floors were upgraded to concrete. For children, the report showed a 78% reduction in parasitic infections, a 49% reduction in diarrhea, and an 81% reduction in anemia, along with a 36% increase in cognitive development. Adults showed a 59% increase in housing satisfaction, a 52% decrease in depression, and a 45% decrease in stress.

Concrete floors are healthy, safe and sustainable. They:

- Improve the physical environment and cleanliness of homes.
- Are durable and safe.
- Provide greater protection against flood damage.
- Are economical and environmentally friendly.
- Are locally produced.
- Increase quality of life and comfort in the house.
- Improve climatic comfort in the house.
- Reduce the amount of dust generated by dirt floors.
- Are washable and more hygienic.

Habitat for Humanity and the Inter-American Cement Federation, known by its Spanish acronym, FICEM, signed an alliance in April 2022 to develop an initiative called

“100,000 floors to play on.” This initiative aims to replace 100,000 dirt floors with concrete by 2028 across Latin America and the Caribbean. “100,000 floors to play on” will focus on women-led households with children younger than 6, adults older than 65, or people with disabilities.



As of June 2024, the initiative has worked in 10 countries, helping 12,608 households.

Country	Number of concrete floors installed
Guatemala	3,455
Colombia	2,850
Dominican Republic	2,166
Honduras	1,999
Peru	944
El Salvador	728
Nicaragua	375
Ecuador	52
Brazil	20
Costa Rica	19
TOTAL	12,608

The “100,000 floors to play on” program supports four of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.



Silvia's story

Silvia's young daughter Melany spends most of her time playing on the floor. It's where her imagination takes flight. She props up her coloring books – her favorite activity – and plays with her doll and stuffed animals. Their family was chosen to have their home's dirt floor changed to concrete as part of a pilot project from FICEM that grew into the "100,000 floors to play on" initiative.

Melany's parents chose to put concrete floors in the living room and bedroom. This project has created a big improvement in the family's quality of life and health.

"When I got the floor, my girl got so much better. She no longer gets sick with coughs or diarrhea," Silvia says.



◀ "Before, the house used to get so wet that my little girl would get very sick," says Silvia, whose dirt floor was upgraded to concrete. "She had a lot of diarrhea and coughing. She used to get sick every 10 or 15 days. She also got her hands very dirty, and she ate with her hands like that. Now with the concrete floor, she hardly gets sick."

You are making a big impact

Your generous support of the "100,000 floors to play on" program has already benefited 12,608 households in just two years. By equipping Habitat offices across Latin America and the Caribbean to change floors from dirt to concrete, you are helping to set these families up for future success. Their children now have a healthy place to study, play and sleep and will miss fewer days of school because of illness. Their parents worry less about the families' well-being and sleep more soundly. Older residents and people with disabilities can move around their homes safely and are sick much less often.



Thank you for making such a big difference in so many people's lives! We look forward to continuing in collaboration with you.



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