

Country profile: ARMENIA



Country facts

Capital:
Yerevan

Main country facts:
Gained independence in September 1991

Population:
Almost 3 million

Urbanization:
64 percent live in cities

Life expectancy:
72 years

Unemployment rate:
7 percent

Population living below poverty line: 26.5 percent

Habitat facts

When the program started:
2000

Highlights:
2010: 10th anniversary of Habitat's presence in Armenia

Families served:
More than 900

Global Village volunteers hosted:
More than 700

Housing solutions:
Repair and renovation of homes
Revitalization of war-affected communities
Condominium renovations
Housing micro-loans

Habitat for Humanity in Armenia

After nearly eight years of work in Armenia, Habitat for Humanity relaunched its country organization in June 2008 to serve more low-income families at an exponentially faster rate, and to become an advocate for better housing policies and practices aimed at those living in indecent housing conditions.

The housing need in Armenia

In Armenia, three events have shaped the current housing situation: economic and social transition that included mass housing privatization; the devastating Spitak earthquake; and a large influx of refugees after a violent conflict with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno Karabakh region. Now, 96 percent of the housing stock in the country is privately owned, and the remaining 4 percent in government hands for social rental is not aimed at low-income households. No national system of affordable housing allowances exists.

The 1988 earthquake destroyed much of the housing stock in the north, erasing the city of Spitak. Today, 5 percent of the population still lives in temporary shelter. These shelters include metal railroad cars, condemned or damaged buildings, and public structures such as former museums, schools or hostels. A significant part of houses in large cities is in deplorable condition and continues to deteriorate because of lack of maintenance.

How Habitat addresses the need

Habitat Armenia is committed to providing housing solutions for families in need of a simple, decent place to live and thrive. Typically, Habitat works with low-income families to build or renovate homes that are paid for over time by affordable mortgages or loans.

Here are some examples of Habitat projects in Armenia:

Renovations of condominium buildings

One of the big existing housing problems faced by Armenia is the bad state of condominium block buildings as a result of lack of maintenance from the Soviet era. The project is aiming at providing cost effective solution to help up to 200 families renovate their homes in Lori and Armavir region.

Repairing homes in Spitak and Aparan

In March 2010, Habitat Armenia started the implementation of a new repair project in Spitak, the epicenter of the 1988 devastating earthquake which overall levelled the city and left thousands of people homeless. The project is aimed at serving 30 families in need of better housing this year. Habitat Armenia also plans to assist 40 families living in the city of Aparan by facilitating cost- effective renovations including roof repairs, completion of homes, internal works, and sanitation.

Housing microfinance

In April 2010, Habitat Armenia initiated the implementation of a new housing renovation project in the regions of Lori, Tavush and Gegharkunik. In its 3-year duration, the project aims to serve up to 350 families, mainly living in rural areas and who are not eligible for traditional banking services, by providing them with access to a micro-finance product. The project is a low-cost solution that provides a possibility for low-income families to improve the homes they are currently living in.

Serving vulnerable groups in war-affected area

Tavush region is a war affected border region in the north east of Armenia. As a result of the war, there are many female-headed households and orphans living in the region in poor housing conditions. The proposed project will provide 50 female-headed families with access to technology and financing to address a range of housing needs.

Meet a Habitat family

Vahe and Christineh Vanesyan are young parents of three daughters: Lilit, Arpineh and Ani. Vahe works as a car mechanic and Christineh is a housewife. They also sell their homegrown products from their garden.

At the moment the family lives with Vahe's parents' house since their apartment in Iljevan city is in a desperate need of renovation. The apartment is devoid of basic amenities and only has water at certain times during the day. As the family is not eligible for a traditional bank loan, they are more than excited to have become a Habitat Armenia partner family.

Little Ani happily comments: *"I can finally keep my toys in my own room now!"*



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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.