

Country profile: POLAND



Country facts

Capital:
Warsaw

Main country facts:
Joined NATO in 1999, joined the EU in 2004

Population:
More than 38 million

Urbanization:
61 percent live in cities

Life expectancy:
76 years

Unemployment rate:
11.8 percent

Population living below poverty line: 17 percent

Habitat facts

When the program started:
1992

Highlights: The opening ceremony of the first house in Gliwice was honored by Millard Fuller, the co-founder of Habitat for Humanity.

Families served:
More than 750

Global Village volunteers hosted:
More than 1,600

Housing solutions:
Renovations and repairs
Energy-efficient homes
Condominium renovations
Vulnerable groups and advocacy

Habitat for Humanity in Poland

Habitat for Humanity has been providing simple, decent and affordable homes to low-income families in Poland for 19 years. Habitat Poland is an active player in the fight for Polish housing legislation that will address poverty issues. In 2008, “Roof Over Head,” a coalition of 15 non-governmental organizations led by Habitat, launched an awareness campaign against poverty housing in the country.

The housing need in Poland

There is no national policy dedicated to building homes for low-income groups or helping them afford renovations. The market price of houses and land increased by 100 percent in 2004 alone, and values continue to rise every year. A comparatively high value-added tax, 23 percent, significantly adds to the cost of renovations. As a result, nearly 12 million Poles—almost a third of the population—live in overcrowded homes. More than 60 percent of apartments need serious renovation.

More than half of the housing stock is more than 40 years old. Low-quality building materials and poor insulation are resulting in high monthly energy bills, making funds even scarcer for families to improve their living conditions.

How Habitat addresses the need

Habitat for Humanity activities in Poland range from building new affordable houses to renovating condominium blocks. The renovation program, in particular, has turned into a viable answer to the long search for an efficient way to help more families in need. Renovation projects have been completed throughout the country in partnership with homeowners’ associations.

Here are some examples of Habitat projects in Poland:

Housing solutions for vulnerable groups

Through a number of different projects, Habitat Poland is committed to help the neediest families and individuals get a decent shelter. The main aim of these projects is to help vulnerable groups of people gain more independency and thus enable them to lead normal fulfilling lives. Projects include renovation of homeless shelters in Miechowice and Gliwice; construction works and repairs of facilities for people with addiction problems as well as improvement of housing conditions for disabled people.

Renovation of apartments and condominiums

Habitat Poland concluded several rehabilitation projects in different cities throughout the country, all in partnership with tenants' associations. Renovations were conducted in common areas, such as corridors and staircases. Habitat Poland would like to continue in its previous efforts and identify the root causes of the poor technical standards of condominiums in Poland and appropriate, feasible and sustainable solutions to fix the problems.

Energy efficient homes

According to The Council of Care for Homeless People in Warsaw one of the biggest problems the beneficiaries of social reintegration programs in Poland are facing is the lack of available social flats where such individuals could start their own households. This can slow down the whole reintegration process significantly. Habitat for Humanity Poland is using environment friendly, low-cost technology to construct energy efficient homes for 8 families (former homeless) who successfully completed a social reintegration program.

Bringing about the change in poverty housing

In order to change the situation of many people living in substandard housing, legislative changes need to be made first. In cooperation with the coalition "Dach nad Glową" (Roof over Head), Habitat Poland is achieving this through lobbying, public campaigning, education and volunteer mobilization.

Meet a Habitat family

The life of Ms Janina Osipiuk (80) has not been an easy one. She spent one year in a work camp in Germany during World War II and since then has had poor health. She suffers from eye cancer and osteoporosis. Janina occupies a two room apartment in a small cottage, semi-attached to another building. She used to share the second room with one of her daughters and her son-in-law. The room lacked heat, electricity or water, but the couple somehow managed.

After the necessary roof and chimney repairs and external insulation her house is much warmer and quieter and she is no longer worried about roof leaks during severe winters. She is very grateful to Habitat Poland for giving her the chance to finally live her life in dignity.



DONATE

Support Habitat for Humanity in Poland by donating through: www.habitatpoland.org/donate

Choose to **designate your gift** to **POLAND**.

TITHE

Establish a strong and rewarding tithe partnership to help build houses globally!

Send your tithe to:
813700, POLAND

CONTACT

Magda Kowalik
Resource Development
Coordinator

Habitat for Humanity Poland
e-mail: mkowalik@habitat.pl
tel: +48 697 97 99 00

Barbora Fričová
Marketing Specialist

Habitat for Humanity
Europe&Central Asia
e-mail: bfricova@habitat.org
tel: +421 911 045 836

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.habitatpoland.org.