

# Country profile: PORTUGAL



## Country facts

**Capital:**

Lisbon

**Main country facts:**

Joined the European Community—now the European Union—in 1986

**Population:**

10.7 million

**Urbanization:**

61 percent live in cities

**Life expectancy:**

78 years

**Unemployment rate:**

10.7 percent

**Population living below poverty line:**

18 percent

## Habitat facts

**When the program started:**

Affiliate launched in Braga in 1996

**Highlights:**

Most Global Village teams per affiliate hosted in Europe and Central Asia

**Families served:**

More than 40

**Global Village volunteers hosted:**

More than 1,500

**Housing solutions:**

New house construction and renovation with volunteer labor

## Habitat for Humanity in Portugal

A group of volunteers concerned about poverty housing in Braga, in northern Portugal, started a Habitat affiliate there in 1996. Two groups of international and local volunteers helped build Portugal's first Habitat house in the town of Vieira do Minho in 1999. In 2002, Habitat expanded its activities to renovating existing homes of low-income families. The Habitat affiliate in Braga is also seeking to partner with local municipalities to build and rehabilitate homes for people living on small incomes.

## The housing need in Portugal

Housing is a major concern of poor Portuguese families, who often live in dilapidated homes in rural areas or shacks in the big cities. Successive governments have liberalized key areas of the economy over the past 20 years after decades of military dictatorship, but economic growth has been slowing since 2001. The recent financial crisis left many people without jobs or savings to improve housing conditions.

At the same time, the need for housing is growing, especially in urban areas. The state cannot support the development of new social housing units. And Portugal has been a destination for emigrants since the late 1970s, when people from former African colonies and Brazil began arriving. More recently, in the 1990s, emigrants from the Soviet Union found refuge there.

## How Habitat addresses the need

Habitat for Humanity in Portugal helps low-income families by building new homes on family-owned land and by renovating houses in the towns of Braga and Amarante. Homes are made of traditional local materials: bricks, red roof tiles, shutters on the windows, and ceramic tiles inside. Recently, the Habitat Portugal has been looking for local opportunities to raise funds to build more simple and decent homes.

Here is an example of a Habitat project in Portugal:

### **Home constuction with volunteer labor**

The Braga affiliate in Portugal is a lively example of an effective volunteering program. It attracts the enthusiasm of more than 300 volunteers a year. Habitat Portugal builds homes with low-income families and international schools from Switzerland, Norway, France and Austria. Strong partnerships have been built with schools in Braga, Lisbon and Porto. The affiliate also hosts corporate partner builds with such long-term Habitat supporters as Whirlpool and Thrivent Financial. Many international churches and women's associations have also found Braga to be a prime building location. At the same time, local volunteers are showing their commitment to improving their communities by working on the construction sites.

### **Meet a Habitat family**

The Gonçalves family from Gomide - Vila Verde has four members, the couple Maria de Fátima and José and their children Emanuel (15) and Cláudia (14).

Due to a work accident, José cannot work and he is retired with a small pension from the government. Both kids go to school but Cláudia has to attend a special school because she suffers from cerebral palsy.

The family used to live in a small shack of 40sqm. They had a kitchen and a bathroom bathroom which was quite small and it wass impossible to give bath to Cláudia due to her disability. All the family members had to sleep in the one bedroom they had, without any privacy or space to move. The situation of this family was extreme and it demanded immediate action.

In July 2011, during the celebration of Habitat for Humanity Portugal's 15th anniversary, a new Habitat house was dedicated to the Gonçalves family. Finally, they will be able to live in decent conditions, enjoy more space and provide a better future for the children.



## **DONATE**

Support Habitat for Humanity in Portugal by donating through:  
[www.habitat-europe.org/donate](http://www.habitat-europe.org/donate)

Choose to **designate your gift** to **PORTUGAL**.

**João Cruz**  
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## **TITHE**

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

Send your tithe to:  
**813800, PORTUGAL**

**Barbora Fričová**  
Marketing Specialist

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Europe&Central Asia  
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## **CONTACT**

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](http://www.habitat-europe.org).