

HOPE OUT OF DISASTER

New Homes For Flood-Affected Families In Leh



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Leh, Ladakh



August 2010 Disaster

On the 5th and 6th of August 2010, a sudden cloudburst caused unprecedented flash flooding across the remote mountainous region of Ladakh in the far northwest of India. The waters and mud slides surged through the arid Ladakh plateau which sits 3,000m. above sea level sandwiched between the Karakoram mountain range to the north and the Himalayas to the south. The ferocity and scale of the flooding left a trail of devastation in the town of Leh and surrounding villages. Hundreds of people were killed and many more left homeless. More than one year on, recovery and rebuilding work goes on in Leh and Ladakh.





How We Responded

Soon after the disaster, Habitat for Humanity India joined forces with Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG) to help some of the poorest families to be affected by the floodwaters to rebuild their homes and lives. Together, the two organizations and the families built 24 homes. Most of the families came from Spituk and Palam villages, near Leh.

LEDeG, a Ladakh-based non-governmental organization, has been working on issues of environmental sustainability and serving underprivileged communities since 1983. Habitat for Humanity India is part of Habitat for Humanity International, a global non-governmental organization dedicated to eliminating substandard or “poverty” housing. Together, Habitat and LEDeG worked to design and build simple, safe, decent homes with environmentally-sustainable and culturally-appropriate features.





Who We Helped

Habitat for Humanity and LEDeG helped marginalized migrant families who had come to Leh from far off villages in Ladakh and beyond. For decades, these families had lived in informal cramped single-room shelters on the outskirts of Spituk village, near the town's airstrip, and right next to the Indus River. Most were low-caste Buddhists from the Bhot tribe. The adults scrapped a living as casual labourers with the army or private contractors.

The families and their homes were particularly vulnerable victims of the August floods. Because of their backgrounds, the families were excluded from the main relief operations. The government did provide a separate relief camp for them near the truck terminal close to the airstrip. There they spent the severe winter of 2010/11 in one-room bamboo huts.

These excluded and vulnerable families were the group Habitat for Humanity India and LEDeG chose to assist with a long-term housing solution. The homes were provided at no cost to the families. But each family was expected to contribute their labour, "sweat equity" to building their new homes.



How We Selected Families

Across the world, Habitat for Humanity chooses families on the basis of their need for decent shelter and the families' willingness to contribute "sweat equity", a willingness to partner and build their own homes.

To be selected, a family had to meet one or more of the following criteria – and many applicants met several:

- The floods had left the family living in tents or temporary shelter that left them vulnerable to extreme weather conditions, especially to cold winter temperatures.
- Their original home had been destroyed or damaged beyond repair.
- Family members had lost their jobs or sources of livelihood.
- The family had no economic capacity to re-build their house on their own.
- The applicant already suffered social exclusion such being an orphan, or a widow, or a single parent or a family headed by a woman.
- The applicant had either secure tenure to an existing plot of land or had received land from the government.
- The family was willing to take responsibility for construction of their own home.

Twenty-four families were chosen to have new homes.



Construction

Building on the 24 houses started in May 2011 and all the homes were handed over at a special ceremony on 2nd October 2011, almost two months ahead of schedule. This meant that the families and especially those with young children were safely housed before the onset of the long and severe Himalayan winter.

The houses were designed and built to applicable international construction standards involving location, size, suitable materials, health and safety. They met IS-CODES and SPHERE standards (www.sphereindia.org.in/).

Construction work was undertaken by the families themselves, local builders and craftsmen, volunteers and members of the Indian Army based in Leh. This assistance helped keep down costs. Each house cost approximately INR300,000, the equivalent of about US\$6,500. This figure included construction, project design and management and other associated costs. The total project cost was close to INR74,00,000.

Funding for the Leh project came from individual and corporate donors in India and around the world (See pages 14 and 15).





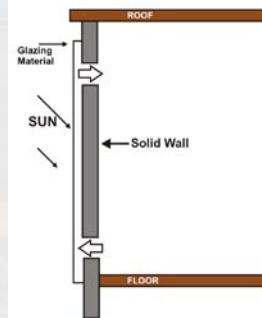
Features of the Leh Houses

Families were involved in the design and construction of the houses.

- House designs maximize environmentally-friendly features and are in-keeping with traditional local architecture and building methods. Thick walls and multi-layered flat roofs provide excellent insulation. The white colour of the exterior with its black and ochre trim is traditional.
- Each house covers 264 sq. ft. (about 30 sq. m.) in area and comprises two rooms: a living area of 14 ft. by 12 ft. and a kitchen area of 8 ft. by 12 ft. The ceiling height is 8 ft. There is a private compost toilet.
- Heating and cooking facilities are provided through smokeless chulas (wood burning stoves with a pipe to the exterior). There is electricity. Water is provided via communal standpipes.
- Foundations are made of local stone and cement; roofs of poplar beams, willow rafters with sawdust insulation; and walls of stabilized compressed earth blocks.
- Materials were sourced locally for reduced transport costs and low environmental impact.
- The houses are designed and built to allow for expansion when a family's financial circumstances allow.
- The entire 24 house community is surrounded by a secure boundary wall.

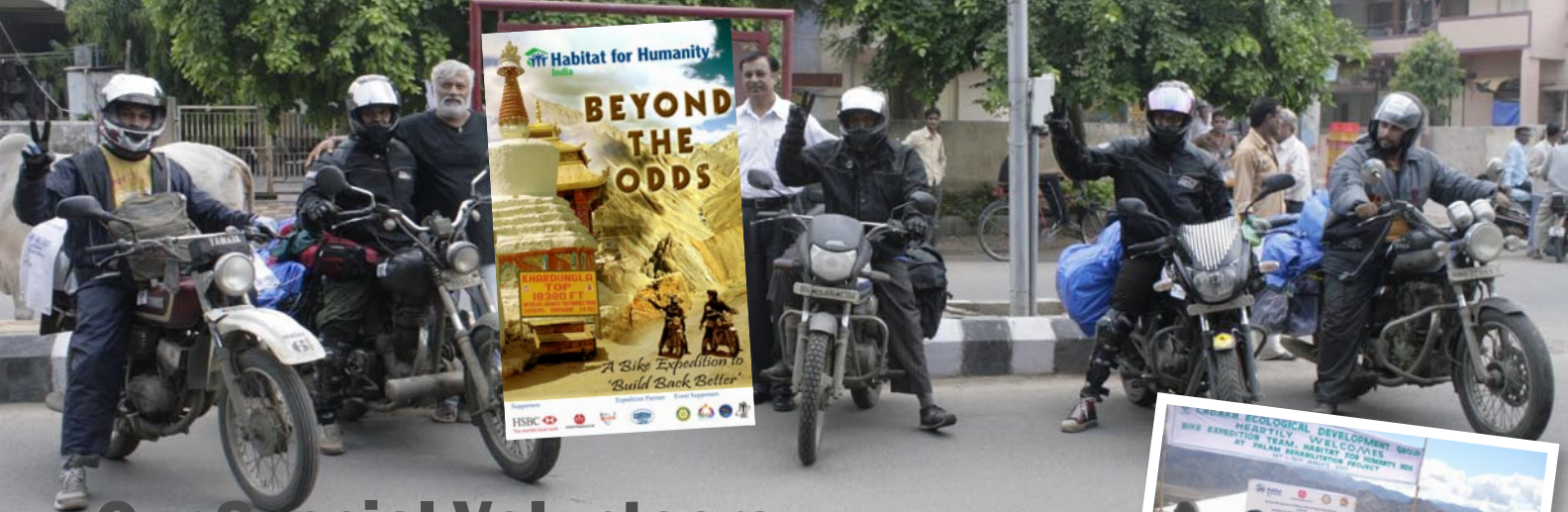
Special Features

Natural heating: A key environmental feature of each house is the south-facing trombe wall. A trombe wall is a wall separated from the outdoors by glazing and an air space. Connecting this air space with the inside of the house are two vents, one at the top and one at the bottom. During the day the sun heats the air and then the solid wall behind. Warm air rises and enters into the room, giving additional heat. The rising air, in turn, pulls in cooler air which is then heated.



Safe sanitation: Each house has a private compost toilet located outside the main structure. These clean, low-tech system toilets utilize natural processes to deal with human waste. Human waste is dealt with on site. It does not have to be treated with chemicals or need an expensive sewerage network. The system does not need water, an important consideration in arid Leh. The resultant matter is organic and can be used as natural fertilizer improving the structure and nutrient value of the soil.





Our Special Volunteers

VIP Motorbike Team from Mumbai

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Leh project was the participation of three special motorcycle-riding volunteers, each of whom is differently-abled. The “Build Back Better in Leh” expedition was led by Vinod Rawat, who uses an artificial limb. Other riders were Manoj Kumar who also uses a prosthetic foot and Santosh Dhumal who is affected by polio. The trio made a marathon fund-raising ride from Mumbai to Leh. When they arrived they then took part in some of the building. Speaking to the *Times of India* newspaper (28th July 2011) Vinod Rawat stated: “I want to break the notion that the society has towards the differently-abled people. I want to prove that we are not weak but can stand up for ourselves and also help others.”

The itinerary for the one-month 4,000 mile round trip covered major cities in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu, Kashmir, Delhi and Chandigarh.





Celebration and the Future

On 2nd October 2011, a house-dedication celebration featuring traditional dances was held to mark the completion of the Leh project. Habitat for Humanity India interim chief executive Mr. Eric Christopher presented each family with the house keys and a certificate of ownership. The chief guest of honour was Shri. Nawang Rigzin Jora, the Minister for Tourism & Culture in the Jammu and Kashmir government. Another VIP was Shri. Rigzin Spalbar, the chairman and chief executive councilor of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council.

In the years ahead, Habitat for Humanity India hopes to invite the families to expand their new homes using one of Habitat's regular affordable, no-profit mortgage loan programs to pay for the additional work. The next steps for the Habitat partnership with LDeG will be to seek to provide decent and appropriate housing or repair and renovation services for other vulnerable families in Leh and possibly elsewhere in Ladakh.



What the Families Say



Skarma Tashi: Labourer from Palam

"I'm very happy. Now I am living in a new home and it is a good home. So thanks to Habitat for Humanity India."



Tsering Doray: Labourer from Palam with wife Kunzo Lamo and baby Tsewang Palmo

"We are really satisfied with our new home. Last year we had a hard time in our temporary bamboo house. Now we have a good home and we will get through the hard winter nicely. Many thanks to Habitat for Humanity India."

Our Generous Sponsors

Ms. Sudarshan Singh

HSBC

United Phosphorus

Ms. Sandra Shroff - Vice Chairman United Phosphorus

Altruists STHS 1984

Convoy Control Club - Mumbai

'The bikers': Vinod Rawat, Manoj Kumar and Santosh Dhumal as well as their support riders Rohan Thakur and Yasar Curtay

LUPIN HWRT

Rotary International (Bandra/Vapi/Ankleshwar/Anand/Jaipur/Chandigarh/Manali)

H-West Federation - Mumbai

90.8 Jago - Mumbai

Arun Basrur

Hotel MANNk - Delhi

Shri Nawang Rigzin Jora - Honorable Minister Tourism & Culture Jammu & Kashmir Government

Mr. Gopal Kini

Mr. Praveen Mishra

Mr. Kishore Bajaj

SAISA Club - Bandra

More Thanks

Our Partner in Leh — Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG):

We wish to thank everyone from LEDeG who was involved, and who continues to be involved, in this project and with the community. Special thanks to:

- Shri. P. Namgial, President, LEDeG
- Dr. Tundup Tsewang, former Director, LEDeG
- Mr. Sonam Gyalsen, Director, LEDeG
- Ms. Arunima, Architect, LEDeG

We also wish to thank members of the Indian Army in Leh for their help and assistance. We particularly thank Brigadier Sudhir Sawant, Deputy Director of the Territorial Army, who called in the Indian Army in Leh, and Brigadier Amar Cheema, who facilitated the actual involvement.

Others elsewhere in India:

- Jacqueline Fernandez, Habitat for Humanity India Brand Ambassador, for her participation in flagging off the “Build Back Better in Leh” biker expedition in Mumbai
- Purab Kohli, actor & TV anchor for his participation in flagging off the “Build Back Better in Leh” biker expedition in Mumbai with Jacqueline Fernandez
- Parikshit Sahni, actor and guest of honour at the Welcome Home “Build Back Better in Leh” celebration
- Everyone who supported and hosted the “Build Back Better in Leh” biker expedition in their epic journey and fundraising events

PICTURE GALLERY : House owner Dolma Tsomo receives her keys and documents



PICTURE GALLERY : Beneficiary families take refreshments at the completion ceremony



PICTURE GALLERY : Local girls performing a traditional dance at the completion ceremony



PICTURE GALLERY : Celebration through traditional dance at the completion ceremony



PICTURE GALLERY : Commemoration stone, (recognizing the Habitat for Humanity/LEDeG partnership)

LADAKH ECOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT GROUP
In collaboration with
HABITAT FOR HUMANITY (INDIA)
Deskit Ling, Palam
24 Passive Solar Houses for
Rehabilitation of August, 2010 Flood affected families
Inaugurated by
Shri. Nawang Rigzin Jora
Hon'ble Minister for Tourism & Culture, J&K Govt.
on 2nd october, 2011

PICTURE GALLERY : Signpost to the 24-house community in Palam, Leh



PICTURE GALLERY : Some of the beneficiary families holding their documents



PICTURE GALLERY : Completed houses



PICTURE GALLERY : Completed houses adorned with flags



PICTURE GALLERY : House interior with owner Tsewang Dolma



PICTURE GALLERY : House interior with owner Tsering Diskit seen with her new smokeless chula



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About Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity International is a global nonprofit housing organization dedicated to bringing people together to build homes, communities and hope. Since 1983, Habitat for Humanity India has served more than 38,000 families throughout the country, without regard to religion, race or nationality, by building and improving homes; by advocating for fair and just housing policies; and by providing training and access to resources to help families improve their shelter conditions. It aims to serve 100,000 families by 2015.

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