Helping the underprivileged to raise a roof

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Everyone knows the importance of owning a house. It may be a dream for many, but a house is certainly a basic necessity of life. Ironically a majority in our country don't own a home, due to poverty.

Realising these basic problems prevailing world over, a non-profit organisation Habitat for Humanity International initiated a programme in 1976 to build affordable houses for people who couldn't afford a dwelling. It was founded by Millard Fuller.

Till now, Habitat for Humanity has built 3,00,000 homes around the world, providing more than one and a half million people in thousands of communities in countries and territories across six continents with safe, decent and affordable shelter.

INDIAN OPERATIONS

The organisation set shop in India, in November 1983. Since then Habitat for Humanity (HFH), India has helped 30,000 underprivileged people to build their own houses. "We have a target to finish 50,000 units by 2012. As our motto is to get a destitute family a decent shelter built through a partnership with a local NGO," said Deepak Visvanathan, general manager of Habitat for Humanity.

He added, "We are not a handout programme. Each member of the family is required to invest many hours of 'sweat equity' into the construction of their home under the Habitat programme. This allows members to work alongside neighbours and volunteers, increasing the pride of ownership and fostering the development of positive relationships within a community."

HOW IT WORKS

Habitat for Humanity works with people from all backgrounds, religions and creeds to build houses together in partnership with families in need.

The total cost of a basic new home, measuring between 260 sq ft to 360 sq ft, can be in the range of Rs1 lakh to 4 lakh. The cost also depends on the location, labour, land, material cost and ancillary development expenses. A family may choose to take a small mortgage so they can build a new home in stages or renovate and repair an existing property.

Price list

Two bricks	Rs **20**
Window	Rs **50**
Roof	Rs **50**
Front door	Rs **100**
Each roof tile	Rs **10**

HFH houses are constructed with locally available materials that are appropriate to the country and region

COMMUNITIES
HOUSING ACTIVISTS

HFH houses are constructed with locally available materials that are appropriate to the country and region. Costs are kept low by using material contributed locally and volunteer labour.

Homeowners are required to help in the construction of their new homes as well as those of others in the community.

REHABILIATION

In coordination with other organisations, HFH provides resources and expertise in alleviating critical housing needs. Partnerships with the state governments provide land and infrastructure for affiliates. International corporations, local businesses and concerned individual sponsors participate in special events or come together to help build houses along with members of the local community.

HFH also helps in disaster affected areas. In 2004, the organisation built more than 11,000 houses in the tsunami-hit areas. In 2005, Habitat responded to the flood situation in Maharashtra, at Mahad and Kalyan. Habitat also responded to the 2008 floods in Bihar.

In addition to this, the organisation worked to rebuild homes in the aftermath of the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat and the cyclone of 1999, which devastated Orissa. "We can help more people with building a decent shelter. It is possible when more people will come to know what we do and how they can contribute. In India there are about 25 lakh units required for the underprivileged section," added Visvanathan.

With the help of Oberoi Mall, the organisation is initiating an event 'Build a home, Brick by Brick' between December 18 to 20 at Goregaon East where people can buy bricks, windows or doors of a model house.

Deepak Visvanathan,
GM, Habitat for Humanity

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