

HFHJ Newsletter

Issue #9, January 2008.

Renovation/Cleaning operation carried out in Tokyo!

Habitat for Humanity Japan has determined that it started volunteer operations which includes minor residential renovation and cleaning support for the socially vulnerable such as elders living alone. A pilot project got implemented with three volunteers participating on November 17, 2007.

This time, it was Mr. K's home in Chuoh 1-Chome Nakano-ku, Tokyo on which some operations had been carried out. Mr. K is 70 years old and born in 1937. Ever since his legs had been injured by a fall-down in taking a walk about 1 month ago, he has



been troubled by cleaning and shopping. This supporting project was put into operation because Habitat for Humanity recognizes the importance of house-renovation and cleaning in order to improve the living environment.

Our three volunteers for this activity were, all from Kanto Campus Chapter (CC), Kazuya Tominaga from Aoyama Gakuin University, Yasuka Arai from Kanda University of International Studies, and Ayuko Kurata from Meiji Gakuin University. We worked mainly on house plumbing area (kitchen and restroom), responding to the requests from Mr. K. After two hours of clean-up and fixation, they became very neat. Having been a temple carpenter, he was de-

lighted by knowing the activities the Habitat has been involved in. Habitat for Humanity Japan is supporting Mr. K periodically from now on.

Moreover, in selecting the home of Mr. K, we had worked with a care support professional at the Higashi-Nakano Area-Comprehensive Support Center which is entrusted by the city of Nakano-ku with elder welfare activities. After this, we are planning on enlarging the network of volunteering activities in association with the Area-Comprehensive Support Center. We would greatly appreciate everyone's active involvement with us.



The 5th meeting of Travelers with a Purpose!!

The 5th TwP meeting was hold on Nov 6th. The topic was **"How to lead a GV trip?"**

Actually most of the GV teams are from Campus Chapters or JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching Program). And the team formed by the individual participants are very few.

Of course, individual participants can join the open team which welcomes individual volunteers, however people often can not join the open team because of their schedule. We do want to give individual participants a chance to join our GV, so we introduced them the way to lead a GV trip by themselves in the last meeting.

As a follow-up to the last meeting on leading a Global Village trip, please see below for some EASY steps to specific topics that you might be interested in.

[INTERESTED IN LEADING A TRIP?]

1. Visit Habitat for Humanity Japan's website.
2. Start choosing a destination from the list of available countries.

3. Start reading the details from website.

[INTERESTED IN JOINING AN OPEN GV TRIP?]

1. Currently, we have 5 Global Village teams that are open to individuals. Please keep checking Habitat for Humanity Japan's website for new trip listings.
2. In addition, you can check the Habitat for Humanity International website for open spots.

[STILL HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?]

1. Visit Habitat for Humanity Japan's website.
2. Check out the FAQs on website.
3. Email us at gv@habitatjp.org

We look forward to seeing you at the next TwP meeting.

Japan Update

Post-Communist East Europe : A Housing Deficit

Habitat Japan has been very active to work with and support countries in the Asian Pacific area, such as Philippines, Thailand, and so on, since we started our operation in Japan. As a result, our activities with thousands of our volunteers have contributed to build "a world where everyone has a decent place to live."

Meanwhile, Habitat Europe & Central Asia (HFH-ECA) is spread across 12 time zones and two continents. Just over a decade ago more than half of the countries Habitat works in were under communist rule. More than 98 million people in our region live on less than \$2 per day, that's over 20 percent of the total population of the area.

Million of people lack access to clean water, sanitation and heating systems (in some areas winter temperatures can drop below -30 Celsius). The fall of the Soviet Union led to large scale unemployment, mass migration to ill quipped urban cen-

ters and severe deterioration in the housing stock that was once maintained by the government. This has led to severe overcrowded in small, dilapidated apartments which lack even basic amenities.

HFH-ECA has currently become very active as a function to be a diverse, innovative program; each program is tailored to meet the housing needs that the local programs have identified. HFH-Japan has started to send GV teams to Romania and Kyrgyzstan from this year because we would like to respond to their needs in the Europe & Central Asia area as well as in the Asian Pacific area. Last November, I visited and observed Habitat Poland and Macedonia for a challenging attempt to send GV teams to those countries in summer 2008. Here, I'll report what Habitat is doing in Poland and Macedonia and hope this makes you interested in GV trips to those countries.



HFH Poland creates apartments or housing units of varying sizes in these multi-family buildings. Currently, the number of apartments in one building varies from 4 to 12. The average size of an apartment for a family of four is approximately 52 sq. m. Families have 20 years to pay off their no-interest loan, through monthly mortgage payments equal to roughly US\$140. This amount is much less than the cost of the few bank loans currently available in Poland. In addition to the simple, decent and healthy housing that these apartments provide, many also share a small garden or play area for the children, creating a strong sense of community among the homeowners.

HFH Poland continues to investigate options to have a greater impact; this has lead towards plans of home and apartment renovations. Within the capital city of Warsaw, the HFH representative office is working with a housing association partner to renovate a post World War II apartment block alongside the 23 resident families.

Poland



Housing need

Poland joined the European Union in 2004 but, as a former member of the Eastern Bloc, Poland has to deal with the legacy left by communist economic and social policies. Despite tremendous reforms, overcrowded and damp housing without proper sanitation is still the reality for too many of Poland's low-income working families. These families are often forgotten behind the walls of aging Soviet-style apartment building blocks.

The Economic Housing Institute research indicates that almost one in four apartments in Poland should be condemned. This sad statistic heightens the problem of Poland's needing more than 1.5 million affordable apartments just to meet current demand. Of the existing housing stock, approximately one in eight do not have a kitchen. Almost one in ten share a toilet



with an entire floor of apartments or have no indoor facility at all. With a severe affordable housing shortage, low-income families often have no choice but to live in sub-standard housing that threatens their health and safety.

Habitat in Poland

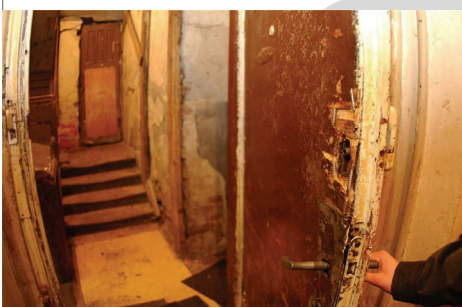
Habitat for Humanity's work in Poland dates back to 1992 in the town of Gliwice. Since that time, four more community groups or affiliates have started in Poznań, Gdynia, Wrocław, the capital city of Warsaw, and Gdańsk, the historic center of the Solidarity movement.

Over the past years multi-family units have been the centerpiece of Habitat's work in Poland. These buildings are built to withstand Poland's harsh winters, while allowing plenty of sun and fresh air in spring and summer. The buildings have wooden roofs and cement foundations. The walls are made of lightweight cellular blocks chosen because they provide good thermal insulation, a solid structure and easy handling.



Habitat for Humanity Poland

- Families Served in FY07: 29
- Families Served to date: 123
- New House (USD): \$31,400
- Renovation (USD): \$2,000-7,800
- Affiliate location: Warsaw, Gliwice, Gdansk



Event and Project

Macedonia



Macedonia has been going through political and economic transition under the circumstances that were unusual for most Eastern European countries. Although it was the only former Yugoslav republic to gain independence peacefully, its transition from a centrally-planned into a market economy has been ridden with problems.

The implications of the conflicts in the region and the growing fractures within Macedonian society led to an interethnic crisis that ended in late 2001 with a political agreement still being in implementation.

As a consequence of a long-lasting instability, Macedonia's national income dropped substantially. Unemployment rose significantly, accompanied by a sharp fall in family incomes and a general rise in poverty levels. Macedonia's unemployment rate is among the highest in Europe, reaching 36 per cent in 2004. The number of people living below the national poverty level has exceeded 25 per cent.

The beginnings of HFH in Macedonia

In January 2003 a group of committed



people from all over Macedonia expressed a willingness to start up a Habitat for Humanity affiliate in Macedonia. Inspired by Habitat's mission and ready to put in their values, experience and time to help those in need, the interest group has been officially recognized as an HFH affiliate in June 2004.

The first innovative project was launched in early spring 2005. In partnership with a local microfinance institution HFH Macedonia has established a Home Improvement Fund that provides micro-loans for



reconstruction and renovation of the sub-standard housing in Macedonia.

Housing Need

The change from a heavy reliance on subsidies to the logic of the free market in the 1990s led to rigid urban planning and significant deterioration of urban services in Macedonia. Consequently, the number of new dwellings completed per year dropped substantially. In response, the price of housing rose beyond what many families could afford.

Since average families cannot afford to buy new homes due to the hard financial conditions to meet, many families live in their parents' houses. More generations living in one house is a frequent phenomenon. The average age of buildings in Macedonia is about 30 years and, due to the poor maintenance, they are in need of immediate reconstruction/renovation. Therefore, the principal type of need HFH Macedonia is addressing is that for reconstruction/renovation of the existing dwelling stock, especially targeting low income families that were unable to improve their

living conditions. The traditional working poor that have been forgotten are offered now with partnership that might help them find decent and affordable housing solution.

Habitat Highlights

- The signing of partnership between HFH Macedonia and "Mozhnosti was attended by Stevco Jakimovski, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs in the Government of



the Republic of Macedonia.

- As of the end of June 2005 the first loans have been distributed while the first completed reconstructions are expected three months later

Habitat for Humanity Macedonia

Families Served Current FY: 28
 Total Houses Constructed: 43
 House Sponsorship Cost (USD): \$27,930

List of Donations and Grants(from2007/10/1to11/30)

Thank you very much for the support. Your contributions will be used to realize "A World Where Everyone Has A Decent To Live".

<Donation>

Date	Donor	Proffered Usage	Amount
5-Oct	Rits Habitat	Niigata	46,429
9-Oct	Michiko Uchida		4,020
9-Oct	at the Global Festival		18,184
11-Oct	at the Hato Live 1st		82,569
15-Oct	Jun Naito		3,000
15-Oct	Takashi Watanabe		10,000
23-Oct	Oheyama Sekizai		6,395
26-Oct	Katsuhiko Aoki		5,188
5-Nov	Kobe Union Church		270,000

<Grants>

30-Nov	Japan Platform	Bangladesh	28,992,625
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(Suffix Omitted, Amount in Yen)

Japan Update

“Building Relationships One Degree North of the Equator”

Inspired by my volunteer work with Habitat for Humanity Japan, I joined a Global Village trip and went to Borneo, Malaysia in October 2007. I went with a team of amazing individuals and made some of the most memorable connections in my life.

The following are a few memories from my trip : ANYONE CAN BUILD A HOUSE, BUT NOT EVERYONE CAN BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

From the first day of our trip, it was about the people. This is not to say that we weren't focused on building a quality house, but that is not all of what Habitat is about. The human connection is where it's at—the connection between you and your team, the connection between you and the family, the connection between you and the Habitat staff. There aren't a whole lot of barriers to connecting when you are working head-to-head, sweating your brains out, doing something that none of you have experience doing.

The new house for Veronica, Philip, Bryan, and Byron of the Yeo Family in a small village near Kuching, Malaysia was the icing on the cake. But the human interactions are the ones that made the trip for us. These are things we are not long to forget. . .

Bryan's scrunch face. As the youngest member of the Yeo family, he seemed to

take on the most ownership of the house. Helping every day before school, he was as good at swinging a hammer and carrying small buckets of rocks as he was about serving us our morning snack. And even better at making us smile. In between all of these little tasks he had this face-scrunch habit. Somehow he was able to simultaneously pull his little eyebrows downward on the inside ends towards his nose; scrunch his nose up towards his eyebrows; and create a perfect 3-horizontal line scrunch just north of the bridge of his nose, right in between his eyebrows. The whole expression gave his round little face, the look of some lizard caught in surprise.

Lunches on the living room and carport floor at Veronica's father's house were always memorable. At noon, we all broke for lunch and walked five minutes from the jobsite to Veronica's father's house, where heaps of home-cooked food would await us. Every day we'd all eat like we hadn't eaten in days, even though we had just had a bountiful morning snack two hours before. After stuffing ourselves, we let our food digest and waited for our sweat to dry a bit. While we relaxed we chatted, watched cooking shows with Veronica's sister, or played with the kids.

And then of course there was our unforgettable first durian experience. We'd seen the signs all over Kuching (a cartoon durian with the universal circular red “no” over it) prohibiting people from bringing one of the world's smelliest fruits into buildings. Finally we got the opportunity to taste one. During dinner, we had left it outside in a plastic bag so as not to interfere with our taste buds. When it came time for our stinky dessert, splitting the big yellow-green spiny thing was itself a production. We huddled around watching expectantly while Philip and Veronica sliced it open. When it was pried open the full force of the putrid smell released by the creamy velvet interior was something



to be reckoned with. We still had to get it into our mouth. Little Bryan eagerly dug his hands in and grabbed a nice big section. I was much more tentative, pinching just a bit between my fingers. Others didn't even try it. But those who did all had the same look of disgust on their face as the fruit entered their mouth. It wasn't until after we tasted it that Veronica sheepishly warned us about the post-durian consumption burps.

And finally, our parting memory was our last dinner with the team and the Yeo Family. Over a chaotic Malaysian hot pot dinner, we tried to say goodbye and wrap up a trip that was too big to fit into any one package. When we first arrived on site we were aliens dropped from the sky into a small village in Western Borneo. By our last night, we were a friendly group of people, just being human and enjoying each other's company. Bryan had decided that after days of people taking pictures of him, he was going to be the photographer, so he was running around sticking the camera in everyone's face. Byron was being a cool 11 year old. Philip was being his quiet fatherly self, but as he gave a thank-you speech, he choked up a bit. And Veronica, so reserved and shy when we first got there, blew a final goodbye kiss to the group like a Hollywood star.

Deva Dawson
MyHabitat, Habitat for Humanity Japan



Habitat for Humanity seeks to eliminate poverty housing worldwide through participatory, community led programs. In 2006 we mobilized nearly 1,000,000 volunteers in over 100 countries. For further information on our exciting activities and life-changing opportunities for you to get involved, contact us today!

Habitat for Humanity Japan	
Add: 1-45-5 B101 Hinode Bldg., Higashi Nakano, Nakano-Ku, Tokyo 164-0003	URL: www.HabitatJP.org
Tel: 03-5330-5571	Published by: Isamu Ando
Fax: 03-5330-5572	Edited by: Shuji Mogi
Mail: info@HabitatJP.org	Also edited by: Aya Ito Ayumi Ota

