



**FIJI IS ONE** of the first nations to see the morning sun each day. The island group in the South Pacific, about two-thirds of the way between Hawaii and New Zealand, comprises 332 separate islands. One third are inhabited.

Endowed with forest, mineral, and fish resources, Fiji is one of the most developed of the Pacific island economies, and a hub serving many small island nations. The economy is improving after problems caused by political and ethnic tension between the majority Fijian and minority Indian populations in the 1990s. But chronic under-investment, underemployment and concerns over government finances.

The housing sector is marked by uncertain land rights and the need to deal with distinct rural and urban challenges. Fiji is frequently hit by extreme weather, especially hurricanes. Homes are often swept away by resultant strong winds and floods. This has spurred a switch to more solid wooden and concrete homes rather than traditional reliance on shelters made of easy-to-replace reeds and wood. But in rural areas, traditional materials are still common and every major storm is followed by a need for repairs and rebuilding. However, villagers do not always practice self help, relying on government aid, which is itself not always forthcoming.

Urban areas are fast expanding as people drift off the land in search of better opportunities, especially for their children. A tradition of bringing large extended families into towns creates overcrowding, squatting and poverty. Many of those who migrate are of Indian descent, who lose their rural land when leases expire.

Habitat for Humanity Fiji was registered in 1991, and the program began two years later. Today the national office is in the capital Suva and the only country affiliate is located in Vunaca.

At the beginning of 2004, HFH Fiji concentrated on building two types of homes. One comprises a single bedroom, living room, kitchen, shower room and a toilet. The second is larger with a second bedroom. Houses are made of concrete block walls, cement floors with corrugated iron roof. Occasionally, stilts are used for elevated houses, which are not more than three meters high and made of wooden walls. Five to ten family members normally occupy a 9 meter x 5.4 meter two-bedroom house, as it is common in Fiji for extended families to live together. It takes at most three weeks to construct a Habitat house.

### COUNTRY FACTS

**Population:** 893,354  
**Capital:** Suva (Viti Levu)  
**Area:** 18,270 sq. km.  
**Ethnic groups:** Fijian 51% (pre-dominantly Melanesian with Polynesian mix), Indian 44%, European, other Pacific Islanders, overseas Chinese, and other 5% (1998 est.)  
**Languages:** English (official), Fijian, Hindi  
**Religions:** Christian 52% (Methodist 37%, Roman Catholic 9%), Hindu 38%, Muslim 8%, other 2%

### HABITAT FACTS

Families Helped

**598**

Cost Of One House\*

**US\$6,375**

As of April 2005

\* international sponsorship cost

### Habitat Highlights

- A concert which aimed to support the "Make Poverty History" campaign, as well as raise awareness and funds for HFH Fiji building programs took place on July 23, 2005.
- In May 2005, English teachers from Japan initiated rebuilding houses in the Fiji highlands.
- HFH Fiji is strongly supported by the Methodist Church and receives donations from the governments of New Zealand, Australia and France to help build more houses.
- The six -day Millenium Build in 2001 hosted by the Vanuaca affiliate successfully built homes for ten families.



**HFH Fiji**

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