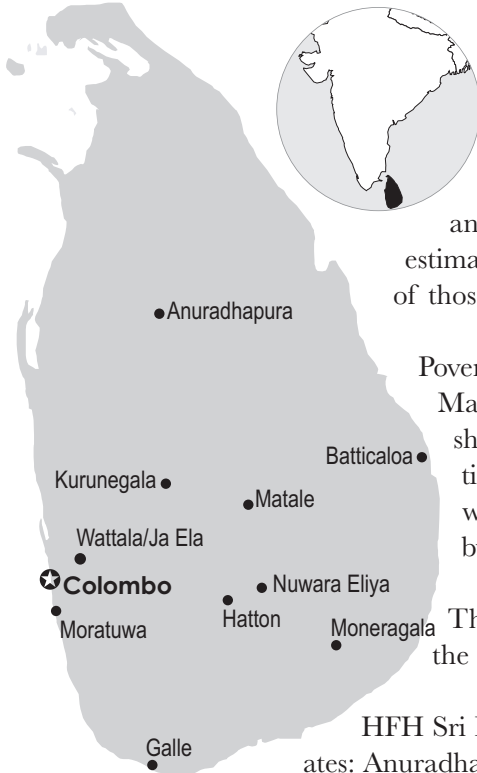


Sri Lanka

Country Profile

✦ Capital and National Office • Affiliates



THE LUSH island state of Sri Lanka is emerging from two decades of civil war. The years of conflict claimed more than 60,000 lives and displaced over 800,000 people, especially in the north and east. The troubles intensified an already formidable need for decent housing. Today, the central government estimates two-thirds of the population lives in inadequate housing: more than half of those in urban areas live in substandard conditions.

Poverty denies many families the capital or credit needed to own decent homes. Many rely on “homes” built from mud and discarded materials. These insecure shelters are poorly ventilated, and lack access to clean water and decent sanitation. There is scant protection from insects or wildlife. Children must be watched so parents cannot pursue decent work or training opportunities thereby trapping families in a vicious cycle of impoverishment.

The December 2004 tsunami rendered many thousands homeless, especially in the east and southeast.

HFH Sri Lanka began in 1994. Today, it has ten active affiliates: Anuradhapura; Batticaloa; Galle; Hatton; Kurunegala; Matale; Monaragala; Moratuwa; Nuwara Eliya; and Wattala/Ja Ela. HFH Sri Lanka’s tsunami response is centered on Batticaloa and Galle.

HFH Sri Lanka is one of the most innovative Habitat operations in the world. To reach those in greatest of need, HFH Sri Lanka pioneered a micro-finance program called “Save & Build”. The concept enables families with the smallest of incomes to pay for the construction of a home of their own. Average monthly repayments are equivalent to about US\$5.20.

Initiated in 1999 in Anuradhapura, “Save & Build” involves groups of up to a dozen low-income families who save together. When there is sufficient money, one house gets built. The savings cycle continues until every family has a home. The concept led to a 40 percent jump in the number of families served each year.

HFH Sri Lanka builds two-room core houses of about 24 sq. m. When an agreed part of the mortgage is repaid, a second section, either a third room or a verandah, is added. This increases the home size to 32 sq. m.

Habitat homeowners often make their own bricks or cut their own lumber in order to keep costs down. Other common ways to reduce costs include substituting locally-available building materials and methods, such as soil blocks, treated timber poles and small concrete tiles.

COUNTRY FACTS

Population: 19,905,165
Capital: Colombo
Area: 65,610 sq. km.
Ethnic groups: Sinhalese 74%, Tamil 18%, Moor 7%, Burgher, Malay and Vedda 1%
Language: Sinhala (official/national language) 74%, Tamil (national language) 18%, others 8%; English used in government and by about 10% of the population
Religions: Buddhist 70%, Hindu 15%, Christian 8%, Muslim 7%

HABITAT FACTS

Families Helped
4,485
Cost Of One House*
US\$1,190

As of April 2005

* International sponsorship cost

Habitat Highlights

- First replacement home completed in Batticaloa on January 20, 2005: three weeks after the Indian Ocean tsunami.
- First Builder teams from Singapore, the US, and the Netherlands began work in tsunami-affected areas in March 2005.
- Since 1997, local affiliates have hosted 29 international teams of volunteer teams from China, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, the UK and the US.
- Matale affiliate plans to build nearly 290 new homes in partnerships with Rotary clubs, Kelabokka Plantation and the Ministry of Finance.



HFH Sri Lanka

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