

Vanuatu

Country Profile

National Office

VANUATU is a scattered archipelago of some 80, largely volcanic, islands in the southwestern Pacific. Located some 2,300 kms off the east coast of Australia, Vanuatu is remote and isolated. The eight largest islands account for 80% of the total land area and are home to nearly 95% of the 200,000-strong population. Vanuatu's isolation is exacerbated by poor infrastructure and expensive international and internal transportation links.

Housing is a major challenge. Overcrowding and unhealthy and unsanitary living conditions are common. Squatter communities have mushroomed in urban areas. In rural areas, more than half of the houses are built from traditional materials and are over ten years' old. This makes them very vulnerable to cyclone damage. In February 2004, Hurricane Ivy damaged more than 10,700 houses on 13 islands.

Rapid population growth and land disputes between tribes means there is a shortage of affordable land for affordable housing. Poor families seeking decent homes have to contend with high land prices, costly building materials, especially if imported, and a lack of assets to secure land ownership.

In addition, sub-standard conditions are costly. Rents can take up more than half average salaries of the equivalent of US\$110 a month.

HFH Vanuatu began operations in the capital, Port Vila, in 2001. It builds and renovates houses in three communities, Fres Wota, Nambouru and Beverly Hills. Eight families in Beverly Hills have formed the first "Save & Build" group. The "Save & Build" concept leverages the combined financial strength of a savings group to enable houses to be built more quickly, as well as encouraging a savings ethos.

Habitat homeowners pay an average monthly repayment of approximately US\$44, far less than the rent for a run-down urban apartment.

Habitat houses in Vanuatu use cement slab foundations and are made from concrete block and wood with hardwood frames and shutters. Corrugated iron is used for roofing. It takes between 20 to 30 days to build a house.

Habitat Highlights

- Concrete Interlocking Block technology to cut down construction cost and encourage innovations.
- Trainings conducted in HFHV Building Centers in Port Vila, Efate and Luganville, Santo empowered community people with skills to build their own homes.
- Hillsong team from Australia completed the building of the 8th Habitat home in Beverly Hills.
- Partnership with Lions Club International Foundation and Lions Club Port Vila to build seven houses for the disabled.
- First "Save & Build" group established to build eight more houses in Beverly Hills.



COUNTRY FACTS

Population: 202,609
Capital: Port Vila
Area: 12,200 sq. km.
Ethnic groups: Melanesian 98% French, Vietnamese, Chinese, other Pacific Islanders
Language: Bislama (a Melanesian pidgin English), English, French and more than 110 languages and dialects
Religion: Presbyterian 36.7%, Roman Catholic 15%, Anglican 15%, other Christian 10%, indigenous, 7.6%, others, including Jon Frum Cargo cult, 15.7%

HABITAT FACTS

Families Helped

22

Cost Of One House*

US\$4,810

As of April 2005

* international sponsorship cost



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