

## HAITI: Six months on



Reconstruction in Haiti was always going to be complex. The destruction was on a similar scale to the 2004 Asian Tsunami, but over a much smaller and more densely populated area, including the capital city and centre of government. And Haiti is a country whose natural resources have been badly depleted, so construction materials have to largely be imported, adding to the logistical difficulties, costs and delays. But we are delighted to report that excellent progress is being made.

Thousands of homes were damaged, and families, fearing for their safety, refused to return to them. So Habitat for Humanity has trained 30 local engineers to assess such homes: If the homes are category Green, families can safely return to them. Category Red homes are unsafe and must be demolished. Category Orange homes will be habitable once some repairs have been made, which families can do with the help of materials and guidelines we provide.

So far, over 2,000 homes have been assessed, and 13,000 more will be assessed by the end of 2010.

Over 21,000 Habitat for Humanity Emergency Shelter Kits have been assembled and distributed. With support from our local staff, Haitians have used the tools and materials in the Kits to repair damaged homes or construct themselves a temporary shelter.

Our Transitional Shelter (T-shelter) Programme is progressing well, with 70 currently being constructed each week. This number is increasing exponentially and, by this time next year, over 625,000 people will be living in T-shelters that Habitat for Humanity has either built directly or with partner organisations such as Care International and Save the Children. Each shelter is built to international standards, being 18sqm in size (an adequate size for a family of five) with a separate latrine. We train the families to use and maintain the latrines properly and thereby minimise the spread of disease.





Left: Local professionals help build T-Shelters that are robust enough to withstand hurricanes. Right: A typical Habitat for Humanity T-Shelter has good ventilation, mosquito nets, a strong frame with cross bracing, and either permanent concrete foundations or temporary concrete anchors so that the structure can be moved to a permanent site.

Where families have their own land, the T-shelters have concrete foundations and the families living in them can easily convert them at a later date into a permanent home, using materials and help from the Habitat Resource Centres we have set up to fill in gaps in the local supply of construction materials and resources. But those families who rented homes before the earthquake do not have land of their own, so for these families the T-shelters have ground anchors rather than foundations, enabling them to be moved to another location once land with tenure becomes available to them. We are advocating for this and hope for success in the near future. These families will be able to disassemble their T-shelters and reuse the materials in the construction of a permanent place to live.



A Habitat Resource Centre.

You cannot build a home today without thinking of the hazards of tomorrow: Haiti is subject to an annual onslaught of hurricanes, so with the help of international engineering firm ARUP, all T-shelters have been designed to resist high winds without adding significantly to the cost.

And what of the Haitian people? They are involved in the whole process. Our experience shows that this is essential after a disaster, both as a means of helping survivors in their own physical and mental recovery, and to ensure that their valuable local knowledge and skills are utilised in the reconstruction process. Many of those Haitians whose homes were not damaged have taken in families who have lost everything. Whole communities are helping to clear debris, recycling what construction materials they can which speeds up rebuilding and keeps costs down. Habitat for Humanity Haiti, which is run by Haitians, has employed further local staff and expatriate Haitians with special skills to manage and implement reconstruction. This is a communitywide, nationwide and worldwide effort.



Now Philippe has a T-Shelter, he can mend his nets in readiness to renew his living as a fisherman.

We're making progress but, with your help, we can enable still more Haitians to rebuild their homes and their lives.

**If you would like to make a donation to our Haiti Appeal, please call our office on 01295 264240 or visit [www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk](http://www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk) to donate online.**

**On behalf of the people of Haiti – thank you!**