



Improve housing conditions.

Help 1 million people improve their shelter situation.

*“Investing in women is the surest way to end global poverty. In many poor countries, women produce the majority of the food supply and are more likely to spend their income on food, education and health care for their children. However, they face unequal barriers to lifting their families out of poverty: Women often work longer hours in the lowest-paid sectors, earn less stable incomes, and receive less training and have fewer economic opportunities than men.”*

— Women Thrive Worldwide



STEFAN HACKER

**30+**

Nations where Women Build has or supports projects.

**300+**

Participating U.S. affiliates.

**2,200+**

Homes built since 1998.

**40,000+**

Volunteers annually.

## WOMEN BUILD

# What is Women Build?

Women Build aims to be the model program for engaging volunteers and partners to address challenges faced by women and children — lack of opportunity, training and education are three examples — close to home and around the world. In the United States, Women Build promotes the involvement of women in the construction of Habitat houses. About 450 Women Build projects a year provide an opportunity for 40,000 women to learn construction skills in a supportive environment, empowering them as they address the problem of substandard housing. Additionally, Women Build brings together women from all walks of life to advocate for affordable housing and safer, stronger communities. Globally, the Women Build program equips female heads of household with business skills, helping to stabilize their finances and ensuring they have decent, safe places to live.

## GENDER INEQUITY

**75%** of women are excluded from bank loans.

**10%** of the world's income goes to women.

**67%** of the world's work (including child-rearing and domestic chores) is done by women.

**<1%** of the world's property is owned by women.

## BUILDING HOUSES, BUILDING CONFIDENCE

In Rhode Island, the South County Habitat for Humanity Women Build team recently returned to the build site where crew leader Christine Fitzpatrick got her Habitat start 15 years earlier.

Fitzpatrick became involved with Habitat after a friend invited her to help construct a new home on Kingstown Road. Over the years, Fitzpatrick dedicated herself to

cultivating a group of women who wanted to be involved in building and rehabilitating Habitat homes on a regular basis. Now, as many as 15 “regulars” join Fitzpatrick every Thursday to work on one of the many projects South County Habitat for Humanity has in progress.

One spring day, the hardworking group rehabilitated and refreshed the same house on Kingstown Road that Fitzpatrick helped build in 1998.

“I’ve found that women are very interested in building projects and being a part of providing housing for families,” Fitzpatrick said. “When we get together every Thursday, I love seeing someone become inspired by what they’ve learned. It’s a great feeling to hear that someone has gone home and used the skills they’ve learned to fix something in their own house. There’s this empowering feeling of ‘OK, wow, I can do that now.’ ”

Jay Shartenberg, director of operations for South County Habitat, observed that women who volunteer “realize they have all these skills they never thought they had,” and those skills were not nearly as intimidating to learn as they thought.

Later in the year, Fitzpatrick and her Women Build team broke ground on a home built entirely by women.



STEFFAN HACKER

## SMALL LOANS MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE

Women Build works with very low-income women who run small businesses out of their homes, teaching them about financial principles, market strategies, business plans, diversification of product offerings, disaster risk prevention and incremental building. Habitat subsidizes small, low-interest, short-term loans that allow these women to enhance their businesses and gradually improve their homes. The average income of participants is less than US\$300 per month.

Kenia Viscaya sells ice pops and phone cards out of her home — which was more like a stall — in Esteli, Nicaragua. Using a Habitat-backed microloan, she built brick walls and put a new roof on her home to keep the rain out. This allowed her to expand and diversify her business, increase her income, pay off her loan early, and make plans to further improve her home and business. “So, I enter the program

again and I finish my dream,” she said. “I feel happy — satisfied — because it was something I wouldn’t have been able to do on my own.”

Based on its success in Nicaragua, Women Build is launching a similar program to give women a hand up throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Safe and Secure Homes for Entrepreneurial Women is starting out working with 1,200 households in Costa Rica and Mexico. If sufficient funding is secured, the program will expand to breathe life into hopes for the future for many more women and children.



JOSH EASTWOOD

Habitat currently operates in 18 countries in the Latin America/Caribbean region, working actively with local governments, financial institutions, technical experts, and community organizations that could be mobilized immediately for this project.



COURTESY/HHH HAITI

## A HOLISTIC APPROACH IN HAITI

A Habitat-supported co-op in Haiti trained women in the principles and practices of sanitation, latrines, waste management and operating kitchen gardens. At the same time, participants learned to make small ornaments, which they sold to raise money for school uniforms, books and food. Habitat seeks to empower more women through programs like this one, as well as others focused on water and sanitation.



TAHILA MINTZ

## WATER AND SANITATION

Water plays a key part in the health and security of women and families. Women in dry regions walk an average of 3½ miles every day to fetch water for their homes. The longer they have to walk, the more vulnerable they are to being assaulted. Every day, almost 2,000 children around the world die of preventable intestinal diseases because they lack access to clean water and proper sanitation facilities.

In Kyrgyzstan, Tamara Balkibekova lived with her husband and five children in two rooms of an unfinished home that

lacked indoor plumbing. A Women Build-supported team completed the house and built a working bathroom onto the home. No longer would Tamara's son Aziz, who has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair, need to make his way to an outhouse, and no longer would any family member need to bathe in a public bathhouse.

In Bulgaria, loans secured through Women Build helped 20 families make their homes safer, warmer and more sanitary for their children with disabilities.



ESRA MILLSTEIN

## BUILDING WOMEN INTO COMMUNITY LEADERS

In the United States, a study found that although Habitat homeowners gain a sense of empowerment and self-esteem in their new homes, they tend not to take up leadership roles in their neighborhoods. The Voice of Women training series aims to help female heads of household take that next step of civic participation so that they can become effective agents of change in their communities. Goals include strengthening communication skills, such as public speaking and positive motivation; getting to know and working with neighbors, civic leaders and law enforcement officials; and learning how to facilitate community meetings.

The initial phase of Voice of Women involves training Habitat affiliate leaders in these areas so they can pass on that knowledge to partner homeowners.

## AN EARLY START, A LIFETIME OF COMMITMENT

Girls Build is an educational program for low-income girls in the United States. Over a few sessions, girls ages 12-14 learn about the advantages of homeownership vs. renting. Concepts covered include self-esteem, construction principles, how homes are bought and sold, financial discipline, and the role Habitat plays in making safe, decent, affordable homes available to everyone. Participants engage in service projects in their communities. Since 2010, Habitat has distributed 229 Girls Build kits to 68 Habitat affiliates and seven Girl Scout troops, offering training to nearly 4,000 girls.



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