



Vicente Ferrer

Empowering rural communities



Fighting Poverty by Building Houses

Project Rationale

In rural India, many people belonging to disadvantaged communities live in small huts in precarious and unsanitary conditions. Huts don't have bathrooms and open defecation is a big issue in rural communities. It causes health problems because of water and food contamination that spread diseases and safety problems, especially for women that can be subject to sexual attacks. Women find it difficult to cook food in small and congested huts, and it can also create a fire hazard, especially in summer and windy seasons. Many huts are covered with grass and leaves and during the rainy season they experience a heavy water leakage. Due to lack of proper doors and windows, huts are also open to intrusion by poisonous insects and scorpions. On top of this, children living in huts lack proper lighting and have to study under street lights. The Vicente Ferrer Foundation USA (VFF USA) supports the Rural Development Trust (RDT), our local partner in India, in its goal of providing permanent, safe, healthy, and decent habitable houses with sanitation facilities to disadvantaged communities in rural India.

Owning a decent shelter for a living is the third most basic need (next to food and clothing) for any human being. A house also serves as a status symbol since it ensures a certain degree of economic as well as social security to families belonging to marginalized layers of Indian society. It is a valuable asset which can act as collateral for institutional finance for productive needs including income-generating activities that hold a key to poverty alleviation.

Unfortunately, many farmers in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana cannot afford to build a proper house and continue living in meagre conditions. It is especially hard for people with disabilities, as they have fewer economic resources and face discrimination within and outside their communities.

Project Goal

The aim of this project is to improve the living conditions of people with disabilities by providing a decent habitable house, that not only provides safety and security but also enhances their dignity both in the family and in the society.

There are many disadvantaged communities in rural India that lack access to a decent house with sanitation. This results in further spread of diseases and the contamination of drinking and bathing water, creating an endemic sanitary problem in India.

Project Description

To address this problem, VFF USA is helping to provide a permanent, safe, healthy, and decent house with sanitation facilities to people with disabilities, so they and their families can lead a life of dignity.

The beneficiaries of this project are one person with disabilities and his family from the Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. The beneficiary has been selected by RDT *Self-help Groups* for People with Disabilities according to the following criteria:

- They don't own any house and don't have resources to construct a decent house.
- They are not covered under the Government Housing Program.

RDT Houses

Houses are simple but sturdy. Each house consists of one common space, bedroom, small kitchen, bathroom with toilet, and verandah and has a total area of 526 sq. ft. See the distribution below:

- Common space: 140 sq. ft.
- Bedroom: 80 sq. ft.
- Kitchen: 54 sq. ft.
- Bathroom with toilet: 35 sq. ft.
- Verandah: 115 sq. ft.

The houses are barrier-free to enable the mobility of people with disabilities, with special ramps when needed.

All houses are constructed in collaboration with the community and the beneficiary families. Housing beneficiaries, as well family members and Self-help Groups for persons with disabilities are involved in planning, execution, monitoring and follow up to ensure the house is built within agreed budgetary provisions and technical specifications.

To support the most disadvantaged, the houses built by the foundation usually become the property of the women of the family or of a person with disabilities.

Impact

Our housing program has a very positive impact on improving living conditions of disadvantaged communities. A house symbolizes a turning point in these families' lives: these houses are an effective shelter against the monsoon rains and the intense pre-monsoon heat, guaranteeing also protection against dangerous animals, like snakes and scorpions. Having a space for personal hygiene helps protect the women of the community, who avoid having to leave the village and expose themselves to potential sexual assault.

An ownership of a safe and dignified home increases families' self-esteem and sense of belonging: something very important for the groups that have historically suffered from profound discrimination. Additionally, the integration of families in the community allows them to use the public services provided by the Indian government, such as electricity and drinking water. This is even more important for people with disabilities, who have additional difficulties to have access to a decent house.

By March 2019, RDT had built 75,532 homes. This includes 3,162 for persons with disabilities.

Would you like to help us build one more house for these families in dire need? You can support our project directly on the web www.vffusa.org or contact us for more information at: info@vffusa.org or at (202) 798-5269.

Thank you for your generosity and kindness!



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