

REACHING OUT TO THE LESS PRIVILEGED

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY INDIA'S IVY LEAGUER BUILD VOLUNTEERS AIM TO CONSTRUCT HOMES FOR 200 TRIBAL FAMILIES AT KAWTEWADI IN KARJAT, SAYS **RAJIV DOGRA**

The families of Yamu Kawte and Yamu Padir, residents of a mofussil tribal village Kawtewadi in Karjat, will no more be at the mercy of vagaries of nature as they now have a proper home complete with stone foundations, brick walls and tiled roofs. Earlier, the families lived in a hut made of reeds and mud.

The Habitat for Humanity India's Ivy Leaguer Build volunteers aim to help construct such homes for 200 families in the tribal belt of Karjat. The volunteers included students from schools and colleges not only in India, but also from the world over.

The two families were handed over the keys to their new homes by K Sankaranarayanan, Governor of Maharashtra, at a function on February 12. Rajashree Birla, Chairperson, IndiaBUILDS, Habitat for Humanity India, Ronald Terwilliger, Chairperson, Habitat for Humanity's Global World of Hope Campaign, Sameer Koticha, Director, ASK Group and Dino Touthang, CEO, Habitat for Humanity India, were among the dignitaries present.

Speaking on the occasion, K Sankaranarayanan said, "Housing is a fundamental need, which has a direct bearing on the quality of life. There is a shortfall of 26.53 million houses in the urban society. There is a need of Rs 6 lakh crore as an investment, which can be achieved through the joint efforts of the Centre, state governments, besides private stake holders such as banks, private institutions and NGOs.

"Despite the housing sector witnessing a boom, yet only the rich and upper middle class are the ones who can afford them. At least 40 million houses are needed for the lower middle class in India. Initiatives such as IndiaBUILDS will, therefore, have a far reaching impact on India's poverty alleviation crusade."

Similarly, Rajashree Birla, said, "Having a house has a great impact on the social upliftment of an individual."

Elaborating on the way of functioning of Habitat for Humanity, Ronald Terwilliger says that the organisation looks towards partnering with working poor families who have no access to normal lines of credit. "These homeowners are later required to pay us back through sweat equity. And depending on respective individual cases, the duration for payback is decided. In this regard, we look forward to cooperation from the government and Indian diaspora. Moreover, if the



leadership wants it to happen, it will certainly happen."

The houses these volunteers are helping build are around 300 sq ft in size. Ensuring minimal use of cement, a paste of mud and water is applied between the layers of bricks to construct a house having a living area, a bedroom, a kitchen and a washing area.

Kawtewadi boasts of a municipal primary school, a police station, a college, which is about four kms away. Yet, when it comes to housing, at least 2,000 tribal families are in need of a proper home.