

# Building Homes, Building Lives

The Mata Amritanandamayi  
Math's Community  
Housing Project







## **Building Homes, Building Lives**

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Everyone in the world should be able to sleep without fear, at least for one night. Everyone should be able to eat to his fill, at least for one day. There should be at least one day when hospitals see no one admitted due to violence. By doing selfless service for at least one day, everyone should help the poor and needy. It is Amma's prayer that at least this small dream be realised.

- Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi



*Mata Amritanandamayi Math  
built 1000 new homes in Raichur,  
Karnataka after floods in 2015.*







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## SUSTAINABLE HOUSING BENEFITS ALL

Born in 1953 in a poor fishing village in the southern state of Kerala, Amma grew up surrounded by families who survived with barely a roof over their heads. During monsoon, many mothers spent entire nights protecting their children from the rainwater that leaked through thatched huts. Seeing this as a young girl, Amma envisioned a world where everyone had safe and peaceful homes.

In 1981, the Mata Amritanandamayi Math (MAM) was established in Amma's birthplace, and in 1987, monastics and volunteers began building homes for people in the area. They quickly saw that these people 'in need of shelter' did not at the same time 'need pity'.

In fact, they deserved respect. It had taken great strength to overcome the challenges they faced. Now, with proper homes in which to ground their lives, they were setting an example of what it takes to gather the courage to survive.

In 1996, Amma officially announced a project to build homes for the poor, all over India. A national advertising campaign for Amrita Kuteeram, which means cottage in Malayalam, stated: "Any person of any religion who does not have a source of income or is destitute may apply, irrespective of his possessing land or not. Destitute widows, women abandoned by their husbands, sick people who are unfit for work, handicapped persons, and destitute elderly people will be given preference."

The request brought an overwhelming response—more than 220,000 applications arrived at the Amritapuri Ashram. Brahmacharis coordinated the newly established Housing

Office and worked day and night to classify the applicants in terms of urgency. Small teams travelled to communities, including remote rural and tribal areas, and construction began with the help of local devotees and paid labourers.

Since then, **more than 47,000 houses** have been built in **over 80 locations**, including impoverished villages, urban slums, and communities where people have lost their dwellings after floods, earthquakes, and tsunamis. In most cases, it is state governments that have provided the land, and the units commonly have two rooms, a veranda, and a separate bathroom. With an average of six people living in each house, over 250,000 people have moved into the safety and comfort of a place they call home.

In 1948, the United Nations stated in its Universal Declaration of Human Rights that everyone has a fundamental human right to housing. As a basis for stability and security, a home should be a sanctuary—a place to live in peace and dignity. For Amma, this means more than constructing houses for individuals. MAM works to build entire communities, complete with town halls, roads, electricity, wells, sewage systems, and clean drinking water.

From a community perspective, stable housing benefits all socio-economic strata by reducing inequality and building resilience against economic crises and natural disasters. A cross-cutting goal in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is an essential driver for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by directly alleviating poverty and leading to support in health, education, employment, and social inclusion.



# Housing Projects by Location

47,000+ homes in 80+ communities

## TAMIL NADU

Amritapuram (Rameshwaram, Ramanathapuram Dt.)

Panagudi (Rosmiyapuram, Valliyoor, Tirunelveli Dt.)

Amirpalayam (Sattur, Virudunagar Dt.)

Scavanchers Colony (Sivakasi, Virudunagar Dt.)

Aruppukkottai (Virudunagar Dt.)

Kollencode, Kaliyakavila, Marthandam, Kuzhitturai, Kulachel and Kanyakumari

Ettimadai, Nallampalayam and Madukkarai (all in Coimbatore Dt.)

Arikkambedu and Vellanur, Ambathur, Avadi and Maduravoyal (all in Tiruvallur Dt.)

Karikattukupam, Ernavur and Kovalam (all in Chennai)

Ramabelur, Pinjumedu, Satyamangalam (all in Erode Dt.)

Kumbakonam

Pudukuppam

Villages in Cuddalore, Kanyakumari and Nagappatinam Districts

## KERALA

More than 20,000 houses spread throughout the districts of Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Idukki, Kannur, Kasargode, Kollam, Kottayam, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Palakkad, Pathanamthitta, Trissur, Trivandrum, Kodungallur and Wayanad

Village colonies in the cities of Trivandrum (Airport Colony) and Kochi (Ambulungal)

Villages and individual houses in the districts of Ernakulam, Alappuzha and Kollam

## KARNATAKA

Hirisave (C.R. Pattana, Hassan Dt.)

Mulki (Mangalore Dt.)

Hosahalli (Mandya Dt.)

Madhuvanahalli (K.R. Taluk, Mysore Dt.)

Gandhi Nagar (Mysore Dt.)

Gokulam (Mysore Dt.)

Dongrampura and Dirampur (Raichur Dt.)

## ANDHRA PRADESH

Gudimalkapur (Medipatnam, Hyderabad Dt.)

Filim Nagar (Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad Dt.)

Amrita Nagar (Pradhatur, Cuddapah Dt.)

## PUDUCHERRY

Kairakal

Near Deepak Cables

Puducherry Taluk

## WEST BENGAL

Puljour Amaravathi and Bidhan Nagar (Durgapur Dt.)

Amritabati Housing Colony (Durgapur Dt.)

Panihatti (Kolkata Dt.)

## RAJASTHAN

Sanghaneer, Jaipur

## UTTAR PRADESH

Telibagh (Lucknow - New Brindavan Yojana Dt.)

Koraon (Mirzapur Dt.)

Pratap Nagar (Ghaziabad Dt.)

## MADHYA PRADESH

Piplani, near SOS Village (Bhopal Dt.)

## GUJARAT

Dagara, Mokhana and Modsar (Bhuj, Kutch Dt.)

## MAHARASHTRA

Ajanta Nagar (PCMC, Pune Dt.)

## UTTARAKHAND

Siror (Uttarkashi Dt.)

Bhatwari Sunar, Nag Jagai and Chunni (Rudraprayag Dt.)

## ODISHA

Baleshwar

Bhubaneswar

## ANDAMAN ISLAND

Bamboo Flat and Austinabad, South Andaman

## SRI LANKA

Thekkawatta (Kalutara District, Western Province)

Periyanilavanai (Ampara District, Eastern Province)





## LAYING THE FIRST BRICKS

Amma's elder sister, Kasturi, led the start of building homes for the poor when the first houses were built in the Amritapuri Ashram area. Construction expanded throughout Kerala, reaching all districts. In isolated, hilly areas, the teams even had to get out and push their vehicles to navigate narrow, slippery roads.

On May 17, 1998, the Prime Minister of India, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, handed over a symbolic key for the first 5,000 houses during the ceremonies to inaugurate Amrita Hospital, Kochi. By 2002, the initial target of 25,000 homes throughout India had been met.





*Amma's elder sister, Kasturi, led MAM's housebuilding project with its beginning in Kerala.*



*Swami Prēmāmṛtānanda Puri (left), Swami Sadāśivānanda Puri (right), and Swami Dhyanamritananda Puri (below), brahamacharis at the time, were among those who formed the Housing Office.*



















*Pushing vehicles through slippery roads in Idukki, a densely forested, mountainous region which is home to many tribal communities.*







*In 1998, members of Japan's International Volunteer University Student Association (IVUSA) began to visit on a yearly basis to take part in building homes.*







*The Honourable Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee hands over a symbolic key for the first 5000 homes at the inauguration of Amrita Hospital, Kochi in 1998.*







*At Amma's birthday celebrations in 1999, some happy recipients come to receive darshan. The first 5000 homes were complete.*







# REBUILDING LIVES AFTER DISASTER

The world is seeing an increase in natural disasters, and with global warming, their frequency and severity will continue to increase. Meanwhile, the destruction of a home leaves people at their most vulnerable. MAM's work begins with immediate aid in the form of medical treatment, food, and emergency shelter, and then transitions to long-term relief, including scholarships,

vocational training, and permanent shelter. As an element of these initiatives, Amrita Kuteeram has rebuilt communities in India and Sri Lanka to move them from ruin to recovery. Construction includes Gujarat after the 2001 earthquake, India and Sri Lanka after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, Karnataka after flash floods in 2009, and Uttarakhand after floods and landslides in 2013.





## Gujarat Earthquake, 2001

On January 26, 2001, Gujarat suffered a devastating earthquake in which 20,000 people lost their lives. Amma immediately dispatched a disaster relief team of 12 doctors, two ambulances, and 100 university student volunteers from Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham. As communities recovered, Amrita Kuteeram adopted three villages in the municipality of

Bhuj which was just 20 km away from the epicentre. MAM rebuilt 1200 homes from the ground up, as well as community centres, a church, a mosque, and a temple. This included strengthening the building structures in the event of future catastrophes, as well as the revival of community and social infrastructures.













*Laying the first stone and performing traditional rites for the beginning of house construction.*



















*Construction included schools and community centres in each village to provide an infrastructure for bringing the survivors together and educating their children. MAM also built a temple, a mosque, and a church.*

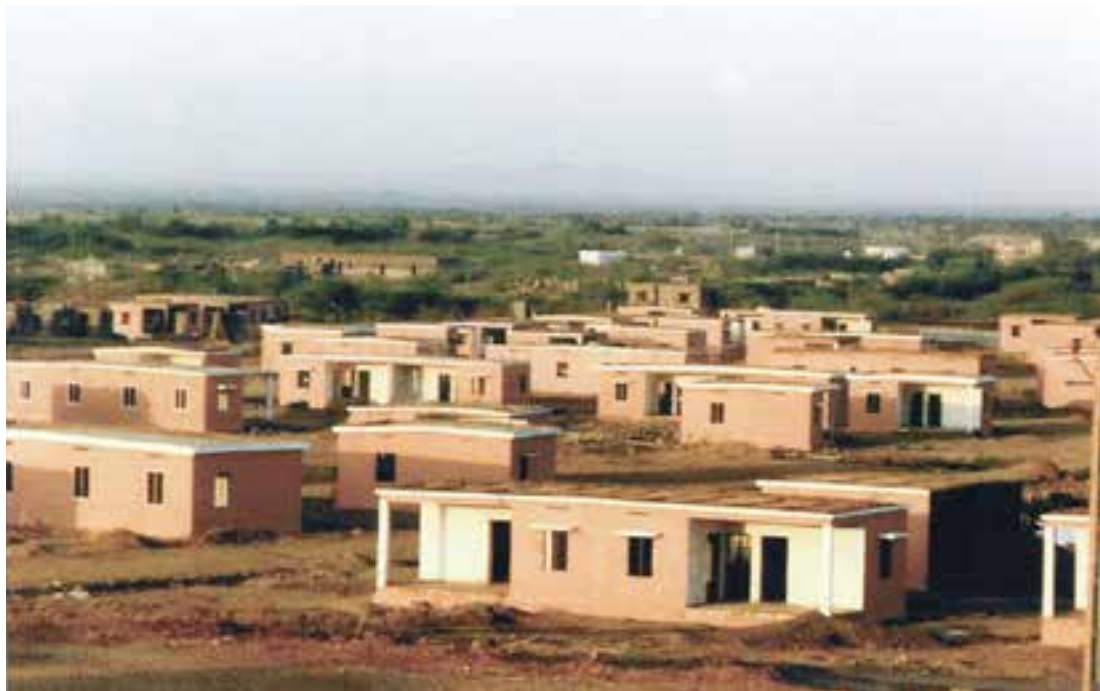




*In March 2002, Amma arrived in the newly completed villages. Thousands of people welcomed her with their traditional rites. Most were meeting Amma for the first time.*











## Indian Ocean Tsunami, 2004

The relief and rehabilitation work conducted by MAM in the wake of the Indian Ocean Tsunami stands today as one of the most multi-faceted, comprehensive, and sustained disaster relief projects ever undertaken by a nongovernmental organisation. What made the ₹200-crore (\$46 million) project unique was its holistic nature—every aspect of the tsunami survivors' lives was considered and improved. In terms of Amrita Kuteeram, once housing construction began, it went

on day and night without stop. On April 18, 2005, MAM became the first NGO in India to complete government-approved housing for those displaced, and every couple of months, MAM would turn over another batch of about 500 houses. By the end of the project, more than 6100 tsunami-resistant homes were built in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and the Andaman Islands, alongside another 160 in Sri Lanka.

























*On December 18, 2005, President APJ Abdul Kalam handed over keys to one batch of houses in Alappad, Kerala.*



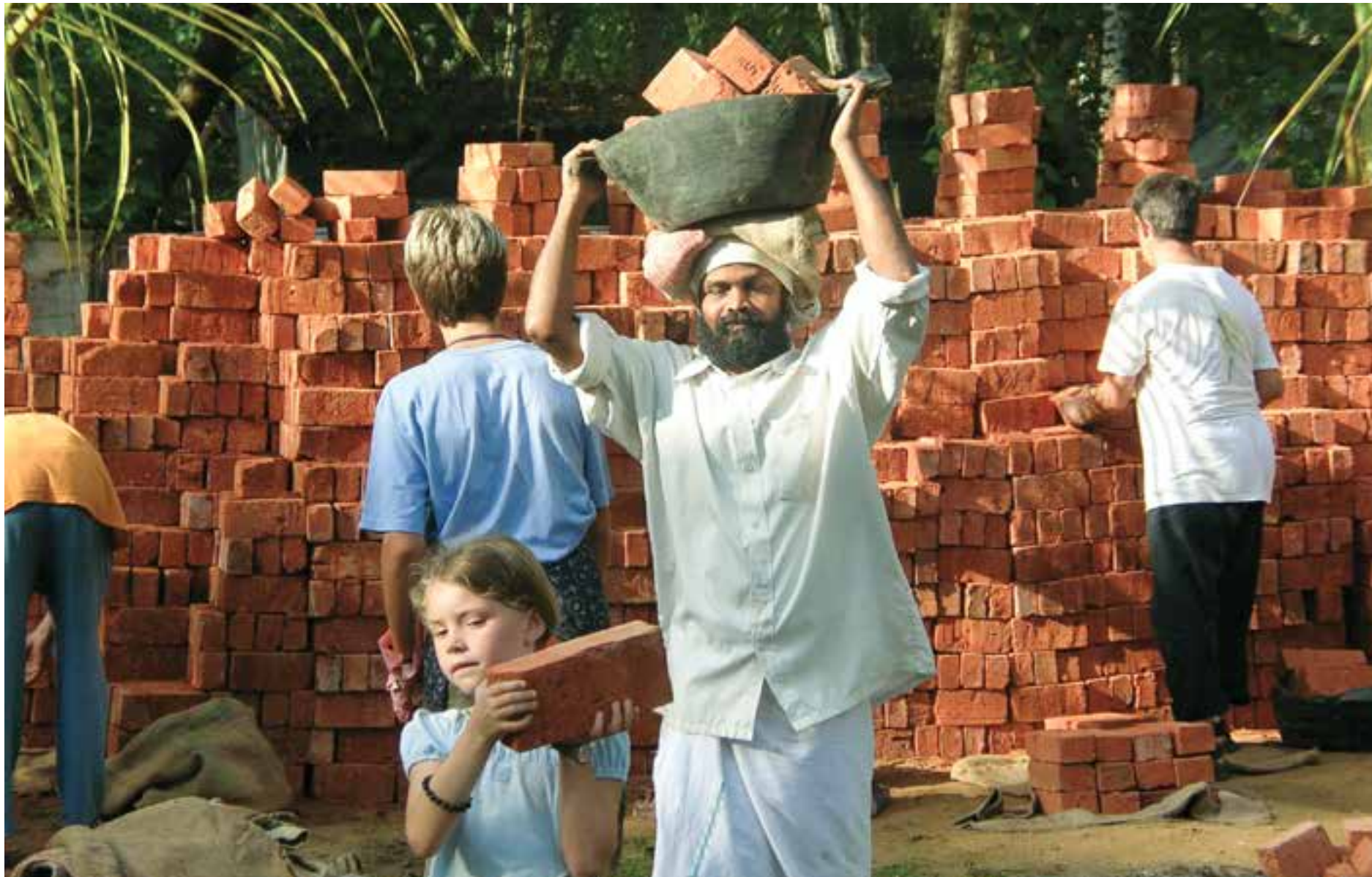


## Tamil Nadu

*President Kalam also visited a construction site in Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu. Born in that state, he expressed gratitude for the building of new homes for poor fishing families there. It was Amrita Kuteeram's largest rebuilding project after the tsunami.*

















## Andaman Islands



*The first 200 homes were built in Bamboo Flat and Austinabad, South Andaman.*



## Sri Lanka

*On February 23, 2007, Amma handed over the key for 100 houses to Sri Lanka's Honourable President, Sri Mahinda Rajapaksa. MAM constructed apartment buildings in Thekkawatta, Kalutara District and Periyaniavani, Ampara District.*







*Flats in Periyaniavanai, Sri Lanka.*







## Floods in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, 2009

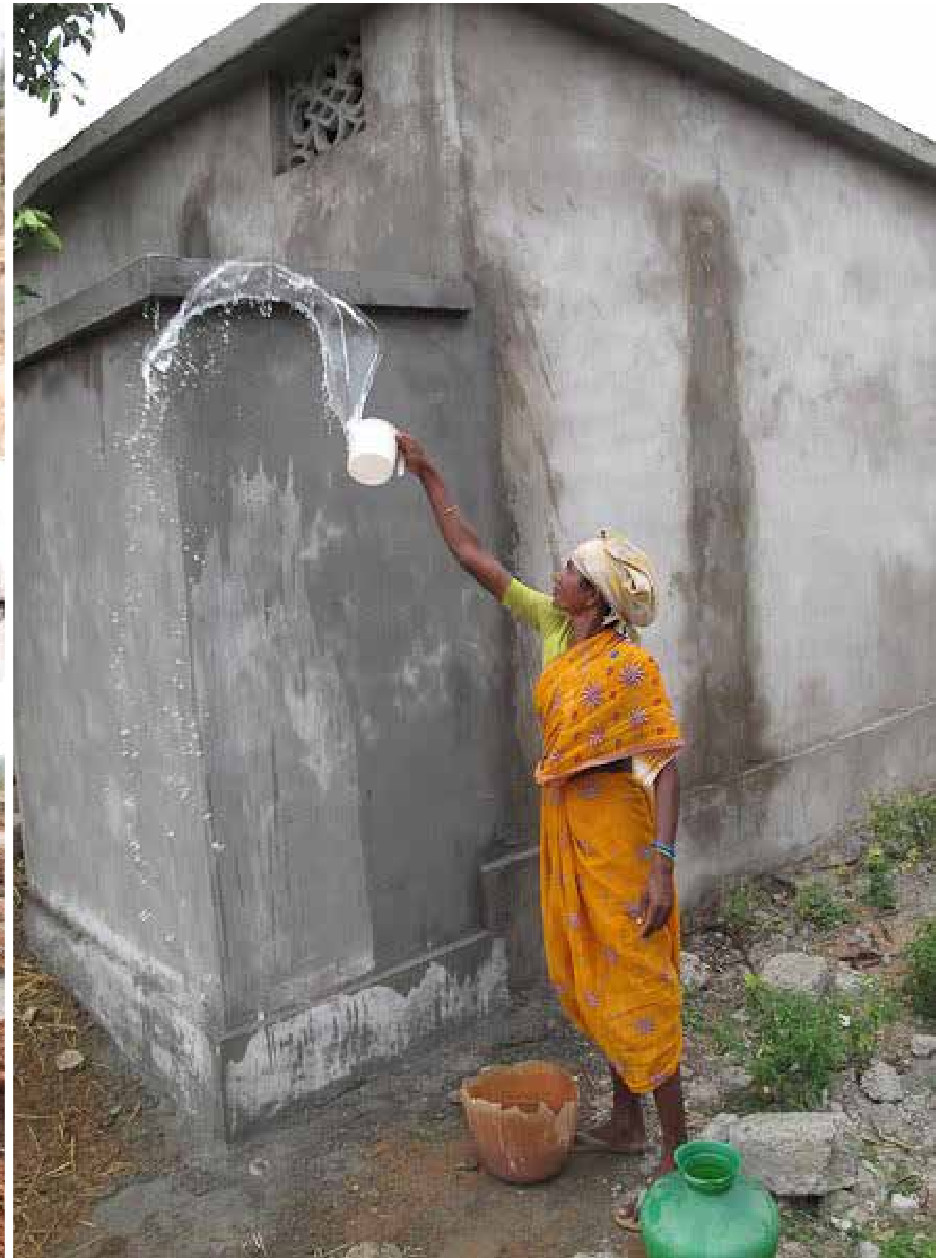
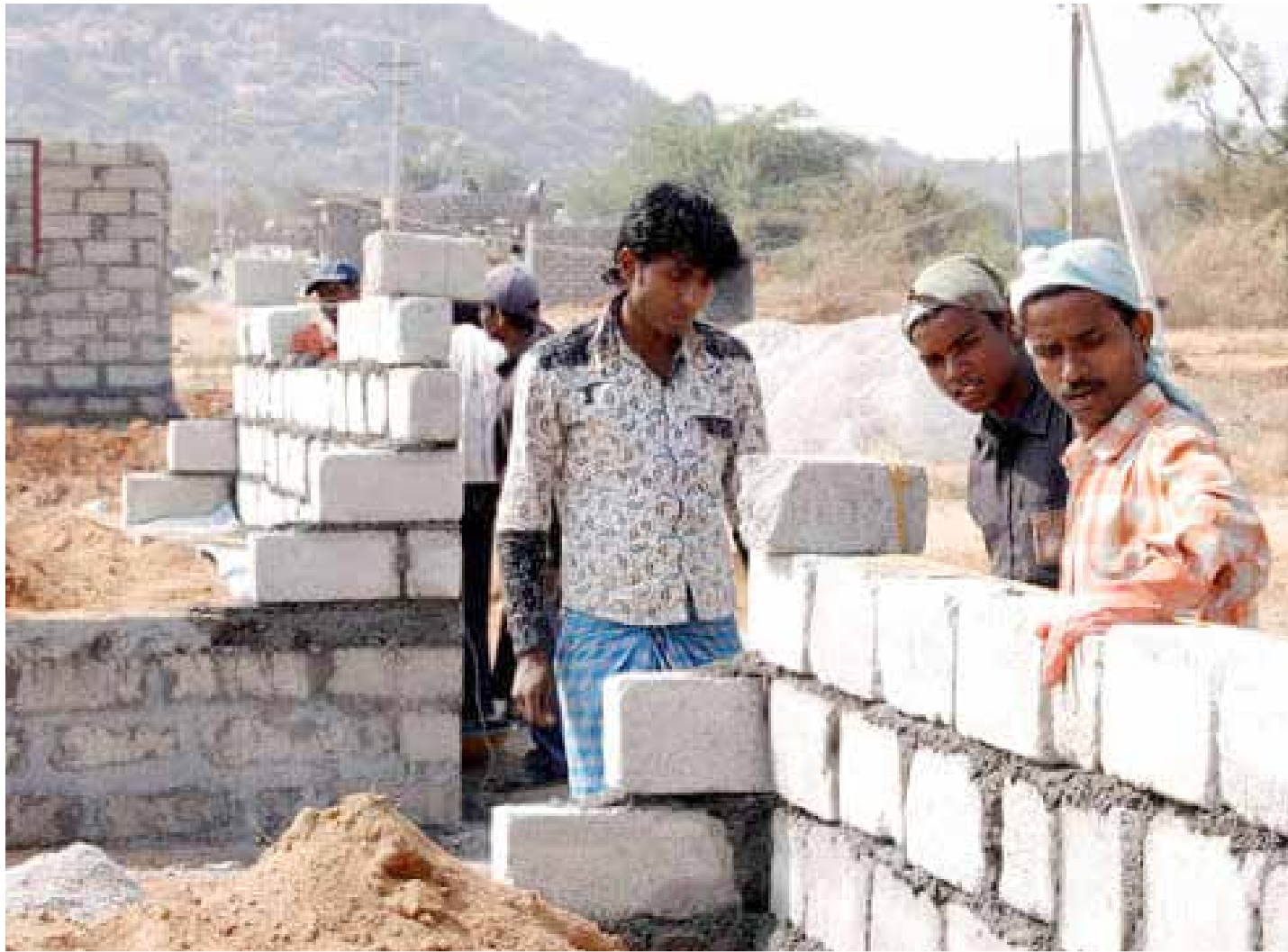
The unprecedented floods in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh destroyed millions of acres of crops and displaced 2.5 million people. MAM announced a ₹50-crore (\$10.7 million) relief package including medical care, food, supplies, and homes for the displaced. Amrita Kuteeram construction took place in the Raichur District of Karnataka where people from four villages

lived on an island in the River Krishna. The 1000 new homes were built on the mainland high enough to avoid future flooding, yet close enough for access to the river as a community water source. MAM also provided the survivors with interim shelter and livelihood by hiring them in the hundreds for housing construction.





























## Uttarakhand Floods and Landslides, 2013

Extremely heavy rains led to floods in the mountainous state of Uttarakhand and caused major landslides. More than 5000 people were killed and many homes were destroyed. MAM immediately held medical camps to treat the injured. Soon after, the Ashram launched a ₹50-crore (\$8 million) relief and rehabilitation project. Amrita Kuteeram

pledged construction of 250 houses in the districts of Rudraprayag and Uttarkashi, a challenging undertaking given the terrain. In phase two, MAM focused on restoring schools by demolishing damaged classroom buildings and rebuilding modern facilities complete with tables and benches. The children had been used to sitting on the floor.





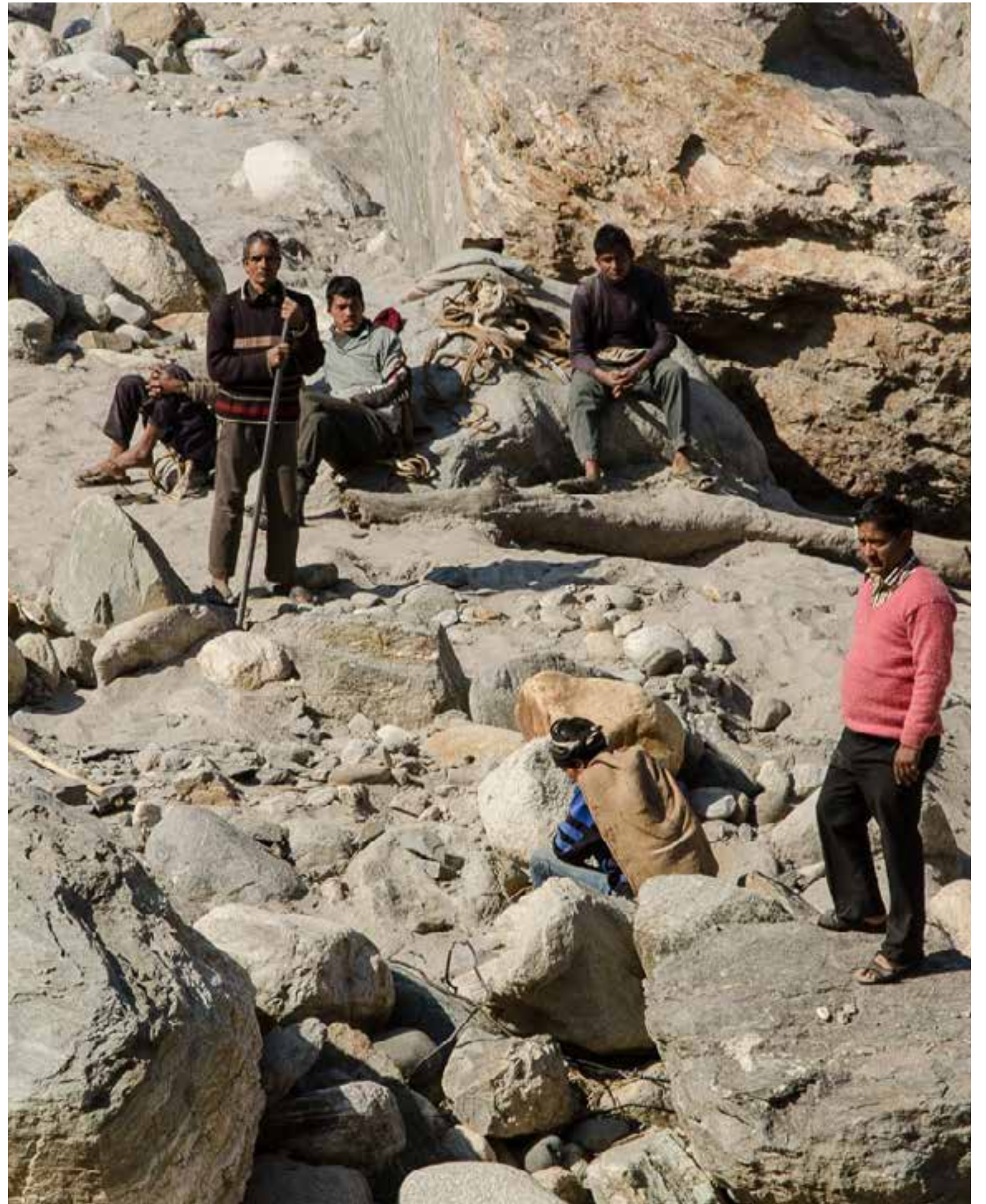








































## BIG CITY SLUMS TRANSFORMED

Amrita Kuteeram has constructed apartment blocks on top of what used to be sprawling shanty towns, including homes for 900 families in the outskirts of Hyderabad, Telangana in 2002 and 700 families in Pune, Maharashtra in 2004. The homes are planned with specifications for durable, hygienic living spaces that include proper plumbing, water supply, and electricity. Since the residents

do not need to pay rent, their income can be used to establish a better quality of life. With a home in which to study, children are able to pursue a formal education, and adults, especially women, have an environment in which to begin home-based businesses such as tailoring. After construction, MAM's support continues in the form of tutoring for children, adult education, and weekly medical checkups.





## Hyderabad, 2002

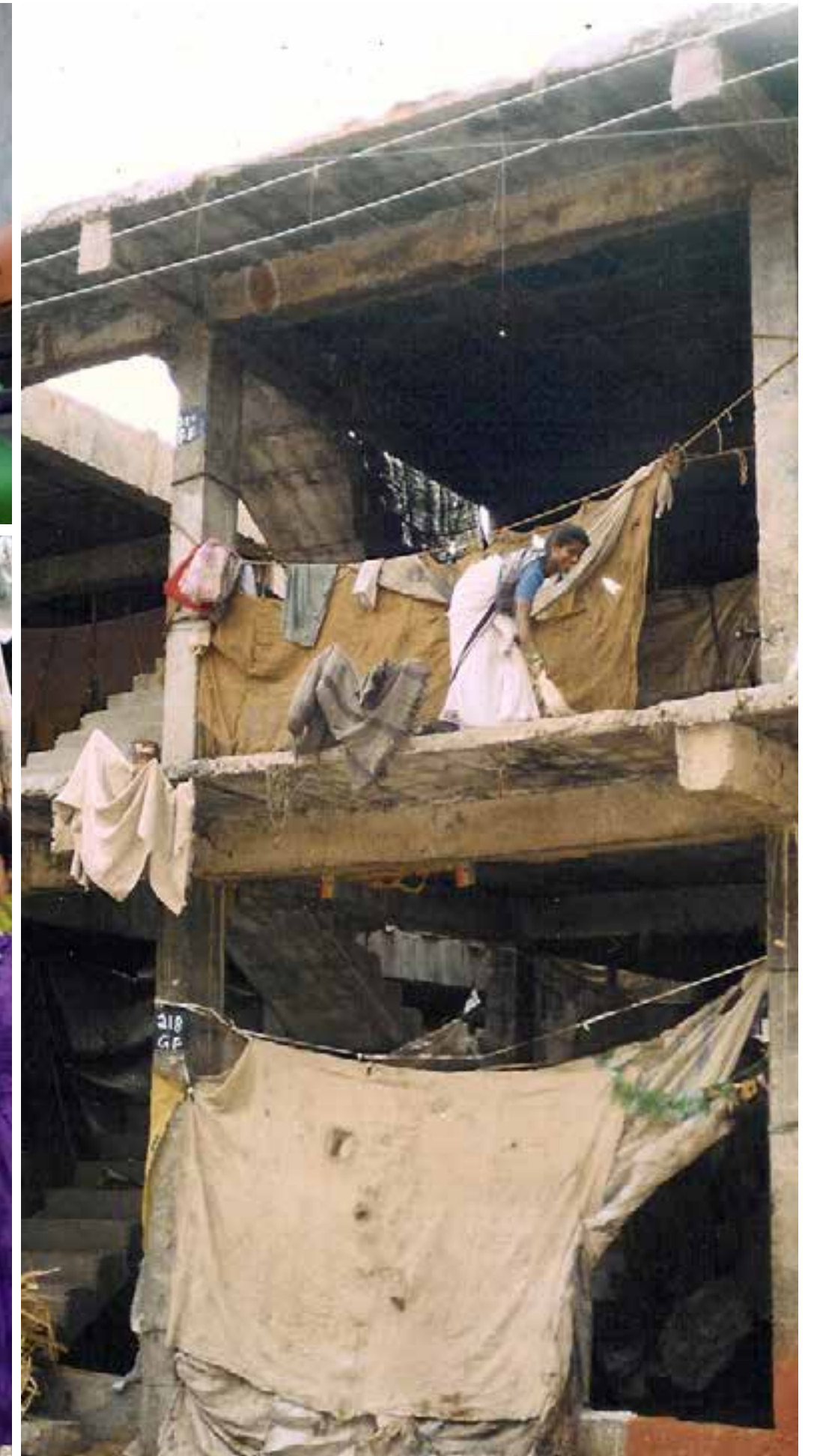
In 1999, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Sri Chandra Babu Naidu, came to Amma during her programme in Hyderabad and asked if MAM would help construct proper housing for families living in two of the city's major slums. Amma went there to visit the residents and promised to help. In the larger one, a fire had destroyed where the people previously lived, so they were in makeshift

huts they built themselves, mostly from plastic and cardboard. The second location was an abandoned construction site which did not even have water supply and electricity. By 2002, MAM completed 900 new homes in low-rise apartment blocks, two or three storeys high, complete with road access, water tanks, and electricity, as well as bore wells for water supply.

















*Brahmachari Śrīdāmṛta Chaitanya, Br Rajesh at the time, was part of the team in Hyderabad.*



































## Pune, 2004

The neighbourhood of Ajanta Nagar was a mass of brick walls and tin roofs that spread across eight acres in Pune. Amrita Kuteeram partnered with the Maharashtra state government to build 11 blocks of five-storey apartment buildings. Seven hundred families were able to move into homes with solid infrastructure, alongside MAM organising assistance for the transition into mainstream

society. Since then, meals are provided on a regular basis, as well as medical camps to support health and well-being. MAM enables children's education by giving the kids school supplies and holding tutoring sessions on Sundays. Students from surrounding slum areas are also welcome, as there is a high dropout rate before 8th standard, especially among girls.





















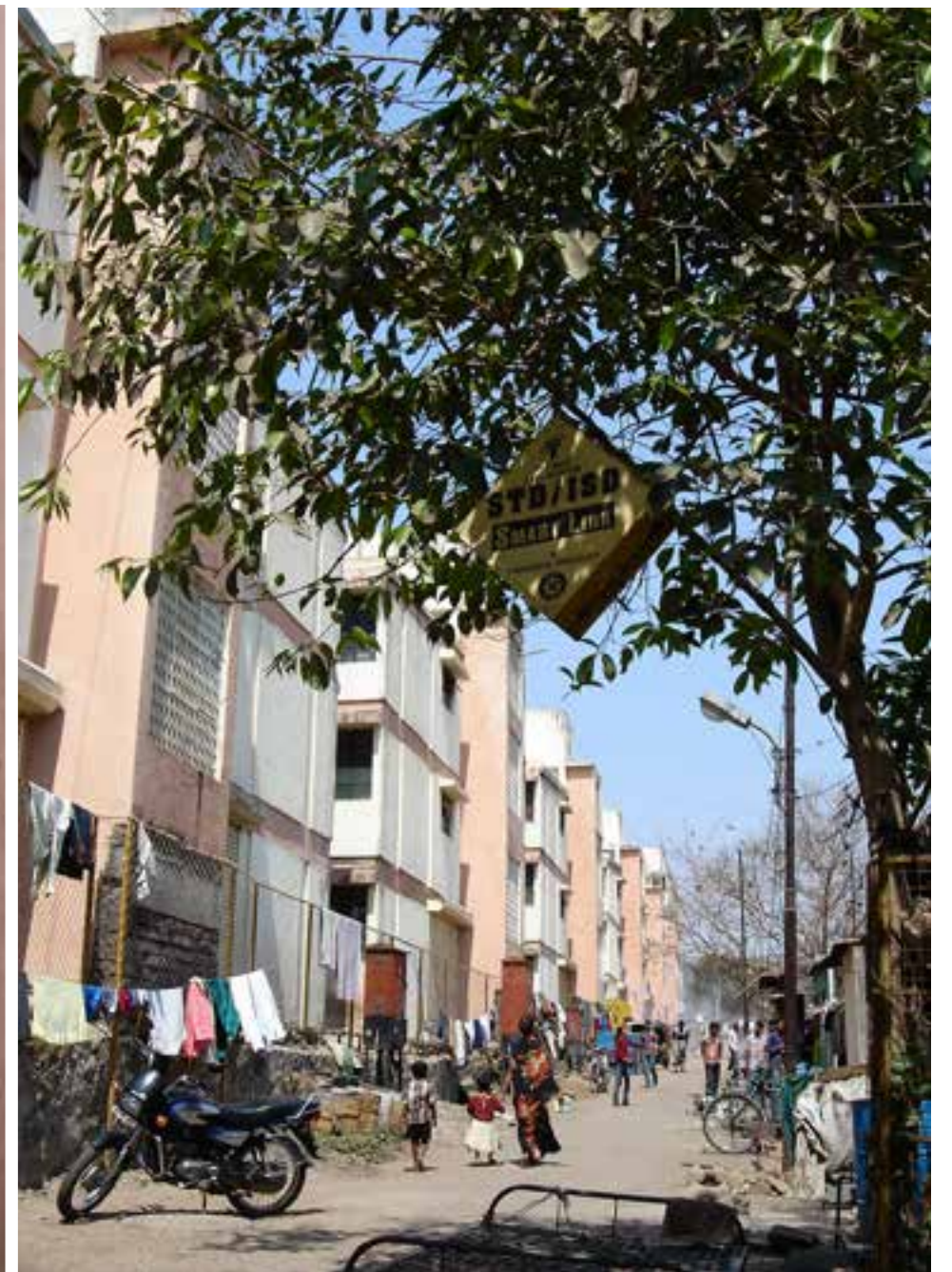




















## CREATING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Amrita Kuteeram has also built housing colonies for the homeless in city outskirts and villages in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Puducherry, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. This is more than a list of locations. These are communities of people who have been freed from the life-threatening conditions that were simply the norm of

their daily lives. It was how they grew up. It was all they knew. As a result, beyond providing shelter, this concrete action has supported the people to establish new individual and community identities that are rooted in their cultural traditions. From the larger perspective, it instills them with their worth as citizens who have the right to be recognised in society overall.



## Mysuru, Karnataka









## Hirisave, Karnataka





A community centre,  
dining hall, & skills training centre













## Vellanure, Tamil Nadu



*This location is focused on providing homes for people with disabilities, especially caring for the blind.*





## Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu









## Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh









## Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh















Don't be discouraged by your incapacity to dispel darkness from the world. Light your little candle and step forward.

- Sri Mata Amritananadamayi Devi







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UPDATES ON AMMA'S INITIATIVES

