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ACF's mason training program blends ACL's technical expertise, ACF's community mobilization skills and government funding to create a strong and professionally trained workforce for the construction industry. ACF has been working in district Dahod, Gujarat, for the past 3 years, reaching out to the tribal youth in the region. The program is supported by the Tribal Development of the Government of Gujarat under the *Van Bandhu Kalyan Yojana*, and trains youth from tribal and migrant communities for gainful employment. Its impact though, is felt far and wide. Here is one such inspiring story.

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As part of the trainings' practical component, trainees create community assets like sit-outs, drinking tanks for animals or compound walls for schools in villages. This process brings structural benefits for the village while providing valuable masonry practice for students. But ACF realized that there was scope to do more.

Following discussions and approvals from the Government, ACF began construction of low-cost housing for the poor. We were supported by the village panchayat in identifying families who had not received any help under the any government housing scheme.



Students of ACF's mason training program build community assets as part of the practical component.



Galiben worked as a daily wage labourer, surviving with bare necessities.



Trainees from ACF's Mason Training Program constructing Galiben's new home.

Panchayat members from Undar village strongly suggested the name of Galiben Gopalbhai. She was a widow with two young school-going children, one of them blind. Galiben worked as a daily-wage laborer, and with no support from her extended family, struggled to earn her livelihood. The family lived in a ramshackle house in the village, and had received no benefit under any government scheme.

“My husband and I used to work in the tile factory at Morbi, in Rajkot, when he unexpectedly fell ill. We spent our savings on treating him, but he died, leaving me with two small children. I was forced to mortgage our small bit of land to raise money for his last rites,” says Galiben. On the advice of a school teacher, her blind son was enrolled in a school in Dahod.

To make ends meet, she continued to spend a good part of the year as a labourer in Morbi. During the agriculture season, she would be in the fields, tilling the land. Despite her hard work, she was constantly under pressure by her in-laws to migrate and earn more for the family.

So imagine her astonishment when the ACF team turned up at her doorstep with a proposal. The team sought her permission to apply for a home under the government housing scheme. Gulliben realized that a *pucca* house would go a long way in making life secure for herself and her children. But she was afraid to hope...and dream. In her view, entangling with the bureaucracy could only mean trouble and money. She wondered how this experience could be any different. But she was in for a pleasant surprise.



Galiben's home, before ACF's intervention.

ACF got the required approvals under the housing scheme, while our mason trainees quickly got together to construct her home. A roof, a door, a toilet; strong solid walls, and lovely windows opening up to the sky.

On March 31, 2011, Galiben and her children moved into their new home. The District Collector of Dahod, Mr. J.M. Luni came for the function, and handed over the keys of the new home to Galiben.

Mr. Luni commended the way ACF's interventions were transforming lives. Standing on the threshold of her new home, Galiben remained enthralled. "I never ever dreamt that I would have my own house, complete with a toilet block. I'll work hard, and raise my children in this house", she remarked. She looked at the proud team and said, "I'll never forget. Thanks to ACF, I'm able to live in my own house with my children."

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Galiben's new home.