

# A Day in the Life of a Humanitarian Architect

**Eric Cesal** Architect, USA  
**Yasmeen Lari** Architect, Pakistan  
**Martyn Hook** Iredale Pedersen Hook  
**Jane Johnson** The Anganwadi Project  
**David O'Brien** The Bower Studio  
**Esther Charlesworth** Architects Without Frontiers (AWF)  
**Robert Watson** Watson Architecture + Design  
**Shaneen Fantin** People Oriented Design  
**Leeanne Marshall** Australia Red Cross and AWF  
**Nicole Mechkaroff** Architects for Peace  
**Fabian Prideaux** Humanitarian Benchmark Consulting



MoDDD

Master of Disaster, Design  
and Development

**HUMANITARIAN  
ARCHITECTURE** WEEK

**THURSDAY, 9 AUGUST**

**12:30–4pm**

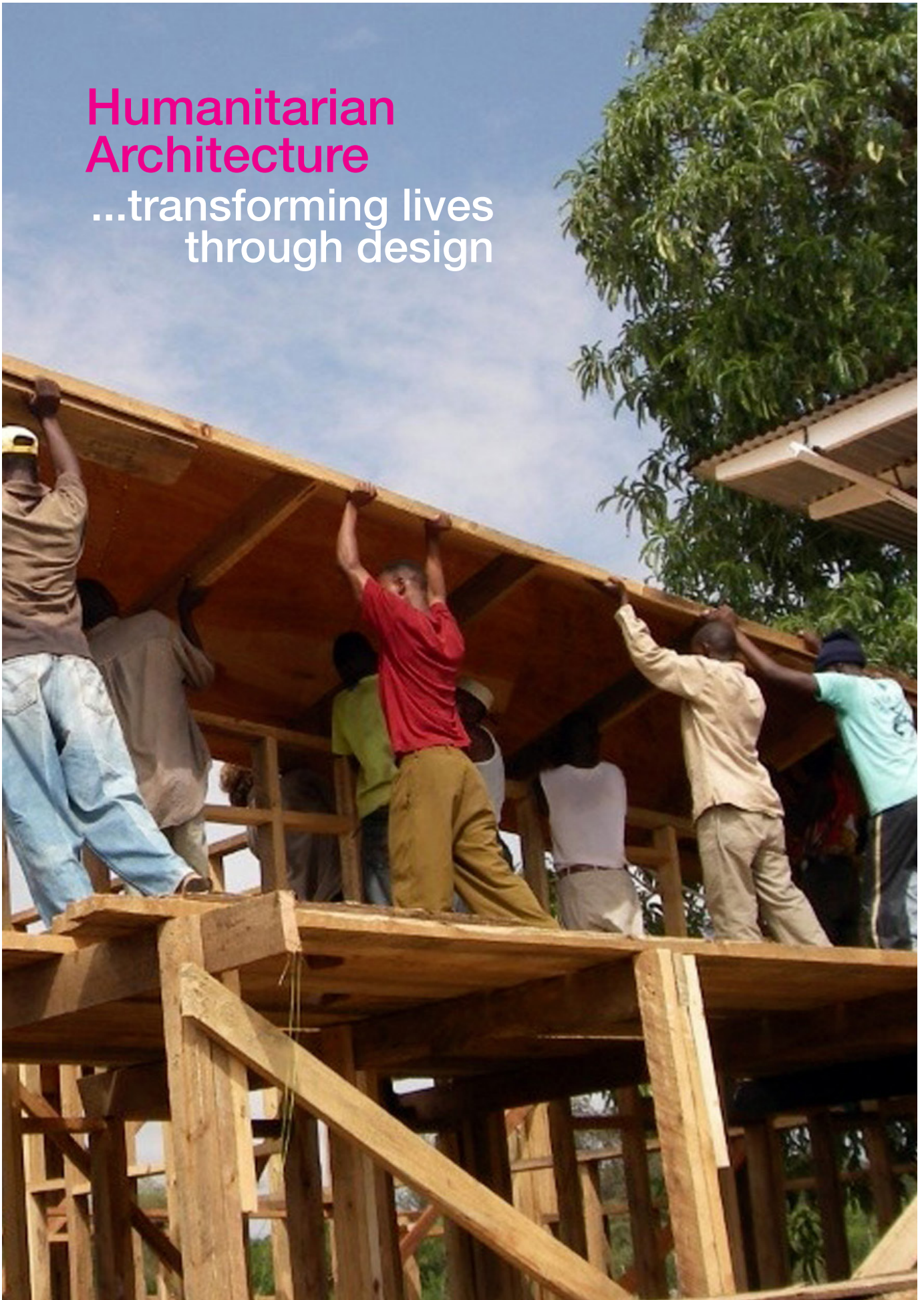
**RMIT Design Hub**

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# Humanitarian Architecture

...transforming lives  
through design



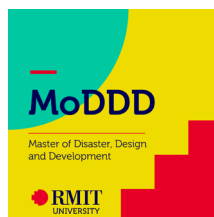
# A Day in the Life of a Humanitarian Architect

The fundamental purpose of architecture is to provide shelter, but in a world obsessed by novelty, development and acquisition this purpose is often subverted and obscured. Concerned with the welfare and wellbeing of individuals and communities, Humanitarian Architects utilise their problem-solving capacities to address complex shelter and infrastructure challenges in vulnerable communities, at both micro and macro scales.

The work of Humanitarian Architects takes many forms and their career progressions are diverse. A Day in the Life of the Humanitarian Architect explores and reveals the practice and projects of a wide group of individuals dedicated to improving human welfare through shelter. This episode begins with RMIT students joining Yaseem Lari (Pakistan) for a bamboo structure-building workshop, followed by a series of presentations and an exhibition of related work by invited humanitarian practitioners from Australia and around the world.

Esther Charlesworth  
EXHIBITION DIRECTOR

HUMANITARIAN  
ARCHITECTURE WEEK







## A Day in the Life of a Humanitarian Architect

Presenters:

Top row L-R:

Eric Cesa

Esther Charlesworth

Shaneen Fantin

Second row L-R:

Martyn Hook

Jane Johnson,

Yaseem Lari

Third row L-R:

Nicole Mechkaroff

David O'Brien

Bottom row L-R:

Fabian Prideaux

Rob Watson

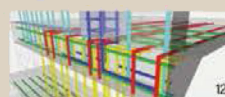




# Eric Cesal

DESIGNER, WRITER, POST-DISASTER EXPERT

‘Humanitarian architecture’ is a redundant term. All architecture must be humanitarian because humanism and empathy are the foundations of all arts. To believe that any architecture can eschew urgent social concerns or human crises is to acknowledge that it’s just fancy sculpture, writ large, for the benefit of the wealthy.



All images from Hati

- |                                        |                                                   |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Post-earthquake damage               | 6 New school building — screen detail             |
| 2 New classroom interior               | 7-8 Montruis School                               |
| 3 Corail Camp                          | 9 Construction training                           |
| 4 Community meeting                    | 10 HRC staff                                      |
| 5 Model used for construction training | 11 Santo community plan                           |
|                                        | 12-13 Construction education explanatory diagrams |

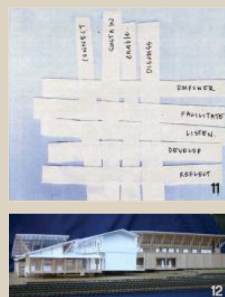
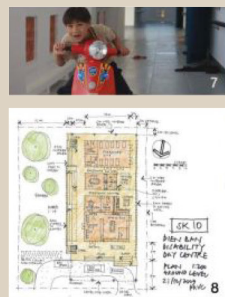
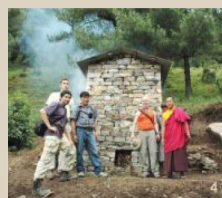




# Esther Charlesworth

ARCHITECTS WITHOUT FRONTIERS

The nascent field of humanitarian architecture connotes using design skills to assist vulnerable communities, particularly aft the often-simultaneous crises of war, economic and ecological disasters. The practice of Architects Without Frontiers (AWF) seeks to expand this nascent field through collaborating with Australian designers to design and build social infrastructure projects that can empower and slowly rebuild communities in need, across the Asia Pacific region.



Thanks to the literally hundreds of architects who have worked with use over the last two decades, including those who have contributed to projects shown here: Leeanne Marshall, Ryan Moroney, BURO, Hassell, Rob Stent, Lani Fender and Felix Holland.



- 1 School: Manny Village, Southern Uganda
- 2 School interior: Manny Village, Southern Uganda
- 3 Dien Ban Disability Day Centre, Hoi An Vietnam
- 4-5 Incinerator waste management project, Everest region, Nepal
- 6-7 Dien Ban Disability Day Centre, Hoi An Vietnam
- 8 Plan: Dien Ban Disability Day Centre, Hoi An Vietnam
- 9 Sketching: Maningrida Art Centre, Arnhem Land NT
- 10 Indlovu Community Centre, Cape Province South Africa
- 11 Woven text
- 12 Model: Kompian Hospital, Kompian PNG
- 13-15 Model: Maningrida Art Centre, Arnhem Land NT
- 16 RaMarama Community Info. Hub, Savusavu Fiji





# Shaneen Fantin

POD (PEOPLE ORIENTED DESIGN)

At POD we firmly believe that collaborative engagement, participation and education leads to empowerment. We are advocates of an inclusive design approach — an approach that puts people first. This forms a solid basis for achieving excellence in design and realising positive community outcomes. We relish problem solving and collaboration on projects to achieve ownership by the community and end users.

I am often asked “What is the answer to improving Aboriginal housing in Australia?” as though there is a single solution. From my experiences, there is no single answer. The housing needs of Aboriginal Australians are as diverse as anyone’s housing needs and a one-size-fits-all approach should not be applied.



Profile image top of page:  
Belinda Alwood and Shaneen Fantin

- |                                                                                                       |                                                                                         |                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Toomelah multi-purpose facility (photo: I Sivakumar)                                                | 5 B Atwood & S Fantin, Toomelah facility (photo: I Sivakumar)                           | 9 Vernacular architecture, Malaita Solomon Islands (photo: B Atwood)             |
| 2 Community engagement with senior men; Cultural & Education Centres Groote Eylandt (photo: A Renata) | 6 Master planning sketch, Cultural & Education Centres Groote Eylandt (photo: S Fantin) | 10 Consulting with men from Ubakumba, Groote Eylandt (photo: A Renata)           |
| 3 Master planning with primary school students Groote Eylandt (photo: A Renata)                       | 7 Master planning with local women, Pomputraaw Women's Shelter (photo: S Fantin)        | 11 Synapse SAIF Project, Cairns: Site plan (author B Atwood)                     |
| 4 Pedestrian bridge to tuberculosis clinic, Solomon Islands (author: B Atwood)                        | 8 Remote travel, Groote Eylandt (photo: A Renata)                                       | 12 Supported accommodation units, Synapse SAIF Project, Cairns (photo: M Marzik) |

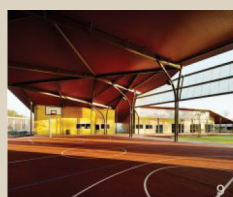
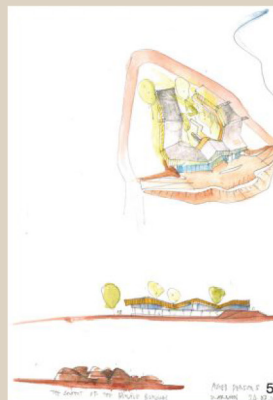
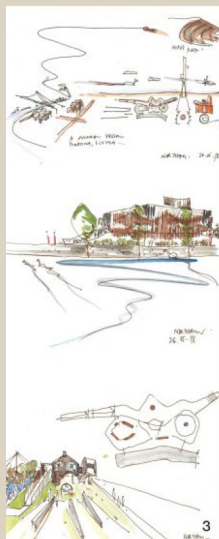
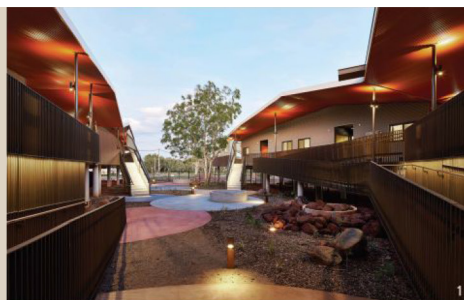




# Martyn Hook

IREDALE PDERSEN HOOK ARCHITECTS

One of the things we really enjoy about this work is collaborating with Aboriginal people to walk together and solve daily problems; to live positively together, acknowledging wrongs and trying to do some good.



- 1-2 Walumba Elders' Centre, Walumba WA (photo: P Bennetts)
- 4 Northern Aboriginal Environment centre, Northern WA
- 5 Sketches for Walumba Elders' Centre, Northern WA

- 6-7 Kununurra Courthouse, Kununurra WA (in association with TAG Architects)
- 8-9 West Kimberley Regional Prison WA (in association with TAG Architects)
- 10 Yagan Square, Perth WA (in association with Lyons Architects)

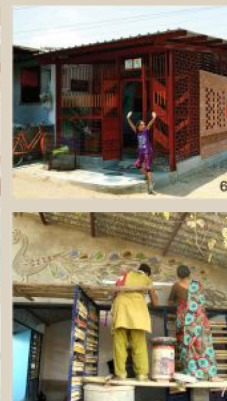
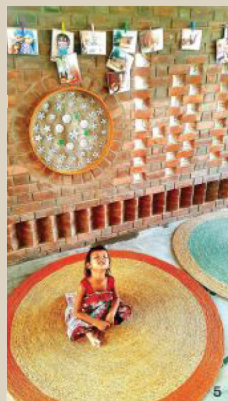
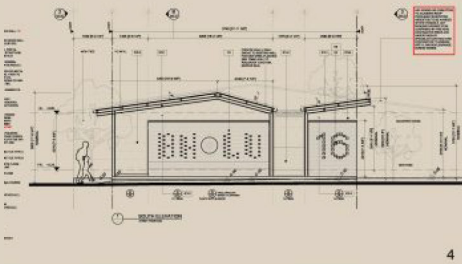




# Jane Johnson

THE ANGANWADI PROJECT (TAP)

The Oxford dictionary defines a humanitarian as 'a person who seeks to promote human welfare'. The term 'humanitarian architect' is therefore somewhat of a tautology to me. If architects aren't seeking to 'promote human welfare' then what on earth are we doing? My role is to recruit and mentor Australian architects who live in India for up to six months designing, documenting and overseeing the construction of pre-schools in the slums of Ahmedabad in India. This is a humbling and incredibly rewarding experience for me and has helped me find my professional *raison d'être*.



- 1 Bholu 14: Entry courtyard showing bamboo building on the right and gabion courtyard wall to the left
- 2 Bholu 16: Teacher and children in front of finished anganwadi
- 3 Bholu 14: Inauguration day. TAP volunteers and local building team in front of the new anganwadi
- 4 Bholu 16: Construction drawing
- 5 Bholu 16: Interior, finished anganwadi

- 6 Bholu 16: Front of finished anganwadi
- 7 Bholu 11: Decorative frieze being handcrafted by local women
- 8 Bholu 13: TAP volunteer, Jo Waterhouse working on design model on site
- 9 Bholu 11: Community members with TAP volunteers, Caroline Kite and Ciara Tapia
- 10 Bholu 11: Model made by TAP volunteer to illustrate the design to the local community

- 11 Bholu 16: TAP volunteers, Harshil Parekh, Christina Fogale & Leanne Cosio present their design proposal to the anganwadi teacher and local community

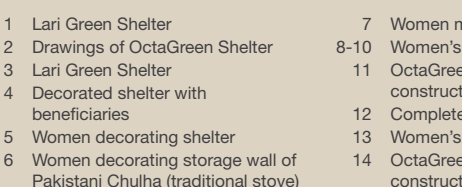
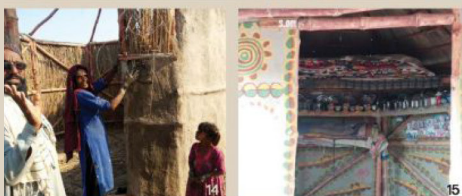
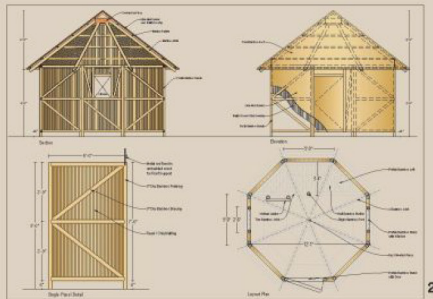




# Yasmeen Lari

HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN

Having been engaged in the humanitarian sector for over a decade, it is my belief architects are best equipped to provide innovative solutions for those at the bottom of the pyramid. In order to overcome deficits and lacunae in their lives it is clear post-disaster communities require more, not less design. And opting for zero-low carbon footprint, zero-low cost and zero waste will go a long way in saving the planet and transforming the lives of the destitute around the world.



- |                                                                         |                                         |                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Lari Green Shelter                                                    | 7 Women making terracotta products      | 15 OctGreen shelter, interior details                                                         |
| 2 Drawings of OctaGreen Shelter                                         | 8-10 Women's centres                    | 16 A beneficiary cooking food at her colourful decorated Pakistani Chulha (traditional stove) |
| 3 Lari Green Shelter                                                    | 11 OctaGreen shelter under construction |                                                                                               |
| 4 Decorated shelter with beneficiaries                                  | 12 Completed OctaGreen shelter          |                                                                                               |
| 5 Women decorating shelter                                              | 13 Women's shelter                      |                                                                                               |
| 6 Women decorating storage wall of Pakistani Chulha (traditional stove) | 14 OctaGreen shelter under construction |                                                                                               |

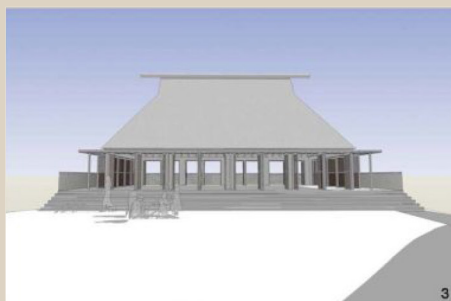
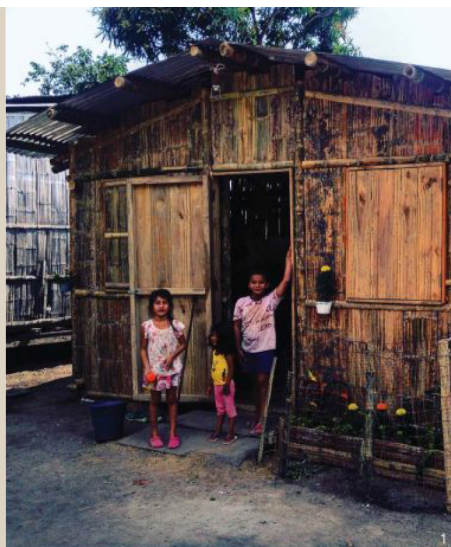




# Leeanne Marshall

THE AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS

What architects can bring to post-disaster situations is not pre-determined designs and standard solutions; rather, a strategic design thinking approach that can help to make sense of complex needs and specific contextual challenges of affected place, and that can support people in their own individual self-recovery and reconstruction activities.



- 1 Traditional shelters constructed in Ecuador by the Shelter Cluster, following 2015 earthquake
- 2-3 Cakaudrove Women's Resource Centre, Savusavu Fiji
- 4-6 Fiji, the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016
- 7 Interior view of Great Hall, Cakaudrove Women's Resource Centre, Savusavu Fiji
- 8-9 Community consultation for safer building activities in Timor Leste, 2015
- 10-11 Branch level emergency shelter kit trainings with Myanmar Red Cross staff and volunteers, 2015
- 12 Cakaudrove Women's Resource Centre, Savusavu Fiji
- 13 Community consultation, Timor Leste
- 14 Distribution of emergency shelter tool kits, Fiji

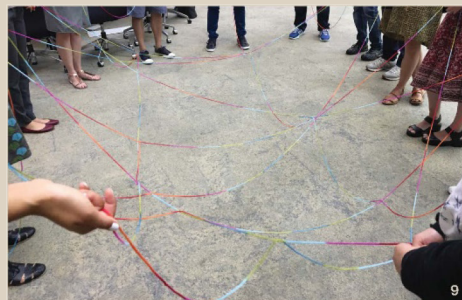




# Nicole Mechkaroff

ARCHITECTS FOR PEACE

To work towards spatial justice, it is important to create a space for the public to freely discuss the political nature of the city and our own involvement in what can be done to prevent conflict and war. Built environments professionals and citizens are builders of cities, heritage and history and, through cooperative efforts, protect urban and natural environments. The city's social realities have spatial and social boundaries that allow and prevent different forms of citizenship, collaboration and friendship at the local and international levels. Everyone has a part to play in exercising their social responsibilities to support and enrich peaceful efforts.



- 1 A public installation exploring architectural metaphors in the tent-activism and civil disobedience, and referencing the Aboriginal Tent Embassy's structure to reclaim the freedom to dwell nomadically across Australia"
- 2 "Waiting for Asylum" by Camille Gharbi. Photographic collection of an Afghan community in Paris (image: C Gharbi)
- 3-5 Free group tour, Carlton Public Housing
- 6 In solidarity with those seeking asylum, the team gathers outside State Library of Vic. on World Refugee Day, 2017
- 7 Architects for Peace involved in a demonstration against Australia's involvement in the war on Iraq
- 8 A partnership between Architects for Peace and Friends of Public Housing in 2015 — public workshops to highlight threats to public housing in Victoria
- 9 Volunteers demonstrating the delicate art of working together and becoming a community
- 10 Architects for Peace sees a new generation of volunteers emerging at the launch of the Strategic Plan
- 11 A public consultation session held in 2016, reviewing Architects for Peace's organisational purpose and growth

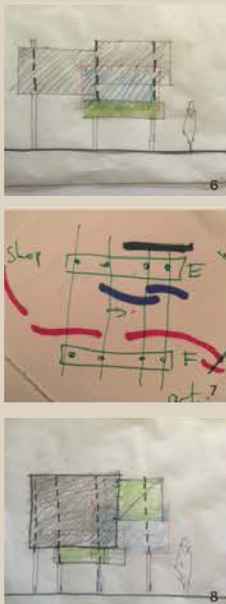




# David O'Brien

BOWER STUDIO

An architectural response to disaster offers a unique perspective to repair both the physical environment and the well-being of communities. Understanding this link is more difficult than it looks as each community has its own challenges and aspirations. Developing and maintaining a truly collaborative process is central to producing the built outcomes that justify our expertise. And remember: under promise and over deliver.



1-9 Wave Hill Walk-off pavilions, Kalkaringi, NT 2016  
10-11 Neonatal Clinic, Suanum PNG  
12-14 Composting toilets, Sipaia PNG

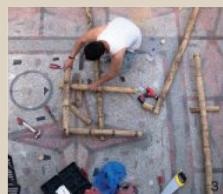
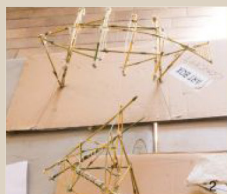




# Fabian Prideaux

HUMANITARIAN BENCHMARK CONSULTING (HBC)

Humanitarian crises are inherently complex situations. As humanitarian responders, our actions can have drastic and long lasting implications. It is our responsibility to ensure that response efforts are appropriate for the context, and adequately address the needs of the most vulnerable. Actions should always be guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. This requires recognition of our own educational bias, privilege, prejudice and cultural/religious beliefs, and constant re-evaluation of our actions. Importantly, we must support affected communities in defining their own pathways to recovery, rather than imposing external 'solutions'.



- 1,2 Humanitarian Bamboo Workshop:
- 8,5 Student prototypes for bamboo shelter using standard issue Red Cross tools and tarpaulins
- 3 Constructing a detail model for bamboo technical training in Gorkha, Nepal
- 4 Bamboo prototype, Woodford Festival, 2016
- 6 Welcome ceremony: Horau, Oro, PNG

- 7 Indonesian Red Cross Shelter Guidelines Review 2017/2018
- 8 Humanitarian Bamboo Community Workshop with Catholic Relief Services, Gorkha Nepal, 2018
- 9 Housing technical assessment: Working with women & youth groups, PNG
- 10 Post-earthquake rural damage assessment, Panchkal, 2015

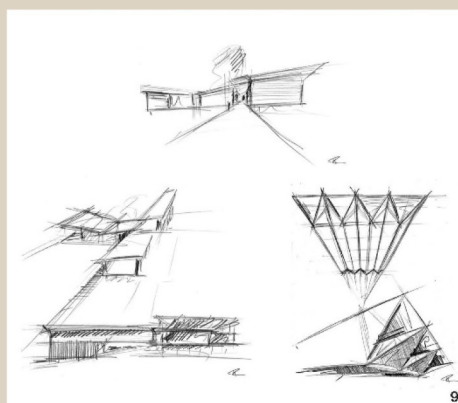
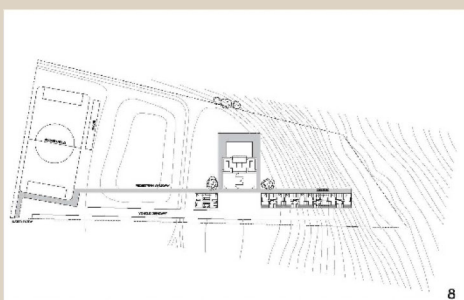
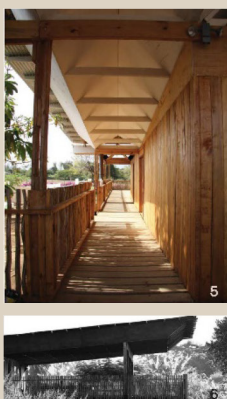
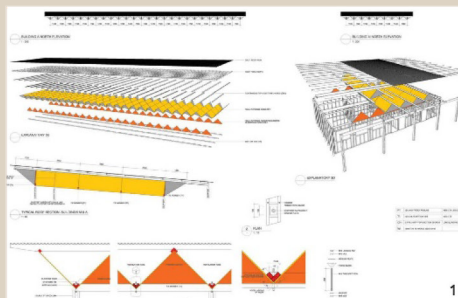
- 11,13 Shelter assessment reports, PNG
- 12 Planning diagram, Labu Tale, PNG
- 14 Main Aid Post building, Labu Tale, PNG
- 15 Entrance to maternity building, Labu Tale, PNG
- 16 Main Aid Post building, Labu Tale, PNG



# Rob Watson

WATSON ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN

From the benefit of hindsight and experience, I recommend any architect — no matter what stage of their profession — get involved in a humanitarian project. Not only will it most likely take them out of their comfort zone; professionally it will make them re-assess the skills they thought they had for problem solving; it will test their communication skills both graphically and verbally; sharpen their abilities to focus on the task at hand and not get distracted by the more trivial aspects of architecture that we're all guilty of pursuing from time to time.



All photographs depict Kesho Children's Village, Tanzania

- |                                                 |                         |                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Roof design and details                       | 5 Classroom access      | 10 Artificial aquifer constructed from truck tyres |
| 2 Constructing the roof                         | 6 Outdoor teaching area | 11 Stair to accommodation wing                     |
| 3 Eastern aspect                                | 7 Northern aspect       | 12 Roof over outdoor teaching area                 |
| 4 Kesho Leo means 'tomorrow today' in kiswahili | 8 Site plan             | 13 Negotiating purchase of building materials      |
|                                                 | 9 Design structures     | 14 Part of the Kesho Leo community                 |



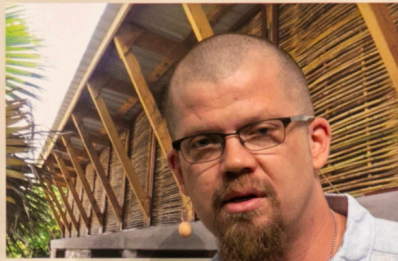
“

Disaster architecture is ... talking and being willing to listen. It's asking ten questions for every statement you make. ”

— Eric Cesal. *The Architecture of Relief: How design builds hope in the wake of disaster.* SMH, Ray Edgar, 3 Aug 2018

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