

Story by Architecture for Humanity

Architecture



Design Like You Give a Damn

The greatest humanitarian challenge we face today is providing shelter. Currently one in seven people lives in a slum or refugee camp, and more than three billion people—nearly half the world's population—do not have access to clean water or adequate sanitation. The physical design of our homes, neighborhoods, and communities shapes every aspect of our lives. Yet all too often architects are desperately needed in the places where they are least affordable.

For decades architects have been called upon to provide solutions to the world's shelter crisis. However, as designers embraced the idealism of the machine age, the increasingly technology-driven, often utopian ideas they proposed carried little resonance for aid workers and others wrestling with the day-to-day realities of providing a roof, clean water, and sanitation to families in need. Over time, the world of relief and development

became divorced from the world of architecture and design. What architects considered a design challenge, aid workers considered an issue of planning and policy.

This disconnect has led to a crisis of faith: What role should design play in providing basic shelter? How can architects best address the needs of the displaced and disenfranchised? And, at the heart of these questions: Should design be considered a luxury or a necessity? This issue plagues not just architects but also planners, policy makers, and aid organizations struggling to balance the logistics of providing shelter with the human longing for a place to call home.

Since 2000, Architecture for Humanity has been working to create opportunities for designers to get involved and to bring their services to those in need. The projects in our new book, *Design Like You Give a Damn*, represent just a sampling of their efforts. ▶

Architecture for Humanity's new book features projects of designers around the world, like Dubai's Francis Kane's Gando Primary School (above), who are working to show that it is not just how we build but what we build that truly matters.

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