



A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

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Better Shelter is a humanitarian innovation project and social enterprise based in Sweden. The project team designs and develops modular temporary shelters for persons displaced by armed conflicts and natural disasters, with the aim of improving their lives by providing them with a safer and more dignified home away from home. The Better Shelter is designed to enable the activities of basic living and offer elementary privacy and security.



Better Shelter began in 2010 as a small-scale project driven by the belief that sustainable design can make a difference to humanitarian relief. Forging partnerships with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the IKEA Foundation, Better Shelter began working with designers, engineers,

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companies, and institutions to create its first prototypes.



In 2015, UNHCR signed a frame agreement for 30,000 shelters. Any profit generated from the project is reinvested within the company or distributed to its philanthropic owner, the Housing for All

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Foundation, established by the IKEA Foundation.



The Better Shelter resembles a very simple house. Its robust steel frame is clad with vertical, semi-hard walls, four windows, a high ceiling, and a door that can be locked. A solar-powered lamp provides light, and includes a USB port for charging electronic devices. The shelter is designed to last for three years, and is suitable for situations where local materials or construction workers are in short supply, with the additional value of preventing deforestation.

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Today, Better Shelters are being evaluated as temporary accommodations, registration centers, medical aid clinics, and food distribution centers. To date, shelters have been shipped to refugee camps, transit sites, and emergency response programs in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. This past year has allowed to evaluate the shelters' performance in different contexts and climates, and has informed the development of improved future models.

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Working side by side with partners around the world provides the valuable opportunity to monitor quality, to understand partners' shelter requirements, and to both gather and offer feedback on the assembling and use of the shelters. Most importantly, it makes it possible to keep developing the design based on the needs of the beneficiaries— men, women, and children who have been forced to leave everything behind as they fled armed conflicts, persecution, or natural disasters, carrying with them painful memories and feelings of uncertainty about the future.

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The simple fact of having a home, a right so fundamental that most of us take it for granted, can dramatically improve the physical and psychological situation of these displaced persons, providing them with a renewed sense of peace, identity, and dignity.

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