



Structure aims to increase resilience among displaced communities by providing emergency structures, which can be upgraded with local materials | Photo source [Better Shelter](#)

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EMERGENCY SHELTER TRANSFORMS INTO A PERMANENT HOME

 NONPROFIT & SOCIAL CAUSE

A non-profit has launched a flat-pack emergency shelter that can be easily turned into a home

Spotted: Emergency shelters are usually designed to house people only in the immediate aftermath of an emergency. Once the disaster has passed and victims can go home, the tents and prefab units are either shipped elsewhere or disposed of. Now, one NGO, Better Shelter, has asked itself: “What if the lack of shelter was the emergency?” Their answer is Structure – a shelter built to last, which can be adapted for use as a permanent residence.

The Structure shelter has a simple frame that can be covered with a tarp, for use as emergency housing during disaster recovery. However, as the frame is also very durable, the idea is that once the immediate emergency is over, the frame can be covered with materials available locally and converted into more permanent accommodation.

When upgraded with local materials, such as bamboo, sorghum or adobe, the structure can be expected to last as long as 10 years. It also allows residents to quickly rebuild themselves, using local techniques and materials, rather than relying on international aid to get started. By using materials available locally, Structure also supports the local purchase of those materials and creates jobs, rather than shipping in a fully-finished home supplied by donors.

Johan Karlsson, managing director of Better Shelter, points out the value in using local supply chains for recovery, [saying](#) “You can stimulate the local economy. And the investment that you make in a humanitarian response to save lives also can link into early recovery.” At just €300 per shelter, Structure is also much less costly than other options.

With disruption from climate change and environmental disasters on the increase, innovators are working harder than ever to come up with housing solutions for the displaced. Some of the innovations recently covered by Springwise include an emergency shelter that uses balloons to self-inflate and [sustainable shelters](#) made from recycled plastics.

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Takeaway:

Better Shelter is supported by the Ikea Foundation, Aga Khan Agency for Habitat and SEEDs. After deploying around 50 units in pilot projects, the non-profit and its partners are now working on scaling up Structure, as well as testing and improving the design. The team also hopes to help share local construction techniques between regions. Structure is just one example of the kind of sustainable solution that will need to be more prevalent, as the world faces a constant increase in climate-related disasters. According to a recent UN report, the number of climate-related disasters has nearly doubled since 2020, and this could increase again by 2030.