

Better  
Shelter  
.org

# Year in review 2018





## Message from our Managing Director

2018 was yet another year when the humanitarian sector managed to deliver more aid to more people than ever before. Humanitarian organisations across the world have continued to save lives, provide protection and reduce suffering – and all while working with comparably less resources. This is a remarkable achievement.

We believe that effective and sensible shelter response requires both locally- and globally-made shelter solutions. We started our partnership with the UN Refugee Agency on the basis that when crisis strikes, local solutions are often more cost effective, better at contributing to the local economy and more likely to fit local culture and customs. Yet, time and again lack of local materials, deforestation and price shocks in local markets are obstacles to providing displaced people the shelter they need. This is exactly the reason we developed the Better Shelter. We provide modular shelters that benefit from rational production and global supply chains, but which can be adapted locally to meet end user needs.

Working with UNHCR and our partners we have provided more than 30,000 shelters in more than 30 countries. We have also teamed up with local NGOs to set up schools, clinics and other communal infrastructure, benefiting hundreds of thousands of people in need. While our solution is standardised, its application and above all, its users are unique – and this is reflected in the creativity with which our shelter's modularity has been used across the globe.

We are proud to be able to contribute to the great accomplishments of our partners. Thank you for your support in 2018, and we look forward to the years ahead. We want to extend a special thanks to UNHCR for breaking new ground and realising bold ideas through this partnership, and we hope our collaboration will pave the way for other similar projects that will benefit refugees and other displaced people in their time of greatest need.

Thank you!



**Johan Karlsson**  
Managing Director,  
Better Shelter



# Key 2018 achievements



- **14,900 shelters** provided in **22 countries**
- **4** new partners
- Release of the upgraded **Better Shelter 1.2**
- Became **UN Global Compact** member



## Highlights

# HAEFA delivers 1,800 health consultations per week in Better Shelter clinics

**Partner:** Health and Education for All (HAEFA) [www.haefa.org](http://www.haefa.org)

**Location:** Kutupalong and Balukali, Chittagong, Bangladesh

**Number of units:** 5

**Application:** Medical camp

**Project output:** 1,800 consultations per week

A series of violent crackdowns on the Muslim minority group Rohingya in the Rakhine state in Myanmar in 2017 led hundreds of thousands to flee to neighbouring countries, of which a majority fled to Bangladesh to seek protection from death, extreme violence and oppression. As of December 2018, more than 900,000 people live in difficult conditions with little food, shelter and cooking fuel in the Cox's Bazar area. Many suffer from health problems including respiratory diseases, skin diseases, and diarrhoea as a result of crowded and unhygienic conditions and drinking unsafe water. In a situation like this where food and shelter take priorities, chronic health conditions known as 'silent killers' such as hypertension (high blood pressure), diabetes (impaired blood glucose levels), malnutrition including anaemia, high-risk pregnancy, and highly infectious chronic disease like Tuberculosis are often neglected.

Health and Education for All (HAEFA), a US-based 501c3 not-for-profit organization ([www.haefa.org](http://www.haefa.org)), which provides healthcare services in Bangladesh since 2012, runs two primary healthcare centres inside extended Better Shelter units in the Kutupalong and Balukhali refugee camps, where four full-time medical doctors and eight healthcare workers provide free-of-charge medical services six days per week. The team uses a custom built electronic medical records system known as NIROG (meaning "no-disease"), optimized to operate in a paperless process under limited power conditions, while being highly effective in capturing patient data and allowing doctors to provide patients with long-term, follow-up care. Although HAEFA medical teams provide primary healthcare, HAEFA's major focus areas include serious chronic ailments that are difficult to diagnose, treat and track in a refugee camp where infrastructure for healthcare delivery is minimal. HAEFA is the leading organization

**“The Better Shelter units provide a sense of permanence. They help make the patients understand that we provide trustworthy health care.”**

Toasim Ahmed Chowdhury, Medical Officer, HAEFA







A 5-year old patient visits the Kutupalong clinic with her mother. The girl has had an allergic reaction and the doctor has prescribed antihistamine cream for her.

© Better Shelter

**“Earlier, the clinic was situated under the sky, and I had dust allergies as a result... Now I work under a roof and there is a fan – the work environment is more comfortable”.**

Zannat Ara, Pharmacist, HAEFA

that provides care for chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, anemia, high-risk pregnancy, and TB. In collaboration with Brown University Global Health Initiative, HAEFA is in the process of setting up “see and treat” single-visit cervical cancer screening using state-of-the-art mobileODT and Thermocoagulator.

As part of an upgrade program of the facilities in June 2018, the temporary bamboo structures which accommodated the clinics, were replaced with Better Shelter units mounted on concrete slabs for increased stability and protection against floods and storms. Five standard units were used to form two extended structures and a storage unit. Better Shelter developed design drawings used to obtain permissions by HAEFA from local authorities and the units were delivered to Dhaka airport nine days after the order had been submitted. HAEFA arranged delivery of these units to Cox’s Bazar.

Training and final installation in the refugee camps in Ukhiya, Cox’s Bazar by Better Shelter was completed in five days.



Kutupalong camp. © Better Shelter

## Highlights

# 150,000 students gain better access to education and build a brighter future in Better Shelter units across Iraq

**Partner:** Terre des hommes (Tdh)

**Location:** Salah al-Din (SAD) and Kirkuk governorates, Iraq

**Number of units:** 1152

**Application:** Temporary classrooms

**Project output:** 150,000 students gain better access to education

Access to education and prevention of dropping out is the first step towards a sustainable future for children in Iraq. In agreement with the Iraqi Ministry of Education and the Education Cluster, the Swiss child relief agency Terre des hommes (Tdh) implemented 1152 Better Shelter units in 330 schools in the Salah al-Din (SAD) and Kirkuk governorates. They are used as temporary learning spaces by children aged from six to twelve.

In 2018, the humanitarian crisis in Iraq remained one of the world's most severe. Violence perpetrated by the Islamic State (ISIS/ Daesh) has forced millions of families to flee their homes. Many of them have been living in precarious conditions and are unable to provide for their children's basic needs including food, security and healthcare. While the restoration of Iraq is expected to take many years, nearly four million Iraqis have already returned to their homes, where they face destruction and devastation. During the protracted course of the conflict, hundreds of thousands of children have been exposed to displacement, violence and a lack of schooling – the latter due to their IDP status, distance from school, destruction of infrastructure, or lack of ID papers proving their identity and level of education.

The level of destruction of infrastructure in the country after so many years of combat operations against ISIS is very serious. The areas to which Iraqis are returning suffer from lack of psychosocial support, case management and sanitation services. As families prioritise income, their precarious



situation can lead them to adopt negative coping mechanisms such as early marriage and child labour.

Even children who are able to attend school can find access to education difficult: overcrowded classes and lack of materials affect children's ability to concentrate and perform. Most displaced Iraqi children have lost years of education. The supply of teachers is insufficient (up to 100 pupils per teacher) and results in children having to attend school in shifts. Moreover, teachers are not prepared – or do not have the tools – to support the specific needs of children who have been out of school for an extended period, throughout which they have been exposed to trauma.

More than a thousand shelter units were erected over a two month period. They can be used for several years until permanent infrastructure is restored. Tdh has taken advantage of the modularity of the Better Shelter by building larger structures which have space for desks and chairs to accommodate larger groups of children along the long sides of the units, with a corridor in the middle allowing teachers and children to pass through.

The project was partly financed through generous donations from Borealis, the UPS Foundation, and also by contributions from private donors made through the crowdsourcing platform [www.respekt.net](http://www.respekt.net).





**“I had 220 students that I had to teach in four classrooms. It was crowded, and learning quality was dropping as a consequence [...] Today, the school has eight classrooms with 27 students per class. It allows us as teachers to deliver better quality education and enrol more students for the upcoming semester”.**

Mr. Rafid Majeed, Headmaster of the Al-Ayoubi School.



**“Better Shelter has been a large and satisfying project, and the impact it has had is truly motivating. [...] The project has made a real impact on education in rural remote areas. These are areas in which schools had fallen into a state of disrepair or were badly damaged during the war against ISIL, and as a result were either overcrowded or children were unable to attend school at all. The installation of Better Shelter classrooms enabled a healthy learning environment for the students and has increased the number of students we can enrol at each school.”**

Sara Faiek, a Better Shelter Supervisor

© Terre des hommes





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## An even Better Shelter

Better Shelter provides ready-made shelter solutions for projects and operations where locally-sourced materials are scarce. Innovation and design thinking are integral parts of Better Shelter's strategy, which means that we continuously improve our products and services to meet the changing needs of our partners and beneficiaries in different environments, climates and situations.

### Design improvements

Several changes relating to safety, comfort and durability have already been integrated in the 1.2 shelter version, which was released in 2018. The resistance, strength and fire behaviour of the roof and wall panels have been improved thanks to new materials. The frame has been strengthened by replacement of plastic pipes with metal, and the lamp- & PV system has been upgraded to a more durable model providing more light for longer. By doubling the number of ventilation inlets, we have increased airflow through the shelter to improve the interior climate.



### Quality control

During 2018 we also made significant improvements in quality and production stability, and we will continue to collaborate closely with our suppliers to ensure even higher and more consistent quality through our entire value chain.



### Monitoring and evaluation

Over the past years we have scaled up our monitoring and evaluation activities in a growing number of locations. Shelter performance is tested in a range of contexts, climates and applications. The data gathered during these exercises informs further development of shelter design and production and will help us improve the services we offer our partners.

### Local adaptation

We have seen several examples of how shelters have been upgraded into more permanent structures using corrugated iron sheets, bricks and other locally-sourced materials. In 2019 we will continue to learn how to improve local adaptation in collaboration with our humanitarian partners. Better Shelter will develop guidelines and best practice methods for local adaptation, which will inform strategies and decision making during the planning and implementation of new projects.











## Highlights

# PCPM improves health care assistance in one of the world's largest refugee settlements

**Partner:** PCPM (Polish Centre for International Aid) and UNHCR

**Location:** Bidi-Bidi Refugee settlement, Yumbe District, Uganda

**Number of units:** 100

**Application:** Health clinics and staff accommodation

**Project output:** Three complete clinics were upgraded (45 units) and 93 medics were able to switch from tents to Better Shelter units (55 units). 4 units are installed in the temporary Referral Hospital in Midigo and receive 2,200 patients per month.

Uganda borders two of the world's largest humanitarian crises: those in South Sudan and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Both are consequences of large-scale violence, long-term civil wars, famine and epidemics, and have forced over 1.19 million refugees to leave their homes to seek safety in Uganda. Many settlements in Uganda lack the medical staff and resources required to meet the needs of refugees, but the situation is especially difficult in the Bidi-Bidi settlement. It is one of the largest refugee settlements in the world, hosting more than 200,000 displaced people.

PCPM set out to improve the medical facilities and the services provided in Bidi-Bidi by donating and implementing 100 Better Shelter units in partnership

with UNHCR. Some of the units were modified to better suit the context and hot climate of the area. 45 units have been adapted and are used as clinic infrastructure, replacing previous temporary health structures made of plastic sheets. The new clinics were assembled on two 400 m<sup>2</sup> concrete slabs, under roofing which provides additional protection against rain and sunlight. The facilities will remain temporary in nature and will not be transferred to the Government once the settlement is closed. The remaining 55 units are mounted on individual concrete slabs and are used as staff accommodation with an aim to improve the living conditions of the medical staff working in the settlement's clinics.

Thanks to the concrete slabs and additional concrete water barriers used inside the Better Shelter units, they offer better protection from rain and high water during the rainy season. The tents the group used previously suffered from leaking roofs. They also offer better protection from intrusion by scorpions, snakes and rats than the old tents, which were mounted directly on the ground.

PCPM is a Polish NGO established in 2006 providing humanitarian, development and rescue assistance. In recent years it has been the largest recipient of funds from the Polish Government (Polish Aid).



## Highlights

# Better living standards provided to refugees in Tanzania

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**Partner:** UNHCR

**Location:** Nyarugusu, Mtendeli and Nduta camps in northwestern Tanzania

**Number of units:** 480

**Application:** Temporary housing


**Project output:** an increase in the overall Adequate shelter coverage in the camps from 56% to 57%.

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Tanzania is host to over 250,000 Burundian refugees who are facing a humanitarian crisis marked by economic decline, extreme food insecurity and a disease outbreak. The strong increase of forced displacement in this region has led to a shelter shortage and crisis, due to lack of funding within the international organizations.

480 Better Shelter units were distributed across the three camps and several categories of Persons with Specific Needs (PSN) who were still residing in emergency shelter or tents were targeted and prioritized to benefit from the units: Children At Risk, Women At Risk, Older Persons At Risk, Disabled Persons, Persons With A Serious Medical Condition and Persons At Risk/Survivors Of Sexual and Gender-based Violence.

Better Shelter supported UNHCR during the assembly training. UNHCR Tanzania reported that the units were quick to install, which allowed beneficiaries to move into their shelter on the same day as the installation. The units have been reported to greatly improve beneficiaries' living standards. The Better Shelters are of great advantage to the operation, since they can be dismantled and re-allocated to other beneficiaries.



Congolese refugee Apolina Nyassa, 86, lives alone in a Better Shelter given to refugees with special needs, at Nyarugusu camp in Tanzania.





© UNHCR/Georgina Goodwin





© UNHCR/Georgina Goodwin

## Better Shelter joins the UN Global Compact and takes actions towards the Global Sustainability Goals

We are a social business driven by our social cause – to achieve positive impact for people displaced by conflicts and natural disasters. As a social company we must meet these objectives while also covering our costs and creating sufficient surplus income via margin to be able to further invest in our cause. We do not distribute any dividends to investors. Should the company have any surplus income remaining it must be used either to lower our prices or be distributed to our philanthropic owner, the non-profit Housing for All Foundation.

As a natural step towards creating positive social impact, we have joined the United Nations Global Compact in 2018 – the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative. We have subsequently started the process of integrating the UN Global Compact's ten principles – divided across the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-corruption – into our business by completing a company-wide assessment and action plan covering various areas and activities. The Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Global Compact's ten principles will gradually be incorporated into our strategies, policies and processes to make sure that we continue to improve and carry out our business in a sustainable and responsible way, both today and in the future.



## Highlights

### Providing protection and safety for refugees and internally displaced people

Better Shelter is a social enterprise which was created with the sole purpose of providing protection, safety and dignity for displaced people. The shelter's design must address many different requirements related to performance and endurance. But most importantly, it must offer a safe space that can be modified for specific needs and be transformed into a family's temporary, but true, home. During regular field visits, technical evaluation missions and assembly trainings we gather information about the needs of our users in order to inform our product design. In 2018, UNHCR rolled out third party Monitoring and Evaluation activities in several locations to capture qualitative and quantitative data about shelter performance from users and identify how it can be further improved.



### Product development

The Better Shelter 1.2 is designed to be even more resistant to wear and tear, to contribute to refugees' wellbeing and meet their basic needs, while remaining a cost-effective and long-lasting solution for humanitarian response programs. The structure can be repaired and upgraded with local materials over time, and can also be disassembled, moved and reassembled. It does not contain any glued joints or elements, which helps prolong its lifespan even further. By not requiring any use of local materials it does not contribute to deforestation. Furthermore,

installing the shelter requires no additional energy source, and the accompanying lamp and charger unit is powered by solar energy. We monitor all chemical substances in the structure's components to make sure that they comply with REACH, RoHS and legislation in every country in which it is used. We have further committed to further reduce the material consumption of the structure and its packaging, and to reduce manufacturing scrap, as well as to remove unnecessary chemicals from components.





## Workplace

We believe an engaged team builds a highly effective organisation. We systematically monitor how our team is doing so we can make sure everyone looks forward to going to work every day. Not just because they are contributing to the well-being of thousands of people, but also because we want Better Shelter to remain a great place to work.

We have adopted several policies and guidelines – including a collective labour agreement – which help us control our work environment both in the office and on missions, ensure a healthy work-life balance and maintain equality in the workplace. We strive for mental as well as physical safety, and colleagues that go on field missions receive appropriate training in advance. In 2018 we carried out activities stipulated in our workplace strategy to maintain the highest working environment standards. These included completing a salary survey to help us make sure our compensation is equal and fair. This work will continue over the years to come.

## Suppliers and partners

In order to meet the standards of our owner, the Housing for All Foundation, and ensure we achieve our social mission, we supply shelters only to trusted partners and projects which contribute to the wellbeing of vulnerable people. We work in close collaboration with our committed supplier base, offering long contracts to ensure quality in all steps of the value chain of our business. A majority of our suppliers are based in Europe and are either ISO 90001/140001 certified or have other well-developed environmental and sustainability policies of their own. In 2018, Better Shelter optimised its packaging and container fill rate, and reduced the amount of scrap material from production, and also streamlined production methods and procedures. We have initiated the assessment and reduction of the environmental impact of transports in our value chain, and we have launched a project to reduce the number of plastic bags used in our packaging.



## Highlights

### Access to safe sanitation facilities, knowledge and practices for refugees and the host community in Kyaka II refugee settlement, Uganda

**Partner:** The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)

**Location:** South West, Kyaka II Refugee Settlement, Uganda

**Number of units:** 8 units and 2 frames

**Application:** Administration hub for WASH volunteers, for hygiene and sanitation sensitisation and record keeping, as well as meeting centre for refugees and the host community

**Project output:** 2,000 households benefit from the project activities in WASH (water, hygiene and sanitation). 2,500 individuals benefit from increased access to safe sanitation facilities (latrines, jerrycans, dignity kits, etc.) knowledge and practices to refugees as well as host community in the Kyaka II refugee settlement.



The Kyaka II Refugee Settlement was established in 2005 to receive the remaining population of the Kyaka I Refugee Settlement following the mass repatriation of Rwandan refugees in the same year. Following the repatriation, Kyaka I was closed after 21 years in operation. When violence resumed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in mid-December 2017, there was a new refugee influx into Uganda, with an estimated 17,000 people arriving at Kyaka II. The settlement's population had grown to almost 45,000 by early 2018.

**The project ensures that households that previously received only one jerrycan of clean water per day (or even no water at all) will receive two.**

The implementation of the Better Shelter units is part of a Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) program run by ADRA. The organisation provides increased access to safe sanitation facilities, knowledge and best practices for refugees as well as the host community in the Kyaka II refugee settlement.

SPHERE standards state a household of up to five people should have at least 15 litres of clean water per day and person, and at least two water containers of 10-20 liters. The project ensures that households that previously received only one jerrycan of clean water per day (or even no water at all) will receive two. Beneficiaries are selected according to UNHCR guidelines and practices and in coordination and cooperation with the WASH Cluster, as well as with leaders and beneficiaries in the four receiving zones of Kyaka II.

The Better Shelter units will function as office space and give staff and volunteers a space where they can carry out administrative tasks for the project.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is an international network with operations in more than 140 countries. It delivers relief, education, health and employment to millions of people regardless of their ethnicity, political affiliation, or religious association.



# Exhibitions

**Better Shelter's primary mission** is to support displaced people and facilitate the work of our humanitarian partners. As a social business, we believe we have a great responsibility to increase awareness of the refugee situation and to inspire others to do what they can to create a better future for refugees.

We participate in exhibitions, conferences and talks around the world to share our story and influence businesses and individuals to support displaced communities. During the course of 2018 we reached hundreds of thousands of people worldwide.



## Victoria & Albert Museum – The future starts here

"The Future Starts Here", a design exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, explored how current and future innovations will affect our lives. The exhibition also examined how we can use emerging technologies and design to support positive development. From artificial intelligence to Better Shelter, "The Future Starts Here" brought together more than 100 innovations that could impact our near future.



## Nairobi design week

Nairobi Design Week is an annual festival showcasing Kenyan design and explaining its socio-economic and environmental impact on the country's development. Better Shelter was showcased in "The Future of Design" exhibition at the Kenya Cultural Center, an exhibition that featured those in the design industry pushing boundaries and exploring new challenges.



## London design biennale – Emotional states

Through its theme of "Emotional States", the London Design Biennale 2018 explored how design affects every aspect of our lives – the ways we live and how we live – and influences our very being, emotions and experiences. The refugee pavilion showcased a Better Shelter and other objects by and for refugees and aimed to shed light on stateless people, who are often forgotten.



## TedX London – Beyond borders

TEDx London's theme "Beyond Borders" introduced visitors to new ways of thinking, beyond limitations and boundaries. Better Shelter took part in the City xLab together with other innovative organizations to inspire visitors to think beyond borders.



## Artpace – One to another

The exhibition "One to Another" at Artpace in San Antonio, Texas told the stories of those who have been forced to flee. As a video was projected inside a Better Shelter, visitors were invited to feel the space and how it impacts refugees' lives around the world.



## Documentary film – The human shelter

Directed by acclaimed Danish film director Boris B. Bertram, "The Human Shelter" is a documentary resulting from a two-year worldwide cinematographic expedition to investigate a simple yet profound question: "What makes a home?", both now and in the future. The film features the story of Better Shelter in Iraq, Stockholm and New York.



# Better Shelter at a glance

A social enterprise headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden.

We are a team of 20 people dedicated to change the lives of those who have been forced to flee, by providing a safer and more dignified home away from home.

Our shelters are used in 30+ humanitarian operations in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, South East Asia and South America.

Our supply chain is located in northern Europe and we supply our shelters from our warehouse in Gdansk, Poland to humanitarian operations worldwide.





Our partners

IKEA Foundation  


 **UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

