

Hope starts with a home



Annual review 2023

Global compact communication on progress
January 1 to December 31, 2023



2023 figures at a glance

10,617

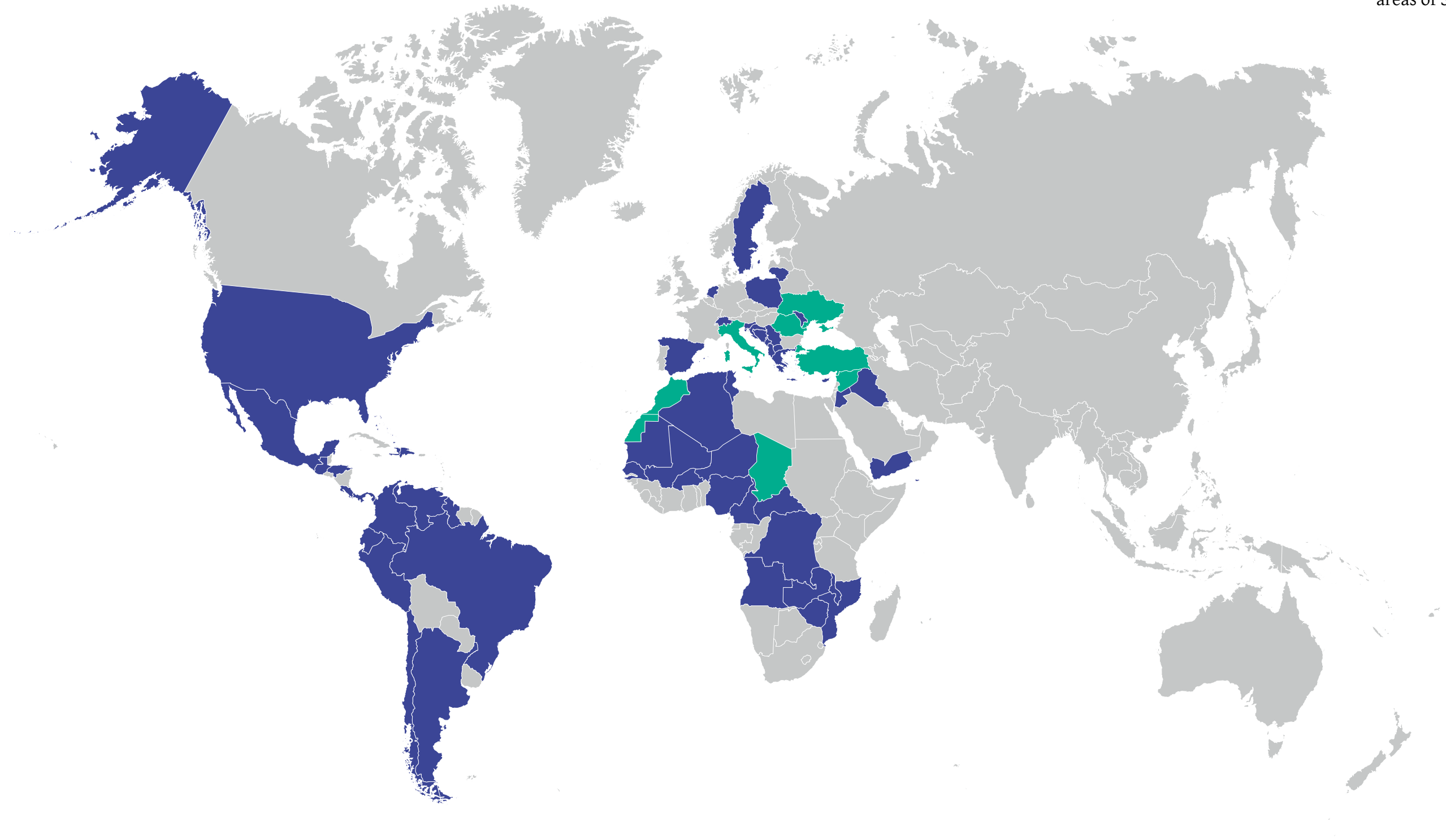
shelters delivered
to six countries
in 2023

91,250

shelters delivered
since 2015

25,578

children went to
school in our shelters
in earthquake-affected
areas of Syria



Who we are

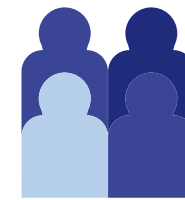


We are an independent non-profit organisation based in Sweden, free from political or religious affiliations. We provide displaced people with safe and dignified shelters that lead them towards a more stable life in a permanent home of their own. Our team is committed to supporting our partners and delivering our shelters globally from our warehouses in Poland, Türkiye, and Panama. Since 2015, we have delivered over 90,000 shelters to emergency, crisis, and development programmes in

over 80 countries. Through collaboration with humanitarian Non-Governmental Organisations, United Nations agencies, corporations, foundations, philanthropists and academic institutions, including UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, the IKEA Foundation, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), we have impacted the lives of hundreds of thousands of displaced persons.

Our 2030 vision

Millions will have access to safe, dignified and sustainable shelters, classrooms and clinics.



1. Partnerships to reach many

More humanitarian partners use our shelters in a good way

2. Impact by design

The shelters meet the needs of their target groups better



3. Greening our footprint

We improve our environmental footprint

SECTORS



Health



Protection



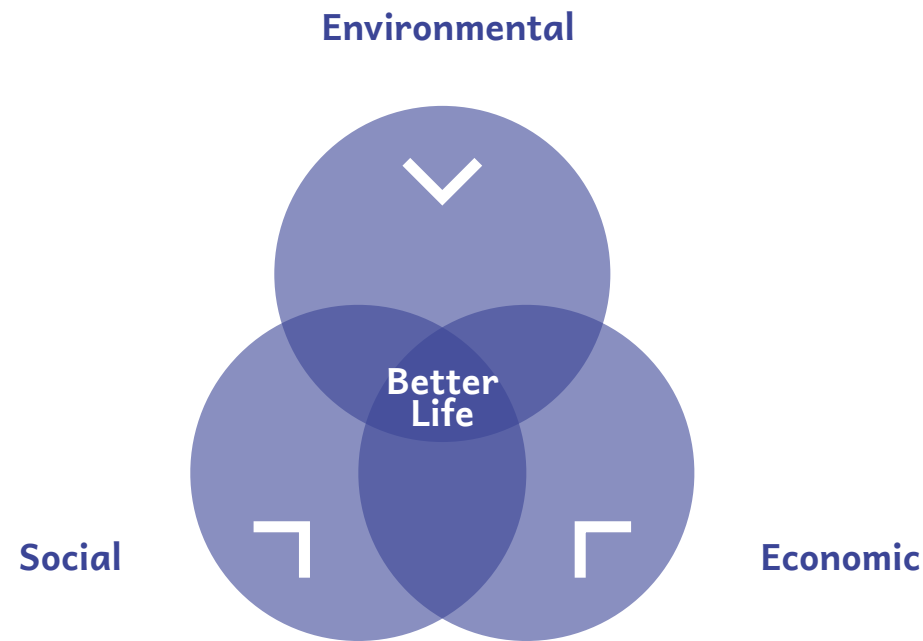
Education



Shelter

What sustainability means to us

To have a positive impact on forcibly displaced people, their communities and their planet.



A better life for more displaced people

Achieving a better balance between environmental, economic, and social impacts will give more people the opportunity for a better life within the planetary boundaries.

Statement of Continued Support to the UN Global Compact

Hej!

In 2023, the need for temporary homes due to humanitarian emergencies was greater than ever. The year was characterised by two significant challenges: the Türkiye-Syria earthquakes and the conflict in Sudan. The earthquakes tragically claimed 55,000 lives and displaced millions, while the Sudanese conflict has uprooted 9.2 million people, making it the world’s biggest humanitarian crisis. Our fast response was made possible through working together with our partners. Together, we were able to provide safe and dignified shelter to thousands in need. Our humanitarian partners, private sector allies, and philanthropic supporters all played crucial roles.

Experience has taught us that these types of emergencies last long, demanding that our commitment continues. We still support Türkiye and Sudan with new shelters and technical assistance, ensuring our humanitarian partners and affected communities receive sustained support even as initial emergency funds wane. This is also true of the situations in Venezuela and Syria, which we are continuously responding to. In parallel, we are preparing for the response in Gaza by increasing our emergency stockpile and securing the right partners to ensure an impactful response. As we hope for an end to this tragedy, we stand ready to support.

We recognise climate change as a key driver of displacement and we are dedicated to reducing our CO2 footprint to meet the targets of the Paris Agreement. Our focus includes minimising the use of plastics and fossil fuel-based materials through collaboration with our partners. However, our commitment goes beyond materials; we strive to enhance the longevity and functionality of our shelters.

Adopting a cradle-to-gate approach, we aim to facilitate easier repairs, maintenance and upgrades, ensuring that our shelters serve their purpose over the entire duration of displacement (which many times span more than a decade). We’re also working with partners to improve reuse, repurpose, and recycling locally, aspiring to achieve a circular shelter model by 2030. We are also working to make our shelters more accessible for people with disabilities and reduced mobility.

Better Shelter reaffirms its unwavering dedication to the Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact in Human Rights, Labour, Environment, and Anti-Corruption. This annual report highlights our ongoing efforts to integrate these principles into our business strategy, culture, and operations, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring our commitment to our ethical and responsible practices. Together, we make a lasting impact—providing shelter and a foundation for resilience and hope. Thank you for your continued support, which helps us provide safety, dignity, and hope to displaced communities.

Warm regards,
Johan Karlsson
Managing Director
Better Shelter



The UN Sustainable Development Goals

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), launched in 2015, describe many global sustainability challenges and calls for action. They provide an inspiring framework for collective action and guide us as we develop Better Shelter, set ambitions, and engage with our partners. We have focused our efforts and report on four goals: 9, 11, 13, and 17.



We are a member of the United Nations Global Compact, which helps us align our strategies and operations with the SDGs on human rights, labour, the environment, and anti-corruption.



Human Rights

Shelter is a human right



A shelter is not just a physical structure. It is a stepping stone for those affected by conflict or disasters, providing safety, dignity, healing, livelihood, community, and resilience. Our belief in the transformative power of shelter drives our mission and guides our actions.



Safety for over 30,000 people displaced by the earthquakes in Syria and Türkiye

“In the tent, we had no privacy. Sometimes, I would wake up to find cats inside. This shelter has a locked door so that I can sleep more securely. It does not resemble a tent; I feel like I’m entering a proper room with a door, windows, better sound insulation, and insulation against cold and heat...,” says Hassan, displaced after the earthquake in northwestern Syria.

With generous backing from the IKEA Foundation and others we delivered more than 6,600 shelters to eleven humanitarian organisations in Türkiye and Syria. A few weeks after the first earthquake, we moved our emergency stock of shelters to affected regions in both countries, with support from IKEA.

Country Türkiye/Syria
Sector Shelter/Education/Protection
Partner Multiple partners

Support provided by Better Shelter
 Capacity Building, Assurance, Communications, Logistics, Warehousing



Providing refuge for Sudanese refugees in Chad

With funding from the IKEA Foundation, we donated 3,000 shelters to the Sudan Emergency Response to provide housing for people who fled the Sudan war. The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, installed more than 2,700 shelters in 11 locations to accommodate nearly 11,000 refugees, including older people, people with disabilities, and single parents. In addition, 75 shelters serve as service points for camp and border protection activities.

We also donated 144 shelters to the International Organisation for Migration, IOM, in Chad, equipped with solar-powered lamps to serve as

temporary homes for Chadian returnees in the Sila region.

“I feel much better now that we have our own place. I will prepare the house and hope my husband will join me one day,” says Bouniana, a mother of two who was forced to flee the conflict in Sudan.



Country Chad
Sector Shelter, Protection
Partner UNHCR and IOM

Support provided by Better Shelter
 Capacity Building, Assurance, Communications, Logistics, and Warehousing.

Education is a human right



Our shelters create a space for children to learn. Our partners’ education programs prioritise regular schooling after disruptions caused by displacement. Besides being places for learning and development, our shelters provide a safe space for children who are especially vulnerable to domestic abuse, sexual violence, human trafficking, and forced recruitment.



Over 25,000 children in Syria return to school in our shelters

Through implementing partners, Save the Children installed over 200 shelters for child protection, psychological support, health and nutrition services, and educational activities. In the shelters, Save the Children offers formal and non-formal education and technical and vocational training.

“The school is great; we have a garden to play in, and our teacher often joins us. Things are better now because I can study and hang out with my friends,” says Marah, a student in one of the schools.

Country Northwest Syria
Sector Education
Partner Save the Children and local partners.

Support provided by Better Shelter
 Design and Planning, Capacity Building, Assurance, Communications, Logistics, Donor Matching, Funding

Health is a human right



There is a critical need for medical support structures worldwide, especially in regions with precarious health services. Through partnerships with medical NGOs, thousands of our shelters have been deployed as medical facilities to increase access to health services for the populations most in need of vital care. Our shelters nurture short-term and long-term mental and physical well-being by enabling access to essential sanitary health services.



Improved health for thousands of Rohingya refugees

In 2018, HEAFA opened two primary health care centres inside extended shelters in the Kutupalong and Balukhali refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh. Since then, medical doctors and healthcare workers offer free-of-charge medical support six days a week for people from the Rohingya community, forced to flee violence and persecution in neighbouring Myanmar.

With support from the Global Office for Humanitarian Affairs (GoHA) at PwC, over 60,000 people received care at the clinics in 2023.

“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

Country Bangladesh
Sector Health
Partner HAEFA and GOHA

Support provided by Better Shelter
Capacity Building, Assurance, Communications, Logistics

Protection is a human right



Whether in response to displacement caused by natural disasters or violent conflict, we have supported missions in some of the world’s most severe crises. One of the critical functions of our shelters is to ensure that its residents are safe and protected so they can live in peace and work towards their vision for the future. Our shelters are equipped with several features that mitigate security risks and strengthen protections for their residents, with particular attention to the most vulnerable populations.



IOM Poland supports Ukrainian refugees

At the height of the conflict in early 2022, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) acquired four shelters and installed two at the Medyka border point as transit centres for Ukrainians seeking humanitarian assistance. As the flow of border crossings fluctuated in the passing months and other humanitarian stakeholders took over the core protection duties in Medyka, IOM redirected its focus to the refugees who had moved past the transit centres and were on their way to settle in Poland.

IOM then donated two shelters to help the NGO expand their services while providing a durable structure as a waiting area. They worked with a construction company to install the shelters with us.

Within hours, the two shelters were fully installed as a combined superstructure, and in a matter of days, the centre was running with refreshments and child-friendly activities.

“The RHU’s could be very useful for many purposes in the future. In Poland, we do not have camps. Still, collective shelters located in various permanent buildings often need more space for community meetings and activities for children and adults, which could be done successfully in an RHU...” - Viktor Dovgosheya, Site Team Leader, IOM Poland.

Country Poland
Sector Protection
Partner IOM

Support provided by Better Shelter
Technical training and Communication.



Environment

Environmental progress



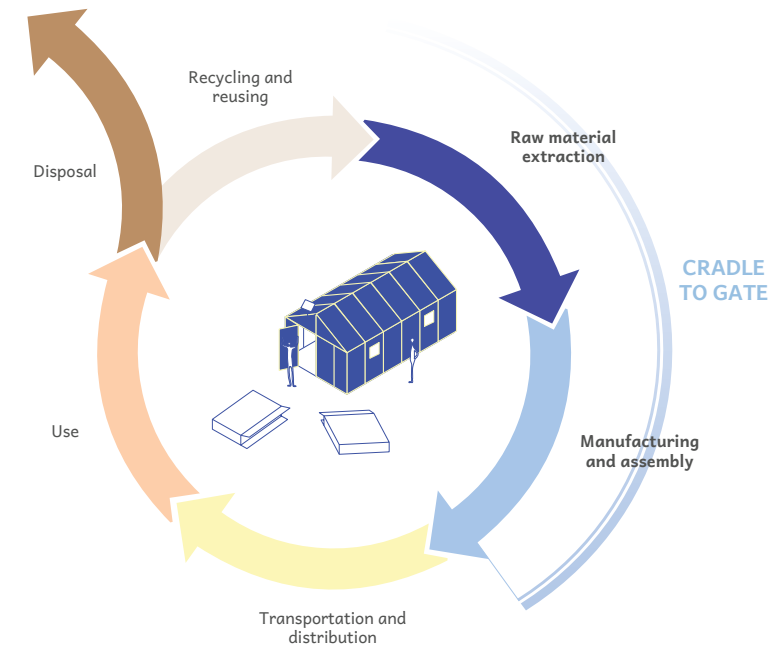
EcoVadis has recognised our third-party logistics partner with the top one per cent platinum medal for its sustainability rating. This award underscores our shared commitment to sustainable business practices and sets a high standard for our partners. EcoVadis, the world’s largest and trusted provider of business sustainability ratings, has created a global network of 130,000 rated companies.

The steel pipes in our shelters are the components with the second highest

emission. Our supplier of these has partnered with the Swedish startup H2 Green Steel (H2GS), which is developing a large-scale plant with the long-term ambition to decarbonise the steel industry. This new technology will emit only steam, reducing carbon dioxide emissions by up to 90 per cent.

We assigned a new travel agency that was awarded the “Swedish Sustainability Grand Travel Award for 2024” in 2023.

Analysing our shelter from cradle-to-gate



A Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) calculates the environmental impact of products or services throughout their lifecycle. In our case, the LCA follows a “cradle-to-gate” approach, measuring the shelter’s environmental footprint until it leaves the factory gate.

We completed the first LCA of the Relief Housing Unit (RHU) in 2022. The calculations used conservative numbers without accounting for recycled material used in the current production.

During 2023, we updated the data in the analysis tool OneClickLCA with more precise data:

- The largest producer of parts in terms of weight is our panel supplier. In 2023, all of the energy used in producing panels came from the supplier’s photovoltaic panels.

- We gathered the data on recycled material used in plastic components in the shelter and updated the LCA accordingly.

We are working on further updates to map the use of recycled materials in the plastic components and panels. The LCA will reflect these updates, showcasing our ongoing efforts to improve environmental sustainability.

- The updated LCA results will be finalised in 2024 and compared to the baseline set before for Better Shelters Global Warming Potential (GWP).

The OneClick LCA tool has also been used for data-driven decision-making through 2023 to inform design decisions and evaluate material choices in our new shelter portfolio. We have also educated an additional team member in using the software.

Continuous product improvements

We developed an improved version of the current shelter in 2023, which will be available in 2024. The new version incorporates improved indoor climate and environmental sustainability.

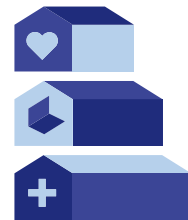


All in a box

The RHU is the last safety net when nothing else works. Residents can move into a dignified shelter from the start.

Modular

It can serve many purposes in different contexts and climates and be upgraded to prolong its lifespan.



Dignified and safe, yet, temporary

While temporary, the Relief Housing Unit offers families displaced by conflict and disaster a higher level of safety and dignity.

IMPROVEMENTS



Better indoor climate

The panels in the new shelter version we have developed have a white reflective film on the outside to reflect solar radiation better and thus lower the indoor temperature in hot weather. The middle layer of the panel is coloured with a masterbatch, increasing the panel's opacity and blocking out light.

Using white in both layers increases the possibility of reusing reground production waste and decreases scrap and virgin material.

Increased use of recycled material

Injection moulded parts, including windows, ventilations, screws and bolts, in the new shelter version are made of 40 to 100 per cent recycled material. This change affects both the parts made of PP (Polypropylene) and PA (Polyamide) plastics.

Environmental and health-friendly flame retardant

Fire prevention is critical in displacement camps because fires pose a significant risk of death

and injury. We have spent several years sourcing a non-bromine-based flame retardant for the panels. The new panels are treated with a flame-retardant material with a lower environmental and health impact while maintaining the same level of fire safety.

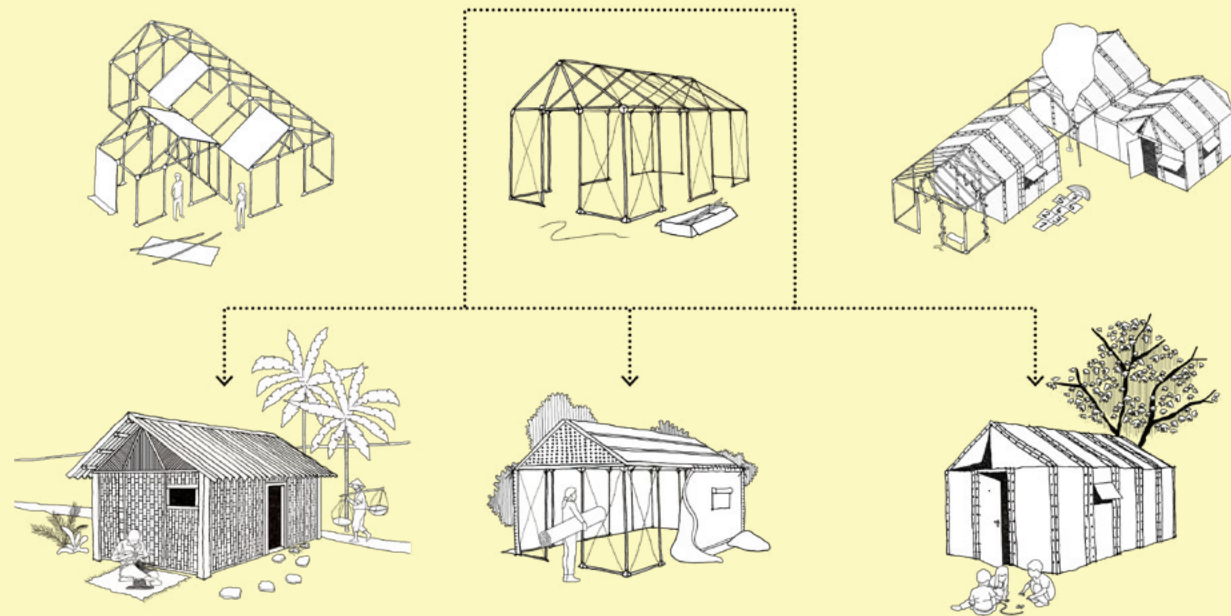
Easier to recycle

Introducing a non-bromine-based fire retardant in the panels increases their recyclability while transitioning to a mono-material. The new panels used in the shelter are made of a sandwich material with only PP as a base, whereas previous panels used a combination of PP and PE materials. This combination allows the panels to be recycled directly as PP, eliminating the need for specific recycling plants or material categorisation.

Lower global warming potential

These changes are expected to result in a lower global warming potential. In 2024, we will conduct a new Life Cycle Analysis to calculate the CO2 impact of the new shelter version compared to the current.

A sustainable shelter portfolio



Climate change and displacement are increasingly interconnected. As extreme weather events and environmental conditions worsen with global heating, they are creating conditions for further forced displacement. The need for temporary shelters is expected to grow dramatically, as will their performance and cost requirements.

Navigating this challenging context, we are taking a step forward to acknowledge and reduce our climate impact. Our product development team continues to develop our shelters to ensure we meet the Paris Agreement’s GHG emission reduction targets.

During 2023, we began this work,

designing a system that is not just a response to the growing needs but a shift in our design approach, moving towards an even more sustainable and incremental model.

Our new shelter portfolio is not just a single solution but a versatile system designed to meet diverse needs. It will be built around a lightweight, robust, and reliable frame and will be available in various materials to suit different needs and budgets. Moreover, it can be upgraded over time to meet changing needs. The system is modular, allowing for various sizes and shapes, and versatile enough to be used in multiple humanitarian sectors such as shelter, health, education, and protection.

Product development focus areas

The new shelter portfolio prioritises environmental sustainability in the following areas:

Longer lifespan

We can reduce the need for replacements if a crisis becomes protracted by designing shelters for temporary short-term responses that can be extended.

Adaptability

We are designing the new shelter portfolio to be adaptable and upgradeable over time, making it better suited to complex specific requirements. The frame is the system’s foundation, and it is easy to attach locally available materials, expanding the possibility of using the best-suited and most environmentally friendly material based on the specific context. We refer to this as our “incremental approach” to shelter: deploying, upgrading, and upcycling.

New materials and production techniques

We are mapping and adjusting the design to fit with new materials and production techniques with proven scalability and suitability for shelter and a lower climatic footprint regarding Global-warming potential (GWP), toxicity, energy use, or water consumption, among others.

Recycled materials

The Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) performed on our current shelters revealed that we can lower our shelters’ global warming potential by increasing the use of recycled materials. Thus, we select easily sourced and readily available materials, including Polypropylene (PP), PET (polyethylene terephthalate), and steel.

Recyclable materials

In the new shelter portfolio, we use as few unique materials as possible while selecting materials that

are easy to recycle. We also make design choices to facilitate recycling, removing the need for separation and providing markings and guidelines for decommissioning shelters.

Energy-efficient production

The Life Cycle Assessment on current shelters has taught us that we can significantly impact the production process using energy-efficient and green energy techniques. The new concept design proposes several changes to reduce energy consumption, including removing production steps and reducing material use, as well as selecting producers and development partners with a track record of using green energy.

Reduced use of raw materials

All our shelters are lightweight (the Relief Housing Unit weighs 148 kg when built). Additional material reductions are made, specifically by reducing the amount of plastic in the new shelter design.

No single-use plastics

We will eliminate single-use plastics in the new portfolio.

An incremental approach to sustainable shelters



Deploy

Our shelter approach is designed to meet the needs of the millions of people who may face displacement in the future. At the core is the modular and versatile shelter framework, which can be easily stockpiled and assembled. This framework, which can be covered with various materials, provides many flexible, low-cost solutions for different scenarios.

Our approach ensures that even in emergencies, we offer a tent cover that is quick, cost-effective, and minimises environmental impact. The option to upgrade to more durable materials if the community remains displaced further underscores our commitment to sustainability. The prefabricated wall and roof panel offer safety and dignity from the outset, with rapid assembly and versatile applications. We choose materials that create as little environmental impact as possible while serving as temporary structures that can fit into complex humanitarian responses.

Upgrade

The frame's design allows it to be clad with available building materials using local traditions and expertise. It enables communities to upgrade and adapt their shelters as local resources become accessible, transforming them into more durable buildings after disasters.

Upcycle

When a family no longer needs to use the shelter as emergency housing because they can access a permanent home, they can repurpose the panels and tent cover. The shelter, clad with local materials, can be turned into an animal shed or a community centre or disassembled and reused elsewhere. Families can use the tent cover as a roof for an outdoor space and recycle the prefabricated panel system.

Putting our shelters to the test



With our humanitarian partners SEEDS and STS, we established a test site in Delhi, India, to evaluate our shelters and local adaptations in a controlled environment during various seasons and temperatures.

As part of our meticulous evaluation process, we have measured temperature, humidity, wind, light, and other parameters on-site. This comprehensive approach ensures we consider all aspects for various adaptations and designs.

We have held several workshops at the site, including building and testing new shelter designs, assessing local material usage, and making other upgrades and adaptations to improve thermal comfort and privacy.

The site will continue to play a significant role in the design process, functioning as an evaluation site for vernacular design and the performance of natural materials in the shelter.

Labour



- We respect and promote fundamental human rights.
- We promote equal opportunities.
- We have no tolerance for any discrimination.
- Our collective agreement upholds employees' right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.
- We have a systematic work environment management plan.

Anti-corruption



- As outlined in our ethical framework, we are committed to counteracting corrupt behaviour. We only collaborate with trusted partners who share this commitment and have established anti-corruption policies.
- We do not accept gifts, benefits, reimbursements, or entertainment.
- We do not accept bribes, kickbacks and similar undisclosed monetary items.
- We request that all suppliers sign our ethical framework to ensure these standards are respected throughout our value chain.
- At Better Shelter, we proactively ensure our anti-corruption standards are met. We have implemented several mechanisms, including authorisation grids and payment control methods, to prevent and detect potential breaches.
- Our internal open communication policy enables assured and confidential reporting of misconduct, allowing us to address deficiencies with training on remediation good practice.

Snapshots from 2023



Northwest Syria. Photo: Ali Haj Suleiman



Northwest Syria. Photo: Ali Haj Suleiman



Türkiye. Photo: TrendX



Chad. Photo: © UNHCR/Insa Wawa Diatta



Northwest Syria. Photo: IHR



India. Photo: Sahiba Chawdhary



India. Photo: Sahiba Chawdhary



India. Photo: Sahiba Chawdhary



Northwest Syria. Photo: IHR



Chad. Photo: © UNHCR/Insa Wawa Diatta



Ukraine. Photo: MSB



Northwest Syria. Photo: Ali Haj Suleiman

Partnering for impact

In 2023, we delivered over 12,000 shelters to some of the world's most vulnerable and crisis-affected people. This was made possible with the generous support of the IKEA Foundation, Swiss Re Foundation, and other private sector partners and donors.

Türkiye and Syria earthquake response

With financial support from the IKEA Foundation and the Swiss Re Foundation, we were able to provide more than 6,600 shelters in response to the devastating earthquake that struck southern and central Türkiye and northwestern Syria in February 2023.

In addition, we received valuable support and funding from corporations and foundations, such as OMRON, 11Onze, and the Bygg-Göta Foundation.

Sudan emergency response in Chad

Thanks to funding from the IKEA Foundation, we could provide 3,144 shelters to support refugees in eastern Chad who fled the armed conflict in Sudan that erupted in April 2023.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Our commitment to working with international and national partners, private donors, NGOs, and other stakeholders reflects our belief that collaboration is essential for lasting impact in humanitarian response efforts for shelter, health, education, and protection projects.



