



TOP 10

Architects Without Frontiers
architectswithoutfrontiers.com.au

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Q Which project through AWF have you found to be most rewarding?

A Two Projects: The Nepal Waste Pit Projects (led by Beau Beza) and the mobile library and Dickwella School Project near Galle in Sri Lanka. Both projects involved rebuilding the 'software' and 'hardware' of communities. The hardware being the physical reconstruction and the software being the capacity-building in both projects. That is to say you can always design and build something for someone in need, but what local employment does it generate, what skills does the project leave behind and who will maintain the building? AWF is only a facilitator for projects; we connect the dots for communities in need with funding agencies and design professionals.

Q Where does AWF's involvement begin and end?

A Completely depends on the project. For example in Stradbroke Island Qld, we physically rebuilt 'Uncle Dennis' (Indigenous Traditional Owner) house over three long weekends. In Kātuba, with the Maternity Clinic Scheme Kevin O'Brien has been working on, we have just provided a sketch design.

Q There must be crises worldwide at every given moment, how do you

decide which communities to get involved with?

A We are interested increasingly in reducing our global footprint of projects and concentrating on sites and communities with whom we have already established a good collaboration. For example in the Kabul, Nepal and Sri Lanka Projects, we are not trying to be 'Robin Hoods', save the whole planet or intervene in disasters where we have not been invited. We also need to work generally with clients who have established funding for the projects, or who have a coherent strategy for doing so.

Q You are working with students at RMIT. Do you find that students bring a different approach?

A Same principles as per the AWF Charter (see website), but also a

focus on multidisciplinary design solutions from a group of architects, landscape architects, interior and industrial [design] students – and the students commonly left out of the design conceptualising (for projects such as the Hoi An housing project for kids at risk), the property construction students. How do we work out a design for Typhoon-resistant housing? Without knowing exactly how, and with what, it will be built! AWF projects are not a testing ground for design experiments or egos.

Q Are there any communities out there that are doing particularly badly that we are relatively unaware of?

A Yes, more and more every day (from Darfur to Nairobi to Lahore), and particularly in Australia, where remote Indigenous communities often live in conditions worse than I have observed in post-war Beirut or Mostar.

Q How many volunteers are working with AWF? Do you need this number to grow?

A Approximately 30 volunteers, involved in 10 projects. Our greatest need is not currently for designers, but for the "back-end" skills of running a non-profit organisation e.g. web design, book-keeping and general member administration – all the un-sexy stuff. Any volunteers out there??

Q What changes might we see in the AWF in the future?

A Focussing the organisation on doing fewer projects with a larger impact, attracting Australian design firms to become involved in AWF through corporate support and an increased focus on doing work in our own 'backyard' and wider Asia-Pacific region.



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