PROBLEM ADDRESSED

In response to the recent multitude of horrendous natural disasters in countries such as Indonesia and Pakistan, the second ASF-UK Summer School, held in collaboration with both International Development in Extreme Environments (IDee) and the Eden Project, focused on ‘Vulnerability and Risk: Rebuilding Communities after Disaster’. Since natural disasters disproportionately affect communities that are poor or otherwise vulnerable, the Summer School addressed the factors that increase the impact of disasters on these communities; poverty, social exclusion, inappropriate technologies, environmental degradation, marginal land, and inadequate preparedness. In addition, environmental sustainability was considered an integral part of the intervention.

GOAL ACHIEVED

Both the theoretical discussions and the building exercise provided students with valuable insights into the factors contributing to vulnerability and risk. Lessons learnt included the importance of enabling communities to help themselves, rather than providing them with a ready-made solution, enabling and encouraging a sense of ownership, responsibility and working together as a family.

METHODOLOGY OF WORK

The 2006 Summer School at Eden explored the factors that contribute to vulnerability and risk. Investigating the role that architects and others in related fields can play both before a disaster strikes, (risk reduction and mitigation), and after a disaster has struck, in rebuilding communities both physically and socially. The emphasis was on linking relief or early interventions to longer-term developmental goals, and on community-based initiatives. Approximately thirty-five students took part in the Summer School.

A balance was sought between theoretical discourse and practical investigations. Workshops, lectures and discussions allowed both participants and lecturers to learn from each other's experience, skills and curiosity. Eden Project's Humid-Tropical Biome housed a live hands-on building programme using waste material, simulated resettlement and reconstruction, exploring the ways and means of building local capacities for preparedness and recovery.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

After the success of the ASF-UK Summer School 2006, and following the enthusiastic reaction from both lecturers and participants to the trial run of this workshop in 2005: The Eden Summer School has led to the setting up of a network of international workshops, in cooperation with local architects and architecture schools, addressing the issue of (re)building communities.