PROBLEM ADDRESSED

Poverty reduction remains one of the key goals of international development. Today, it is recognised that reducing poverty has much to do with building the assets of vulnerable communities. It is these assets that serve as a buffer to the shocks and stresses of daily life and are a way of ensuring more sustainable livelihoods.

Spotting opportunity to develop local enterprise depends on each individual situation and potential skills and resources, however one almost universal resource is waste. The reuse of waste materials can be a great resource that has relatively little immediate cost, although the design and manufacturing process of new and innovative materials/products is incredibly labour intensive, and can lead to the potential for local social enterprise.

GOAL ACHIEVED

The 2007 Summer School explored the strategic role that architects must play in building sustainable livelihoods when working in the development arena. Teams of participants each acted as a ‘social enterprise’. They designed and produced recycled building components from Eden’s waste recycling centre. Teams developed a business strategy for how their unique enterprise could be adopted to serve the social and physical needs of their community.

METHODOLOGY OF WORK

The workshop commenced with two and a half intensive days of lectures which covered varying topics, including Development and Sustainable Livelihoods, waste recycling, building from waste, and social enterprise planning. Following the lectures, thirty five participants were divided into groups to investigate various waste materials from the Eden Project. The groups were asked to be innovative in their attempts to re-use and or recycle their particular materials, and develop building materials/systems such as roofing, windows, cladding systems or guttering, which could then be further developed into a permanent building made entirely from waste.

The workshop aimed to develop thinking and understanding of architecture as a process, where each stage acts as a potential opportunity to benefit the associated community, providing far more than just a place of shelter and resource. The acquisition of skills, status and physical assets within any community is vital to its success, especially for those in more vulnerable circumstances.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

The components developed during the summer school form part of a library of prototypes from which ASF can draw inspiration to design and develop construction technologies that will be used to build the first permanent building in the UK made entirely from ‘waste’ materials. See the Building Plot for further information.