



LIFESHELTER

RETHINKING REFUGEES IN EACH STEP OF THE VALUE CHAIN

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Each year the number of internally displaced persons and refugees are increasing. UNHCR estimates that in 2018 68,5 million people were forcibly displaced.

For people in distress shelter is the biggest concern after food and water. And each year more than half a billion USD are used in humanitarian shelter programs.

In addition to these numbers more than half of all refugees are the age of 18, leading to a huge need in schooling and hence adequate facilities for early child education, proper schooling and vocational training.

Lifeshelter is the preferred solution for temporary communities. The structures have been set-up in 8 countries over the last 6 years and show an innovative approach to establishing sustainable communities.

Lifeshelters were originally designed as a low-cost shelter solution aimed at families in refugee camps and settlements. However, as the structures can easily be modified both scope and sizes has been broadened and they now serve many different purposes even though we keep refugees as the main beneficiary for the structures.

Lifeshelter is a unique shelter design characterized by three main drivers; best living conditions for people, most environmentally sustainable solution and delivering more value herein a significant multiplier impact on the local economy. The latter is achieved by local sourcing of materials, local business partners and vocational training of local employees all in all delivering up to 80% of total project costs locally.

Lifeshelter was founded in 2012 by Architectural Engineer Jakob Christensen and Architect Claus Heding. During the first four years the team developed, tested, and optimized the durable panel-based shelter solution, which became the Lifeshelter. The development phase was finalized in May 2016.

It soon became evident, that although the product was very well-received, the price of a Lifeshelter was higher than the price of a tent, and well above the target price of the market. Henceforth, a partnership with Danish Refugee Council was established to investigate the possibility of producing the shelters locally at a lower cost. Changes in both material compositions and production methods revealed a great potential for both local

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production opportunities and lowering the price.

In August 2017 the locally producible shelter v2.0 was launched, and it immediately received a lot of positive attention.

Currently Lifeshelter is scaling up and commercializing the product. Lifeshelter Limited has been established in Uganda where the first commercial orders have been achieved. In addition to Uganda constructions are being commenced in the UK (shelter research program with Bath University), Somalia and Tanzania.

The main challenge is the classic chicken and egg discussion on the conditions to deliver on a larger scale, where 'standards' at times hamper innovation and create a feeling of inertia in the decision-making processes.

In addition, it is a challenge to ensure proper end-user feedback. Our shelters have been put up in very remote areas where we rely on communication that has to go through a number of partners (and hence filters) before we get a relevant overview of our results.

Over the last 6 years Lifeshelters have been deployed in 8 different countries both for testing, case materials and from 2018 as commercial products.

Currently there are structures at display in London, Copenhagen, Kampala and Dar es Salaam and Lifeshelter is on a journey now to commercialize the initiative.

In 2018 the company received new funding and more funds are being sourced to increase growth of the company, along with a more mature set-up around end-user engagement and feedback.

End-user feedback and user engagement is monitored and evaluated in close contact with our clients and partners. In these partnerships we also explore the potential for local sourcing of materials, upskilling of local staffs to act as liaison partner with us as well as looking at alternatives uses and clients for the structures.

Our business model is highly scalable. All materials can easily be sourced, and local workers can be trained in the building techniques applied. We have developed a go-to market strategy where we focus initially on NGO's in East Africa and the Middle East, hereafter national government in Africa with focus on affordable housing for public workers.

Focus is on demonstration and sales in order to test our scalability as well as getting further user feedback.

A recommendation for others should be directed to those who create the framework for humanitarian innovation. Having worked extensively with innovation for +10 years there are many lessons that could be derived on a generic level and infused for the humanitarian setting.

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Biography of Author

Jens Odgaard Olsson
CEO, Lifeshelter

Lifeshelter is the preferred solution for temporary communities. The structures have been set-up in 8 countries over the last 6 years and show an innovative approach to establishing sustainable communities. Lifeshelter is unique shelter design characterized by three main drivers; best living conditions for people, most sustainable solution and delivering more value herein a significant multiplier impact on the local economy. The latter is achieved by local sourcing of materials, local business partners and vocational training of local employees all in all delivering up to 80% of total project costs locally. Jens Odgaard Olsson is CEO of Lifeshelter and has a broad background from management positions in DanChurchAid, Arla Foods, Odense ZOO and other companies.

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