

Travelling to the Philippines with Studio Tacloban



Materials and labour for the study centre were sourced from nearby slums to help strengthen local businesses.
Photo Ronnie Ramirez

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Who's better at building fast, cheap and efficient facilities just where they're needed most than aspiring young architects? Sounds pretty logical, so why do we find it so exceptional that three Norwegian architecture students set up Studio Tacloban in late 2010, raised money to support the non-profit organization, took their freshly acquired architectural know-how and did what ought to be done more often: travelled to a less fortunate area of the world – in this case, the Philippines – and built a school.

In collaboration with local NGO/NPC Streetlight, whose main goal is to get kids off the streets and into schools, Alexandre E. Furunes, Ivar Tuttoren and Trond Hegvold organized a series of workshops with area residents, who were invited to contribute ideas for the concept and design of the neighbourhood's future study centre. The project revolved around a caring community relying on give-and-take to get things done. 'Since many of the men involved were day labourers at the local cement factory,' says Furunes, 'working with skilled labour meant a chance to get experience that could lead to further opportunities after the building was finished.' Meanwhile, the women were busy designing and building the interior of the school. By the time the architects had to leave, the project was only half done, but at that point the participating parents were so well skilled that finishing the job on their own presented no problems.

'The aim was to create a space that would stimulate social awareness,' says Furunes. 'By the end of the process, the building had become a symbol of change, manifested through the efforts of everyone involved.'

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