

Three regions of the world, three practices, three ways

Three architectural practitioners – from Finland, India and Britain – write about how their respective ground up building projects came to be built.

Below *Jenni Reuter* tells the story of Rufisque, a Women's Centre that sprang out of her and two Finnish student colleague's inspiring time in West Africa's Senegal in the nineties. It would turn into a five-year project and a crossover NGO-architectural practice, Ukumbi, focused on development work.

On page X *Suhasini Ayer*, describes a very different project, the building of a network of schools in South Eastern India, as part of Indian eco-city's Auroville's outreach in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

Finally *Peter Clegg*, from Britain's FCBa Studio's writes on page X about the Richard Feilden Foundation's schools-work in Uganda, and eastern Africa, alongside earlier FCBa's humanitarian work

ARCHITEXTS (GROUND UP ARCHITECTURE 5???)

Birth of a Swahili women's centre



In the mid-nineties three Finnish architecture students returned from Senegal, with dreams in their heads. Jenni Reuter, one-third of the all-woman practice which emerged out of that first African journey, HollmenReuterSandmann, tells the story of what happened next

Captions for both photos

In 1996, we were architecture students on a field trip to the town of Rufisque in Senegal, as part of a course organised by the Helsinki University of Technology titled, 'Interplay of Cultures'. The purpose of the trip was to study a local problem that might be solved through architecture. A Finnish sociologist, Anne Rosenlew, introduced us to a women's group and, at their initiative, we ended up designing a centre for local women's associations as a study assignment. Although just a simple exercise for students, the idea and the dream of an actual building stayed with us. That was the beginning of a long and complex process of fundraising and planning, during which the project changed shape several times.

A Real Construction Project Is Born

When the project had been granted aid by the Finnish Foreign Ministry and the town of Rufisque had donated a plot of land for the centre, we were able to start work on the actual design. We did not find out what the target group was until the land had been donated, but when the representatives of women's groups in the area heard about the project they were pleased – the centre would be the first public building in the Gouye Aldiana district, whose infrastructure is otherwise rather rudimentary. Indeed, it was a real problem when the fence around the house was damaged by the sheer size of the crowd during initial meetings. Just the thought of a centre of their own seemed