Beat: News

Recyclable Plastic Used To Make Homes

Converting Plastic Waste

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USPA NEWS - A Colombian company has developed recyclable plastic-based shelters to help people in impoverished countries and those displaced by natural disasters such as earthquakes, wildfires and hurricanes.

The prices of building materials continue to rise and in some countries, getting those materials are extremely difficult. Then should an area get hit by a natural disaster, people are left with no where to shelter and often resort to tents and tarps. On another extreme, eight million tonnes of plastic is dumped into the oceans every year, in addition to a total of 300 million tonnes of plastic waste accumulation worldwide. From milk jugs to laundry detergent bottles, the plastic we dispose of every day can be turned into a shelter for those who are left without homes.

Communities that are devastated, can be rebuilt into permanent or temporary housing, shelters, classrooms or meeting halls from these recycled materials, thanks to Colombian startup company Conceptos Plasticos. The plastic waste is melted and poured into a mold to produce plastic blocks that look and work much like Lego pieces. The materials are fire and earthquake resistant and divert waste from landfills. “We are mitigating global warming and helping to close the extreme poverty gap with a solution that has a high, social, environmental and economic impact,” says co-founder Oscar Andres Mendez. "A house for one family takes four people, with no construction experience, just five days to build,” he adds. “A shelter for 14 families takes 15 people, with no construction experience, only 10 days to build” (Huffington Post).

The social start-up won $300,000 at the final of a global competition called “The Venture,” which is run by Chivas Regal and aims to find the most innovative start-ups across the world. Mendez has used the cash to develop his business and improve the processes and capacity, and also hopes to replicate their business model in other countries.

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