Women’s Health Centre
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

The Centre pour le Bien-être de la Femme (CBF) is located in Sector 27 of Burkina Faso’s capital Ouagadougou, one of the poorest suburbs on the city’s northeastern limits. The site for the Centre is still only partially urbanised, and when land was first allocated for the project there was very little development in the area. Since then, the Centre has created a dynamic for increased urban development for its rural migrant population, and the municipality has recently built the major connecting road for the project. The CBF strives to improve women’s lives and guarantee their reproductive health and sexual rights. The CBF serves the entire 40,000-person community in Sector 27, both women and men, with programmes for health, awareness and social action.

The building consists of two separate 250-square-metre blocks—a community centre and a counselling centre—placed atop an artificial plane created by a single structural platform, which is raised above grade to ensure programme-appropriate hygienic conditions, increase ventilation and protect against dust, mud and humidity. The CBF also uses a double roof strategy, with corrugated metal and acrylic sheets laid on steel I-beams, set in parallel to the width of the rooms, and supported by earth-block walls. The acrylic sheets ensure that the rooms receive indirect natural light, reducing electrical demand. The second roof is made of a 16.8-square-metre steel grid, supported by a tree-shaped steel structure and reinforced concrete columns, and covered by a recycled PVC canopy, which allows for a 90-centimetre overhang from every side of the platforms. The canopy is tightly stretched to the grid and is sloped to channel rainwater drainage. The cross-ventilation system, with a careful orientation and plentiful shaded areas, provides a significant reduction in the need for air conditioning.

The project makes innovative use of locally available materials and resources to respond in an efficient and responsible manner to climate constraints and reduce cooling needs. The project’s technological and typological solutions, on a par with its social objectives, represent the formal expression of new approaches to community practices promoted by client organisations.