

Diébédo Francis Kéré
Berlin, Germany – Gando, Burkina Faso

Diébédo Francis Kéré was born in 1965 in Burkina Faso, the eldest son of the headman of the village of Gando. At the age of seven, he left home to go to school in Tengodogo. He then trained as a carpenter and found work in Ouagadougou. From 1985, he was employed as an instructor by BMZ, a German NGO which funds technical training workshops in his country. This early contact with Germany allowed him to obtain a scholarship to pursue a secondary education. In 1990, aged 25, he went to Berlin and took his baccalaureate. He then obtained a university grant and chose to study architecture at Technische Universität de Berlin (T.U.), graduating in 2004.

The African T.U. student did not wait to graduate before starting work. In 1998, he created "Schulbausteine für Gando",* an Association that collects funds to build amenities in Burkina Faso "which contribute to development and are suited to the climate". His first building was a primary school in Gando. It is fascinating to see in it how the architect transposes the ecological rationalism taught at the T.U. to the conditions of Gando. As with any good climatic architecture, the school needs to be looked at in section. The transversal view reveals the respective roles of brick walls – which provide compactness and thermal regulation – and an awning roof, separated by a blade of air that cools the building mass. The longitudinal view reveals alternating classrooms and ventilated buffer-spaces, playgrounds, open-air courtyards or grassy areas. For both features, the wide overhanging roof provides shade from the sun and protection for the walls. The school's linear volume is maintained by a concrete chain structure. Walls and ceilings are made of clay blocks. The architect uses little timber, which is in short supply and vulnerable to termites. The roof and roof frame are therefore constructed of welded iron bars and sheet metal made by the village blacksmiths, as are the screens. Cool, well lit and clear in design, the school is a model of the quest for an appropriate solution for an African context. The skills of local bricklayers and metalworkers are employed. Materials found all over Africa are transformed into strong structures, with fine shapes. Francis Kéré believes that stakeholders need to be involved in the development process so that they can appreciate its advantages and drive it forward. "And that is equally true for architecture." In 2004, the Gando school received the Aga Khan Award for Architecture.

Francis Kéré lives between Germany, where he teaches at the T.U. and Burkina Faso. In Berlin, he teaches his students to design urban projects, collective housing and obviously sustainable architecture. As chairman of the Association, he continues his work to fund projects in Burkina Faso that are innovative both in their function (training centres, health

stations, women's house) and in their architecture. The association's biggest partner is the pharmaceutical firm Hevert Arzneimittel, which funded the extension to the Gando school and the library, currently under construction, and intends to provide financial support for Francis Kéré's African projects for the next 10 years. In Gando, Dano, Ouagadougou, the architect is building schools and amenities, all with the same rationality, economy and sober lines, reflecting the truth of the process and of the resources. However, he found it hard to persuade the authorities that such an endogenous architecture can offer something better than imported western models.

Francis Kéré also has projects in India, in Yemen, in Spain ... Worldwide, there is recognition of the benefits of an approach that contributes to national development through an intelligent transposition of ecological rationalism. In Gando, his native village and the epicentre of his work, the school now educates 700 pupils in the much extended building. A boarding centre, garden and classrooms have been added. These will be followed by accommodation for the teachers and a sports ground. For Francis Kéré, this founding project can be summed up as "a climatic concept that permits development whilst saving energy".

Diébédo Francis Kéré , born in 1965 in Gando (Burkina Faso), architect Di Dr T.U. Berlin. Among his projects : a Home for the women in Gando (2009), a research centre in Tenkodogo (2010) and a Community centre in Ouagadougou, in the Burkina Faso; a school for girls in Dattigaon (India) and a prototype school for Yemen.

His works were displayed in the DAM of Frankfurt (Updating Germany - on 2009), in Saragossa (ZaragozaKyoto - Architectures for has sustainable Planet - on 2008) and will be introduced in 2009 in MOMA in New York. Next lectures: Alvar Aalto Architecture Symposium Août 2009, Jyväskylä, Finland; " Step by Step, building schools in Africa " GSAPP, Columbia University, New York; Housing Workshop in Johannesburg Novembre on 2009, Johannesburg. Francis Kéré received in 2004 the Aga Khan Award for Architecture.