

# DISCOVERIES



## GOOD WORKS

# Doctor's Orders

Architectural designer *Sharon Davis* teams with nonprofit Possible Health to bring off-the-grid care to a Nepalese community in need

NEPAL'S BAYALPATA REGIONAL HOSPITAL, BY SHARON DAVIS DESIGN.

In the Achham district of western Nepal, some 600 miles from capital Kathmandu, patients historically have had to travel up to seven days to reach a doctor. Thanks to a new project by the do-good architecture firm Sharon Davis Design, high-quality health care just got closer to home. Working in collaboration with the nonprofit Possible Health and the Nepalese government, the New York-based practice has redesigned and expanded what was an obsolete medical facility. Reborn as the Bayalpata Regional Hospital, the campus now delivers top-level care (both primary and specialized) to this corner of the country. One of the main challenges of the site was the climate: Seasonal temperatures can range from freezing to over 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and there was not sufficient grid reliability to support a traditional heating and cooling system. Inspired by a previous mud-brick project, Davis turned to rammed earth, a low-cost heat-storing material. Unfamiliar with the construction method, locals needed some convincing. “We found one person in Nepal who had been making rammed-earth walls, and he agreed to make a mock-up for us,” explains Davis, who then worked with a structural engineer to perfect the mix of concrete and earth. With it, the firm designed six new hospital buildings (among them an emergency room, pharmacy, and maternity ward), as well as doctors’ housing and visitor dormitories. In most, natural ventilation, breezeways, and ceiling fans help mitigate heat; landscaped courtyards serve as waiting areas; and separate public and private spaces combat the swell of foot traffic while keeping doctors organized. The pitched roofs, familiar to many who hail from the surrounding countryside, are topped with photovoltaic panels designed and supplied by nonprofit SunFarmer. Since it opened in November, the 7.5-acre campus has yielded net positive energy. When building in a remote location, says Davis, “this project is a model of how vernacular materials can be utilized to create modern architecture.”—ELIZABETH FAZZARE

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