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SPIEGEL'S DAILY TAKE: Tsunami-safe homes



One thousand Sri Lankan families may soon get a tsunami-safe home.

An American architect who survived last year's South Asian tsunami has come up with a high-tech solution to an ancient conundrum: how to outsmart Mother Nature. Carlo Ratti, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has developed a low-cost (\$1,000-\$1,500) [Sri Lankan house](#) that will allow raging ocean water to wash through and under a home rather than knocking it flat. Ratti claims his houses are five times safer than traditional Sri Lankan models and could help save many lives. The best part about the high-tech design is its low tech materials -- all available locally. In order to stand firm, the houses will have four core blocks made of concrete and the walls will be made of wood or bamboo. They will also sit on top of concrete blocks a few feet above ground, which will allow storm waters to whoosh beneath them.

The best part: Ratti is not only a thinker, but also a doer. With help from MIT's Prajnopaya Buddhist Foundation, he has collected numerous donations and in July he plans to start building 1,000 of his "tsunami safe" houses on Sri Lanka. Anyone who lost a home in the flood is eligible. That is no small number. The flood killed an estimated 40,000 Sri Lankans and 100,000 are still living in make-shift shelters. (11 a.m. CET)

[Back](#) [to Press Gallery](#)

