World Heritage Lahore Fort in 2003, Lari used her experience of working with mud on some of her earliest projects – the barracks in Bahawalpur of the early ’80s, and a couple of schools built near Karachi – to rehabilitate the earthquake victims. Donor agencies offered help but, faced with this devastation, building traditions were eschewed in favour of prefab housing, concrete structures and galvanised iron sheets. Using mud, lime, stone and wood from the debris to make houses that were both cost-effective and eco-friendly, Lari worked with a large number of people who had lost everything. With a team of volunteers she taught people to use indigenous materials to build better and safer, encouraging the victims to work on a self-help basis rather than depending on government assistance.

Since this about-turn post-retirement, Lari’s work has had a significant impact on marginalised communities not only in Pakistan but also further afield. ‘At the time I enjoyed using expensive building materials such as large glass panels, polished granite and steel trusses’, Lari reflects, ‘and perhaps with my present work I am atoning for the damage I caused with my earlier projects’, although as she points out, even then she managed to build a few structures using sustainable materials.

This shift in her work was not as out of the blue as it might first appear. In her initial years after graduating from Oxford Brookes School of Architecture, Lari...