

Ánako Aps Design for Dignity

Design as a tool of solidarity for
humanitarian emergencies and
highly vulnerable territories



What Ánako is

Who we are

Ánako APS is a social design laboratory based in the hills of Parma. We design and deliver concrete solutions for people living in extreme conditions: newborns, mothers, the elderly, patients, and families displaced by war, disasters, and climate crises. We are not a traditional NGO. We come from over twenty years of experience in industrial design, and we work with the same rigor used to develop a market-ready product: needs assessment, prototyping, testing, industrialization, and impact measurement.

What we do

We work along four main axes:

- protection of newborns and the mother–infant dyad
- access to safe water, energy and basic hygiene
- solutions for extreme and unstable climatic conditions
- low-resource emergency medical tools

Every project begins with a real problem observed in the field, and is developed as a real product—complete with technical specifications, cost constraints, logistics requirements, and safety standards.

Who we work with

- Universities and design schools in Italy and abroad
- NGOs, foundations, and humanitarian organizations
- Companies willing to put materials, technologies, and skills at the service of those who have no voice
- Professionals from different countries (designers, doctors, technicians, researchers) who volunteer their expertise in Ánako projects



Why we founded Ánako

Every year, millions of refugees, including adults, children, and newborns are forced to live in conditions no health system would consider acceptable: births in makeshift shelters, overcrowded tents, damaged buildings, improvised reception centers.

In contexts of war, forced migration, or climate disaster, basic items we take for granted are often missing: a safe cradle, a life vest suitable for a baby, a support for blood bags, a thermal blanket.

Most of the time, improvised or repurposed devices are used whatever can be found, whatever is cheapest, whatever “more or less works.”

“The truth is that most objects used in emergencies were never designed for emergencies. They are the result of compromises.

Ánako was created to fill this gap: to design using the methods and skills of Product Design, what is truly needed when everything else has collapsed.

Simple, robust, intelligent objects that help NGOs, doctors, and field operators work better, and help people survive with a minimum of dignity.

“Most objects used in emergencies were never designed for emergencies.”



Design for Dignity

Our approach is based on three key principles

1. Designing to protect life and dignity

Every object must first and foremost save lives or reduce real risks. But “functioning” is not enough, we design with:

- conditions of stress, fear, and fatigue in mind
- different bodies, cultures, and habits
- an aesthetic that respects rather than humiliates those who receive it

We do not want “poor products for poor people”; we want essential yet well-designed tools that do not make people feel like the discarded ones of the system.



2. Local production and circular approach

Where possible, Ánako projects are designed to:

- be produced partly or entirely locally, with local companies or workshops
- use renewable, recycled, or easily available materials
- be repairable, disassemblable, recyclable, reducing waste and cost

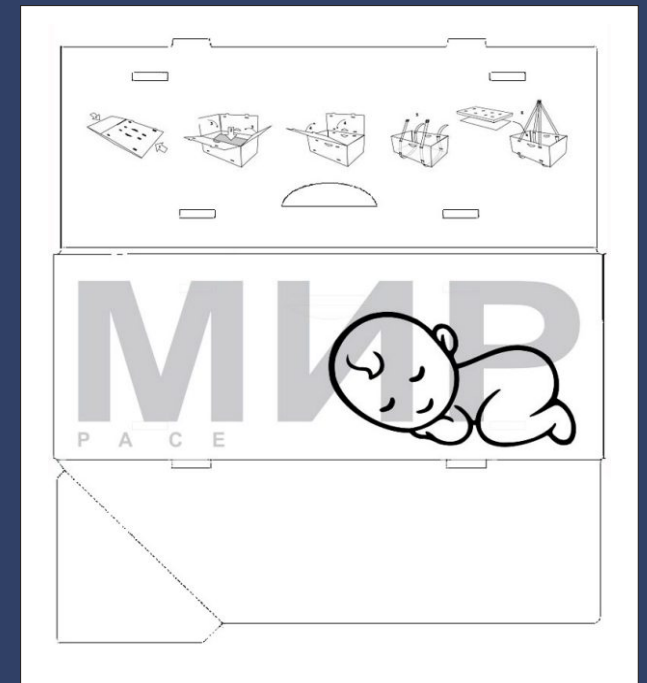
This approach reduces dependence on international shipments and fosters skills and micro-supply-chains in the communities involved.



3. Training and knowledge transfer

Each project includes diagrams, visual instructions, technical documentation, and workshops with universities and NGOs.

We do not want to be indispensable. We want solutions to be replicable, adaptable, and improvable even without us.



Some of our Projects - 1

Three emblematic examples of our work.
Not the whole of Ánako, but a good indicator of how we design and what our objectives are.

Emergency Folding Cradle an emergency cradle

When a baby is born in an emergency, they are often placed on makeshift beds, tables, or boxes. Space, hygiene, and protection are lacking. A cradle although temporary, is already a first safe boundary in a newborn's life.

Emergency Folding Cradle is a system of foldable cradles made of structural cardboard and certified materials, designed to:

- be shipped flat and assembled in minutes without tools
- provide a clean, protected, elevated surface
- be mass-produced with controlled costs and, where possible, local supply chains

In the last two years, over 1,000 Ánako cradles have been delivered, in collaboration with NGOs and foundations, to countries affected by war or disaster including Ukraine, Türkiye, Syria, and a new production is underway for Gaza.

The project was developed with design students, artisans, local companies, and international partners.

The cradle is not only functional: it sends a message “*someone thought of you before you arrived here*” This is what design should do in emergencies.



Some of our Projects - 2

Kanguro – the life jacket that keeps mother and newborn together

Today most life jackets are designed for adults or older children. Mothers and babies crossing the sea often rely on improvised means, holding the baby in their arms.

Kanguro is the first life jacket specifically designed for the mother–newborn dyad in emergency situations.

It is designed to:

- keep two bodies with very different weights safely afloat
- maintain the newborn in a stable, protected, body-to-body position
- allow the mother limited but necessary mobility
- be put on quickly, even in chaotic conditions

The project was developed with designers and safety experts at *Veleria San Giorgio*, a leading company in marine safety.

Work focused on:

- water ergonomics
- placement of buoyancy volumes
- robust yet intuitive closure systems
- certified materials for marine use

A fundraising campaign is supporting the first production batches, destined for NGO operating along the most dangerous migration routes. Kanguro is a safety device designed with the same rigor as technical sports equipment, but intended for those who risk their lives crossing the Mediterranean.



Some of our Projects - 3

BloodBalance – a support system for plasma bags in emergencies

In emergencies, blood and its derivatives are both vital and extremely fragile resources. Bags are moved, hung, transported, and used in spaces far from proper hospital conditions: tents, improvised corridors, overloaded ambulances, temporary medical centers. In many cases, supports are improvised tripods, hooks, or unstable structures that increase the risk of errors, contamination, or waste.

BloodBalance was created to address this overlooked problem. It is a support system for plasma and blood bags specifically designed to:

- provide a stable, safe anchor point in provisional environments
- be quickly assembled by non-specialized personnel
- minimize weight, volume, and transport complexity
- remain lightweight and fully disassemblable
- be producible at accessible cost
- be compatible with existing NGO and field-hospital protocols

BloodBalance is the third piece in Ánako's work: after the emergency cradle and the mother-newborn life jacket, we focus on the heart of many life-saving procedures, blood and its proper management.

Project developed in collaboration with IUAV University of Venice, Vicenza campus by Ambra Matilde, Liani Valentina and Piai Sabrina



Why Ánako is different

What we do that others do not

Roots in Product Design

We start from the problem.

We translate humanitarian needs into technical product specifications, then build the supply chain around them.

A network of design schools and universities

Every year we involve hundreds of students and professors in real projects. This allows us to explore many more variables in less time and to constantly generate innovative solutions.

Ability to speak “the language of industry”

We understand production cycles, costs, materials, certifications, logistics, industrialization.

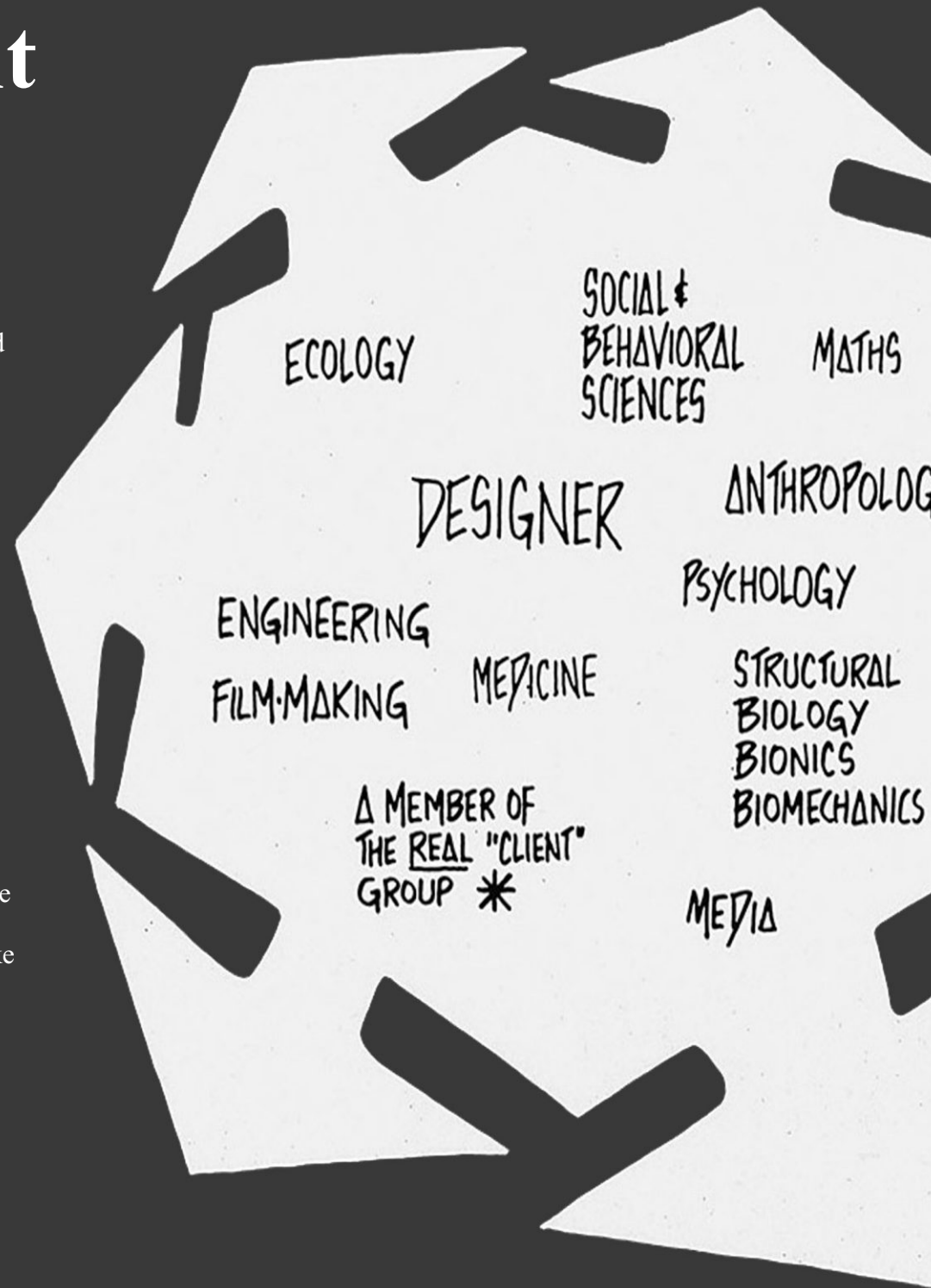
We don't just ask for donations, we propose co-projects.

Dual impact measurement

We measure how many people we reach, of course, but also: how many units can be produced, at what cost, with which materials, with what CO2 reduction.

This combination of design, social impact, and production chains is Ánako's true uniqueness.

It allows us to be credible with NGOs, universities, and international brands alike without changing language each time.



Possible forms of collaboration

Ánako collaborates with companies, foundations, universities, and NGOs in several concrete ways.

1. Co-development of emergency solutions

Partners contribute materials, technologies, R&D, engineering, or clinical expertise. Ánako contributes real needs, user-centered humanitarian design, and access to NGOs and field operators.

- Outcome: a solution that makes technical sense for the partner and human sense for those who use it.

2. Targeted funding of products/projects

Companies, foundations, and institutions can fund the production of defined Ánako solutions (e.g., X Kanguro vests, Y BloodBalance units, Z emergency cradles) destined for specific humanitarian missions.

- Outcome: measurable, verifiable impact, with clear numbers and destinations.

3. Joint educational and research programs

Challenges, workshops, studios, or masterclasses with design universities, co-signed by Ánako and the partner. Topics: social design, circular design, emergency design, new materials, new supply chains.

- Outcome: new competencies, real experimentation, and positioning of the partner as a credible actor in responsible innovation.

4. Exhibitions and experiential installations

Exhibitions presenting “design for survival”: objects, stories, data, testimonies. They can be hosted in corporate spaces, museums, universities, foundations, or cultural festivals.

- Outcome: a strong narrative linking the partner’s identity to protection and responsibility beyond conventional communication.

5. Tailor-made humanitarian/social projects

Ánako co-designs custom humanitarian initiatives based on:

- what the partner produces and the skills it possesses
- the territories or themes it wants to engage with (sea, climate, health, childhood, etc.)
- its desired impact and positioning goals

- Outcome: a unique initiative, aligned with Ánako’s mission and the partner’s identity—not “standardized,” but truly their own.



AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS 2023–2025

Over the past two years, Ánako APS has been recognized with several international awards in design, social innovation, and sustainability.

Seoul Design Award 2025 – Best of the Best

Awarded for social impact and design quality, selected among 960 projects worldwide.

ADI Design Index 2025 – Compasso d'Oro Pre-selection. Inclusion in the official Italian selection for the Compasso d'Oro, Italy's most prestigious design award.

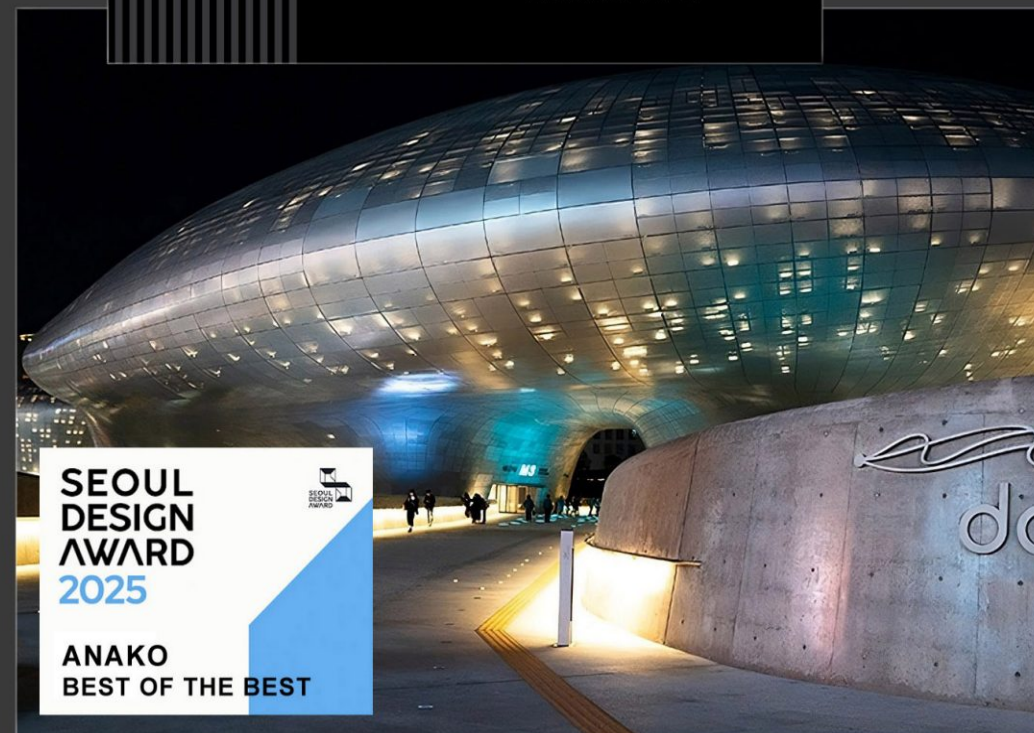
Angelo Ferro Award 2025 – Finalist - Recognizing outstanding social innovation.

World Sustainability Awards 2025 – Social Enterprise Finalist
Shortlisted among the most innovative social enterprises worldwide.

Welfare, che Impresa! 2024 – First Prize Awarded by Fondazione Accenture, for a replicable, locally grounded model capable of generating employment and social innovation.

Creativepool Annual 2023 – Silver Award (Social Good) Recognized for combining creativity, design, and real impact for vulnerable communities.

These recognitions attest to the technical robustness of our projects and their relevance in the international landscape of design and social innovation.



Membership & Network

Ánako APS is actively part of several national and international networks dedicated to design, social innovation, sustainability, and cooperation.

World Design Organization (WDO) – Official Member

One of the world's most authoritative institutions in industrial design. Ánako APS joined in 2025, becoming part of a highly selective global network of studios, institutions, and organizations shaping design standards.

ADI – Associazione per il Disegno Industriale

Italy's main design association. Ánako participates in professional activities and initiatives on design for social impact.

New European Bauhaus (NEB) – Community Partner

EU program promoting sustainable, inclusive, forward-looking design.

CNA – Artigiani e Imprenditori d'Italia

Collaboration with CNA Parma and the national network on circular design, training, and social innovation.

CSV Emilia – Volunteer Service Center

Part of the regional network supporting training, social planning, and Third Sector initiatives.

CO.DI.RE – Awareness, Dialogue, Responsibility

AICS-supported program for Global Citizenship Education. Ánako contributes to activities on human rights, sustainability, and social responsibility.

ART-ER & Emilia-Romagna Open Innovation – Community Member

Part of the regional platform for innovation and sustainable development promoted by ART-ER.





Design for Solidarity and Social Innovation

Ánako Aps
Via Faviano Superiore 49
43037 Lesignano de' Bagni (PR) – Italy
www.anako.it

mail: info@anako.it
tel. +39 0521 1792113
tel. +39 0521 1626431