

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: FROM SHELTER TO CITIZENSHIP:
ESTABLISHING SAFETY, AUTONOMY
AND BELONGING FOR DISPLACED
WOMEN THROUGH ARCHITECTURE

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Displacement increasingly functions as a long-term condition rather than a temporary interruption, shaping everyday life for women across refugee camps, informal settlements, and urban transitional shelters. These environments often prioritize efficiency and control while neglecting privacy, safety, and autonomy. Women experience heightened vulnerability within spaces designed around an abstract, neutral user that rarely reflects the gendered realities of care, trauma, and mobility. This thesis examines how architecture participates in the production of vulnerability and how it may also support recovery, agency, and belonging. Feminist spatial theory, displacement studies, climate research, and participatory governance literature establish a framework for understanding shelter as civic infrastructure rather than emergency accommodation. The project proposes a Transitional Architecture of Care that integrates spatial safety, participatory governance, and communal infrastructures. Design strategies focus on layered thresholds, shared care spaces, climate-responsive construction, and co-governance

models. The work positions architecture as a medium through which displaced women move from survival toward autonomy and civic presence.

FROM SHELTER TO CITIZENSHIP: ESTABLISHING SAFETY, AUTONOMY
AND BELONGING FOR DISPLACED WOMEN THROUGH ARCHITECTURE

by

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the women whose lives are shaped by displacement, uncertainty, and the continuous work of rebuilding safety. Their strength, endurance, and care for one another form the foundation of this project.

It is also dedicated to the women of Bangladesh and the Rohingya community whose experiences informed the questions at the heart of this thesis. This work is offered with respect for their resilience, their dignity, and their right to spaces that support belonging, autonomy, and hope.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my family, whose sacrifices, encouragement, and faith made this journey possible. Their love has been the ground on which my education, my work, and my aspirations have been built.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Area

Displacement is no longer a temporary interruption but an enduring form of global urbanization. Around the world, millions of people live for years, often decades, in refugee camps, informal settlements, and transitional shelters that were never intended for long-term habitation.¹ These environments are dense, under-resourced, and precarious, with spatial conditions that profoundly shape daily life.² Women, in particular, experience heightened vulnerability in these contexts: lack of privacy, gender-based violence, unsafe circulation paths, and limited control over their environments. Their social and emotional well-being is directly affected by how space is organized, surveilled, and shared.³

Yet humanitarian design continues to approach displacement as an emergency scenario. Shelters and aid infrastructures are designed for speed and efficiency, not dignity or autonomy.⁴ As a result, women are forced to rebuild their lives in spaces

¹ Oliver-Smith, Anthony. *Defying displacement: Grassroots resistance and the critique of development*. University of Texas Press, 2010.

² Chant, Sylvia, Caroline Moser, and Cathy McIlwaine. *Cities, slums and gender in the global south: Towards a feminised urban future*. London: Routledge, 2015.

³ Ulrike Krause, "Escaping Conflicts and Being Safe? Post-Conflict Refugee Camps and the Continuum of Violence," in *Gender, Violence, Refugees*, ed. Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Ulrike Krause (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 37–54.

⁴ Miriam I. Ticktin, *Casualties of Care: Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

that were not designed with their voices, cultural needs, or emotional realities in mind.⁵

This condition is not limited to distant camps. In urban regions like the DMV, newly arrived refugee and migrant women navigate a parallel landscape: temporary shelters, overstretched service centers, transitional apartments, and community organizations.⁶ These spaces, often fragmented and programmatically rigid, shape how women access resources, form relationships, and rebuild identity. They are not simply shelters; they are the first civic infrastructures women encounter in a new country.⁷

This thesis identifies this in-between terrain between displacement and belonging as an urgent architectural problem. If displacement is prolonged, then transitional environments must evolve from provisional shelters into civic spaces that restore dignity, foster safety, and support autonomy.

Problem Statement

Women who have experienced displacement inhabit environments that are materially insufficient and conceptually misaligned with their lived realities. Most humanitarian and social-service architectures are designed around a “neutral user,” a universal, abstract figure who rarely reflects the needs of women navigating trauma,

⁵ Jean Calterone Williams, *A Roof over My Head: Homeless Women and the Shelter Industry* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016).

⁶ Hilary Botein and Andrea Hetling, *Home Safe Home: Housing Solutions for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016)

⁷ Yasminah Beebeejaun, “Gender, Urban Space, and the Right to Everyday Life,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 39, no. 3 (2017): 323–34.

caregiving responsibilities, cultural expectations, or safety concerns. The resulting spaces often restrict autonomy, limit participation, and reinforce cycles of vulnerability.⁸

In refugee camps, informal settlements, and host-city shelters, women frequently lack control over circulation, privacy, and access to resources. Residential units are overcrowded; communal facilities are unsafe; pathways are poorly lit or unmonitored; and programmatic spaces rarely support healing, economic independence, or community-building.⁹ Even in metropolitan contexts like Washington, D.C. and the larger DMV region, transitional shelters and refugee service centers replicate this issue: they provide safety but often fail to foster a sense of belonging, agency, or long-term stability.¹⁰

This mismatch between spatial design and women's lived realities produces environments that trap women between the need for survival and the desire for participation. They are physically present but often civically invisible.¹¹

Possible Built Environment Response

A built environment that truly supports displaced women must do more than provide shelter; it must cultivate autonomy, participation, and belonging. This thesis proposes a **Transitional Architecture of Care**, a design approach that merges the

⁸ Jos Boys, "Women and the Designed Environment: Dealing with Difference," *Built Environment* 16, no. 4 (1990): 259–267.

⁹ Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Ulrike Krause, eds., *Gender, Violence, Refugees* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017).

¹⁰ Williams, "A Roof over My Head"

¹¹ Beebeejaun, "Gender, Urban Space," 329.

immediacy of refuge with the long-term infrastructures of civic life. Instead of treating transitional environments as brief stopovers, this framework acknowledges them as formative periods during which identity, trust, and community are rebuilt.

Spatial Safety and Dignity

Architectural interventions such as layered thresholds, supervised sightlines, gender-sensitive circulation routes, and culturally informed privacy gradients can transform environments of fear into environments of psychological ease.¹² Safety is not simply the absence of danger; it is the presence of spatial conditions that allow women to move freely, rest, socialize, and make decisions without surveillance or threat.¹³

Agency Through Participation

A feminist and participatory lens positions women not only as end-users but as co-authors of space. Participation can occur through co-building workshops, adaptable room layouts, shared garden spaces, and maintenance systems that strengthen ownership and skill-building. This shifts the architectural narrative from “designing for women” to designing with women.¹⁴

¹² Kristen Day, “Constructing Masculinity and Women’s Fear in Public Space,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 8, no. 2 (2001): 109–127.

¹³ Beebeejaun, “Gender, Urban Space,” 329.

¹⁴ Bina Agarwal, *Gender and Green Governance: The Political Economy of Women’s Presence within Community Forestry Institutions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Communal Infrastructures and Social Networks

Communal kitchens, protected courtyards, child-friendly areas, workshop spaces, and culturally responsive gathering zones nurture mutual aid, collective care, and relational stability. These shared spaces function as civic infrastructures where women can learn, organize, support one another, and rebuild community networks essential for transition.¹⁵

Pathways to Integration

Programmatic elements such as classrooms, legal literacy hubs, microenterprise spaces, counseling rooms, and communal governance areas bridge survival and citizenship. Through these, architecture becomes a scaffold for economic independence and civic participation.

Through these principles, the built environment becomes a stabilizing force, supporting women not only in times of crisis but in the long-term process of belonging.¹⁶

Structure of the Thesis Document

This thesis develops its argument through a sequence of interconnected chapters that build from theory to methodology to design. Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical foundation by synthesizing literature on feminist spatial theory,

¹⁵ Chant, Moser, and McIlwaine, *Cities, Slums and Gender in the Global South*, 112–14.

¹⁶ Hilary Botein and Andrea Hetling, *Home Safe Home*.

displacement, care ethics, participatory architecture, and environmental psychology. Organized into thematic subchapters, the literature review constructs the conceptual framework that guides the project's priorities: safety, autonomy, participation, and belonging.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological foundation of the research, drawing heavily from Ray Lucas's approach to fieldwork, mapping, embodied observation, and interdisciplinary inquiry. It explains how qualitative, subjective, spatial, and participatory methods shape the research process, informing precedent selection, site selection, program development, and conceptual design.

Chapter 4 analyzes a series of precedent projects selected for their relevance to gendered space, transitional infrastructures, community-led building, and civic participation. Each precedent contributes a specific lesson that advances the thesis narrative.

Chapter 5 develops the program and conceptual zones that support a Transitional Architecture of Care, integrating insights from literature, precedents, and methodological research.

Chapter 6 extends the inquiry into site selection and analysis, examining potential locations and their socio-spatial conditions.

Finally, Chapter 7 presents the early discovery-phase design explorations, connecting research to the architectural proposition.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter examines how feminist architecture, gender studies, displacement research, and climate resilience shape both the design and lived experience of shelters. It argues that shelters are not neutral or equally protective but often reproduce power structures and gender inequality. The profession's notion of a 'neutral user' is inherently gendered, prioritizing men's experiences and often disregarding women's needs for privacy, safety, and dignity.¹⁷ The review is structured around four interconnected subthemes. First, Feminist Architecture and the "Neutral User" establishes a theoretical foundation by critiquing conventional notions of universal design and introducing models prioritizing care and inclusivity. Second, Violence, Displacement, and the Gendered Shelter examines how shelter design may reinforce patriarchal harm through surveillance, overcrowding, and symbolic violence, emphasizing the necessity of counteractive design strategies. Third, Climate Change, Migration, and Women's Vulnerabilities connect environmental threats to gendered displacement and argues that climate resilience must necessarily integrate feminist perspectives. Finally, Participation, Agency, and Governance explore how shelters can transcend paternalistic frameworks by integrating women's decision-making into organizational structures. The chapter posits that shelter design constitutes not only emergency accommodation but also essential infrastructure for feminist care, resilience, and justice. Ultimately, architecture shapes social equality,

¹⁷ Beebejaun, "Gender, Urban Space," 323–334.

either perpetuating or challenging inequity. The review frames this thesis as both a design and political proposition, aiming to redefine shelters as spaces of genuine protection and empowerment for women.

Subtheme 1: Feminist Architecture and the “Neutral User”

The Neutral User as a Masculinized Construct

Architecture claims neutrality with standardized layouts. Feminist scholars argue this neutrality hides bias: the 'neutral user' is modeled on male experiences and priorities.¹⁸ Women, especially those with caregiving or safety needs, are excluded. Historically, the pursuit of design universality has ignored women's needs.¹⁹ Recognizing this bias is key to creating feminist shelter designs that address inequality. Jos Boys' foundational essays challenge this myth of neutrality.²⁰ In “Women and the Designed Environment: Dealing with Difference,” Boys argues that architecture tends to erase difference by assuming a universal subject. This “user” is stripped of gender, race, or cultural context. But this is not truly a universal body. In practice, it is a male body. Neutrality becomes a way of ignoring the specific needs of women and other marginalized groups.²¹ Boys reframes difference not as a problem to be solved, but as a condition of design itself. This critique remains directly relevant to feminist shelter design. Shelters are frequently regarded as marginal, temporary, or exceptional typologies. If Boys is correct, the task is not simply to insert women into

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Marion Roberts, *Living in a Man-Made World: Gender Assumptions in Modern Housing Design* (London: Routledge, 2025).

²⁰ Jos Boys, “Is There a Feminist Analysis of Architecture?” *Built Environment* 10, no. 1 (1984): 25–34

²¹ Boys, “Women and the Designed Environment,” 259–267.

extant frameworks of neutrality, but rather to reconstruct these frameworks so that women's requirements for privacy, dignity, and autonomy become central. Shelters, therefore, do not constitute exceptions to architectural norms; instead, they reveal the discipline's biases and provide occasions to reimagine the very foundations of architectural thought.²²

Historical Precedents for Feminist Architecture

If Boys exposes the problem of universality, Dolores Hayden demonstrates that feminist alternatives have long existed. In *The Grand Domestic Revolution* (1981), Hayden recovers a history of women-led experiments in housing and community planning that restructured domestic life to reduce women's burdens and redistribute labor.²³ Collective kitchens, shared laundries, and cooperative childcare facilities transformed the home from a private site of isolation into a collective infrastructure of empowerment.

For this thesis, Hayden is invaluable. She situates shelter design within a broader historical context of feminist spatial interventions. The communal experiments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries anticipate contemporary debates regarding privacy, safety, and collective care in shelters. These examples illustrate that architecture has consistently possessed the capacity to challenge gendered norms, even when such experiments have been marginalized

²² Helen Hills, review of *Feminism, Architecture, and the Poor Rich Man*, by Debra Coleman, Elizabeth Danze, and Carol Henderson, *Oxford Art Journal* 21, no. 2 (1998): 101–103.

²³ Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981).

within the architectural canon. Hayden thus establishes a sense of continuity between the past and the present, demonstrating that shelters today are part of an ongoing feminist project that mobilizes space as an instrument of social transformation.²⁴

Rewriting Architectural History

Helen Hills extends Hayden's work by questioning the basic categories of architectural history. In *Feminism, Architecture, and the Poor Rich Man* (1998), Hills argues that the architecture canon has been built on masculinized values. It privileges the monumental, the formal, and the abstract while neglecting the domestic, the social, and the everyday.²⁵ She shows that architectural history has not just overlooked women's contributions. It has defined its categories of authorship and value in ways that make women's interventions invisible.

From this perspective, feminist shelters are not just pragmatic humanitarian interventions. They are historiographic acts. Designing a women's shelter becomes an intellectual and cultural challenge to architectural orthodoxy. To build such a space is to critique the history of who architecture has served and what it has considered worthy of design. For a feminist architect, the shelter is not at the margins. It is at the center of architectural discourse, a place where the canon itself can be rewritten.²⁶

Gendered Housing and Everyday Empowerment

Marion Roberts brings these debates into the realm of modern housing. In *Living in a Man-Made World* (1991), Roberts examines how twentieth-century

²⁴ Hayden, *Grand Domestic Revolution*, 3–28.

²⁵ Hills, "Review of *Feminism, Architecture, and the Poor Rich Man*," 195

²⁶ Hills, "Review of *Feminism, Architecture, and the Poor Rich Man*," 197

housing projects were shaped by gendered assumptions. Modernist housing often relegated women to private domestic spheres. It overlooked their needs for childcare, flexible layouts, and community support. Roberts shows how design choices around privacy, autonomy, and collective space directly influence social hierarchies.²⁷

Her findings have two essential implications for shelter design. First, shelters should provide not only protection but also empowerment. If modernist housing reinforced women's dependency, feminist shelters must invert this logic by promoting autonomy and spatial control. Second, Roberts argues that feminist design principles, privacy, flexibility, and the integration of childcare should inform all housing typologies. This applies not just to shelters. In this sense, feminist shelter design becomes a prototype for systemic reform in housing and urban design.²⁸

Care as a Democratic Practice

Joan Tronto, in *Caring Democracy* (2013), brings a vital ethical perspective to feminist architecture. She sees care as a political principle, not just a private virtue. Societies are defined by how they support their most vulnerable members. Applied to architecture, this lens reframes shelter as an enactment of justice. Elements like walls, thresholds, and circulation patterns become ethical instruments. They organize relationships of care, trust, and autonomy.²⁹

²⁷ Roberts, *Living in a Man-Made World*

²⁸ Roberts, *Living in a Man-Made World*, 112–145.

²⁹ Joan C. Tronto, *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

Tronto's argument elevates shelter design from humanitarian relief to civic infrastructure. Privacy is care. Autonomy is care. Access to shared resources is key. A feminist shelter materializes democracy through spatial generosity and relational dignity. When architecture centers care as a design value, it transforms from a reactive practice into a proactive form of governance. Ethics become visible in-built form.³⁰

Synthesis: From Critique to Framework

Boys challenge the myth of neutrality. Hayden elucidates historical examples of collective feminist design. Hills reframes architectural history to address inclusion. Roberts demonstrates how design influences empowerment. Tronto asserts that care is essential for justice. Collectively, these scholars offer a framework for feminist architecture grounded in difference, historical recovery, care, and empowerment as central elements of spatial justice.³¹

This framework forms the basis for the rest of the literature review. It shows that feminist shelter design is not just a specialized exercise in humanitarian architecture. Rather, it is the redefinition of architecture as a discipline capable of addressing structural inequities through space, care, and participation.

The Continuum of Violence

Shelters are often seen as havens from violence, instability, and displacement. Yet feminist and humanitarian scholars repeatedly show that these structures can also

³⁰ Tronto, *Caring Democracy*, 22–45.

³¹ Jos Boys, "Women and the Designed Environment," 262

reproduce the hierarchies and harms they aim to resist. Violence, as theorized by Johan Galtung and later expanded by Pierre Bourdieu and Mohammad Musfequs Salehin, is not limited to overt physical harm. It extends into the structural and symbolic conditions of everyday life.³²

Galtung's concept of structural violence describes how institutions and systems embed inequality into social organization. Bourdieu adds that symbolic violence operates through cultural and social norms that naturalize oppression. Salehin's ethnographic work on Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh applies these frameworks to humanitarian contexts, revealing how spatial management zoning, surveillance, and restrictions on mobility become a form of control disguised as care. In the Rohingya camps of Cox's Bazar, curfews, gender-segregated zones, and watchtowers intended to ensure safety also reinforce subordination. Violence persists not because of physical aggression alone, but because of architectural and bureaucratic systems that deny agency.³³

This continuum perspective reframes how shelter is understood. Violence is not simply what shelters protect against; it is often embedded in the logic of protection itself. The assumption that security requires surveillance or that safety requires confinement turns protection into a mechanism of control. Feminist design must reimagine shelter as a site of liberation rather than containment.³⁴

³² Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001)

³³ Mohammad Musfequs Salehin, "Rohingya Refugees and the Continuum of Violence," in *Gender, Violence, Refugees*, ed. Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Ulrike Krause (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 215–232.

³⁴ Ticktin, *Casualties of Care*, 45.

Shelters as Sites of Surveillance

Jean Calterone Williams's *A Roof Over My Head* (1998) offers a powerful account of homeless women navigating the U.S. shelter system. Her participants describe shelters not as sanctuaries, but as institutions that humiliate and monitor. Constant oversight, rigid schedules, and a lack of privacy produce environments of mistrust. Williams notes that women frequently compare shelters to prison spaces where dependency is enforced rather than autonomy restored.³⁵

Donna Haig Friedman's *Parenting in Public* (2000) extends this argument to family shelters, documenting how mothers are subject to moral scrutiny and bureaucratic intrusion. Friedman argues that shelter policies, designed to "help," often punish women for poverty and displacement. Rules about cleanliness, curfews, and parenting routines institutionalize suspicion.³⁶ Similarly, Paula Meth's research on domestic violence shelters shows that even spaces designed explicitly for protection can reproduce patriarchal power through architectural and managerial control.³⁷

Together, these studies reveal that shelter architecture cannot be separated from governance. Floor plans, sightlines, and access points materialize hierarchies of authority. A design that privileges staff oversight over resident privacy reduces resident privacy to surveillance. The feminist challenge is to dismantle these spatial

³⁵ Jean Calterone Williams, *A Roof over My Head*, 45–47.

³⁶ Donna Haig Friedman, *Parenting in Public: Family Shelter and Public Assistance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

³⁷ Paula Meth, "Informal Housing, Gender, Crime and Violence: The Role of Design in Urban South Africa," *British Journal of Criminology* 57, no. 2 (2017): 402–421.

hierarchies without compromising security, creating environments where safety and autonomy coexist.³⁸

Humanitarian Neutrality and Its Contradictions

In humanitarian architecture, neutrality is often celebrated as a moral ideal. Yet, as Julie Mertus argues in *War's Offensive on Women* (2000), neutrality can mask complicity. Humanitarian agencies that claim impartiality frequently impose one-size-fits-all models that ignore gendered needs. Shelters in Bosnia and Kosovo, for example, were planned as “universal” spaces, yet women faced harassment, exposure, and inadequate sanitation because gendered realities were overlooked.³⁹

Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Ulrike Krause's *Gender, Violence, Refugees* (2017) further reveals that camp infrastructure often replicates patriarchal hierarchies. The placement of toilets, food distribution points, and water sources, seemingly technical details, can determine women's exposure to danger.⁴⁰ Doreen Indra's *Engendering Forced Migration* (1999) reaches similar conclusions, arguing that humanitarian responses frame women as dependents rather than decision-makers and embed vulnerability in spatial arrangements.⁴¹

Judy El-Bushra and Eugenia Piza-Lopez's work on gender and conflict (1993) remains one of the earliest to articulate this paradox: when shelters prioritize

³⁸ Williams, *A Roof over My Head*, 89–112.

³⁹ Julie A. Mertus, “War's Offensive on Women: The Humanitarian Challenge in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (2001).

⁴⁰ Ulrike Krause, “Escaping Conflicts and Being Safe?” 45.

⁴¹ Doreen Indra, ed., *Engendering Forced Migration: Theory and Practice* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999)

protection over empowerment, they reproduce dependency.⁴² Miriam Ticktin's *Casualties of Care* (2011) captures this tension poignantly, showing how "care" within humanitarian regimes often harms as much as it helps. Her concept of "humanitarian reason" exposes the contradiction between moral intent and structural disempowerment.⁴³

These critiques converge on a single point: neutrality is not neutral. By ignoring differences, humanitarian design often perpetuates gendered harm. A feminist shelter must reject neutrality in favor of situated, participatory, and contextually responsive approaches.

Spatial Geographies of Fear

Kristen Day's research on gendered urban safety in *Environment and Behavior* (2001) adds another dimension: the geography of fear. Day demonstrates how lighting, visibility, and circulation in public space shape women's sense of security. These insights apply directly to contexts of displacement. A poorly lit path to a latrine or an isolated entryway can undo the safety of an entire shelter. Safety cannot be confined to walls; it extends across thresholds and into surrounding landscapes.⁴⁴

Salehin's work in the Rohingya camps similarly illustrates how fear is spatially produced. Pathways without lighting, overcrowded communal spaces, and restricted mobility all contribute to a sense of constant vulnerability. Feminist spatial

⁴² Judy El-Bushra and Eugenia Piza Lopez, *Development in Conflict: The Gender Dimension* (Oxford: Oxfam GB, 1999). <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/handle/10546/121074>

⁴³ Ticktin, *Casualties of Care*, 4–7.

⁴⁴ Day, "Constructing Masculinity and Women's Fear," 120.

practice must therefore treat the surrounding environment, not just the building, as part of the shelter. The boundary between “inside” and “outside” is porous; both must be designed with care.⁴⁵

Intersecting Forms of Harm

Violence in shelters operates through the intersection of structural, cultural, and direct harm. Structural violence appears as overcrowding, bureaucratic dependency, or resource scarcity. Cultural violence manifests through gender norms that restrict movement or stigmatize survivors. Direct violence persists in harassment, assault, or coercion. These forces converge to produce a complex ecology of vulnerability.⁴⁶

In domestic violence shelters, for instance, rules that prohibit privacy may prevent physical harm but inflict psychological control. In refugee camps, gender-segregated zones protect modesty but isolate women from community life. In homeless shelters, shared sleeping areas intended for efficiency erase dignity. In all these examples, architecture participates in the reproduction of violence by materializing control through form.⁴⁷

To counter these patterns, feminist theory calls for a redefinition of safety itself. Safety must extend beyond physical protection to include autonomy, trust, and dignity. Feminist design reinterprets the shelter not as an institution of containment

⁴⁵ Mohammad Musfequs Salehin, “Gendered Violence and the Rohingya Refugee Crisis,” in *Gender, Violence, Refugees*, ed. Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Ulrike Krause (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 155–172.

⁴⁶ Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” *Organicom* 15, no. 28 (2018): 33–56.

⁴⁷ Williams, *A Roof over My Head*, 145–147.

but as a sanctuary of self-determination. Privacy is reconceived not as isolation but as agency, the ability to regulate one's exposure and participation.⁴⁸

This redefinition transforms the function of shelter. Instead of protecting women from the world, feminist architecture seeks to reconnect them to it through spaces that nurture healing, restore identity, and rebuild collective life. The design of shelter becomes an act of resistance against the violence of erasure, dependency, and silence.⁴⁹

Synthesis: Architecture as Resistance

The literature on violence and displacement exposes the paradox at the heart of shelter: that spaces built for care can replicate harm when designed through paternalistic or neutral frameworks. By drawing on Salehin, Galtung, Bourdieu, Friedman, Williams, Meth, and others, a clear conclusion emerges violence is not eradicated by walls; it is transformed through the ethics of design.⁵⁰

Feminist shelter design must engage with power directly. It must dismantle the hierarchies that equate safety with surveillance and autonomy with risk. True protection lies not in confinement but in agency. Architecture, when informed by feminist ethics, becomes a medium of resistance, reshaping structures of care into structures of liberation.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Beebeejaun, "Gender, Urban Space, and the Right to Everyday Life," 328.

⁴⁹ Joan C. Tronto, *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

⁵⁰ Salehin, "Gendered Violence and the Rohingya Refugee Crisis"; Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research"; Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*.

⁵¹ Ticktin, *Casualties of Care*

Subtheme 2: Violence, Displacement and the Gendered Shelter

Shelters are often imagined as safe havens: spaces that provide refuge from violence, instability, and disaster. Yet feminist and humanitarian scholarship consistently shows that shelters are not immune to the very structures of harm they are meant to resist. Instead of guaranteeing safety, shelters can perpetuate cycles of control, surveillance, overcrowding, and dependency. In contexts of displacement, these problems are magnified as cultural norms, humanitarian bureaucracies, and spatial design converge. This subtheme unpacks how violence operates across displacement, how shelters themselves can reproduce violence, and what this means for feminist design.⁵²

The Continuum of Violence in Forced Migration

Mohammad Musfequs Salehin's study of Rohingya refugees reframes violence not as a discrete event but as a continuum.⁵³ Drawing on Johan Galtung's framework of direct, structural, and cultural violence, and Pierre Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence, Salehin shows how displacement embeds violence into everyday life. In Myanmar, Rohingya men were targeted as political threats, while women experienced systematic sexual violence intended to rupture community reproduction. Upon exile to Bangladesh, these patterns did not end but transformed. Domestic violence rose in crowded camps, early marriage became a strategy of survival, and

⁵² Buckley-Zistel and Krause, *Gender, Violence, Refugees*.

⁵³ Salehin, "Gendered Violence and the Rohingya Refugee Crisis"

women's mobility was further restricted by cultural expectations and camp regulations.⁵⁴

Salehin demonstrates how spatial arrangements, zonal divisions, curfews, poorly lit paths, and constant surveillance become instruments of violence. These are not simply neutral management tools but extensions of structural inequality. The very architecture of camps participates in producing vulnerability. For feminist shelter design, this continuum framework is essential: safety cannot be reduced to physical walls; it must account for how design interacts with cultural, bureaucratic, and symbolic forms of harm.⁵⁵

Shelters as Sites of Control and Dependency

Ethnographic studies of women's experiences in shelters reinforce Salehin's insights. Jean Calterone Williams' *A Roof over My Head* (2003) documents how homeless women in the United States often found shelters to be demeaning rather than protective. Women described constant surveillance, rigid rules, and little privacy. Instead of fostering empowerment, shelters reproduced dependency and reinforced systemic inequalities.⁵⁶

Donna Haig Friedman, in *Parenting in Public* (2000), makes similar observations in family shelters. She shows how surveillance disproportionately targets mothers, policing their parenting under the guise of protection. Far from

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Salehin, "Gendered Violence and the Rohingya Refugee Crisis," 160–165.

⁵⁶ Williams, *A Roof over My Head*, 84–86.

offering autonomy, shelters created environments where women were treated as subjects of control.⁵⁷

Paula Meth's study of domestic violence shelters echoes this pattern. Even in spaces explicitly designed for women's protection, institutional layouts shared rooms, open corridors, and limited lockable spaces undermined women's privacy and sense of dignity. What emerges across these ethnographies is a consistent theme: when architecture and management focus narrowly on "protection," they risk creating environments that feel more like prisons than sanctuaries. The implication is clear: design cannot rely solely on security measures. Overemphasis on control and surveillance strips women of the very autonomy and dignity that shelter should restore.⁵⁸

Humanitarian Neutrality as Complicity

While ethnographies reveal control within shelters, critiques of humanitarianism reveal how neutrality itself can perpetuate harm. Julie Mertus, in *War's Offensive on Women* (2000), documents shelter in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan that failed precisely because they were designed around a "neutral" template. By ignoring women's specific safety needs, humanitarian organizations produced spaces that left them vulnerable to harassment, coercion, and assault. Neutrality, in this context, was not protection but complicity.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Donna Haig Friedman, *Parenting in Public: Family Shelter and Public Assistance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

⁵⁸ Meth, "Informal Housing, Gender, Crime and Violence," 410–12.

⁵⁹ Mertus, "War's Offensive on Women," 69–70

Buckley-Zistel and Krause's edited volume, *Gender, Violence, Refugees* (2017), pushes this critique further, showing how violence is structured into the governance of refugee camps. Decisions about where to place food distribution points or latrines are not technical details but life-or-death issues for women, who face heightened risk of assault when these are distant or poorly lit.⁶⁰ Doreen Indra's earlier collection, *Engendering Forced Migration* (1999), makes a similar point: humanitarian practice often treats women as dependents rather than decision-makers, embedding vulnerability into logistical arrangements.⁶¹

Even earlier, El-Bushra and Piza-Lopez (1993) insisted that safety without dignity amounts to control. Their argument that shelters should not only protect but also empower remains foundational.⁶² Miriam Ticktin echoes this critique in *Casualties of Care* (2011), showing how humanitarian care often wounds as much as it heals. Shelters that impose surveillance, standardization, and confinement reproduce inequality while claiming neutrality.⁶³

The lesson here is profound: neutrality in humanitarian architecture is not neutral at all. It is an active stance that perpetuates gendered violence by ignoring difference and erasing agency.

Everyday Urban Geographies of Fear

Violence in displacement cannot be fully understood without considering the broader spatial geographies surrounding shelters. Kristen Day's study of Irvine,

⁶⁰ Buckley-Zistel and Krause, *Gender, Violence, Refugees*, 112–114.

⁶¹ Indra, *Engendering Forced Migration*, 45–46.

⁶² Indra, *Engendering Forced Migration*, 15–17.

⁶³ Miriam Ticktin, *Casualties of Care*, 23–25.

California, demonstrates how public space encodes gendered fear. Lighting, circulation, and visibility patterns create environments where women feel unsafe even in supposedly benign suburban contexts.⁶⁴

Applied to displacement, this insight underscores that a shelter is never isolated. Its thresholds, entrance paths, and surrounding circulation patterns can either mitigate or intensify fear. A poorly lit entryway or an isolated edge can undo the safety of interior spaces. Conversely, thoughtful integration of lighting, visibility, and permeability can create counter-spaces of inclusion.⁶⁵

Salehin's continuum framework also resonates here: the violence that women experience in everyday urban geographies of fear does not stop at the shelter's boundary. It flows across thresholds, meaning that feminist design must account for both interior and exterior conditions.⁶⁶

Intersecting Structures of Harm

One of the most striking findings across this literature is the intersection of multiple forms of harm. Structural violence through bureaucracy, overcrowding, or dependency intersects with cultural violence, such as restrictive gender norms. Both intersect with direct violence, from sexual assault to domestic abuse. Shelters often sit at the nexus of these forces.⁶⁷

For example, a camp may provide physical protection from armed conflict but impose curfews that limit women's mobility, reinforcing domestic dependency. A

⁶⁴ Day, "Constructing Masculinity and Women's Fear in Public Space," 112–114.

⁶⁵ Beebejaun, "Gender, Urban Space, and the Right to Everyday Life."

⁶⁶ Salehin, "Gendered Violence and the Rohingya Refugee Crisis," 160–162.

⁶⁷ Joan C. Tronto, *Caring Democracy*, 127–129.

domestic violence shelter may protect against an abusive partner, but strip autonomy through surveillance and a lack of privacy. A homeless shelter may provide a roof but perpetuate stigma and dependency through institutional control. In each case, architecture becomes implicated in reinforcing rather than disrupting cycles of harm. This convergence highlights why feminist shelter design cannot focus only on physical protection. Safety must be redefined to include autonomy, dignity, and empowerment.⁶⁸

Subtheme 3: Climate change, Migration, and Women's Vulnerabilities

Gendered Dimensions of Climate Displacement

The accelerating climate crisis has deepened patterns of displacement across the Global South, disproportionately affecting women. While floods, cyclones, and droughts appear to be natural phenomena, scholars such as Farhana Sultana, Terry Cannon, and Katha Kartiki reveal that their impacts are profoundly social. Gendered power structures shape who moves, who stays, and who suffers most. Architecture responding to displacement must engage with climate not only as an environmental issue but as a site of social justice.⁶⁹

Farhana Sultana's "Gendering Climate Change" (2014) challenges the assumption that environmental vulnerability is evenly distributed. Her research across South Asia reveals that social expectations, particularly those related to modesty, domestic labor, and mobility, intensify women's exposure to harm. In Bangladesh,

⁶⁸ Salehin, "Gendered Violence and the Rohingya Refugee Crisis," 160–61.

⁶⁹ Katha Kartiki, "Climate Change and Migration: A Case Study from Rural Bangladesh," *Gender & Development* 19, no. 1 (2011): 23–38.

purdah norms often prevent women from evacuating during floods or cyclones, forcing them to remain indoors even as danger rises. Sultana argues that gendered norms, not nature alone, determine who survives. For architecture, this means that climate adaptation must integrate cultural sensitivity and feminist awareness at every scale. A shelter that is technically sound but socially inaccessible cannot be called resilient.⁷⁰

Terry Cannon's "Gender and Climate Hazards in Bangladesh" (2002) echoes this argument, showing that shelters are often underused by women because they are not designed for them. Inadequate privacy, fear of harassment, and long distances to shelters make evacuation unsafe or impossible. Cannon's research reframes shelter design as an ethical and cultural project: resilience cannot be achieved through engineering alone. Women must be able to enter and inhabit shelters without fear or stigma. The absence of gender-sensitive design, segregated areas for privacy, lighting for safety, and child-friendly spaces turns adaptation infrastructure into another site of exclusion.⁷¹

Placement and the Erosion of Autonomy

Katha Kartiki's study on climate-induced migration in Bangladesh (2011) draws attention to the difference between sudden and slow-onset disasters. While cyclones trigger immediate displacement, gradual processes such as salinity intrusion and soil erosion produce quieter but equally devastating forms of loss. Women are

⁷⁰ Farhana Sultana, "Gendering Climate Change: Geographical Insights," *The Professional Geographer* 66, no. 3 (2014): 372–381

⁷¹ Terry Cannon, "Gender and Climate Hazards in Bangladesh," *Gender & Development* 10, no. 2 (2002): 45–50.

often the first to lose access to land, livelihoods, and autonomy. Kartiki notes that when agriculture collapses, men migrate to cities in search of work, leaving women to sustain households in precarious conditions. This feminization of environmental vulnerability results in displacement without movement. Women remain in place but lose control over resources and decision-making.⁷²

For architecture, slow-onset disasters challenge the notion of “temporary” shelter. Feminist resilience requires long-term adaptability rather than short-term relief. Shelters must evolve with environmental change, supporting livelihoods, childcare, and education as integral components of resilience. They are not merely structures for survival but infrastructures for continuity, bridging crisis and stability.⁷³

Political Ecology and the Question of Power

S. Jayawardhan’s work on gender and displacement situates environmental vulnerability within broader political and economic hierarchies. He argues that women’s marginalization after disasters is less a result of their biological or emotional fragility than of systematic disenfranchisement. Without land rights, political representation, or access to decision-making, displaced women face structural barriers to recovery. This perspective reframes architecture as a political practice: to design for resilience is to design for redistribution of power.⁷⁴

Similarly, Roger Zetter’s research on rights-based approaches to migration underscores that displaced persons are not passive recipients of aid but rights-bearing

⁷² Kartiki, “Climate Change and Migration,” 30–32

⁷³ Sultana, “Gendering Climate Change,” 375–77.

⁷⁴ Shweta Jayawardhan, “Vulnerability and Climate Change–Induced Human Displacement,” *Consilience* 17 (2017): 103–142.

citizens. Shelters, he argues, should guarantee privacy, safety, and dignity as components of human rights. From this view, the architect's responsibility extends beyond providing physical protection to enabling social and political agency. A feminist shelter thus becomes an instrument of justice, spatializing the right to safety as an entitlement rather than a favor.⁷⁵

Care Networks and Everyday Resilience

Caroline Moser's influential concept of the "triple role" of women, productive, reproductive, and community-managing, helps explain how women sustain survival systems during and after disasters. In *Gender Planning and Development* (1993), Moser reveals that women often fill the gaps left by failing institutions, managing both care work and informal economies.⁷⁶ Sylvia Chant and Cathy McIlwaine, in *Cities, Slums and Gender in the Global South*, extend this argument to urban migration, showing how women create networks of mutual aid, food sharing, and microfinance that sustain displaced communities.⁷⁷

For design practice, these insights are transformative. They show that resilience is not primarily about infrastructure but about relationships. Shelters must facilitate social infrastructure in care spaces for collective cooking, shared childcare, and mutual support. These are not auxiliary functions but the backbone of survival. By recognizing care as labor and expertise, feminist architecture aligns with Moser's

⁷⁵ Roger Zetter, "More Labels, Fewer Refugees: Remaking the Refugee Label in an Era of Globalization," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 2 (2007): 172–192.

⁷⁶ Caroline O. N. Moser, *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training* (London: Routledge, 2012).

⁷⁷ Chant, Moser, and McIlwaine, *Cities, Slums and Gender in the Global South*, 143–45

and Chant's insistence that empowerment emerges from everyday practice rather than external intervention.

The Development Paradox

Anthony Oliver-Smith's *Defying Displacement* (2010) critiques the logic of development that often creates the very displacement it seeks to solve. He documents how "protective" projects, such as dam construction or coastal embankments, force communities into relocation under the guise of progress. This pattern mirrors the gendered violence of humanitarianism described earlier: aid becomes displacement, and development becomes dispossession. Oliver-Smith calls for an "architecture of resistance," one that protects communities from both environmental and bureaucratic threats.⁷⁸

In feminist terms, this means designing shelters that resist homogenization and erasure. Standardized housing may satisfy engineering requirements but often fails to sustain cultural identity or community cohesion. A feminist response values adaptability and participation over uniformity, grounding resilience in local agency.⁷⁹

Intersecting Injustices: Environmental and Gendered

The intersection of gender and environment reveals that climate injustice is inseparable from social injustice. As Sultana emphasizes, climate resilience without gender justice merely reproduces existing inequalities. Women are often responsible for securing food, water, and energy, yet they have the least access to decision-making about how these resources are managed. In the Rohingya camps and similar

⁷⁸ Oliver-Smith, *Defying Displacement*, 201–225.

⁷⁹ Ibid

contexts, women's labor sustains daily survival but remains invisible within formal governance⁸⁰.

Architecturally, this intersection demands an integrated approach. A climate-resilient shelter must provide not only physical protection from floods or heat but also the social infrastructure that sustains care. Elevated plinths, natural ventilation, and water-harvesting systems are necessary, but so are private courtyards, safe gathering areas, and spaces for income generation. In feminist terms, resilience encompasses both ecological adaptation and social emancipation.⁸¹

From Adaptation to Empowerment

The literature ultimately redefines climate adaptation as a feminist act. Rather than focusing on protecting women as vulnerable subjects, feminist scholars call for centering women as agents of resilience. Participatory governance, economic autonomy, and spatial equity are as vital as technical preparedness.⁸²

For architects, this reorientation transforms the purpose of design. The goal is not merely to construct buildings that withstand climate shocks but to build systems that redistribute power. Climate-resilient architecture becomes feminist architecture when it acknowledges that environmental vulnerability is socially produced and socially solvable.⁸³

⁸⁰ Sultana, "Gendering Climate Change," 378–380.

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² Maria Tanyag, "Resilience, Female Altruism, and Bodily Autonomy," *Signs* 43, no. 3 (2018): 625–653.

⁸³ Oliver-Smith, *Defying Displacement*, 142–45

Synthesis: Feminist Resilience as Spatial Justice

Across this body of literature, a coherent argument emerges that climate resilience must be inseparable from gender equity. Sultana exposes how social norms create vulnerability; Cannon and Kartiki highlight cultural and temporal dimensions of displacement; Jayawardhan and Zetter tie resilience to rights and governance; Moser and Chant reveal care as infrastructure; and Oliver-Smith warns against technocratic displacement. Together, these works redefine the role of shelter as both environmental and social infrastructure.

A feminist shelter is not an endpoint but a process, a living framework of adaptability, participation, and care. It protects not only against storms and floods but against the systemic inequities that magnify their impact. Resilience, reimagined through feminist architecture, becomes an ethics of interdependence that aligns environmental survival with human dignity.⁸⁴

Subtheme 4: Participation, Agency, and Governance

From Beneficiary to Decision-Maker

The final body of literature foregrounds participation as both a design method and a political act. Scholars, including Bina Agarwal, Julie Drolet, Elaine Enarson, Caroline Moser, Sylvia Chant, and Kalpana Sharma, argue that participation transforms women from passive recipients of aid into active agents of change. When participation is integrated into the design and governance of shelters, architecture becomes a vehicle for justice rather than charity.

⁸⁴ Tronto, *Caring Democracy*, 23–25.

Bina Agarwal's *Gender and Green Governance* (2010) provide the theoretical foundation for this argument. Her research on women's involvement in forest and environmental management demonstrates that inclusion is not only ethical but also effective: where women lead, both social equity and ecological sustainability improve. Agarwal's concept of "participatory exclusions" warns that mere representation without authority does not constitute real empowerment. Participation must be structural, embedding women's voices into every level of decision-making. In the context of shelter design, this means involving women in site planning, resource management, and maintenance from the outset. Their participation ensures that spatial arrangements reflect lived needs, creating environments grounded in trust rather than imposition.⁸⁵

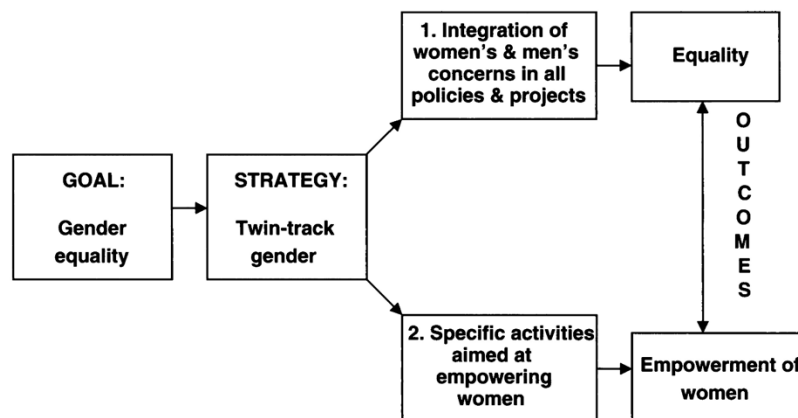


Figure 1: Components of a gender mainstreaming strategy. Source: Moser (2005, 10)

⁸⁵ Agarwal, *Gender and Green Governance*, 15–16

Participation as Recovery and Resilience

Julie Drolet's work on women's roles in post-disaster reconstruction demonstrates that recovery succeeds when it builds upon women's existing networks. In studies of the 2010 Pakistan floods and the 2015 Nepal earthquake, Drolet shows that women's informal collaborations organizing food, managing childcare, and coordinating mutual aid often outperform formal interventions. Yet such networks are rarely acknowledged in policy or design. Drolet argues that post-disaster architecture must strengthen, not replace, these social systems.⁸⁶

For feminist shelter design, this insight is transformative. It positions architecture as a platform that enables existing forms of agency. Shared kitchens, multipurpose courtyards, and communal storage areas support the rhythms of collective care. These spaces make women's invisible labor visible and valued. Participation becomes both process and form, embodied in spatial flexibility and governance structures that encourage shared responsibility.⁸⁷

Knowledge, Leadership, and Risk

Elaine Enarson and Lourdes Meyreles expand Drolet's perspective through their analysis of gender and disaster risk reduction. In *Women, Gender and Disaster: Global Issues and Initiatives* (2013), they emphasize that women's local knowledge of terrain, resources, and social networks is indispensable to effective risk planning. When women participate in shaping evacuation routes or identifying safe zones, the

⁸⁶ Julie Drolet et al., "Women Rebuilding Lives Post-Disaster: Innovative Community Practices for Building Resilience and Promoting Sustainable Development," *Gender & Development* 23, no. 3 (2015): 433–448.

⁸⁷ Agarwal, *Gender and Green Governance*, 15–16

outcomes are more inclusive and sustainable. Their studies across the Caribbean and Latin America show that when women co-design risk strategies, mortality rates and recovery times improve for entire communities.⁸⁸

For architecture, this research implies that participatory design is not only a matter of justice but of efficiency. Excluding women from design and governance leads to failures in function and sustainability. Enarson and Meyreles also note that participation must extend beyond consultation: women should hold decision-making authority within institutions that manage shelter systems. Feminist governance is not achieved through token inclusion but through structural redistribution of power.⁸⁹

The Architecture of Collective Care

Caroline Moser's and Sylvia Chant's research further demonstrates how women's collective action sustains everyday urban life in contexts of poverty and displacement. Moser's concept of the "triple role" of women, productive, reproductive, and community-managing, illustrates that their contributions transcend domestic boundaries. In *Cities, Slums and Gender in the Global South*, Chant and McIlwaine describe informal women-led systems of savings, childcare, and food security that effectively operate as parallel forms of governance.⁹⁰

Feminist shelter design can learn from these practices by reinterpreting them spatially. Architecture should provide not only safety and rest but also infrastructure

⁸⁸ Elaine Enarson and Lourdes Meyreles, *Women, Gender and Disaster: Global Issues and Initiatives* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2013).

⁸⁹ Enarson and Meyreles, *Women, Gender and Disaster*, 87–112.

⁹⁰ Chant, Moser, and McIlwaine, *Cities, Slums and Gender in the Global South*, 143–45

for care work. Shared kitchens, day-care courtyards, meeting verandas, and flexible workrooms become spaces of governance where women organize, plan, and manage their communities. This vision redefines shelter as a civic institution of empowerment, an architectural common that merges domestic care with collective leadership.⁹¹

Beyond Tokenism: Reclaiming Authority

Doreen Indra's *Engendering Forced Migration* provides a crucial caution: participation without authority is tokenism. Indra's analysis of refugee governance shows that while many humanitarian programs nominally include women, they rarely grant decision-making power. True participation, she argues, requires shifting control over budgets, rules, and daily management to those most affected. Applied to shelter design, this means allowing women to set priorities, manage shared spaces, and determine the boundaries of privacy and community.⁹²

Kalpana Sharma's *The Silence and the Storm* brings the human voice into this discussion. Through narrative journalism, Sharma highlights how women's stories of displacement and resilience reveal agency often overlooked by policy. Storytelling itself becomes a participatory act, a way for women to define their own spatial and social realities. For architects, listening is the first act of design. Participatory design begins not with drawing plans but with creating platforms for dialogue and recognition.⁹³

⁹¹ Chant, Moser, and McIlwaine, *Cities, Slums and Gender in the Global South*, 142-70

⁹² Doreen Indra, *Engendering Forced Migration*, 14-27.

⁹³ Kalpana Sharma, *The Silence and the Storm: Narratives of Violence Against Women in India* (New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2019).

Governance as Spatial Practice

Agarwal's and Moser's frameworks converge in the idea that governance is not limited to institutions; it is spatially enacted. The configuration of rooms, visibility of courtyards, and accessibility of communal spaces shape patterns of decision-making and inclusion. Architecture can thus reproduce hierarchy or dismantle it. In feminist governance, spatial openness symbolizes transparency; shared spaces enable collaboration; and flexible layouts accommodate evolving needs.⁹⁴

When shelters are co-governed by women, they become adaptive systems rather than static structures. Decision-making can occur in common areas where discussions are visible and inclusive. Maintenance and adaptation become collective rituals that reaffirm agency. This process transforms architecture into a living framework of democracy, what Agarwal calls the "everyday practice of participation."

Participation as Healing

Participation also has a therapeutic dimension. Trauma-informed design research shows that when survivors of violence are invited to shape their environments, the act of design becomes part of the healing process. Making choices about space, arranging furniture, planting gardens, or co-creating communal rituals

⁹⁴ Caroline O. N. Moser, "Mainstreaming Women's Safety in Cities into Gender-Based Policy and Programmes," *Gender & Development* 20, no. 3 (2012): 435–452.

restores a sense of control often stripped away by displacement or abuse. In this sense, participation is not only about governance but also about recovery.⁹⁵

The literature positions participatory shelter design as both ethically necessary and psychologically restorative. Agency becomes healing; collaboration becomes safety. This transformation exemplifies the feminist ideal that empowerment and care are inseparable.

Synthesis: Co-Governance as Feminist Architecture

Across this body of literature, participation emerges as the connective tissue linking feminist ethics, spatial justice, and social resilience. Agarwal provides the theoretical framework for shared governance; Drolet, Enarson, and Meyreles demonstrate its practical benefits in recovery and risk management; Moser and Chant reveal how women already perform governance in informal settlements; and Sharma reasserts the importance of voice and testimony.⁹⁶

Together, these scholars define a model of co-governance, a system in which shelter is not built for women but with them. Participation becomes both process and form, transforming architecture from a symbol of protection into a structure of power-sharing. This synthesis closes the literature review: the feminist shelter, conceived through care, resilience, and agency, is not a refuge from society but a reimagination of it.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Drolet et al., “Women Rebuilding Lives Post-Disaster,” 439–442.

⁹⁶ Elaine Enarson and Lourdes Meyreles, “International Perspectives on Gender and Disaster,” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 24, no. 10/11 (2004): 49–93

⁹⁷ Agarwal, *Gender and Green Governance*, 231–236.

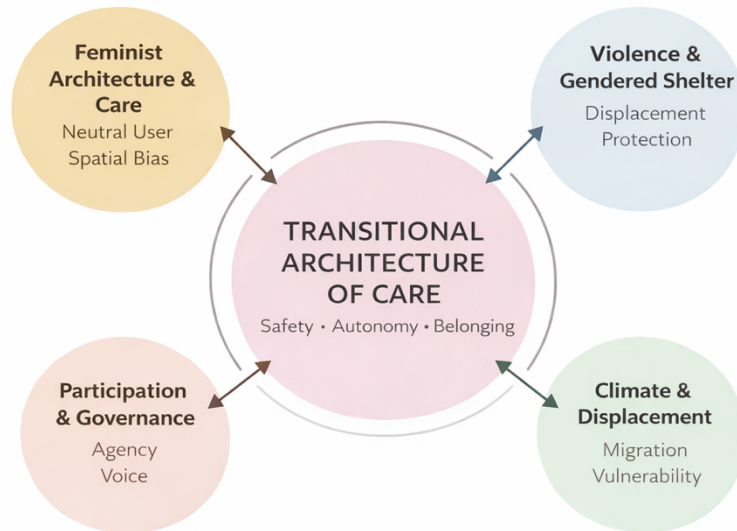


Figure 2: Synthesizing feminist architecture, gendered displacement, climate vulnerability, and participatory governance (Source: Author's work)

It illustrates how four literature subthemes converge to inform the thesis's central proposition of a Transitional Architecture of Care. By integrating feminist critiques of neutrality, analyses of violence and protection, climate-driven displacement, and participatory governance, the framework positions architecture as an active agent in supporting women's safety, autonomy, and belonging across prolonged displacement.

Conclusion

Across the four subthemes, the literature advances a radical proposition: shelter is not a passive container for safety but an active participant in shaping justice. Feminist theorists dismantle the illusion of neutrality, revealing architecture as a system of power; ethnographers expose how shelters can reproduce harm through surveillance and control; climate scholars connect environmental vulnerability to gendered inequality; and governance researchers demonstrate that participation transforms dependency into empowerment.

This chapter positions feminist shelter design as both critique and proposal. It critiques the patriarchal and technocratic systems that produce displacement and harm, while proposing architecture as a site of care, agency, and democratic renewal. Shelters reconceived through feminist theory become infrastructures of transformation, spatial embodiments of justice in which survival evolves into empowerment and protection into participation.

Chapter 3: Methodologies

Introduction: Why Research Methods Matter

Architectural research shapes not only what we design, but *how* we understand the world we design for. For a thesis centered on displaced and migrant women individuals navigating trauma, unfamiliar landscapes, cultural transitions, and systemic barriers the role of research becomes even more critical. Their experiences cannot be inferred from generalized models, humanitarian standards, or abstract users. They must be approached through methods that honor specificity, complexity, emotion, culture, and lived reality.⁹⁸

Ray Lucas argues that architectural inquiry is never neutral; methods determine what becomes visible, what is valued, and what is ignored. In the context of this thesis, methods allow me to shift from a distant analytical stance to a relational, empathetic, and situated approach. They help me understand displacement not simply as a statistic or spatial condition but as a lived, embodied, gendered experience.⁹⁹

Research methods also become a necessary bridge between theory and design. Feminist spatial theory, environmental psychology, and participatory models offer conceptual frameworks, but it is through mapping, interviewing, precedent analysis, diagramming, and phenomenological observation that these ideas become spatial strategies. Methods reveal patterns that drawings alone cannot capture moments of

⁹⁸ Ray Lucas, *Research Methods for Architecture* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2016).

⁹⁹ Ibid

fear, gestures of care, informal gathering behaviors, cultural rituals, or the small acts of agency that shape belonging.

For a thesis proposing a **Transitional Architecture of Care**, research must uncover more than needs. It must illuminate how women move, rest, socialize, support one another, and rebuild identity in the in-between spaces of migration. The methods selected for this project therefore reflect a spectrum from subjective to objective, qualitative to spatial, embodied too analytic. Together, they form a methodological framework capable of translating women's lived realities into architectural propositions centered on safety, autonomy, and belonging.

Overview of Methods Used in this Thesis

Research for this thesis draws from a spectrum of methodologies, reflecting the interdisciplinary, embodied, and socially grounded nature of displacement. Each method responds to a specific need within the project: understanding lived experience, analyzing spatial patterns, interpreting cultural contexts, and translating these insights into architectural form.

The primary methods fall into four interconnected categories:

Interdisciplinary and Theoretical Methods

This includes feminist spatial theory, environmental psychology, migration studies, and the ethics of care. These frameworks help define the *why* of the thesis

why architecture must address gendered experiences of displacement, why transitional spaces matter, and why belonging is spatially constructed.

These theories guide key questions:

- How does space support or undermine agency?
- What does safety *feel* like, and how does design cultivate it?
- How do women establish belonging across cultural transitions?

Qualitative and Subjective Methods

Displacement is an experiential condition. Lucas emphasizes that subjective methods listening, observing, emotionally attuned fieldwork help reveal the atmospheres, behaviors, and relational dynamics that shape lived experience.

For this project, qualitative methods include:

- **Embodied observation** (How do women move through space? Where do they hesitate?)
- **Atmospheric reading** (Light, sound, smell, temperature what emotions do this produce?)
- **Narrative analysis** (Interviews, testimonies, reports from NGOs and women's organizations)

These methods make visible the emotional and psychological dimensions of space fear, comfort, privacy, trauma, dignity that are central to transitional architecture framework.

Spatial and Analytical Methods

These provide structured, architectural ways of understanding displacement:

- **Mapping + diagramming** of flows, risks, gathering zones, and privacy gradients
- **Typological analysis** of shelters, women's centers, compounds, courtyards, and communal kitchens
- **Precedent analysis** capturing spatial lessons from Rwanda, Bangladesh, Morocco, the DMV, and beyond
- **Site analysis** through circulation mapping, sun/wind studies, and scale evaluation

Participatory and Co-Constructive Methods

Central to the thesis is the belief that women must shape the environments they inhabit. Therefore, participatory methods workshops, co-design principles, community mapping become foundational. Even when not implemented directly, their frameworks inform design logic: flexibility, adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and shared authorship.

Applications of Methods Across the Thesis

Each component of the thesis relies on a distinct but interconnected set of methods. This section outlines *what* methods are used, *where* they are used, and *why*

they are essential to the study of displaced and migrant women moving from shelter toward citizenship.

Literature Review (Chapter 2)

Methods Used:

- Thematic synthesis
- Textual analysis
- Cross-disciplinary comparison

How/Why:

The literature review constructs the conceptual scaffolding of the thesis. By organizing texts into thematic categories feminist architecture, displacement, care ethics, environmental psychology, and participatory design the study identifies recurring patterns of vulnerability and agency. Thematic organization also reflects Lucas's emphasis on structuring research around evolving questions. This method ensures the thesis narrative remains coherent while integrating diverse disciplinary perspectives.

Precedent Studies (Chapter 4)

Methods Used:

- Spatial analysis (plans, sections, circulation)

- Programmatic analysis
- Cultural/contextual reading
- Outcome-based evaluation (“What did this project achieve long-term?”)

How/Why:

Precedents are not chosen for formal reasons alone. They are selected because they demonstrate qualities essential to your thesis: community governance, co-building, safety infrastructures, economic empowerment, or culturally responsive gathering spaces.

Examples:

- **Women’s Opportunity Center (Rwanda)** → lessons in co-construction and dignity
- **METI School (Bangladesh)** → social empowerment through craft and participation
- **Jhenaidah Housing (Bangladesh)** → incremental autonomy and shared resources
- **Local DMV shelters and refugee resource centers** → understanding transitional urban infrastructures

By studying not only spatial layouts but social outcomes, this method reveals what succeeds, what fails, and why. It connects architecture to long-term women's lives.

Site Selection + Site Analysis (Chapter 6)

Methods Used:

- Fieldwork and embodied observation
- Mapping of risks, paths, visibility, shadows, and microclimates
- Interviews, testimonies, and community reports
- Criteria matrix scoring

How/Why:

For a thesis centered on women's safety and belonging, site selection cannot be neutral. The site must be analyzed through atmospheric, social, and cultural layers not just zoning or dimension.

Embodied observation helps answer questions such as:

- Where might women feel exposed?
- What routes are comfortable or uncomfortable?
- What community anchors already exist?
- What sensory qualities (light, sound, wind) promote healing or stress?

Program and Zone Development (Chapter 5)

Methods Used:

- Typological research
- Behavioral mapping
- Reverse engineering of precedents
- Relational diagrams (social → spatial → programmatic)

How/Why:

Zones are derived from analyzing how women rebuild autonomy and social networks. For example, mapping daily rhythms reveals the need for:

- Protected circulation during early morning/evening
- Child-friendly areas visible from workspaces
- Semi-private transition zones for counseling and legal support
- Communal gathering spaces that double as civic stages

Discovery-Phase Design (Chapter 7)

Methods Used:

- Parti diagramming
- Massing iterations
- Environmental simulations (light, wind, exposure)
- Scenario testing (“What happens if...?”)

How/Why:

These iterative methods connect the research to architectural form.

They allow the project to test:

- How spaces support emotional safety
- How circulation enhances agency rather than surveillance
- How courtyards foster community and mutual aid
- How tectonics can reflect local materials, labor, or participation

Precedent Selection and Examination

Precedent selection is a critical methodological step in this thesis because it bridges the gap between conceptual frameworks (feminist theory, care ethics, environmental psychology) and architectural application. The chosen precedents are not merely case studies; they function as prototypes, cautionary tales, and methodological teachers. Each one reveals how architecture can support or fail to support safety, autonomy, participation, and belonging for vulnerable communities.

Criteria for Selecting Precedents

Precedents are selected according to four overarching criteria:

1. Relevance to Gendered Space and Safety

Projects that prioritize visibility, controlled thresholds, community oversight, and culturally sensitive privacy.

Example: Sharon Davis's Women's Opportunity Center in Rwanda sets a precedent for designing environments that feel safe without becoming restrictive.

2. Demonstration of Participatory or Co-Building Methods

Projects where local women or community members participate in construction, decision-making, or ongoing governance.

Example: METI School in Bangladesh demonstrates how participation creates ownership, skill- building, and dignity.

3. Culturally Attuned Communal Infrastructures

Projects centered around shared kitchens, courtyards, workshops, or ritual spaces typologies essential to women's collective life.

Example: Jhenaidah's community-led housing foregrounds shared resources and incremental autonomy.

4. Transitional or Civic Function

Projects that bridge private life and civic life, spaces where women gather, organize, learn, and build capacity.

Example: DMV-based shelters and resettlement organizations reveal programmatic challenges and opportunities in urban contexts.

How Each Precedent is Examined

Each precedent is analyzed through multiple lenses:

1. Spatial and Programmatic Analysis

- Plans, sections, circulation patterns
- Degrees of privacy vs collectivity
- Protection and exposure
- Visibility and supervision

2. Construction and Materiality

- Local materials or imported systems
- Accessibility of maintenance
- Potential for co-building

3. Cultural Context and Social Behavior

- Did the space evolve over time.
- How women use the space daily
- Informal behaviors that emerge

outside the formal design
- Rituals, gatherings, comfort zones, fear zones

4. Outcome-Based Evaluation

- Did the project strengthen community bonds?
- Did it improve safety?
- Did women gain autonomy or skills?

Conclusion: Relevance of Methods to the thesis

The methodological framework for this thesis is intentionally plural, woven from interdisciplinary, qualitative, spatial, and participatory approaches. Each method illuminates a different dimension of displaced women's lived realities, and together they generate a research environment capable of producing a deeply grounded architectural response.

Interdisciplinary theory feminist spatial thinking, environmental psychology, migration studies, and care ethics provides the conceptual lens through which the problem is defined. These frameworks challenge the assumptions of neutrality embedded in humanitarian design and emphasize that experiences of safety, dignity, and autonomy are gendered, embodied, and culturally specific.

Qualitative and subjective methods, influenced by Lucas's emphasis on embodied observation, allow the research to access emotional atmospheres, fear zones, informal behaviors, and relational dynamics that shape women's daily experiences. Without attending to these nuanced and often invisible conditions, architectural solutions risk repeating the same failures present in existing shelters and aid infrastructures.

Spatial and analytical methods convert experiential insights into architectural clarity. Mapping, diagramming, typological analysis, and environmental studies transform lived realities into spatial logic, identifying the circulations, thresholds,

gathering spaces, and environmental conditions that become foundational to the Transitional Architecture of Care.

Participatory and co-constructive methods ensure that the project does not design *for* women but aligns itself with the ethic of designing *with* them. Even when direct co-design is not possible, the methodological stance foregrounds adaptability, shared ownership, cultural sensitivity, and long-term governance in the design outcomes.

Together, these methods position architecture as a relational, ethical, and civic practice. They ensure that the design emerging from this thesis is not a speculative object, but a response grounded in lived experience, cultural nuance, and the fundamental need for safety, autonomy, and belonging.

Chapter 4: Precedent Studies

Introduction

Architecture supporting women in precarious conditions must ground itself in lived community knowledge, feminist and participatory spatial practice, and the real successes and limitations of built projects globally. In a thesis concerned with transition from shelter to autonomy from survival to citizenship precedent studies reveal how architecture has approached safety, healing, empowerment, and belonging for populations negotiating displacement, trauma, and gendered vulnerability.¹⁰⁰

My five core studies Sharon Davis's Women's Opportunity Center in Rwanda, the METI Handmade School in Bangladesh, Francis Kéré's Léo Doctors' Housing in Burkina Faso, Aldo van Eyck's Amsterdam Orphanage, and Superkilen Park in Copenhagen span geographies, scales, and political contexts. Each represents a distinct facet of transitional architecture: economic empowerment, participatory construction, climate-responsive domesticity, psychological safety, and cultural belonging.¹⁰¹ They embody the theoretical frameworks guiding this thesis: Dolores Hayden's feminist spatial critique, Joan Tronto's ethics of care, Jos Boys' analysis of gendered institutions, and contemporary thinking around co-creation and inclusive public space.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Archidatum. "Women's Opportunity Center / Sharon Davis Design." 2016. <https://www.archidatum.com/projects/women-s-opportunity-center-sharon-davis-design/>.

¹⁰¹ Anna Heringer, "METI Handmade School, Rudrapur, Bangladesh," accessed 2025. <https://www.anna-heringer.com/projects/meti-school-bangladesh/>.

¹⁰² Michiel van Iersel, "Book of the Month: Aldo van Eyck—Orphanage Amsterdam," *The Architectural Review*, December 5, 2018. <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/book-of-the-month-aldo-van-eyck-orphanage-amsterdam-building-playgrounds>.

Four extended precedents address coexistence between host and displaced communities: Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement (shared markets)¹⁰³, Bidi Bidi Arts Center (collective creative space)¹⁰⁴, Jordan Water Program (shared resource infrastructure)¹⁰⁵, and Vivienda en Puebla (indigenous participatory construction)¹⁰⁶. These operate at urban, regional, and infrastructural scales, revealing systems of care that bridge divided communities.

Collectively, these precedents articulate an expanded understanding of "transitional architecture," moving beyond emergency shelter to shape environments anticipating growth, relationality, community interface, and long-term stability. This chapter extracts strategies that will directly inform my program, zoning logics, and design approach in subsequent chapters.

Women's Opportunity Center, Kayonza, Rwanda - Sharon Davis Design

Theme: Feminist spatial organization, cluster-based safety, economic autonomy, community interface

¹⁰³ Betts, Omata, and Sterck, "Kalobeyei Settlement"

¹⁰⁴ Lizzie Crook, "Earth Bricks Shape Bidi Bidi Performing Arts Centre," *Dezeen*, June 20, 2024. <https://www.dezeen.com/2024/06/20/bidi-bidi-performing-arts-centre-uganda/>

¹⁰⁵ Stockholm International Water Institute, *Transboundary Water Cooperation over the Lower Jordan River Basin*, 2017

¹⁰⁶ Revista Código, "¿Cómo Construir una Vivienda Social?" 2016.



Figure 3 Women's Opportunity Center (Source: Elizabeth, 2023)

Completed in 2013, the Women's Opportunity Center is an internationally recognized model for women-centered architecture.¹⁰⁷ In a rural context where women face poverty, limited mobility, and socio-economic precarity, the center functions as hybrid building: training facility, shelter, economic generator, and community hub. The project embodies feminist design through its organizational logic, construction methodology, and relationship to cultural patterns of gathering and livelihood.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Sharon Davis Design, "Women's Opportunity Center

¹⁰⁸ Archidatum, "Women's Opportunity Center / Sharon Davis Design," 2016

Relevance to Thesis

The WOC demonstrates how architecture creates a framework for safety → skill → autonomy → integration, mirroring the transitional pathway I am designing for women in Bangladesh. It uses clustered circular forms organized around courtyards spaces simultaneously protective and welcoming. The cluster typology avoids institutional monotony, creating micro-worlds where women move gradually from privacy to collectivity. This resonates with my goal of designing non-hierarchical, emotionally safe environments supportive of incremental community re-engagement.¹⁰⁹

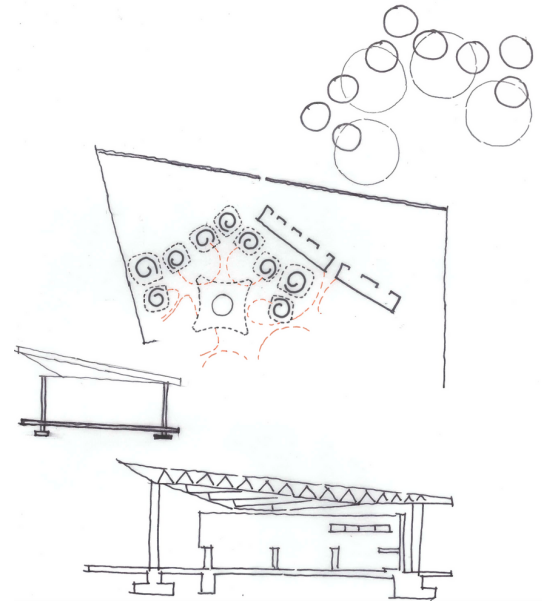


Figure 4 Women's Opportunity Center, Space Organization
Diagram by Amina Mainuddin

In the literature particularly Hayden and Tronto feminist architecture is defined not by formal language but by relational support systems.¹¹⁰ The WOC models this through integrated social enterprise: workshops, classrooms, demonstration farms, marketplaces, and cooperative structures. Physical buildings enable psychological recovery by reducing exposure, providing familiarity, and

¹⁰⁹ Nancy Reilly, "Women's Opportunity Center in Rwanda," *METALCON*, March 6, 2023

¹¹⁰ Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981)

giving women agency over how they occupy space. For survivors of violence or displacement, the ability to choose when and how to participate is critical.¹¹¹

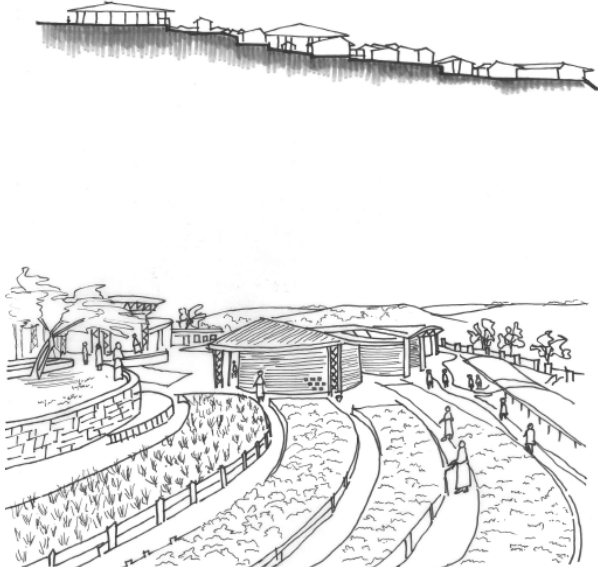


Figure 5 Women's Opportunity Center Elevation drawing by
Amina Mainuddin

Architectural Characteristics

The center's material palette of locally fired bricks, bamboo, and thatched elements reflects participatory construction engaging local women. Circular forms eliminate hierarchical corners. Entry is carefully choreographed: from the main road through semi-enclosed courtyards into clusters where circular huts connect via shaded walkways, offering safety without isolation. Natural ventilation, thick brick walls, and deep overhangs create cool interiors. Courtyards anchor agricultural training, childcare, gatherings, and peer support. Importantly, the design encourages market interactions and economic independence with the surrounding community.

¹¹¹ Joan C. Tronto, *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice* (New York: NYU Press, 2013).

Outcome for Thesis: The WOC proves transitional environments must integrate economic empowerment, spatial dignity, and cultural familiarity. This informs my cluster-based spatial organization for safety, micro-courtyard typologies for healing and peer support, programmatic integration as autonomy pathway, and governance models structuring empowerment beyond architecture. The essential lesson: shelter alone is insufficient. Architecture must build infrastructure of possibility.

METI Handmade School, Rudrapur, Bangladesh - Anna Heringer & Eike Roswag

Design

Theme: Participatory construction, local materials, empowerment through making, climate-adaptive design



Figure 6 METI Handmade School



Figure 7 METI Handmade School

Completed in 2006, the METI Handmade School is a landmark example of participatory architecture grounded in local knowledge, materials, and social

structures. Built collaboratively with local craftsmen, women, and students, METI is built pedagogy demonstrating how construction itself becomes a tool of empowerment, capacity-building, and community agency.¹¹² For a thesis on women-centered transitional environments in Bangladesh, METI is geographically, materially, and methodologically indispensable.

Relevance to Thesis

Bangladesh's refugee-hosting regions particularly Cox's Bazar face overlapping vulnerabilities: economic precarity, gendered labor inequalities, unstable climate conditions, and limited construction resources. METI offers a counter-model viewing architectural production as collaborative social act. By involving women in material preparation (earth mixing, bamboo processing) and construction, METI challenges gendered labor divisions and expands women's participation in making essential to my thesis framing architecture as both product and process of building autonomy.¹¹³

METI embodies Joan Tronto's ethics of care. Here, care is embedded in material decisions, slow craft, and relationships formed during building. The project demonstrates participatory construction strengthens social bonds crucial where displaced and host communities must negotiate co-existence. This precedent

¹¹² Anna Heringer, "METI Handmade School, Rudrapur, Bangladesh," accessed 2025, <https://www.anna-heringer.com/projects/meti-school-bangladesh/>

¹¹³ UN-Habitat, "Handmade Architecture as a Catalyst for Development: Anna Heringer, UNESCO Chair for Earthen Architecture," 2025, <https://unhabitat.org/handmade-architecture-as-a-catalyst-for-development-anna-heringer-unesco-chair-for-earthen-architecture>

articulates how participatory building integrates into both design methodology and programmatic content.

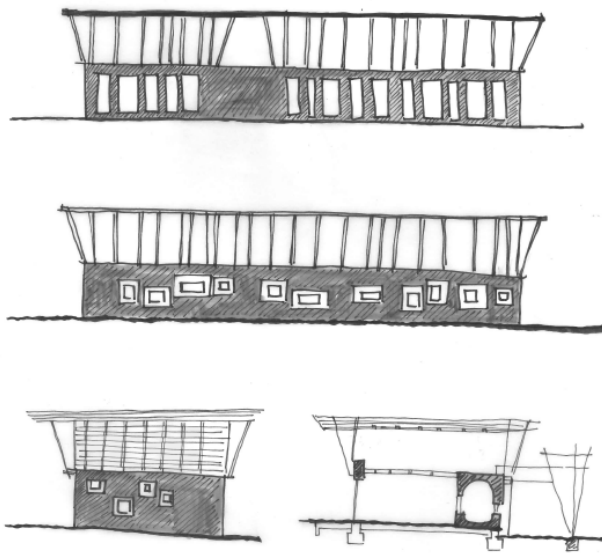


Figure 8 Meti School, Solid vs Void Study Diagram by Amina Mainuddin

Architectural Characteristics:

The building combines earthen walls on the ground floor with bamboo-and-earth lightweight upper structure. Rammed earth provides thermal mass, stabilizing temperatures against Bangladesh's extreme heat and humidity.

Bamboo trusses and woven lattice walls allow airflow while maintaining structural clarity.

Natural ventilation relies on high ceilings, operable shutters, and strategic openings.

Spatially organized around flexibility, the ground floor creates intimate learning spaces while the upper floor is airy, open, communal reflecting transitional space's emotional logic: grounded below, expansive above. Verandas, shaded outdoor classrooms, and semi-open walkways create "spaces between spaces" where social learning unfolds informally culturally significant in rural Bangladesh where public-private transitions are nuanced and choreographed.

Figure 9 Figure 10 Figure 11 Figure 12

Outcome for Thesis:

METI establishes participatory construction as a design methodology, not a social add-on; local material logic (earth + bamboo) as a culturally resonant, low-cost, climate-adaptive strategy; transitional thresholds as emotionally supportive spatial devices; architecture as empowerment where building becomes healing; and community integration through shared labor. This precedent proves architecture can be both a product and a process of emancipation essential for designing environments supporting women's transition from vulnerability to autonomy.

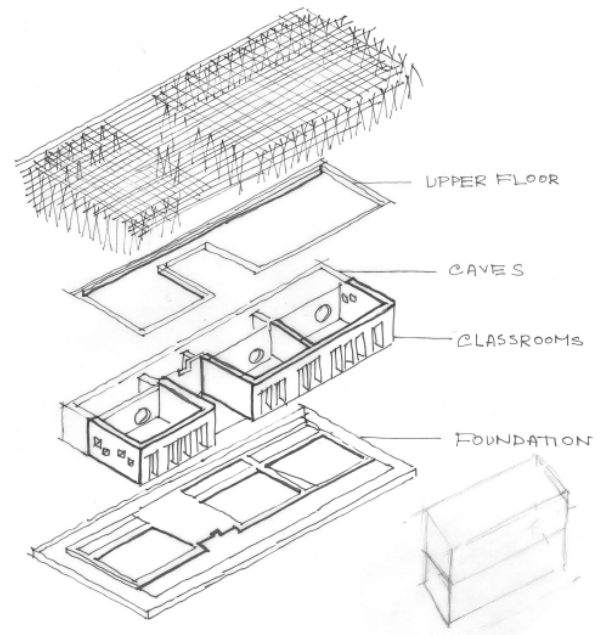


Figure 13 Meti School, Material Study exploded redrawn
Diagram by Amina Mainuddin

Léo Doctors' Housing, Léo, Burkina Faso - Kéré Architecture

Theme: Climate-responsive domesticity, privacy-community balance, dignity in low-resource contexts



Figure 14 Léo Doctors' Housing, Léo, Burkina Faso - Kéré Architecture

Completed in 2010, the Léo Doctors' Housing offers a nuanced domestic architecture model for working women and families in low-resource, high-heat contexts.¹¹⁴ Developed for the town's medical staff many women professionals recently assigned to the region the project demonstrates how architecture cultivates dignity, social belonging, and climatic comfort without expensive technologies.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Kéré Architecture, "Léo Doctors' Housing," 2016.

¹¹⁵ Wey, "Léo Doctors' Housing / Kéré Architecture," *Apsaidal*, January 31, 2020

Relevance to Thesis

Unlike emergency shelters or temporary structures, Léo focuses on stability over time. This operationalizes an idea central to my thesis: women in precarious circumstances, whether climate-affected, displaced, or escaping violence, require environments supporting not only immediate safety but also long-term psychological and social continuity. Léo proves that even with constrained budgets and extreme climates, architecture conveys dignity through thoughtful spatial organization, robust materials, and carefully articulated communal life. Kéré's emphasis on community-scale belonging, where each household embeds in a network of courtyards, shared outdoor spaces, and collective paths, informs my thesis interest in transitional zones where women relearn trust, pattern daily routines, and engage with community on their terms.

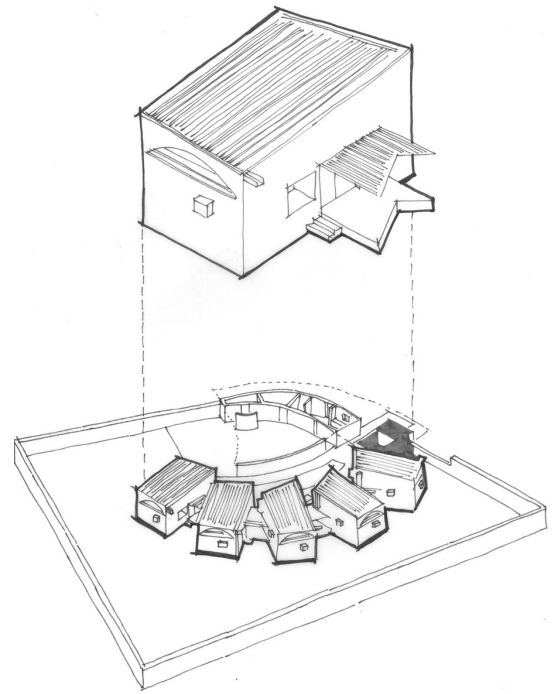


Figure 15 Léo Doctors' Housing, Léo, Burkina Faso - Kéré Architecture, Exploded Axon Drawing by Amina Mainuddin

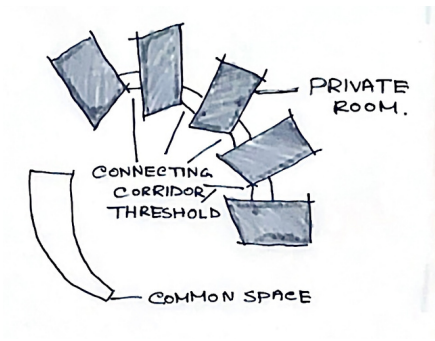
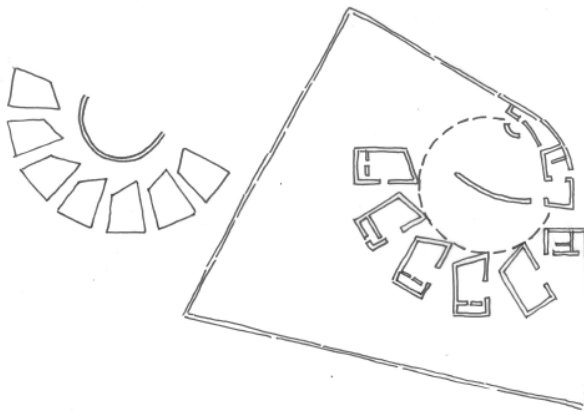


Figure 16 Léo Doctors' Housing, Léo, Burkina Faso - Kéré
Architecture Special organization diagram by Amina Mainuddin



Architectural Characteristics: The project comprises modest homes around shared courtyards, constructed using locally available laterite stone, compressed earth blocks, eucalyptus wood, and ventilated metal roofing.

Materials are chosen for thermal performance: thick earthen walls absorb heat during the day, releasing it slowly at night; ventilated roofing systems significantly reduce indoor temperatures. Each dwelling contains a shaded veranda functioning as a threshold and social buffer, neither fully inside nor outside, allowing residents to observe activity, host gatherings, or retreat with autonomy. Verandas act as "social mediators," enabling participation without exposure. Within clusters, paths and courtyards interlock, forming micro-communities where social interaction is natural but not forced. Privacy gradients layer from personal rooms to semi-private verandas to communal courtyards to larger site circulation.

Outcome for Thesis: Key lessons include layered privacy gradients mirroring women's emotional trajectories from protection to openness; verandas as trauma-informed transitional spaces allowing choice and control; courtyard-based domestic clusters supporting mutual support without sacrificing privacy; low-cost, climate-adaptive material strategies relevant for Bangladesh's mixed-humid, cyclone-prone environment; and community belonging as long-term programmatic outcome. Léo demonstrates small-scale domestic architecture when designed with cultural intelligence becomes a foundation for healing, stability, and empowerment.

Amsterdam Orphanage, Amsterdam, Netherlands - Aldo van Eyck

Theme: In-between space, psychological safety, spatial autonomy, non-institutional care environments

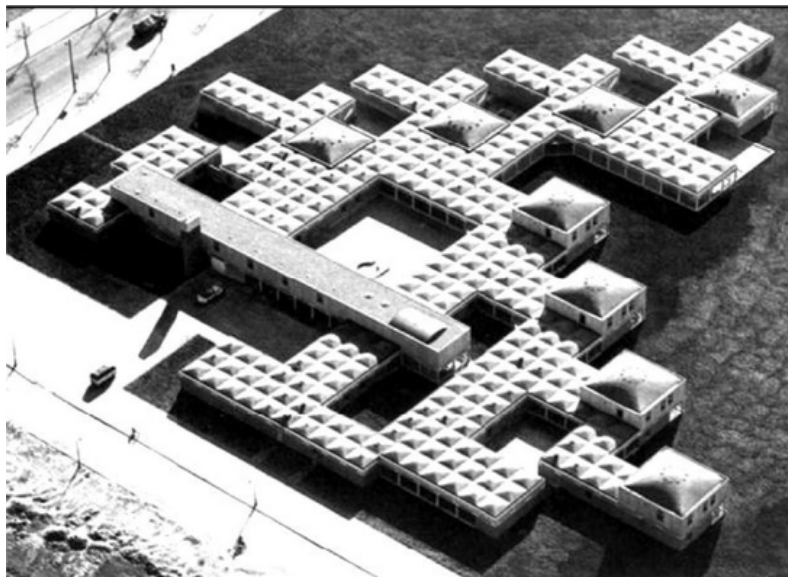


Figure 17 Amsterdam Orphanage, Amsterdam, Netherlands - Aldo van Eyck

Completed in 1960, Aldo van Eyck's Amsterdam Orphanage remains a seminal precedent for creating environments supporting emotional development,

autonomy, and belonging for vulnerable populations.¹¹⁶ Designed for children without stable homes, the orphanage challenged institutional models by replacing rigid hierarchies, corridors, and surveillance-based planning with a network of small, human-scaled spaces. The project is built on relationality: between inside and outside, private and communal, stillness and play.¹¹⁷

Relevance to Thesis: The orphanage's relevance lies in its spatial theory. Van Eyck's design builds on the "in-between" concept a condition blurring categorical boundaries allowing occupants to choose their own engagement modes. This aligns directly with trauma-informed design emphasizing control, autonomy, and agency especially for women who have experienced environments where those elements were stripped away. Women in transitional settings occupy states of "in-betweenness": between danger and safety, anonymity and belonging, past identities and future possibilities. Van Eyck's architecture fluid, warm, decentralized translates this emotional landscape into spatial language, avoiding institutional typologies that can retraumatize by echoing carceral or bureaucratic environments.

¹¹⁶ ArchEyes Team, "The Amsterdam Orphanage by Aldo van Eyck: Post-War Architecture," *ArchEyes*

¹¹⁷ Michiel van Iersel, "Book of the Month: Aldo van Eyck-Orphanage Amsterdam, Building & Playgrounds," *The Architectural Review*, December 5, 2018

Architectural Characteristics:

The orphanage structures are a constellation of pavilions around courtyards of varying scale and intimacy. No long corridors: instead, circulation happens through interconnected rooms, each different in proportion, ceiling height, and exposure. This creates a constantly shifting spatial experience, allowing children to occupy niches, semi-enclosed corners, shared breakout spaces, and inner gardens. The modular grid establishes coherence, while each module adapts to specific purposes: dining, learning, playing, and gathering. Courtyards function as "outdoor rooms," extending interior life into nature. Their diversity, from narrow, contemplative spaces to larger communal courtyards, mirrors emotional transitions. Materially, the building uses brick, concrete, and glass with warm textures and domestic proportions. The architecture is calm, quiet, and grounded, not monumental or austere.

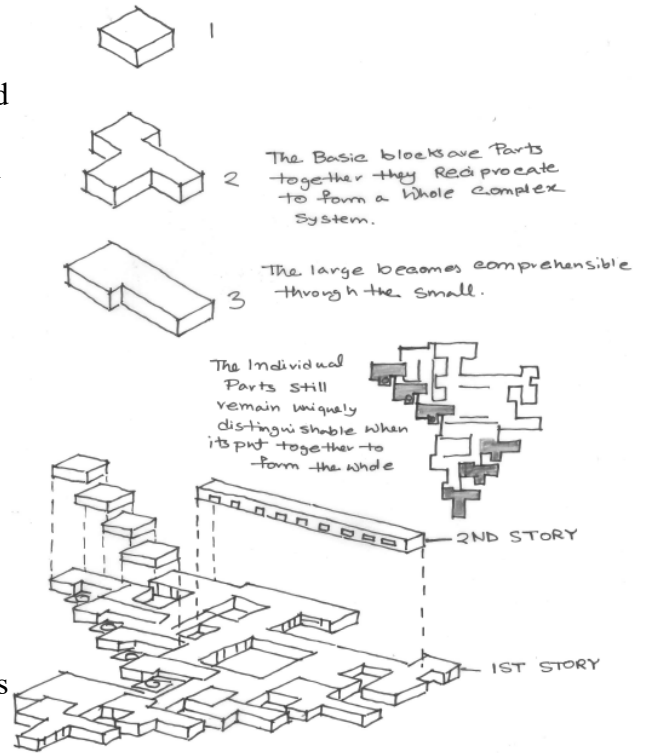


Figure 18 Amsterdam Orphanage, Amsterdam, Netherlands - Aldo van Eyck, diagram by Amina Mainuddin

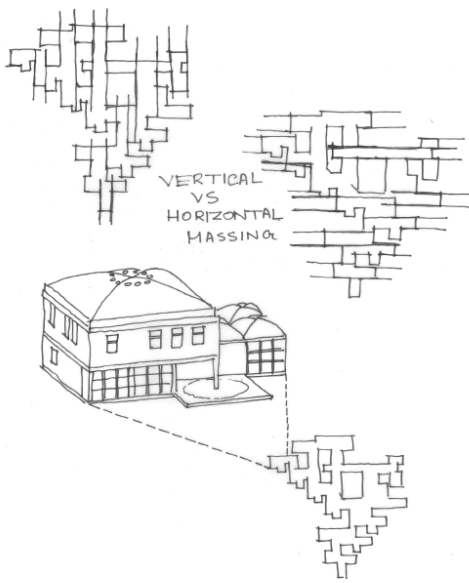


Figure 19 Amsterdam Orphanage, Amsterdam, Netherlands - Aldo van Eyck Diagram by Amina Mainuddin

Figure 20 Superkilen Park, Copenhagen, Denmark - BIG, Topotek1, Superflex

Outcome for Thesis: Key insights include in-between spaces as healing environments allowing women to negotiate social interaction on their terms; distributed, human-scaled clusters rather than centralized institutional blocks; courtyards as emotional regulators offering visibility, nature, and choice-based engagement; avoidance of institutional aesthetics favoring domestic, warm modernism; and circulation as a field of relationships, not neutral connector. The Amsterdam Orphanage strengthens my argument that transitional architecture must be gentle, relational, and psychologically attuned designed for human complexity rather than institutional efficiency.

Theme: Multicultural visibility, inclusive public space, shared identity, urban coexistence



Figure 21 Superkilen Park, Copenhagen, Denmark

Completed in 2012 in Copenhagen's Nørrebro district, Superkilen Park is a globally recognized precedent for designing inclusive public space in ethnically diverse, politically tense urban contexts.¹¹⁸ Nørrebro hosts immigrant communities from over 60 countries, many from refugee and post-conflict backgrounds. Rather than smoothing differences, Superkilen celebrates them through multicultural visibility: everyday objects benches, neon signs, fountains were selected by residents representing their countries of origin.¹¹⁹

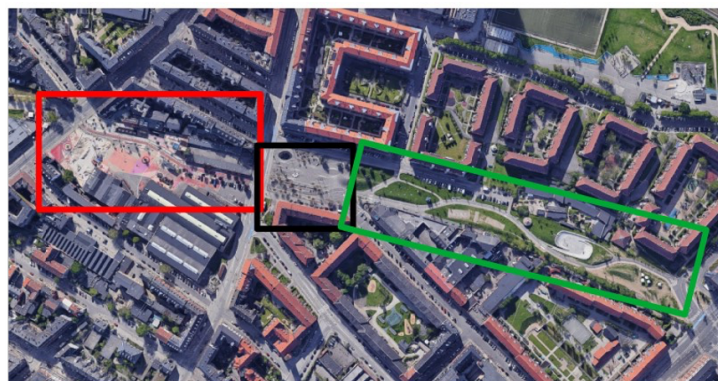


Figure 22 Superkilen Park, Copenhagen, Denmark

¹¹⁸ ArchDaily, "Superkilen / Topotek 1 + BIG Architects + Superflex," October 25, 2012.

¹¹⁹ Zas Brezar, "Urban Revitalization: Superkilen by Topotek1, BIG & Superflex," *Landeszine*, February 5, 2013.

Relevance to Thesis

This project speaks directly to my thesis's "shared futures" dimension. Transitional architecture addresses not only immediate safety but also how displaced and host communities coexist long-term. Superkilen demonstrates how public space becomes a platform for recognition, belonging, and cross-cultural visibility crucial themes for women navigating transitions in Bangladesh where host-refugee tensions shape daily life. From a gendered perspective, public space is often where women feel least safe. Yet in Superkilen, openness pairs with legibility, light, and social density collectively fostering collective care. This lesson is critical for transitional environments in Bangladesh, especially near Cox's Bazar where public spaces are often male dominated, limiting women's mobility and autonomy.

Architectural Characteristics

The park divides into three zones Red Square, Black Market, and Green Park each with distinct materials and atmospheres choreographing different spatial behaviors: gathering, markets, play, rest, movement. Objects placed throughout selected through participatory processes function as micro-monuments anchoring immigrant identities within the city. This strategy is not merely symbolic; it is political, challenging assimilationist models that erase cultural specificity.

Outcome for Thesis

Superkilen teaches that cultural visibility is a form of care; shared urban infrastructure strengthens coexistence; participatory selection of objects/spaces enhances belonging; public space must be safe, legible, and emotionally inclusive for

women; and urban-scale interventions support social integration of displaced groups. This precedent advances my thesis by expanding scale: transitional care must operate not only architecturally but also urbanistically, shaping shared landscapes of everyday life.

Friendship Hospital, Satkhira, Bangladesh - Kashef Chowdhury / URBANA

Theme: Climate resilience, water-based healing, rural dignity, low-tech care infrastructure



Figure 23 Friendship Hospital, Satkhira, Bangladesh - Kashef Chowdhury / URBANA

Completed in 2018 in flood-prone Satkhira, Friendship Hospital is a model of climate-responsive, dignity-centered care for marginalized rural communities. Instead of mechanical cooling or institutional aesthetics, the project uses water, brick, and

shaded courtyards to create a calm, restorative environment aligned with local culture and climate.¹²⁰

Relevance to Thesis

The hospital's significance lies in how it merges climate adaptation with emotional well-being, an essential parallel to transitional environments for women. Just as women navigate states between danger and safety, the hospital negotiates land and water, enclosure and openness. It's warm materials, human scale, and courtyard logic directly align with the trauma-informed design required in Zones 1 and 2 of my programs. Moreover, it acts as a shared civic resource rather than an isolated aid facility, reinforcing my thesis goal of serving both host and displaced women long-term.

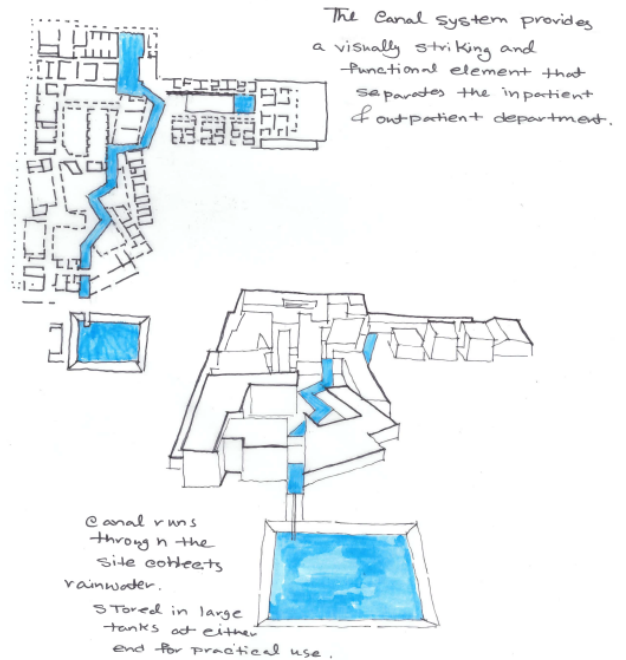


Figure 24 Friendship Hospital, Satkhira, Bangladesh - Kashef Chowdhury / URBANA, Water Drainage Diagram by Amina Mainuddin

Architectural Characteristics

A central canal structures the campus, cooling the microclimate and managing floods while offering tranquil visual relief. Brick pavilions and shaded walkways flank this water spine, with courtyards punctuating the sequence. Thick brick walls

¹²⁰ Arquitectura Viva, "Friendship Hospital in Shyamnagar – Kashef Chowdhury / URBANA

provide thermal mass; perforated screens admit soft light and air. Circulation is intuitive and slow, supported by verandas and resting pockets that reduce clinical stress.

Outcome for Thesis:

Key insights include:

- Water and landscape can act as therapeutic elements.
- Climate-responsive design enhances long-term safety for women facing environmental trauma.
- Courtyards support emotional regulation and gentle movement.
- Domestic materiality avoids institutional cues common in shelters.
- Infrastructure can operate as shared community support, benefiting host and refugee women alike.

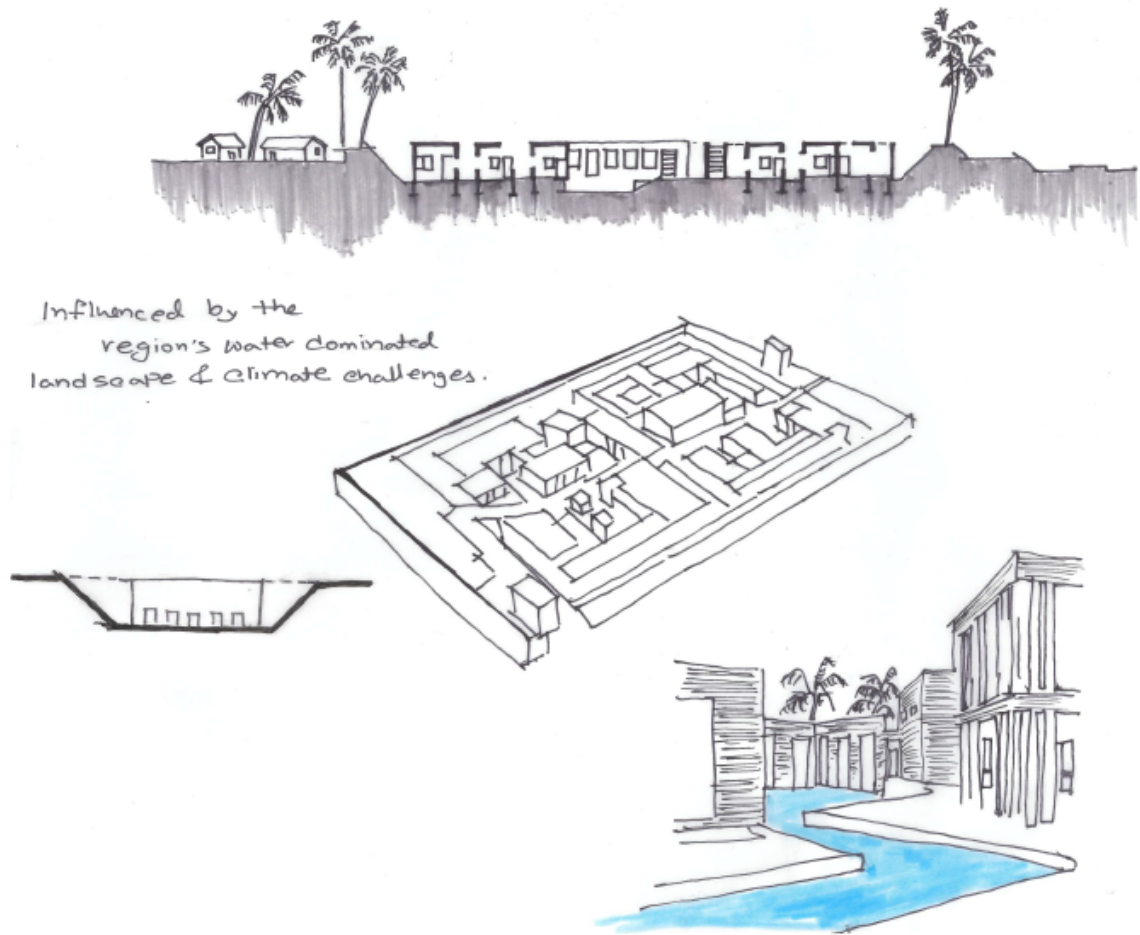


Figure 25 Friendship Hospital, Satkhira, Bangladesh - Kashef Chowdhury / URBANA, Massing Study Diagram by Amina Mainuddin

Friendship Hospital affirms that care-based architecture must be climate-smart, culturally grounded, and emotionally attuned, providing environments that uphold dignity and strengthen collective resilience.

Extended Precedents: Coexistence and Shared Infrastructure

While the five core precedents establish foundations for spatial dignity, empowerment, climate adaptation, and psychological wellbeing, they do not fully address coexistence between host and displaced communities. Success of any

transitional environment especially in Bangladesh depends on negotiating shared resources, spaces, and futures. This section introduces four additional precedents illustrating infrastructural, economic, and social coexistence models.

Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement, Kenya Developed by UNHCR and the Kenyan government, Kalobeyei challenges conventional refugee camp models by promoting shared infrastructure between host Turkana communities and refugees. Unlike fenced, segregated camps, Kalobeyei embeds refugee housing, local markets, schools, and clinics into mixed settlement plans organized around economic opportunity. The settlement integrates shared marketplaces, agricultural zones accessible to both groups, public services in neutral zones, and pedestrian linkages promoting everyday encounters. These spatial strategies reduce segregation, allowing interdependence through routine, low-stakes interactions. Outcome: Shared economic infrastructure is foundational to coexistence; market spaces become sites of women's empowerment; transitional environments must operate at urban planning scale; shared proximity transforms social dynamics and reduces conflict.¹²¹

¹²¹ Betts, Omata, and Sterck, "Kalobeyei Settlement"



Figure 26 Bidi Bidi Arts Center, Uganda

Bidi Bidi Arts Center, Uganda Located in one of the world's largest refugee settlements, Bidi Bidi Arts Center provides communal space for refugees and host communities to engage in performance, arts, craft-making, and cultural exchange. The structure designed with local materials uses an expressive roof form and large open hall accommodating flexible programming. The circular stage-space encourages participation and fluid movement. Women often excluded from public life can safely occupy these protected, semi-public environments. Outcome: Shared creative space fosters belonging and reduces social boundaries; architecture supports collective healing without institutional stigma; programs for women must extend beyond survival to joy, expression, and culture.¹²²

Jordan Water Program, operating across Jordan, Israel, and Palestine, the Jordan Water Program provides a precedent for resource management in politically sensitive regions. It uses water-sharing agreements, cross-border treatment facilities,

¹²² Lizzie Crook, "Earth Bricks Shape Bidi Bidi Performing Arts Centre for Refugees in Uganda," *Dezeen*, June 20, 2024

and decentralized water storage technologies promoting cooperation. These infrastructural elements become shared touchpoints among communities in conflict, building cooperation through necessity. Outcome: Shared resource systems reduce inequality and conflict; water infrastructure can be spatial anchors for coexistence; women's safety depends on reliable access to water, sanitation, and hygiene.¹²³

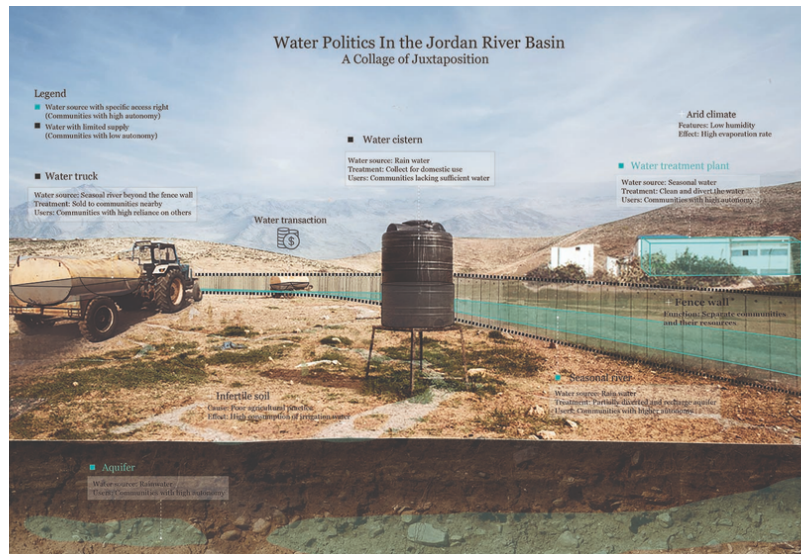


Figure 27 Jordan Water Program

Vivienda en Puebla, Mexico Communal Taller de Arquitectura, designed in 2016, Vivienda en Puebla responds to indigenous Nahua housing practices while navigating restrictive federal policies stigmatizing traditional materials. It emerged from participatory processes involving local cooperatives, workshops, and community-led design decisions. The project uses prefabricated bamboo-based wall panels, a modular system of three core components, rapid assembly (one week),

¹²³ Stockholm International Water Institute, *Transboundary Water Cooperation over the Lower Jordan River Basin*, 2017

panels wrapped in local ixtle fiber and mortar for weather protection, bioclimatic strategies addressing heat and humidity, and rainwater harvesting with greywater wetlands.¹²⁴ The plan responds to indigenous customs with a central salón principal for home altars and drying harvest, permeable kitchens for smoke escape, and local lattice motifs reinterpreted in modern materials. Outcome: A culturally rooted modular system adaptable for transitional housing; a model blending prefabrication with indigenous identity; evidence that policy barriers can be navigated without cultural erasure; lessons for women's domestic autonomy and continuity in new contexts.



Figure 28 Vivienda en Puebla, Mexico Comunal Taller de Arquitectur



Figure 29 Vivienda en Puebla, Mexico Comunal Taller de Arquitectur

Conclusion: Synthesis of Precedent Insights

These precedents articulate an expanded framework for designing transitional environments for women in precarious contexts. The Women's Opportunity Center

¹²⁴ Revista Código, “¿Cómo Construir una Vivienda Social?

demonstrates empowerment inseparable from spatial autonomy, economic opportunity, and culturally grounded clusters. METI reveals participatory construction and local materials as process, pedagogy, and community-building tool. Léo Doctors' Housing brings climatic intelligence, dignity-oriented domesticity, and layered privacy gradients essential for trauma-informed design. Amsterdam Orphanage offers spatial psychology of care where in-between spaces, thresholds, courtyards, and relational scales support emotional recovery and autonomy. Superkilen Park expands the thesis urbanistically, showing how cultural visibility, shared infrastructure, and inclusive public space promote coexistence. The extended precedents Kalobeyei, Bidi Bidi, Jordan Water, and Vivienda en Puebla, reinforce that coexistence requires shared economic, creative, and resource infrastructures bridging divided communities.

Recurring themes emerge: Spatial dignity through material warmth, cultural resonance, and human-scaled environments. Participation and ownership through construction, program formation, or cultural object selection, making agency a spatial practice. Safety as gradient, not boundary, transitional environments offering multiple exposure levels from protected interior zones to communal courtyards and public interfaces. Climate and material intelligence, low-cost, locally embedded materiality strengthening resilience and aligning with cultural familiarity. Coexistence and shared futures, shared infrastructures (economic, social, spatial) crucial where displacement intersects with host communities.

These insights directly shape the programmatic and spatial logics of Chapter 5, where I translate these findings into zones, programs, and reverse-engineered

architectural logic forming my thesis proposal's foundation. The precedents establish that transitional architecture for women must exceed shelter: it must offer belonging, agency, livelihood, and the possibility of citizenship.

Chapter 5: Zones and Program

Program Abstract

This program proposes an architectural framework supporting women in vulnerable transitional states, from crisis stabilization to healing, skill-building, and long-term autonomy. Informed by feminist spatial theory, community-based design, and precedents including the Women's Opportunity Center, METI School, Léo Housing, Amsterdam Orphanage, and Superkilen Park, the program organizes into four interconnected zones: (1) Safety & Stabilization, (2) Healing & Personal Growth, (3) Skills, Livelihood & Collective Making, and (4) Community Integration & Shared Futures. Each zone embodies care ethics through spatial choice, cultural resonance, climate responsiveness, and opportunities for participation. Together, they form a relational system where architecture becomes not just physical shelter but a platform for agency, recovery, and community belonging.

Introduction: Why Program Matters

A program for transitional architecture cannot be generic. It must be deeply rooted in the lived patterns, vulnerabilities, and aspirations of women navigating displacement, climate trauma, or domestic violence. Program is not a menu of rooms; it is the translation of worldview into spatial and social logic. For women in Bangladesh, this means understanding gendered mobility, privacy needs, collective care, kinship-based interaction, and the cultural significance of thresholds and courtyards.

This chapter articulates a program emerging directly from research: the needs identified in literature review, spatial lessons from precedent studies, coexistence models from host-refugee settlements, and site-specific realities of Bangladesh's climate, culture, and socio-political context. In other words, this chapter transforms research into architecture.

This is not a program for a "women's shelter." It is a program for a transitional architecture of care, where women move through layered spatial conditions that gradually empower them to participate fully in community life.

How Research Informs Program

The program is grounded in theoretical pillars that directly shape spatial decisions:

Feminist Spatial Theory (Hayden, Boys): Hayden argues that architecture often encodes patriarchal norms through circulation, privacy, and labor. Shelters frequently replicate institutional limitations. The program resists this by avoiding corridor-based institutions, using clusters and courtyards, embedding economic independence opportunities, and designing for community without erasing privacy. Jos Boys argues that gendered lived experience must be visible in form, this program treats zones as responses to specific gendered challenges (safety, trust-building, trauma, livelihood).

Ethics of Care (Tronto): Tronto outlines care as a process, caring about → taking care → care- giving → care-receiving → caring with. Each program zone aligns with this sequence: Zone 1

(caring about safety), Zone 2 (taking care through healing), Zone 3 (caregiving through skill- building), Zone 4 (caring with through community integration). Spatial translation of care becomes the architecture's backbone.

Transitional Theory: Women in vulnerable states don't move linearly from crisis to stability; they oscillate between states. Therefore, zones must have blurred boundaries, provide circulation options, and allow retreat at any time, reflecting the in-between spatial logic learned from van Eyck's Amsterdam Orphanage.

Coexistence and Shared Infrastructure: From Kalobeyei, Bidi Bidi Arts Center, and Jordan Water Program, the thesis learns that coexistence is infrastructural. Shared spaces reduce conflict; water, creative spaces, and markets are common denominators between communities. Program zones include public-facing components enabling host-refugee sharing.

Climate and Material Intelligence: Bangladesh's mixed-humid, cyclone-prone climate demands shaded semi-outdoor spaces, raised platforms, passive ventilation, courtyards for cooling, and bamboo, earth, and light prefabrication, aligning with METI and Vivienda en Puebla precedents.

Program Zones

The program organizes into four interdependent zones, each corresponding to different phases of women's transitional journeys. These zones are not sequenced linearly; they overlap and interweave, allowing women to move at their own pace.

Each zone is inspired directly by theoretical frameworks and precedents analyzed in Chapter 4.

Zone 1: Safety & Stabilization

Purpose: Immediate refuge, trauma-informed spatial logic, sensory regulation, protected access

This anchor zone provides psychological decompression, physical security, and predictable spatial sequences. Architecture must counteract hypervigilance, fear, and exhaustion, the most common trauma responses.

Spatial Qualities: Gentle, layered thresholds instead of single boundaries, shaded entry court, semi- open reception pavilion, distributing courtyard, visible but non-dominating staff offices. This echoes the Women's Opportunity Center's circular clusters. Cluster-based units organize 3-5 rooms around micro-courtyards, allowing peer support, visibility, controlled access, and reduced institutional feeling. Trauma-informed environments use warm, non-institutional materials; soft edges; privacy-positioned windows; multiple exit options; acoustic buffering; dimmable lighting. The spatial logic takes cues from van Eyck's Orphanage, small rooms, small courtyards, human-scale proportions.

Essential Services: Intake rooms, private sleep rooms (120-150 sf each), dignified shared bathrooms, sensory decompression space, small kitchenette, soft-presence staff oversight.

Outcome: Stabilizes women psychologically and physically through non-institutional, domestic- scaled architecture; establishes trust and familiarity; forms the base for gradual movement into healing and community zones.

Zone 2: Healing & Personal Growth

Purpose: Recovery, self-awareness, community support, body-mind restoration

Once stabilization occurs, women enter periods of reflection, grief processing, and emotional repair. This zone provides environments for quiet introspection, therapeutic services, nature connection, and peer support, drawing on Amsterdam Orphanage's in-between spaces, Léo Doctors' Housing verandas, and Bidi Bidi Arts Center collective healing.

Spatial Qualities: Healing gardens with enclosed gardens, quiet courtyards, shaded seating, water features for sensory grounding serve as daily therapeutic rituals. Counseling spaces cluster around small courtyards for privacy, one-on-one counseling rooms (120 sf each), group therapy rooms (250- 350 sf), meditation/prayer rooms (150-200 sf), yoga/movement rooms (400-600 sf). Each is acoustically isolated and naturally lit. Semi-private verandas, borrowing from Kéré, offer choices, sit alone but see others, sit discreetly with another, observe without participating. Control equals healing. Small-scale reflection spaces include reading rooms, craft nooks, journaling corners. Childcare support (300 sf), visible from healing courtyards, enables mothers to engage in counseling.

Outcome: Provides environments for emotional recovery, encourages agency through spatial choice, builds trust through shared gentle spaces, offers culturally adaptable healing (prayer, storytelling, group support), fosters resilience through nature and movement. Zone 2 positions healing as communal, not isolated experience.

Zone 3: Skills, Livelihood & Collective Making

Purpose: Economic empowerment, hands-on training, co-creation, participatory production

Where Zone 1 stabilizes and Zone 2 heals, Zone 3 enables women to reclaim agency through making. Economic dependency is a significant barrier to autonomy. This zone operationalizes livelihood as architecture, providing safe access to tools, workshops, learning environments, and production opportunities.

Rooted in METI's participatory building, Women's Opportunity Center's livelihood integration, Comunal Taller's modular making, Bidi Bidi's creative expression, and Kalobeyei's shared markets, it is the heart of the thesis: transition from care to capability.

Spatial Qualities: Makerspaces and workshops (500-800 sf) for textile work, bamboo and carpentry training, earthen construction labs, craft rooms, shared tool library. Each is ventilated, naturally lit, acoustically buffered. Teaching kitchens (300 sf) for communal cooking workshops, food micro- enterprise training, nutrition learning, shared meal preparation, encouraging intergenerational exchange. Digital skills rooms (300 sf) support computer training, sewing machine training, literacy

classes, financial literacy, small-business development. Open courtyards (400 sf) for drying goods, displaying crafts, small pop-up markets, transitional zones between making and sharing. Participation in construction: women help co-build modular elements, participate in bamboo treatment, prepare earthen plasters, contribute to facade patterns. Participation → ownership → dignity → autonomy.

Outcome: Moves women from dependency to capability, restores agency through making, bridges host and refugee communities through shared economic activity, builds income-translating skills, reinforces livelihood as healing. Zone 3 is the engine of transformation.

Zone 4: Community Integration & Shared Futures

Purpose: Public interface, coexistence, cultural expression, host-refugee engagement

This outward-facing dimension enables women to re-enter public life on their own terms and facilitates host-displaced community meeting. While Zones 1-3 are inward and restorative, Zone 4 is outward and integrative, drawing on Superkilen's cultural visibility, Kalobeyei's shared markets, Bidi Bidi's performance spaces, and Jordan Water Program's shared resources. The goal is not to expose women prematurely, but to create safe pathways into community life.

Spatial Qualities: Community market/bazaar (1000+ sf), shaded, flexible hall where women sell products, communities shop together, and cultural festivals occur, using open sheds, lattice shading, bamboo trusses. Gardens and plazas (1500 sf) for small events, garden paths connecting programs, shaded seating for elders,

intergenerational play, soft social thresholds inspired by Superkilen and Kalobeyei. Multipurpose rooms (400-600 sf) for neighborhood meetings, women-led advocacy, ESL classes, intercultural gatherings. Visibility is controlled; women decide when and how they are seen. Performance spaces with small amphitheater, covered stage for dance, music, storytelling, communal festivals, recognizing joy and celebration as essential to resilience. Shared water/resource node with community-accessible rainwater collection, greywater reuse gardens, shared washing areas, communal cistern. Shared resources → shared responsibilities → shared futures.

Outcome: Enables cultural exchange between host and displaced women, provides dignified spaces for public re-entry, reduces social isolation, creates new collective identities, makes architecture a shared community asset. Zone 4 embodies "citizenship", a relational state of belonging, participation, and visibility.

Reverse-Engineered Program: Women's Opportunity Center (WOC), Rwanda

Precedent Justification: Of the five analyzed precedents, the Women's Opportunity Center is chosen for reverse-engineering because it most closely aligns with this thesis conceptually and programmatically. It integrates safety, healing, economic empowerment, and community interface, the same four zones developed in this thesis. It uses cluster typologies, circular courtyards, women-centered governance, and livelihood-based programming to support women recovering from trauma. Studying it closely reveals spatial, organizational, and operational lessons that directly inform program logic. Reverse-engineering is not copying; it is

decoding, revealing why certain decisions were made, how they function socially, and how their logic can be adapted to Bangladesh's context.

Architectural Logic Decoded:

Spatial Typologies: The WOC organizes as a constellation of circular structures around variously scaled courtyards. Circles eliminate hierarchical corners. Courtyards distribute circulation without corridors. Clusters give women choice between privacy or group presence. The overall network allows navigation without surveillance. Translation to thesis: Modified cluster typology for Safety Zone (Zone 1) and Healing Zone (Zone 2), using courtyards as anchors for stabilization and emotional decompression.

Zoning Strategy: The WOC transitions from private → semi-public → public programs through spatial layering. Inner rings contain counseling, quiet spaces, protected areas. Middle rings house workshops and training rooms. Outermost layer contains market interfaces with the village. Translation: The thesis's four zones form a similar gradient from protection (Zone 1) to shared community life (Zone 4). This informs site strategy: inward healing, outward integration.

Material Intelligence: The WOC uses locally fired bricks, bamboo screens, thatch shading, earth floors, and culturally familiar textures. These materials soften architecture and reduce institutional feel. Translation: The thesis program incorporates bamboo, earth plasters, permeable brick screens, and light prefabrication

(inspired by Puebla), reinforcing dignity, climate responsiveness, and women's comfort.

Economic & Social Infrastructure: The WOC integrates kitchens, training halls, craft workshops, market stalls, and outdoor gathering courts. These spaces are not secondary; they are the core of the center. Translation: Zone 3 (Livelihood & Making) replicates this logic and expands it through Bangladesh-specific crafts, food economies, and modular teaching workshops.

Governance & Agency: WOC incorporates local cooperatives and women-led committees. Architecture supports governance by offering meeting rooms, creating semi-public "decision" courts, and allowing visibility without intimidation. Translation: Zone 4 includes rooms for councils, advocacy groups, and women-led decision-making, ensuring architecture becomes a platform for political agency.

Relevance to Thesis: This reverse-engineering validates the four-zone structure as grounded and research-driven. Cluster logics inform Zones 1 & 2. Livelihood spaces inform Zone 3. Public markets and plazas inform Zone 4. Material and governance strategies inform the entire program. It demonstrates that the program is not an abstract collection of rooms but an evolution from proven, evidence-based strategies.

Written Summary: Research to Program

The program for this transitional center emerges from direct readings of precedent, theory, and site conditions. Each zone responds to specific needs identified in research.

Feminist theory demanded that the program challenge patriarchal and institutional logics, producing clusters instead of corridors, gardens instead of holding rooms, and workshops instead of charity-based service spaces. Care ethics mapped women's emotional journey into a four-zone structure, with each zone corresponding to a stage of caregiving or care-receiving: safety, healing, making, and belonging. Participatory and indigenous frameworks, from METI and Puebla, shaped the material and construction logic, ensuring women are not only users but also co-creators. Coexistence precedents, such as Kalobeyei and Superkilen, proved that shared markets, public spaces, and resource infrastructures are critical for long-term integration between host and displaced communities. This affirmed the necessity of Zone 4. Psychological and spatial lessons from van Eyck and Kéré revealed how small-scale, soft, relational environments help rebuild trust and autonomy.

The synthesis of all this research provides the blueprint for a program that is not just architectural but transformational. It reflects a worldview in which care is spatialized, empowerment is infrastructural, and women's autonomy is the ultimate design goal.

Conclusion: Toward Spatial Strategy

Together, the four zones form an integrated spatial ecosystem mirroring women's trajectories through vulnerability, healing, and empowerment. The architectural strategy is one of gradual expansion, from inward protective environments toward outward participatory public ones. This gradient reflects the project's ethical stance: autonomy is cultivated over time, through relationships, making, and community belonging.

What makes this program unique is its alignment of theory, precedent, and lived experience. Every zone tie to specific research insights: Hayden's feminist critique, Tronto's care ethics, van Eyck's in- between spaces, METI's participatory construction, Kéré's domestic dignity, and coexistence strategies from Kalobeyei, Bidi Bidi, and Jordan. The program is evidence-based and culturally grounded, adaptable to Bangladesh's social and environmental complexities.

A transitional architecture of care cannot be reduced to shelter or rely on imported institutional typologies. It must emerge from understanding women's lived realities, spatial, emotional, economic, climatic, cultural. This program forms the foundation for translating these zones into massing, diagrams, sections, sequences, and architectural interventions embodying care ethics, empowerment, and coexistence at every scale.

This project positions itself not as temporary fix, but as a platform for women's long-term stability, autonomy, and citizenship.

Chapter 6: Site Selection and Analysis

Introduction

This chapter establishes the relationship between program and site for my thesis on a women centered empowerment center at the civic edge of Cox's Bazar. I began the semester with Site Zero in Washington DC to test methods of field documentation and urban reading in a safe local context. After refining my methodology, I shifted fully to the Bangladesh site where the project will be located for the remainder of the thesis. The chapter presents the program driven criteria for site selection, an analysis of the Gundum and Customs Balukhali Playground area, and the environmental and sociocultural factors that shape the architectural direction.

Program Based Site Criteria

The program focuses on training, gathering, shared production, and community support for both host and refugee women. It is not a shelter. The site must support safety, accessibility, and cultural familiarity. Required conditions include walkability, proximity to children's spaces, access to health or civic services, layered visibility that balances protection and comfort, and the ability to create transitional social edges. Environmental conditions such as flood exposure, shade, drainage, and wind movement strengthen the need for a site that can support raised construction and shaded outdoor activity. Together these program needs produce explicit criteria: an edge location, multiple safe entry sequences, the presence of social activity nearby, potential for microclimate creation, and the ability to host shared civic life.

Site Zero as Methodological Foundation

Site Zero, located across from Mary House in Bunker Hill, provided a controlled setting for learning and testing field-based research methods. I documented edges, thresholds, pedestrian movement, sensory atmospheres, and visibility patterns. I learned to interpret open land as social territory rather than vacant space. I developed an understanding of how comfort and safety emerge through layered edges, shade, and the presence of other people. I also gained clarity on how to respect community privacy by limiting invasive photography. These lessons formed the basis of the analytical framework used for the Bangladesh site.

Territorial Context of the Thesis Site in Bangladesh

The Gundum and Customs Balukhali region sits between host Bangladeshi villages and the Rohingya refugee settlements of Cox's Bazar. The area is shaped by displacement, ongoing humanitarian presence, and continuous movement along the Bangladesh Myanmar Friendship Road. This edge condition is critical for a program that seeks to foster shared civic interaction while protecting women's privacy and agency. Nearby clinics, markets, and a major playground generate everyday activity that makes the site socially viable. Environmental pressures such as flooding, erosion, and heat define the need for resilient construction and shaded communal areas.

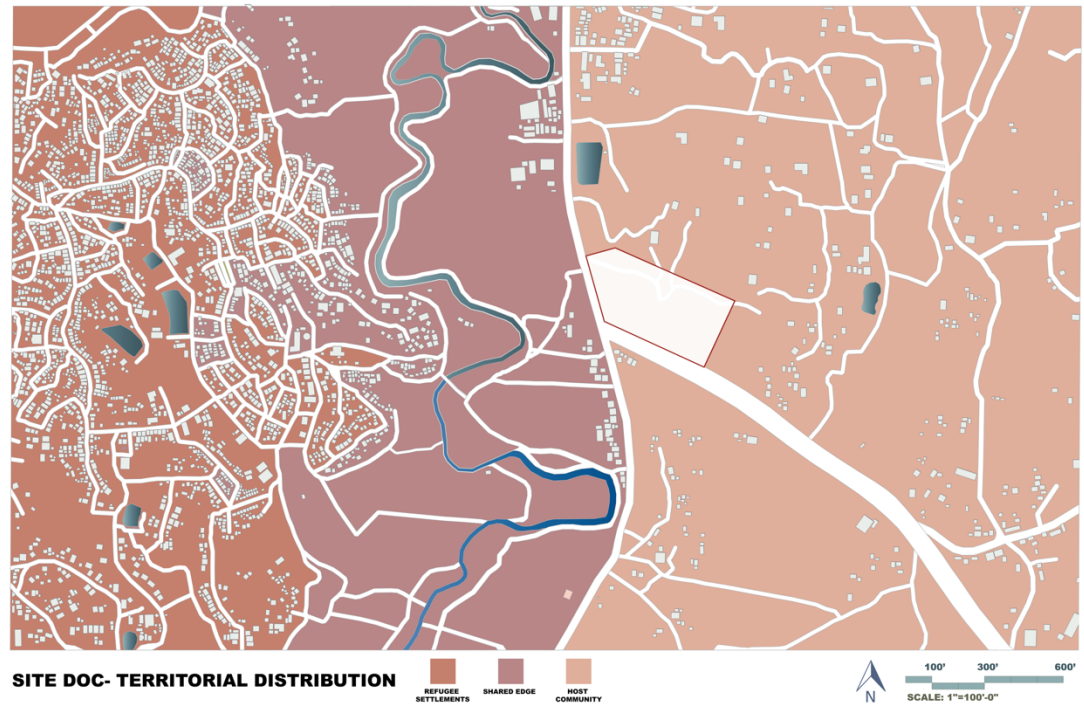


Figure 30 Territorial Distribution Map by Amina Mainuddin

Site Documentation Through Mapping

The mapping studies clarify the site as a layered edge rather than a single isolated parcel. Land use, territorial distribution, topography, vegetation, building types, access, and spatial density all reveal a landscape shaped by both settlement pressure and environmental systems. The proposed site sits between dense refugee settlement patterns, more dispersed host community fabric, agricultural land, water channels, and major road infrastructure. This in-between position supports the thesis argument that the project should not belong exclusively to one side but should operate

as shared civic ground.

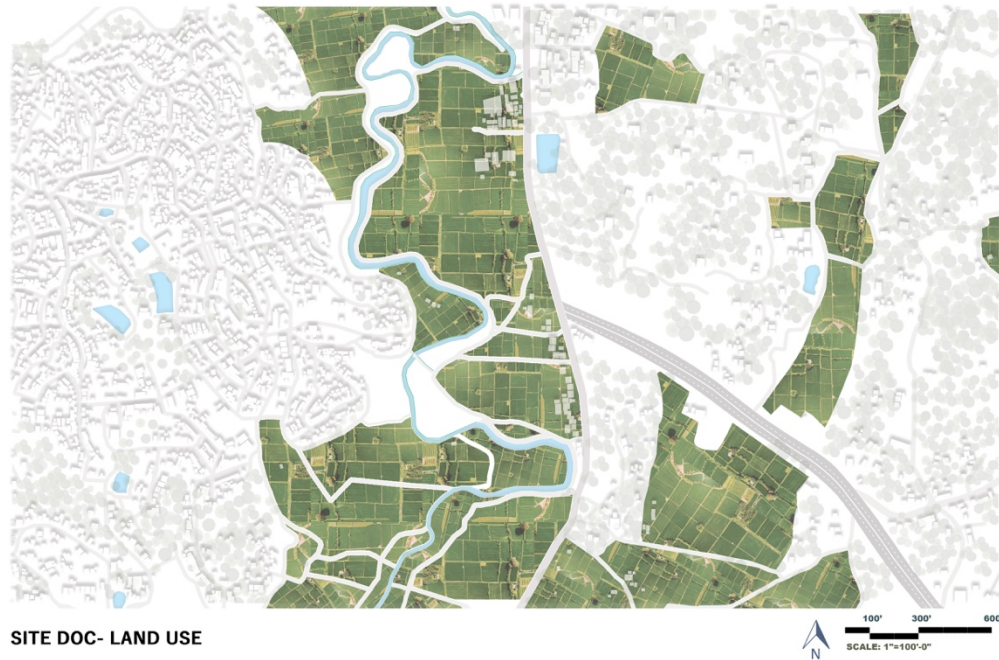


Figure 31 Land Use Map Diagram by Amina Mainuddin

The land use map shows how agricultural fields, settlement areas, roads, and water systems overlap around the site. The site is surrounded by productive land and open terrain, which makes the decision to limit the project footprint important. Rather than expanding carelessly into agricultural land, the proposal works with an existing civic edge near the playground and road. This allows the architecture to support community life while reducing additional pressure on land already affected by

displacement.

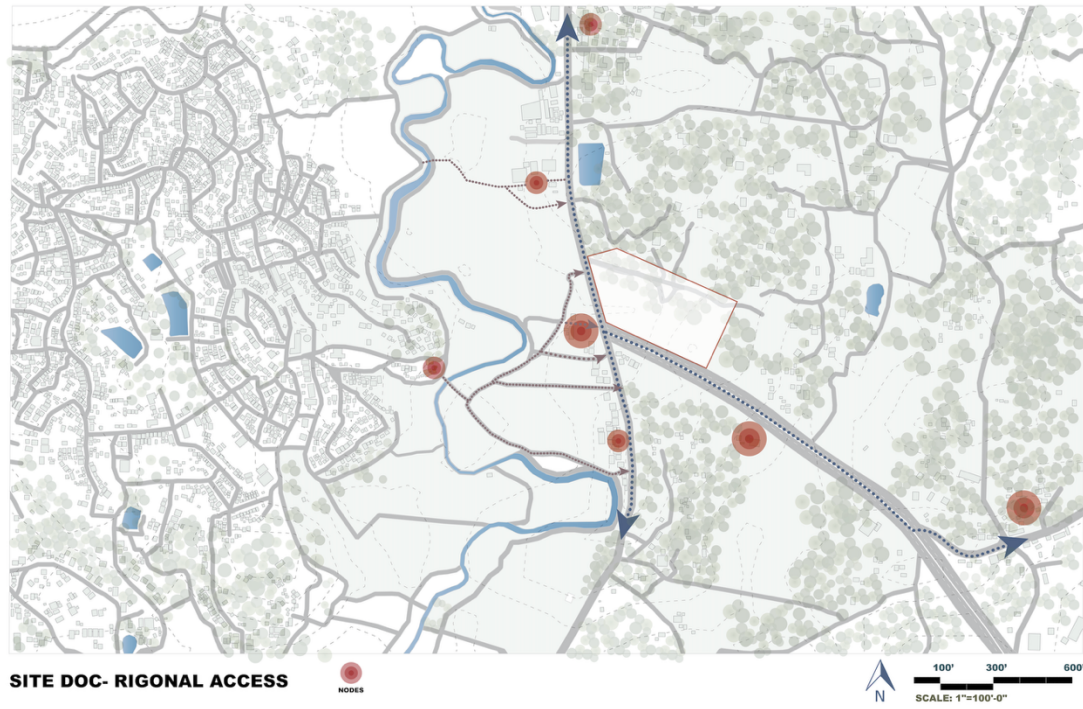


Figure 32 Regional Access Map Diagram by Amina Mainuddin

Regional Access

The regional access map identifies the main road as both a connector and a boundary. It links the site to larger movement networks, markets, clinics, and everyday circulation, but it also creates exposure and risk. For women and children, the road cannot be treated only as infrastructure. It is also a social and safety condition. This reading supports the decision to concentrate the project on the north side of the road, where the architecture can remain visible and accessible without requiring constant

crossing.

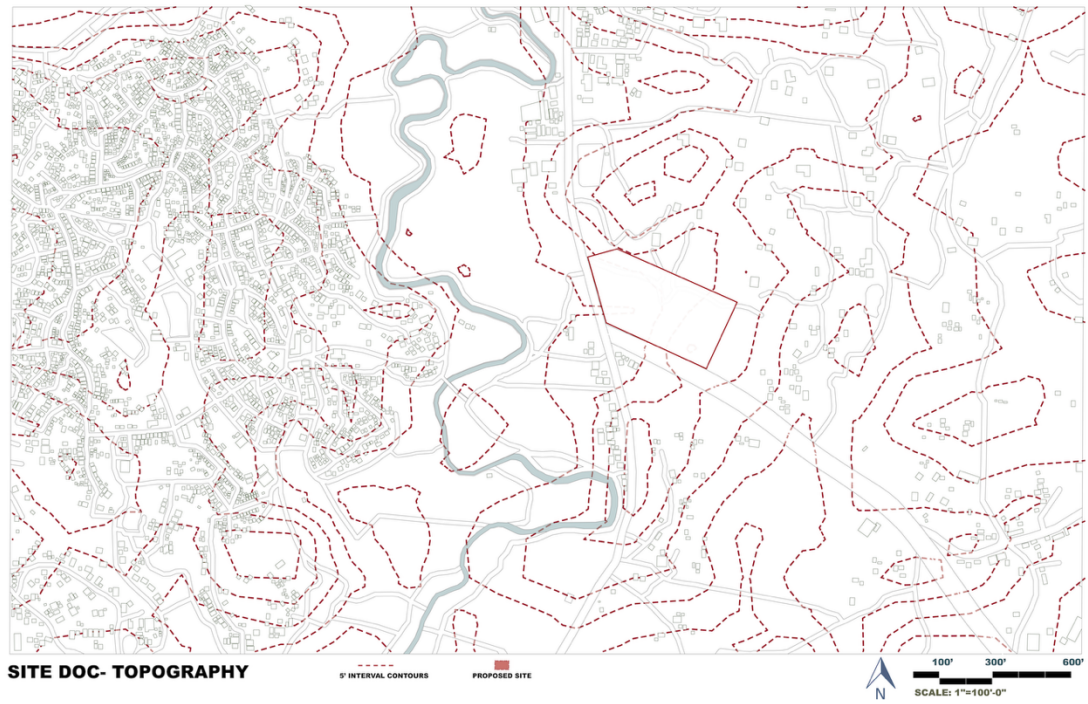


Figure 33 Topography Map Diagram by Amina Mainuddin

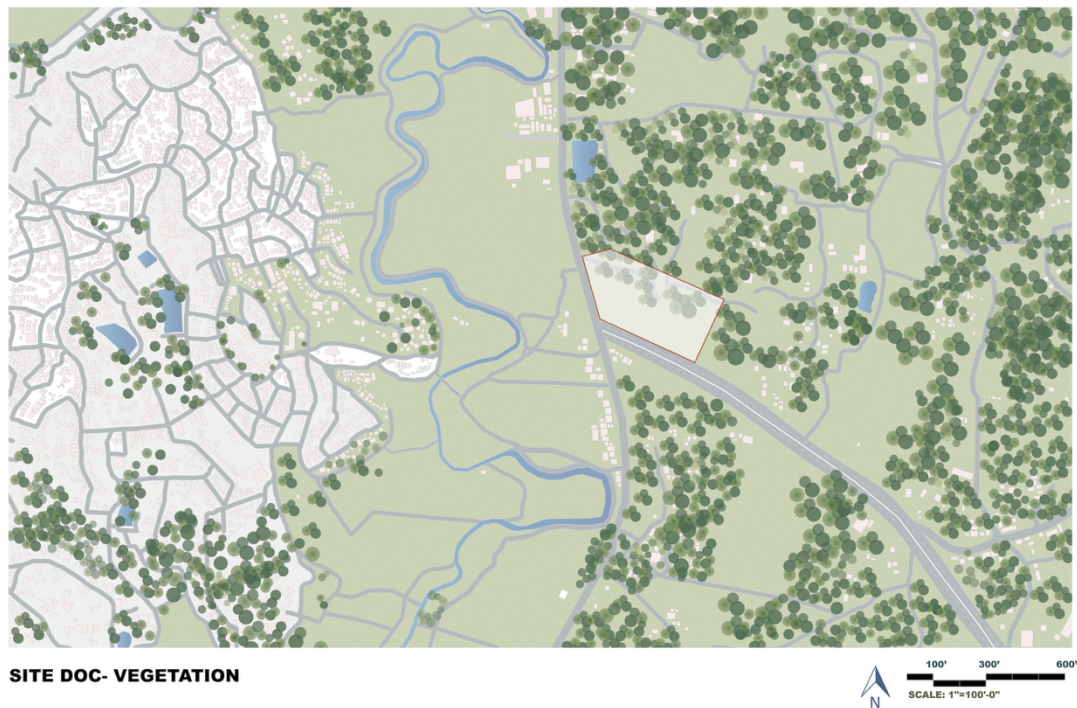


Figure 34 Vegetation Map Diagram by Amina Mainuddin

The topography and vegetation maps show that the site is shaped by slope, drainage, and existing ecological patterns. These conditions inform the design strategy of terraced program bands, shaded courtyards, and a central water-management spine. Because monsoon rain and surface runoff are major concerns, drainage becomes part of the architectural organization rather than a secondary technical system. The project uses the slope to collect, slow, and direct water through courtyards, planted areas, and bioswales.

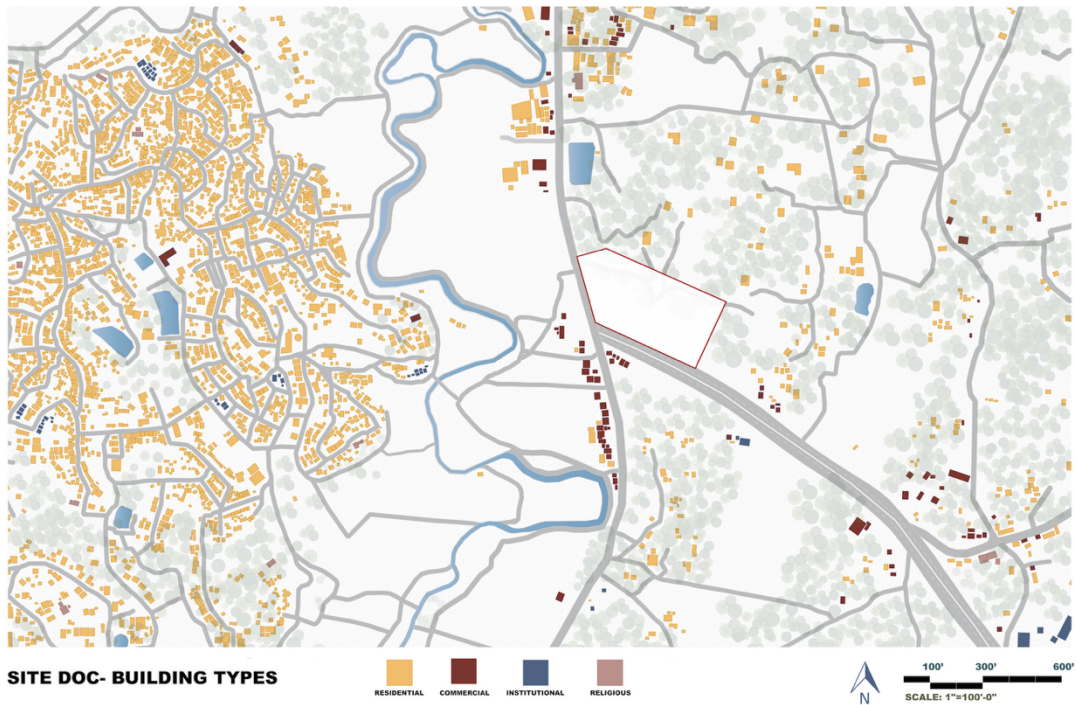


Figure 35 Building Types Map Diagram by Amina Mainuddin

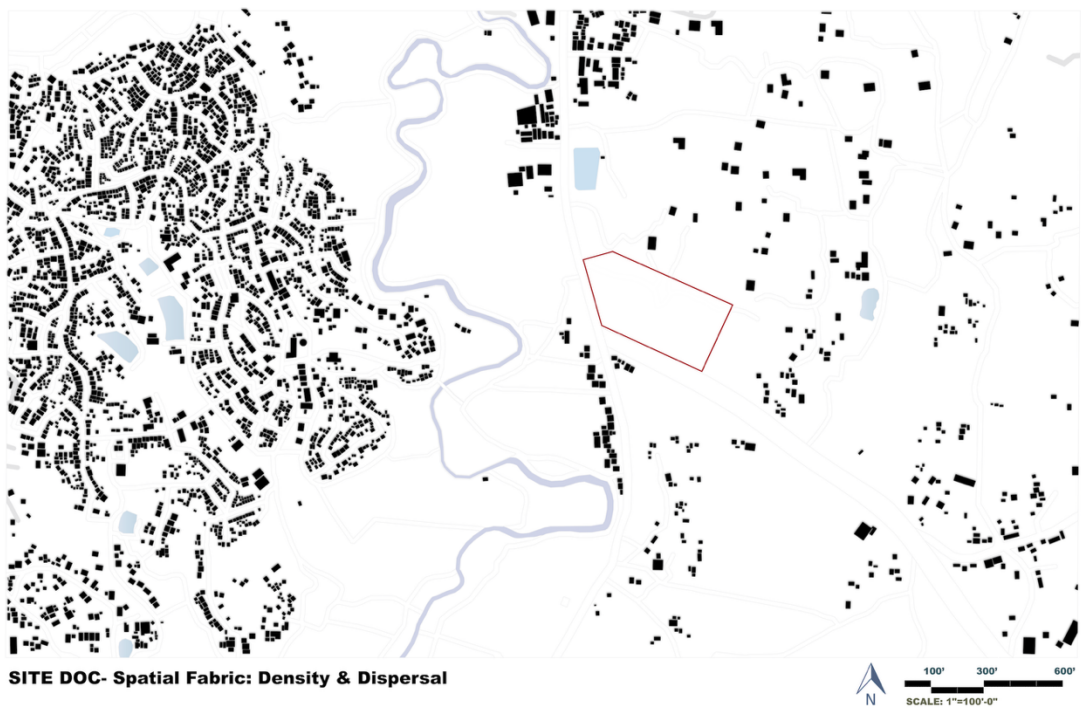


Figure 36 Density Map Diagram by Amina Mainuddin

The building type and spatial fabric maps reveal a strong contrast between the dense, repetitive settlement fabric and the looser, more dispersed host community fabric.

The proposed architecture responds by creating a middle scale: not a single large institution, and not a domestic compound, but a campus of smaller civic buildings organized around shared outdoor rooms. This scale allows the project to feel accessible and familiar while still supporting public programs such as learning, counseling, childcare, food preparation, craft production, and gathering.

Together, these maps confirm that the site is not neutral. It is a place where displacement, host-community life, infrastructure, agriculture, and environmental risk meet. The mapping process therefore becomes more than documentation; it becomes a design method. It shows where the project must be open, where it must be protected, where it must slow movement, and where it can create shared civic life. This analysis directly supports the thesis goal of designing an architecture that bridges rather than divides host and refugee communities.

Thesis Site: Gundum and Customs Balukhali Playground Edge

This site functions as a civic hinge between two communities. The existing playground draws families and children from both sides. The lot across from it offers a strategic location for a women's empowerment center that remains accessible, visible, and culturally neutral. Physical characteristics include flat terrain with drainage challenges, direct exposure to the road, clusters of existing vegetation, and

informal paths connecting settlements. When evaluated through my site criteria, the site performs strongly in accessibility, social adjacency, potential for layered privacy, and opportunities for community integration. Risks such as noise, exposure to the road, and political sensitivity can be addressed through spatial filtering, orientation, and careful boundary design. The site supports an architecture that bridges rather than divides.



Figure 37 Site Documentation Photographs by Fahim Alam

Cultural and Spatial Memory of Rohingya Communities

Understanding Rohingya spatial customs is essential for creating an environment that feels grounding and dignified for displaced women. Traditional courtyard compounds organize daily life through protected interior spaces. Verandas serve as flexible social thresholds. Homes rely on bamboo, thatch, woven screens,

and earthen textures that produce soft light and breathable surfaces. Women's daily rhythms follow paths between home, shaded gathering zones, water points, and productive spaces. Communal rituals include storytelling, shared cooking, and collaborative craft. My project interprets these spatial patterns through a protected courtyard, verandas that mediate social interaction, textured and breathable facades, and flexible spaces for shared making and gathering. This supports cultural continuity and psychological comfort.



Figure 38 People & Activities Near Site, Photographs by Fahim Alam

Methodologies for Thesis Site Analysis

The analysis of the Gundum site uses a hybrid approach combining GIS mapping, satellite data, NGO reports, and lessons learned from Site Zero. Key methods include edge mapping, movement pattern analysis, visibility studies, microclimate observation, and program driven scenario testing. Feminist methodology shapes the focus on women's movement lines, sensory comfort, and

social negotiation spaces. Climatic methods include flood mapping, sun studies, wind flow analysis, and heat mitigation strategies. These tools ensure that the design decisions remain grounded in real environmental and social conditions.

Synthesis

The site embodies the central question of the thesis. It is a place where displacement meets possibility, where women negotiate safety and participation, and where architecture can create a dignified civic edge shared by host and refugee communities. The mapping studies show that this edge is shaped by more than proximity. It is defined by land use, movement, topography, vegetation, building density, and territorial identity. These conditions confirm the site as an appropriate location for developing an architecture of care, autonomy, and shared community life. The analysis also establishes the design priorities carried into Chapter 7: a north-side site strategy, layered thresholds, terraced program bands, shaded courtyards, water management, and a civic program that supports both protection and participation.

Chapter 7: Discovery Phase: Conceptual Testing

Introduction

This chapter presents the early conceptual explorations of the thesis and shows how they emerge from theoretical frameworks, cultural analysis, site conditions, precedent studies, and program requirements. Massing tests, parti diagrams, tectonic studies, and conceptual vignettes are used to examine how an architecture of care can mediate between host and refugee communities while supporting the autonomy and dignity of women.

Parti Development

The parti explores the translation of theoretical ideas into spatial form. Three primary strategies are tested. The first is a linear thickened edge that runs parallel to the road and creates a sequence of filtered thresholds. The second is a cluster of courtyards that organizes spaces around protected interior worlds aligned with Rohingya cultural memory. The third is a raised hinge or plinth structure that creates shaded ground level activity while lifting enclosed spaces above flood risk. Each parti

examines how women enter, move, gather, and choose levels of exposure or privacy across the site. These diagrams define the core architectural logic.

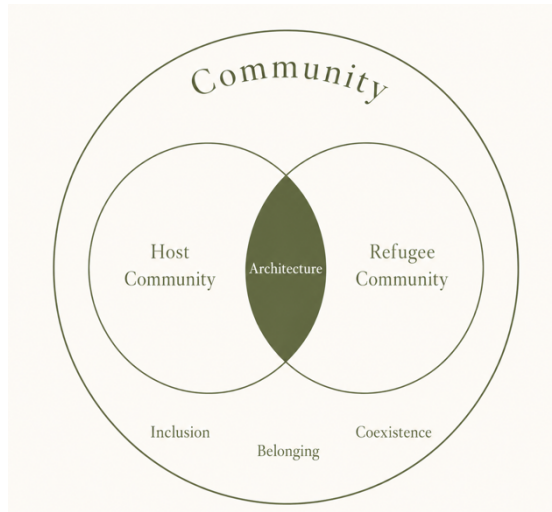


Figure 39 Project Parti Diagram

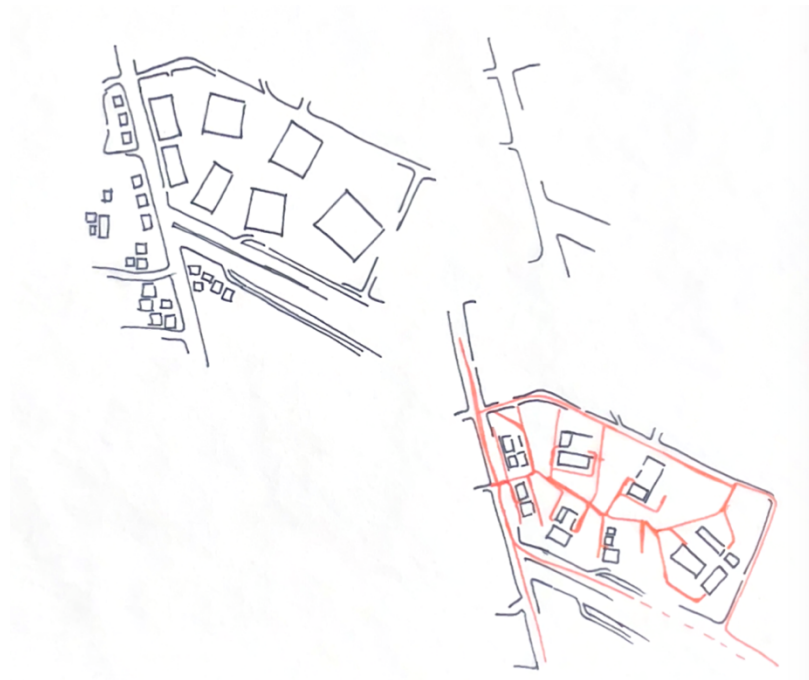
Massing Studies

Massing studies respond directly to climate and program. Flood exposure suggests elevated floors or stilted construction. Heat drives the use of deep overhangs, verandas, and shaded courtyards. Rain collection and ventilation strategies shape roof forms. Program distribution places shared civic and economic activities at the ground level, training and gathering spaces at mid-level, and quiet reflective areas above. Comparative evaluation of three massing options reveals how each performs socially

and environmentally. This process clarifies which strategies best support safety, comfort, and inter community engagement.



Figure 40 Massing Exploration Diagrams by Amina Mainuddin



Tectonic Explorations

Tectonic studies focus on materials and structural strategies that support cultural memory and environmental resilience. Bamboo screens, woven shading systems, and breathable facades create privacy while maintaining airflow. Raised structures protect from flooding and create shaded undercroft spaces for informal use. The structural rhythm organizes program modules and supports incremental construction. Tectonics is approached as both environmental logic and a means of supporting community participation in construction.

Precedent Integration

Key precedents inform the design through direct testing. The Women's Opportunity Center demonstrates the value of layered thresholds and circular gathering spaces. The METI School illustrates how section, material, and child centered design can create warm learning environments. The Bidi Bidi Arts Center shows the potential of dignified low-tech construction for collective creativity. The Zero Carbon Women Centre provides a model for raised bamboo structures in flood prone regions. Each precedent offers a specific lesson that is adapted to the cultural and environmental context of the Bangladesh site.

Site Driven Refinements

Site conditions shape the design evolution. Entrances orient toward the playground and informal paths. The road exposure requires filtered thresholds and semi open edges. Existing trees and shade patterns define microclimates and outdoor gathering spaces. Flood conditions influence the height and continuity of raised floors. Women's movement lines inform circulation and spatial sequencing. These refinements ensure that conceptual explorations remain grounded in the specific conditions of the Gundum site.

Conceptual Vignettes

Vignettes describe key experiential moments within the project. The arrival sequence from the road includes a shaded threshold, a semi open veranda, and a protected courtyard beyond. The central courtyard functions as a safe interior world for women and children. Shared production spaces support collaboration between host and refugee women. An upper-level terrace provides a quiet area for reflection

and small group meetings. These moments illustrate how spatial choices support care, autonomy, and comfort.

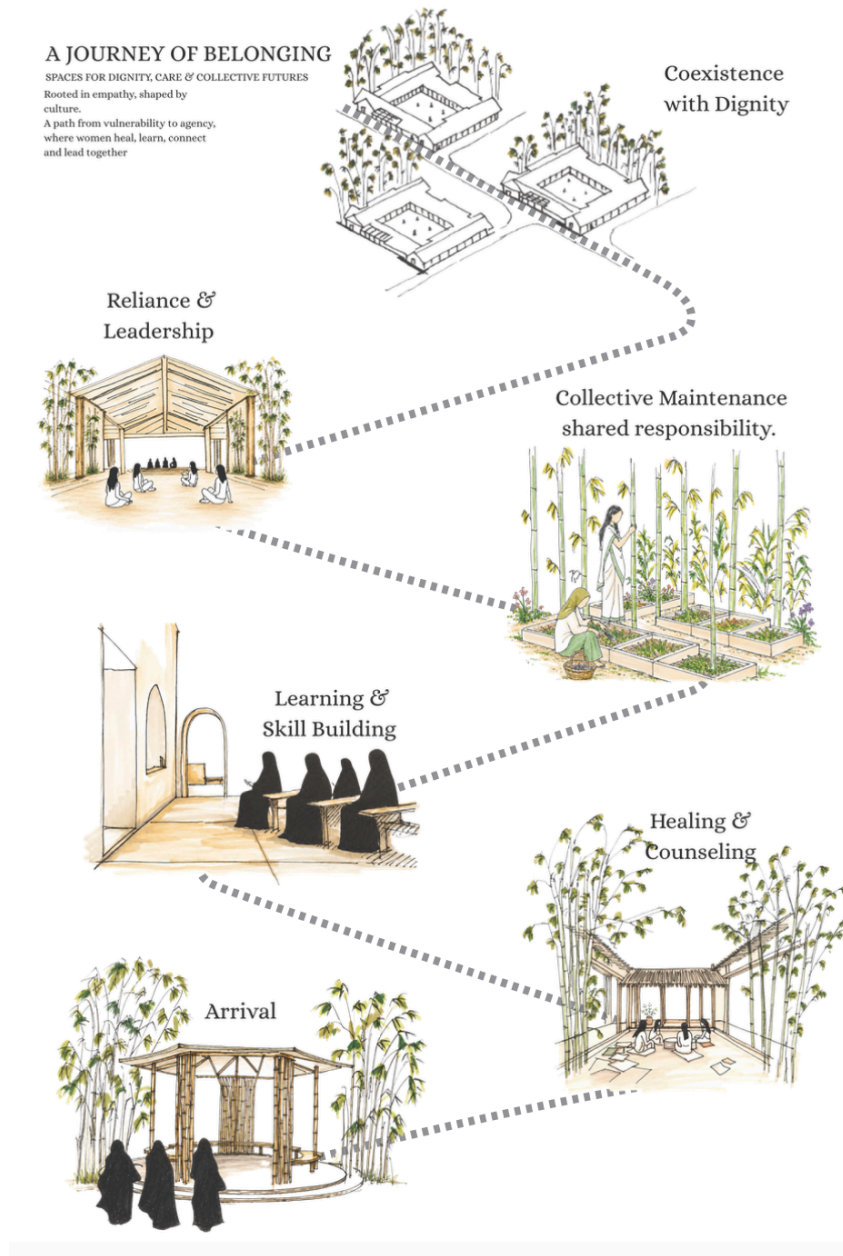


Figure 41 Conceptual Vignettes by Amina Mainuddin

Preliminary Direction

The current direction combines the thickened edge strategy with a raised and courtyard-oriented massing. This approach responds to environmental risks, cultural

memory, and program needs. It creates a clear gradient of public to protected spaces, supports shared community life, and provides women with meaningful choices in movement and occupation.

Chapter 8: Design Experience and Conclusion

Introduction: From Design Proposal to Spatial Experience

The preceding chapters established the theoretical, cultural, environmental, and site-based foundation for this thesis. Chapter 7 translated those findings into a design proposal: a women-centered civic campus located at the host-refugee edge in Gundum, Bangladesh. This final chapter examines how the proposal is experienced through movement, program, material, landscape, and everyday use.

The project began with a question about the role of architecture in prolonged displacement. If displacement continues for years and formal return remains uncertain, then emergency shelter alone cannot address the full condition of life.

Women need spaces where they can move safely, access care, learn skills, gather with others, care for children, practice faith, produce work, and participate in public life.

For this reason, the project does not propose a shelter. It proposes a shared civic infrastructure for women living between displacement and belonging.

This chapter presents the final design through a sequence of spaces. The sequence begins at the street front, where the project meets the existing road, market activity, and playground. It then moves inward through the community garden, learning spaces, childcare building, forum, amphitheater, and artisan gallery. These perspectives are not only visual representations of the project. They are used as design evidence. Each view tests whether the architecture can support the central aims of the thesis: safety, dignity, autonomy, and coexistence between host and refugee communities.

The design is organized around a careful balance between openness and protection. Because the site sits near a major road and between two communities, the architecture cannot simply hide from the public realm. At the same time, women's safety cannot depend on full exposure or constant visibility. The project therefore works through filtered thresholds, shaded paths, courtyards, bamboo screens, interior-facing openings, and gradual transitions from public to private space. These spatial layers allow women to participate in civic life without being placed under unnecessary surveillance.

The final proposal also tests how architecture can make care visible without making it institutional. Care appears in the relationship between childcare and classrooms, between the kitchen and garden, between counseling and quiet outdoor rooms, between the marketplace and artisan production, and between the forum and the larger community. The project understands care not as one room or one service, but as a spatial network. It is built into circulation, adjacencies, materials, shade,



Figure 42 Massing Diagram Illustrated by Amina Mainuddin

drainage, and the ability to choose where to go and how much to be seen.

The chapter concludes by returning to the thesis title, **From Shelter to Citizenship**. Citizenship in this project is not used only as a legal term. It refers to the everyday conditions that allow women to belong, participate, and claim space in the public

realm. Architecture cannot resolve statelessness or the political violence that produced displacement. However, it can create spaces where women are not only protected but also recognized as active members of a shared community.

Core Design Concept: Architecture as Shared Civic Ground

The core design concept of this thesis is based on the relationship between three conditions: the host community, the refugee community, and architecture as the shared civic ground between them. The project does not place architecture on one side of the conflict or treat one community as the only user. Instead, it uses architecture to occupy the overlap between two groups whose lives are already connected through land, labor, roads, markets, aid systems, and environmental pressure.



Figure 43 Massing Diagram, Illustration by Amina Mainuddin

The host community and refugee community are often described as separate populations, but the site reveals a more complicated reality. The settlement and village are divided by systems of governance and belonging, yet they share infrastructure, markets, roads, water systems, and social spaces. The project responds to this condition by creating a civic center that is neither fully a camp facility nor a private village institution. It is a shared threshold where women from both

communities can access programs without the space belonging exclusively to one side.

This idea is expressed through the project parti: two communities held within a larger field of community, with architecture occupying the center as a space of overlap. The architecture does not erase difference. It does not force integration or assume that coexistence is simple. Instead, it creates controlled opportunities for shared use.

Women may enter for different reasons: to attend a class, sell goods, bring a child to the early education room, cook with others, seek counseling, pray, learn a technical skill, or participate in a gathering. These uses allow contact to happen through everyday routines rather than through symbolic gestures alone.

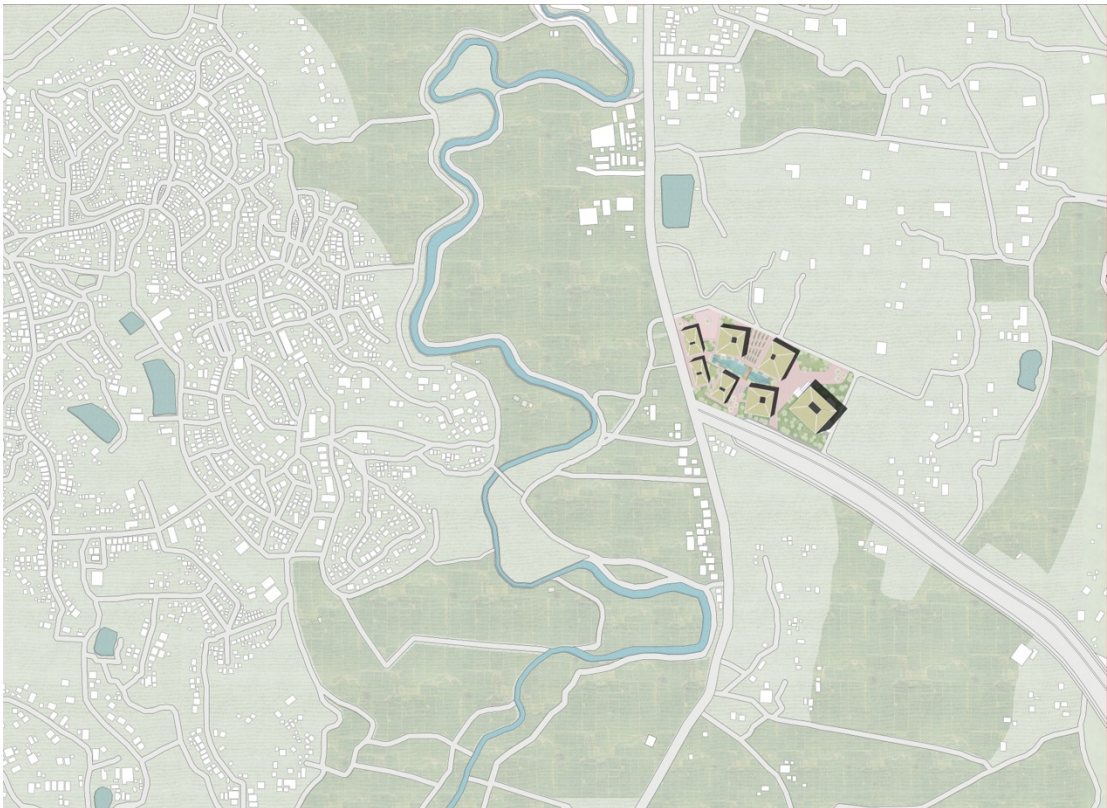


Figure 44 Site plan Illustrated by Amina Mainuddin

The design therefore treats coexistence as something spatial and gradual. It is not produced by placing everyone in one large room. It is produced through repeated movement across familiar thresholds, through programs that overlap without collapsing into each other, and through courtyards that allow people to gather while still choosing distance. The project supports both connection and separation, because safety requires the ability to choose one's level of engagement.

Three spatial ideas guide the proposal: protection, participation, and coexistence.

Protection is created through shaded edges, inward-facing courtyards, filtered openings, and program placement that shields quieter spaces from the road.

Participation is created through the marketplace, classrooms, community kitchen, forum, and artisan gallery, where women can learn, work, teach, gather, and exchange. Coexistence is created through shared outdoor rooms, gardens, circulation paths, and civic programs that allow host and refugee women to occupy the same

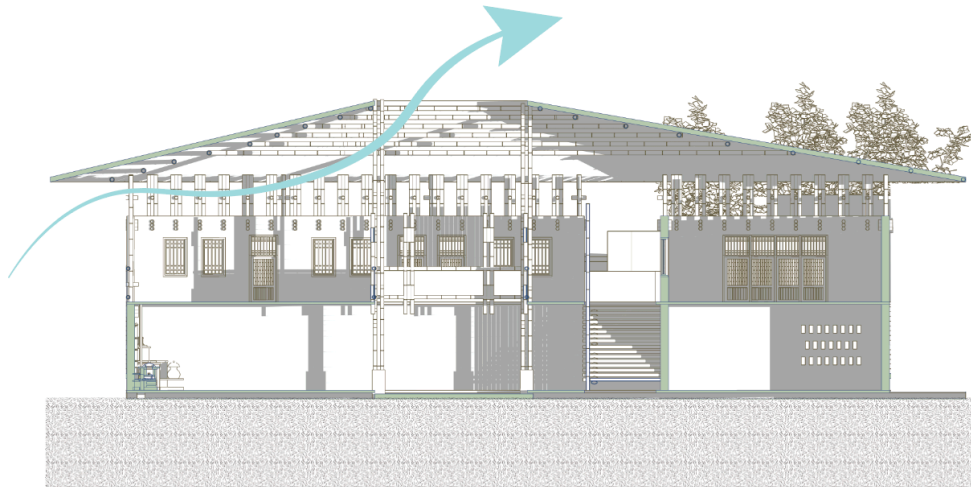
campus without erasing their different needs.



Figure 45 Ground Floor plan Illustrated by Amina Mainuddin

This concept also changes the meaning of the site. The project is located near an existing playground, road, water body, and settlement edge. These conditions already make the area a place of movement and encounter. Rather than treating the site as empty land, the design understands it as a civic hinge. The architecture strengthens what is already present: children gathering, people walking, informal exchange, and

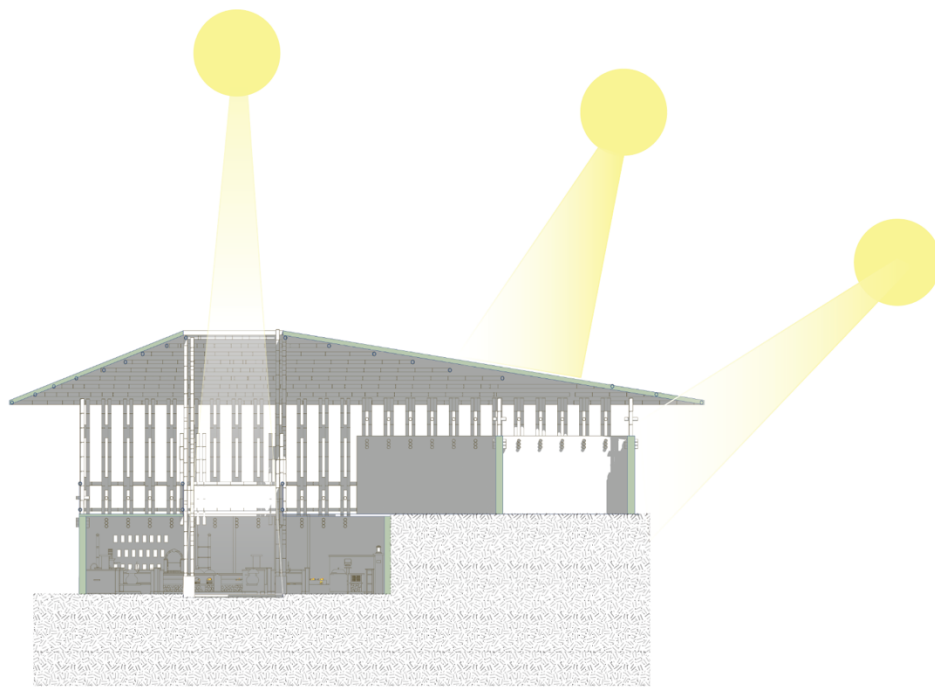
the need for safer spaces of support. The existing playground is preserved as a social anchor, while the proposed buildings frame new spaces for women's autonomy and collective life.



VENTILATION

Figure 46 Ventilation Diagram Illustration by Amina Mainuddin

The project's form follows this concept. Instead of one large institutional building, the design is divided into smaller program buildings organized through terraced bands and courtyards. This allows the campus to feel accessible, familiar, and porous. The buildings create a rhythm of open and enclosed spaces, allowing women to move gradually from the road to the interior courtyards. The campus becomes a small civic village, where each building has a clear purpose but remains connected to the others through shared landscape and circulation.

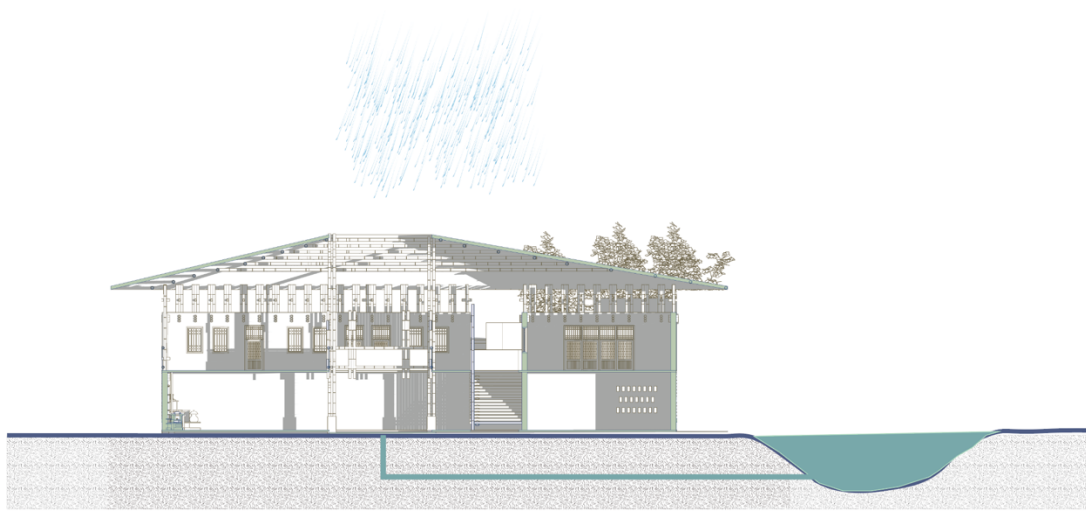


SUN

Figure 47 Sun Diagram Illustrated by Amina Mainuddin

Architecture, in this thesis, becomes the middle ground. It is not neutral, because neutrality would ignore the unequal conditions faced by displaced women. It is also not a wall, because separation alone cannot produce dignity or autonomy. Instead, architecture becomes an active mediator. It organizes care, softens boundaries, creates

choices, and gives form to the possibility of belonging.



WATER DRAINAGE

Figure 48 Water Drainage Diagram Illustrated by Amina Mainuddin

Site Sequence: From Road to Interior Courtyard

The spatial experience of the project begins at the road. This is intentional because the road is one of the strongest forces shaping the site. It connects the settlement to markets, clinics, schools, and larger regional movement, but it also creates exposure. For women and children, the road is not only a line of access. It is also a place where speed, noise, visibility, and social risk must be negotiated. The design therefore treats the road edge as the first architectural threshold.

At the street front, the project presents its most public face. The market edge and forum forecourt are positioned closest to the road because these programs benefit from visibility and daily movement. This zone allows the project to connect to existing patterns of exchange without exposing the entire campus. Women can sell goods, display craft, meet others, or enter the site from a recognizable public edge. The architecture does not hide women's work. Instead, it gives that work a visible and dignified place within the community.



Figure 49 Site Section Illustrated by Amina Mainuddin

This front edge is also connected to the existing playground. The playground is important because it already holds social memory and everyday use. It is a place where children gather, families wait, and informal community life already occurs. Rather than replacing this condition, the project strengthens it. The women-centered center is placed near this existing social anchor so that the proposal grows from a place already familiar to both host and refugee communities.

From the road, the site begins to move inward through a sequence of filtered spaces. The entry is not a single door into a single building. It is a gradual transition through shaded edges, planted buffers, verandas, and framed views into the campus. This sequence allows women to move from a public and exposed condition into a more

protected civic environment. The design avoids a sudden separation between outside and inside because the project is not meant to become an isolated institution. It is meant to create a softer and safer version of public life.

The organization of the campus follows the slope of the land. The site descends from the back toward the road, and the design uses this condition to create three terraced bands. These bands organize the project into different levels of activity. The most public programs sit closer to the road. Programs that require more privacy, such as counseling, prayer, childcare, and learning spaces, are placed further inward. Larger collective programs, including the forum, kitchen, dining spaces, and garden, are held within the deeper civic interior of the campus.

This movement from public to protected space is one of the main design strategies of the thesis. Safety is not created by removing women from visibility altogether. It is created by giving women control over visibility. At the road, women may choose to participate in public-facing economic activity. Moving inward, they may enter classrooms, gardens, counseling spaces, childcare areas, or the forum. Each layer offers a different degree of openness, allowing the user to decide how exposed or protected she wants to be.



Figure 50 Entrance Perspective Illustrated by Amina Mainuddin

The central circulation path works as a civic spine through the campus. It connects the road edge to the interior courtyards and links the different program buildings. Along this path, movement is slowed by shade, planting, water, and outdoor rooms. The path is not only for circulation. It becomes a social space where women can pause, wait for children, speak with others, or observe activity before deciding where to go next. In this way, the project turns circulation into a form of participation.

Water also shapes the site sequence. Because the land slopes toward the road and because monsoon rainfall is a major environmental concern, the design introduces a central water-management spine. Courtyards and roof edges drain toward planted channels and bioswales that collect and slow runoff. This system makes environmental performance visible within the daily experience of the project. Water is not hidden underground as a purely technical system. It becomes part of the

landscape, helping to organize movement, soften boundaries, and create a cooler microclimate.



Figure 51 Exterior Perspective of Shared Kitchen and Garden, Illustrated by Amina Mainuddin

The transition from road to courtyard therefore carries both social and environmental meaning. Socially, it moves women from exposure toward choice, privacy, and collective support. Environmentally, it moves water from roof and courtyard surfaces into a managed landscape system. Architecturally, it creates a sequence of thresholds that turns the site from a difficult edge into a shared civic ground.

The project's site sequence demonstrates that the edge does not have to remain a line of separation. Through careful placement of public programs, shaded circulation, planted buffers, and protected courtyards, the design transforms the road-facing condition into an entry into care. The experience of entering the project becomes the first evidence of the thesis: architecture can mediate between vulnerability and

participation, between movement and rest, and between two communities that already meet at the edge.

Programmatic Organization: Care, Learning, Production, and Gathering

The program of the project is organized as a network of care rather than as a single service building. Each program responds to a different part of women's daily lives, but the thesis depends on how these programs work together. Learning, childcare, food, counseling, prayer, craft, market activity, and civic gathering are not treated as separate needs. They are understood as connected conditions that shape whether women can safely participate in public life.

The project is organized into four primary programmatic zones: care, learning, production, and gathering. These zones overlap through courtyards, shaded paths, verandas, and shared outdoor rooms. This overlap is important because women's lives are rarely divided into separate categories. A woman may come to the center for a class, but she may also need childcare. She may come to sell goods, but she may also need a quiet place to pray. She may come for counseling, but she may also pass through the garden, speak with another woman, or attend a gathering in the forum. The design allows these activities to support one another.

The care programs include childcare, counseling, wellness, legal support, prayer, and family support spaces. These programs are placed deeper within the campus, away from the most exposed road edge. Their location reflects the need for privacy, trust,

and a calmer atmosphere. The counseling and wellness spaces are organized with more controlled thresholds so that entering them does not feel overly visible. The prayer and reflection room is also treated as a protected interior space, with openings oriented inward rather than toward the street. These decisions allow care to be accessible without making private needs public.

The learning programs include language exchange rooms, literacy and numeracy classrooms, a digital lab, and vocational training spaces. These spaces support both immediate skills and long-term autonomy. The language exchange room is especially important because host and refugee women do not always share the same language. A space for Bangla and Rohingya language exchange becomes more than a classroom. It becomes a tool for communication, mutual recognition, and daily coexistence. The digital lab and vocational training rooms extend this goal by supporting women's access to technical knowledge, entrepreneurship, and work beyond aid dependency.



Figure 52 Interior Perspective of Forum Mezzanine, Art Gallery Illustrated by Amina Mainuddin

The production programs include artisan studios, craft spaces, the community kitchen, and the marketplace. These programs connect learning to livelihood. Women can develop skills in one part of the campus and display or sell their work in another. The marketplace along the street makes this production visible to the broader community, while the artisan gallery in the forum gives craft a more civic and cultural presence. This relationship allows women's work to be recognized not only as informal labor, but as a contribution to community identity and economic life.

The community kitchen and dining spaces occupy an important position between care and production. The kitchen is not only a place for food preparation. It is a place for teaching, sharing, gathering, and cultural continuity. Shared cooking can support nutrition, skill-building, and intergenerational exchange. The dining area extends this role by creating a space where women, children, and community members can sit

together. In this sense, food becomes a form of civic infrastructure. It brings people into relation through an everyday act that is familiar, necessary, and social.

The gathering programs are centered around the forum. The forum is the largest civic room in the project and acts as the symbolic heart of the campus. It supports assemblies, workshops, storytelling, performances, public meetings, and emergency gathering during moments of crisis. Its amphitheater seating allows the room to operate at multiple scales, from informal daily use to larger community events. The forum connects the interior life of the campus to the public life of the edge.



Figure 53 Interior Perspective of Early Childhood Learning Room Illustrated by Amina Mainuddin

Childcare is placed close to the learning and garden spaces because it directly affects women's ability to participate. Without childcare, programs such as classes, counseling, meetings, or work opportunities become harder to access. The early education room and adjacent outdoor play areas allow children to remain nearby

while women use the campus. This adjacency is not only practical. It is part of the thesis argument that women's autonomy depends on spatial support systems. The design does not ask women to separate care work from public participation. Instead, it builds the two into the same civic environment.

The community garden also plays a connective role. Located between childcare, kitchen, and learning spaces, it supports food production, environmental education, informal gathering, and applied learning. The garden softens the campus and creates a protected outdoor room where women and children can work, sit, and learn together. It also connects the project back to the surrounding agricultural landscape without consuming more land carelessly. The garden becomes a small-scale expression of resilience, care, and shared stewardship.

Through this programmatic organization, the project argues that empowerment is not produced by one isolated classroom or one symbolic gathering hall. It is produced by the relationships between programs. A woman's ability to attend a class may depend on the childcare room. Her ability to sell goods may depend on the craft studio and marketplace. Her ability to seek support may depend on privacy and trust. Her ability to belong may depend on repeated encounters in courtyards, gardens, kitchens, and shaded paths.

The design therefore uses program as an architectural method. Each function is placed not only by size or convenience, but by its relationship to safety, privacy, visibility, and participation. Together, the programs form a civic care network that supports women as learners, mothers, workers, makers, neighbors, and public

participants. This organization moves the project beyond the idea of shelter and toward a more complete understanding of citizenship as daily access to space, support, and community.

Testing Safety Through Thresholds and Visibility

Safety is one of the central concerns of this thesis, but the project does not define safety as enclosure alone. For displaced women, safety is shaped by movement, visibility, privacy, social trust, and access to support. A space may be physically enclosed and still feel unsafe if it is isolated, dark, difficult to reach, or too exposed to authority and public judgment. For this reason, the design tests safety through thresholds and visibility rather than through walls alone.

The project uses a gradual sequence of thresholds from the public road to the interior courtyards. Each threshold changes the user's relationship to the surrounding environment. At the street edge, the architecture is more public and active. The market and forum forecourt create visibility and invite community engagement. Moving inward, the buildings begin to frame quieter spaces. Shaded paths, verandas, planted edges, and courtyard walls create a softer transition into more protected zones. This sequence allows women to remain connected to public life while also gaining control over exposure.



Figure 54 Forum Interior Perspective Illustrated by Amina Mainuddin

Visibility is treated carefully throughout the project. The goal is not to make every space transparent. Full transparency can become surveillance, especially for women whose safety depends on controlling how and when they are seen. Instead, the project uses filtered visibility. Bamboo screens, high clerestory openings, shaded verandas, and interior-facing windows allow light and air to enter while limiting direct views into private programs. This creates a balance between openness and protection.

The counseling and wellness spaces demonstrate this strategy most clearly. These rooms need to be accessible, but they should not announce a woman's private needs to the entire campus. Their entrances are therefore protected by layered approaches rather than placed directly on the main road or most public courtyard. A woman can enter these spaces without feeling exposed. At the same time, the counseling area is

not hidden so deeply that it becomes difficult or intimidating to reach. It remains part of the civic campus, supported by nearby paths, gardens, and other programs.

The prayer and reflection room also relies on controlled visibility. Its openings are oriented inward to preserve quietness and privacy. This creates a space for spiritual practice and emotional retreat without separating it completely from the daily life of the center. In this way, the project recognizes that autonomy includes the right to withdraw, reflect, and occupy a calm interior space.

The childcare and early education areas use a different form of visibility. Here, visual connection is important because children need supervision and women need reassurance that children are nearby. The childcare building is connected to outdoor play and garden areas, allowing children's activity to remain visible within a protected zone. This relationship supports women's participation in classes, counseling, market work, or gatherings because care is not distant from the rest of the campus. It is integrated into the spatial logic of the project.



Figure 55 Exterior Perspective, Project Center, Illustrated by Amina Mainuddin

The courtyards provide another form of safety. They are open to light and air but enclosed enough to create a sense of belonging and protection. A courtyard allows women to gather without being fully exposed to the road. It also allows passive observation, where people can see activity without feeling watched in a direct or uncomfortable way. This kind of indirect visibility is important because it supports both social life and safety. Women can recognize who is present, where children are playing, and which paths are active.

The project also avoids creating back conditions along the main shared spaces. Buildings are oriented so that entries, verandas, and active edges face the courtyards and paths. This prevents the central campus from becoming surrounded by blank walls or service backs. By keeping active fronts along the shared spaces, the design

creates natural supervision and a stronger sense of collective presence. The campus feels occupied, not abandoned.

Thresholds are also material. A change from open road to shaded veranda, from compacted earth path to planted courtyard, from exterior light to filtered interior light, signals a change in social atmosphere. These shifts help women understand where they are and what level of privacy each space offers. The architecture communicates without relying only on signage. It uses shade, texture, screens, openings, and enclosure to guide behavior.

This approach to safety is especially important because the project serves both host and refugee women. The architecture cannot assume that trust already exists. It must create conditions where trust can develop gradually. Shared spaces are therefore designed with options: one can join a group, sit at the edge, pass through, observe, or retreat. The ability to choose one's level of participation is central to the project's understanding of autonomy.

Through thresholds and visibility, the design transforms safety from a defensive condition into a civic one. Protection does not mean removing women from public life. It means giving them spatial tools to enter public life on their own terms. The project's filtered edges, courtyards, screens, and inward-facing openings create an environment where women can be present, supported, and seen with dignity, without being overexposed.

Courtyards, Gardens, and the Spaces Between Buildings

The project is not organized around one central object. It is organized around the spaces between buildings. These spaces are as important as the rooms themselves because they carry the daily life of the campus. Courtyards, gardens, verandas, shaded paths, and small outdoor thresholds allow the project to function as a civic environment rather than a collection of separate programs.

The use of courtyards comes from both environmental and cultural logic. In the regional context, courtyard-like spaces and verandas often support daily domestic and social life. They create protected outdoor rooms where cooking, conversation, childcare, repair, rest, and informal gathering can happen. The project does not directly reproduce a traditional compound, but it learns from this spatial pattern. It uses courtyards to create a sense of familiarity, protection, and social belonging within a public civic campus.

Each building is designed with an internal courtyard or opening that brings light and air into the program while preserving privacy. This is especially important for a women-centered project. The courtyard allows the building to open inward rather than relying only on outward-facing windows. Women can receive daylight, ventilation, and visual connection without being directly exposed to the road or surrounding public views. The courtyard becomes a protected source of openness.

The community garden is one of the most important spaces in this sequence. Positioned between childcare, kitchen, and learning programs, it connects care, food,

education, and daily gathering. Women can use the garden for growing herbs and vegetables, teaching children, supporting the kitchen, and creating a quieter outdoor space for conversation. The garden is not decorative. It is part of the project's care infrastructure because it supports nourishment, teaching, shade, and collective stewardship.

This garden also connects the project to the larger agricultural landscape around the site. The thesis is careful not to treat open land as empty land. In Gundum, agricultural land carries livelihood, memory, and environmental value. By placing the garden within the campus, the project acknowledges cultivation as part of community life while avoiding unnecessary expansion into productive land. The garden becomes a smaller, shared version of an existing landscape practice.

The outdoor classroom and storytelling spaces extend the learning environment beyond enclosed rooms. These spaces allow teaching to happen in a more flexible and culturally familiar way. A class does not always need to occur inside four walls. Language exchange, craft instruction, family education, and informal discussion can happen under shade, beside planting, or along a veranda. This flexibility is important because the project supports women of different ages, backgrounds, literacy levels, and comfort levels.

The spaces between buildings also support intergenerational use. A young girl may move between the early education room and play area. A mother may attend a class while remaining close to childcare. An older woman may sit near the garden, participate in storytelling, help with craft, or attend a gathering in the forum. These

overlapping routines allow the campus to serve women not as a single category, but as people with different rhythms, responsibilities, and forms of knowledge.

The courtyards also slow down movement. Instead of forcing users through corridors, the campus creates pauses. A woman can stop under a roof edge, sit beside a planted area, wait outside a classroom, or watch children play from a shaded veranda. These moments of pause are important because they allow users to occupy the site without needing a formal reason. The ability to sit, wait, observe, and belong is part of the project's definition of civic space.

Landscape is also used to create privacy without hard separation. Planting, low walls, level changes, and water channels help define outdoor rooms while maintaining visual softness. These elements separate programs without creating the feeling of exclusion. The result is a campus where spaces feel connected but not exposed, open but not uncontrolled.

The courtyards, gardens, and shaded paths therefore carry the thesis argument at the scale of everyday use. They show that care is not only found in service rooms. It is found in the relationship between programs, in the softness of thresholds, in the ability to gather without pressure, and in the possibility of moving between public and private life at one's own pace. In this project, the spaces between buildings become the spaces where belonging is most quietly produced.

The Forum as the Civic Room

The forum is the largest collective space in the project and acts as the civic heart of the campus. While the smaller buildings support daily care, learning, counseling, childcare, and production, the forum gives the project a shared public room. It is the space where individual routines can become collective presence.

The forum is important because the thesis does not define safety as withdrawal from public life. A women-centered project cannot only provide private support spaces. It also must create a place where women can gather, speak, teach, organize, celebrate, and be recognized. The forum gives architectural form to this need. It is a room for assembly, but also a room for visibility, cultural expression, and community authorship.

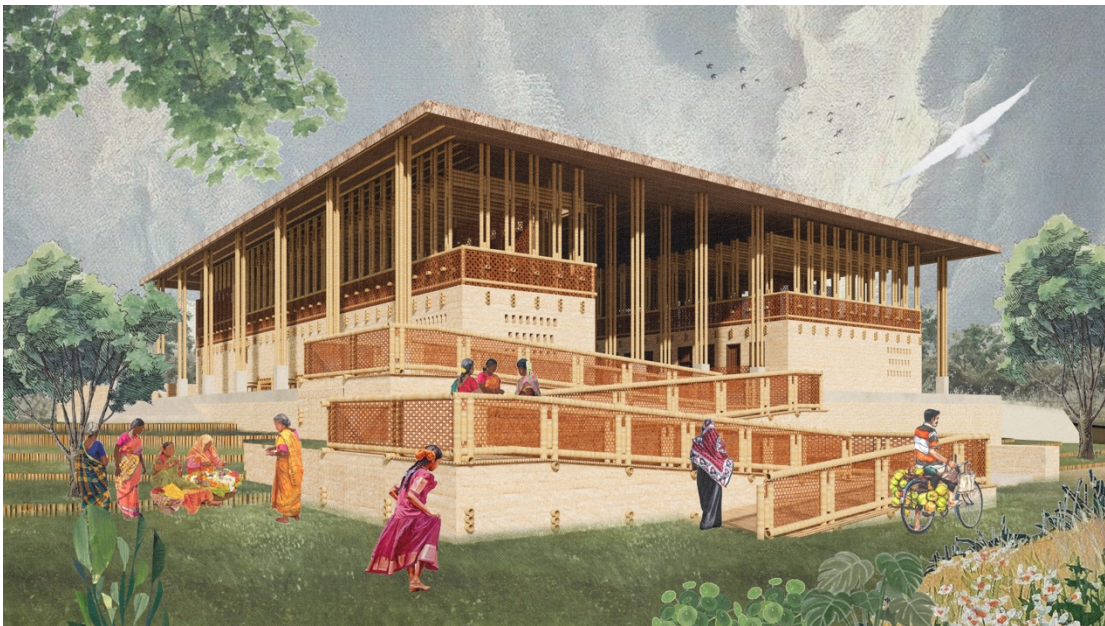


Figure 56 Exterior Perspective of the Forum Building, Illustrated by Amina Mainuddin

The building is positioned so that it connects to both the interior life of the campus and the more public edge of the site. Its forecourt allows larger gatherings to spill outside, while its interior amphitheater creates a more focused space for events, workshops, storytelling, and performances. This relationship between indoor and outdoor gathering allows the forum to operate at different scales. On ordinary days, it may support small group meetings or informal conversations. During larger events, it can become a collective room for both host and refugee women.

The amphitheater is central to the experience of the forum. It creates a space where women are not only audience members, but speakers and participants. The stepped seating allows different kinds of use: sitting, listening, teaching, resting, watching children, or gathering in groups. The amphitheater also gives the room a sense of civic importance without making it monumental or intimidating. It remains grounded in everyday use.

The forum also has the capacity to function during moments of crisis. In a region shaped by monsoon flooding, fire risk, displacement pressure, and unstable infrastructure, large, protected spaces are essential. The forum can serve as an emergency gathering space when needed. This does not make it a shelter in the conventional sense, but it allows the project to provide support during moments when the community requires temporary refuge, coordination, or collective response.

Above the main level, the mezzanine gallery extends the forum's civic role. This gallery is used to display artisan work produced by women in the project's craft and training spaces. Its location within the forum is significant. Craft is not hidden as

informal labor or treated only as a small economic activity. It is elevated into a public cultural display. The gallery allows women's work to be seen as knowledge, skill, and identity.

The mezzanine also creates a layered spatial experience. From above, visitors can investigate the forum and understand the scale of gathering below. From below, the gallery becomes part of the room's interior life, giving the space vertical depth and visual connection. This relationship between levels supports the larger thesis argument about participation. Women can occupy the building in different ways: as makers, sellers, teachers, listeners, organizers, and observers.

Materially, the forum follows the same environmental and privacy logic as the rest of the campus. A heavier lower wall provides enclosure, stability, and protection, while lighter bamboo elements above allow filtered light and air. The roof extends outward to provide shade and rain protection, allowing the edge of the building to become a usable threshold rather than a simple boundary. The forum is not sealed off from the climate, but it is protected enough to support comfort during heat and rain.

The interior light is meant to be soft and filtered rather than harsh or fully exposed. This is important because the forum is a public room for women, and publicness must still allow dignity and comfort. Bamboo screens, clerestory openings, and shaded roof edges allow the space to feel open without becoming visually vulnerable. The architecture supports gathering while still respecting the need for controlled visibility.

The forum therefore becomes the clearest expression of the project's title, **From Shelter to Citizenship**. It moves beyond the idea of simply protecting women from harm. It creates a place where women can gather as civic participants. They can share stories, display work, learn from one another, organize around common needs, and occupy a public room with dignity. In this way, the forum transforms care into civic presence.

Everyday Life Across the Campus

The project is ultimately tested through everyday life. While the plan explains organization and the sections explain structure, the perspectives show how the architecture may be occupied by women across different ages, responsibilities, and rhythms of use. This is important because the thesis does not imagine women as one uniform group. A young girl, a mother, and an older woman may all use the same campus, but they experience safety, care, and autonomy differently.

For a young girl, the project may begin with the early education room, the playground, the garden, and the shaded paths between buildings. These spaces allow learning and play to happen within a protected environment. The child is not hidden inside, but she is also not exposed directly to the road. Her experience of the campus is shaped by visible caregivers, soft outdoor rooms, and spaces where learning can happen through movement, play, and observation.

For a middle-aged woman, the campus may be experienced through a more complex daily sequence. She may enter from the market edge, drop off a child at the early

education room, attend a language exchange class, meet someone in the counseling office, work in the community kitchen, or sell goods in the marketplace. Her movement through the site depends on the relationship between programs. The design supports her autonomy by reducing the distance between care, learning, production, and public participation.

For an older woman, the project may offer spaces for rest, teaching, prayer, storytelling, and intergenerational knowledge. She may sit near the garden, participate in craft production, attend a gathering in the forum, or share knowledge with younger women in an outdoor classroom. Her role is not passive. The architecture gives space for older women to remain visible as holders of memory, culture, and community knowledge.

These three rhythms show how the campus supports different forms of participation. Autonomy does not look the same for every woman. For one person, it may mean access to education. For another, it may mean earning income. For another, it may mean having a safe place to rest, pray, or speak. The project allows these different needs to exist within the same civic environment without forcing one experience to dominate the others.

The street-front perspective shows the first layer of this everyday life. It presents the project as part of an active public edge, where movement, selling, gathering, and visibility is already present. This view is important because it shows that the project is not withdrawn from the community. It participates in the life of the road while using architectural filters to protect the more private interior spaces.

The garden perspective shows another scale of use. Here, the architecture becomes quieter and more intimate. The garden connects childcare, kitchen, and learning spaces, allowing women and children to share a productive outdoor room. It supports food, teaching, rest, and conversation. This view demonstrates how care can be embedded in landscape rather than limited to enclosed service rooms.

The forum forecourt perspective shows the project at a larger civic scale. This is where the campus can hold assemblies, workshops, performances, public meetings, and celebrations. The forecourt extends the forum outward, allowing gathering to spill into the landscape. It becomes a place where women's presence is not hidden or minimized but given public space.

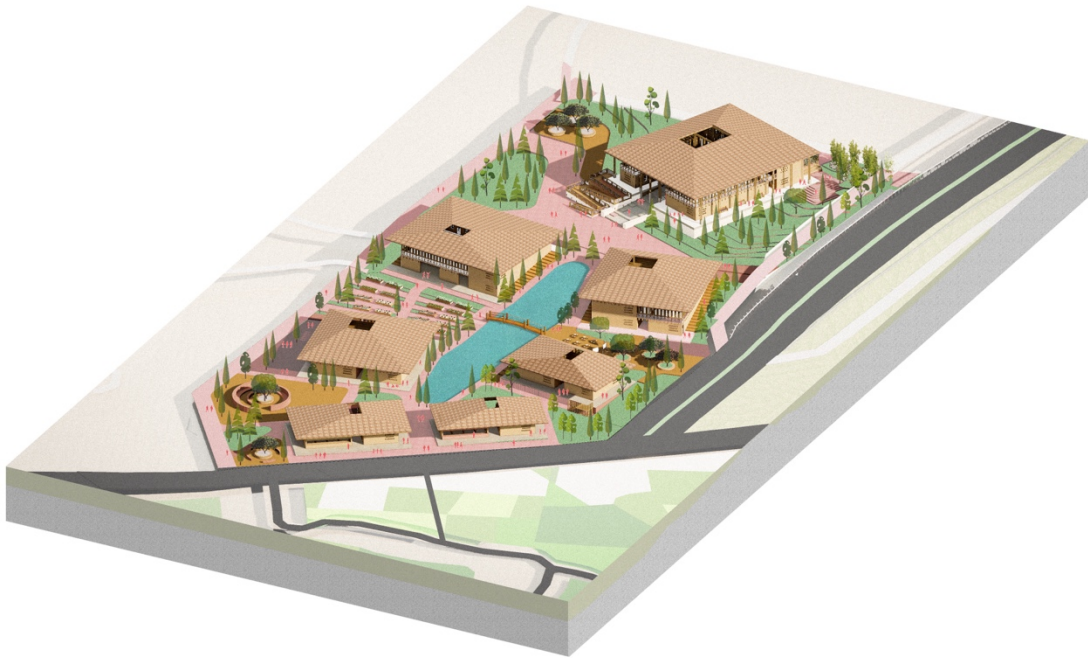


Figure 57 Site Axonometric Illustrated by Amina Mainuddin

The interior forum perspective shows the project's collective room from within. The amphitheater creates a space where women can sit together, speak, listen, and

organize. This view is central to the thesis because it shows the transition from protection to public voice. The forum does not only shelter bodies. It supports expression, gathering, and civic identity.

The childcare perspective shows how practical support is built into the project. The early education room allows children to be cared for close to the programs women use. This makes participation more realistic. Without childcare, the center would remain accessible in theory but difficult to use in daily life. By placing childcare within the campus, the design acknowledges the real conditions that shape women's mobility and time.

The mezzanine gallery perspective shows another form of visibility. Artisan work is displayed above the forum, giving women's production a public and cultural role. This is not only about selling objects. It is about recognizing skill, memory, and authorship. The gallery turns making into a visible part of civic life.

Together, these perspectives demonstrate that the project is not defined by one iconic view. It is defined by a sequence of ordinary but meaningful spaces: entering, walking, waiting, learning, cooking, gathering, praying, caring, selling, and displaying work. These everyday actions are the evidence of the thesis. They show how architecture can create conditions for women to move from being protected as vulnerable users toward being recognized as active participants in a shared community.

Environmental and Material Resolution

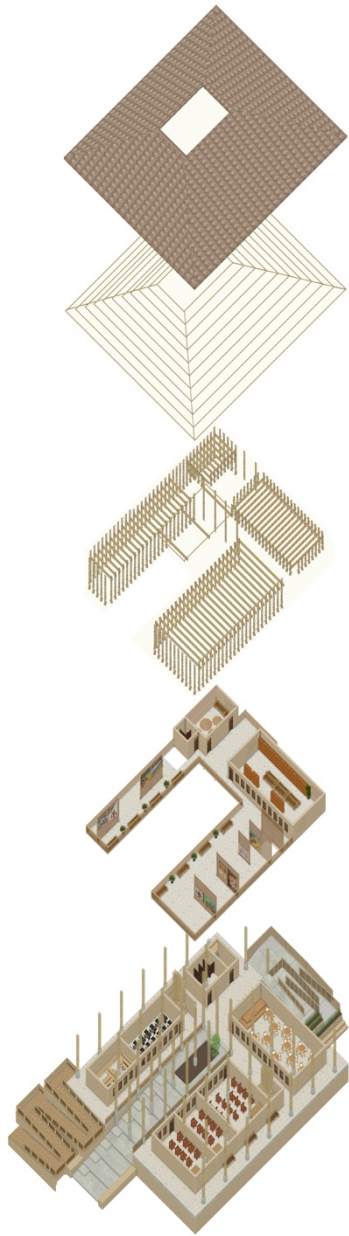
The environmental strategy of the project is inseparable from its social purpose. In Gundum, climate is not a background condition. Heat, humidity, monsoon rainfall, flooding, erosion, and lack of shade directly affect how women move, gather, work, and rest. A space that is socially welcoming but environmentally uncomfortable cannot support dignity in daily life. For this reason, the project treats material, shade, ventilation, water, and ground as part of the architecture of care.

The buildings are designed with a layered wall strategy. The lower portion of the wall is more solid, using earth-based construction to create privacy, thermal mass, and a sense of groundedness. This heavier base protects interior programs from direct views and creates a feeling of enclosure where privacy is needed. Above this solid wall, a lighter bamboo clerestory band allows air and filtered light to enter the interior. This upper layer helps the buildings breathe without making the rooms fully exposed.

This relationship between earth and bamboo is important because it balances protection and openness. Earth gives the buildings weight, privacy, and climatic stability. Bamboo gives the buildings lightness, texture, ventilation, and cultural familiarity. Together, they create an architectural language that feels rooted in place without becoming a direct imitation of domestic shelter. The project uses familiar materials to create a civic environment, elevating everyday construction into spaces of public dignity.

The roof is another major environmental element. The buildings use generous roof overhangs to protect walls, entries, verandas, and circulation paths from sun and rain. These overhangs allow the edges of buildings to become usable outdoor rooms. In a monsoon climate, this is essential. A shaded veranda or covered threshold can support waiting, conversation, teaching, and informal gathering even during rain. The roof therefore extends the program beyond the enclosed room and makes the campus more usable throughout the year.

The bamboo clerestory band also works with the roof to create filtered daylight. Rather than relying on large outward-facing windows, the project brings light in from above and from courtyard-facing openings. This protects women's privacy while still allowing the interiors to feel bright and breathable. The filtered light creates a softer atmosphere, especially in classrooms, counseling areas, prayer spaces, and the forum. Light becomes part of the project's safety strategy because it supports comfort without producing exposure.



*Figure 58 Figure 50 Forum,
Exploded Axon, Illustrated by Amina
Mainuddin*

Ventilation is addressed through the same layered section. The combination of courtyard openings, clerestory bands, shaded roofs, and permeable bamboo screens allows air to move through the buildings. This is especially important in shared spaces such as classrooms, kitchen areas, dining spaces, and the forum, where heat and occupancy can build up quickly. The project does not depend only on mechanical systems. It uses passive strategies to reduce heat, improve air movement, and support comfort in a resource-sensitive context.

Water management is one of the most important environmental systems in the proposal. Because the site slopes downward toward the road, and because monsoon rainfall can quickly overwhelm open ground, the design uses the slope as an organizing tool. Roof runoff and courtyard drainage are directed toward a central water spine. This spine functions as a bioswale

and planted drainage system, collecting water, slowing its movement, and guiding it through the site.

The water spine is not treated as a hidden technical feature. It is visible within the landscape and becomes part of the spatial experience of the campus. It marks the center of the site, softens the spaces between buildings, and creates a cooler microclimate. During dry periods, it can read as a planted channel or water feature. During heavy rain, it becomes active infrastructure. This dual role allows the environmental system to participate in the identity of the project.

The courtyards also contribute to environmental performance. They bring light and air into the buildings, reduce the need for outward exposure, and create shaded outdoor rooms. Planting within these courtyards helps cool the campus and provides spaces for rest, gathering, and small-scale food production. The courtyards are therefore both social and climatic devices. They support privacy, comfort, drainage, and daily use at the same time.

The material strategy also carries an ethical dimension. In a context shaped by displacement and humanitarian construction, architecture can easily become temporary, minimal, and purely functional. This thesis argues that women living in prolonged displacement deserve more than emergency materials arranged for survival. They deserve spaces that are durable, careful, beautiful, and culturally grounded. Earth, bamboo, shade, texture, and filtered light are used to produce dignity rather than scarcity.

The environmental and material resolution of the project therefore supports the larger thesis argument. Safety is not only about boundaries. It is also about thermal comfort, dry paths, shaded waiting areas, breathable rooms, and protection from rain.

Autonomy is not only about program access. It is also about whether a woman can walk comfortably through the site, sit in shade, bring a child to class during rain, or gather in a forum without being overwhelmed by heat. The project's material and environmental systems make care physical. They turn climate response into a form of

social support.

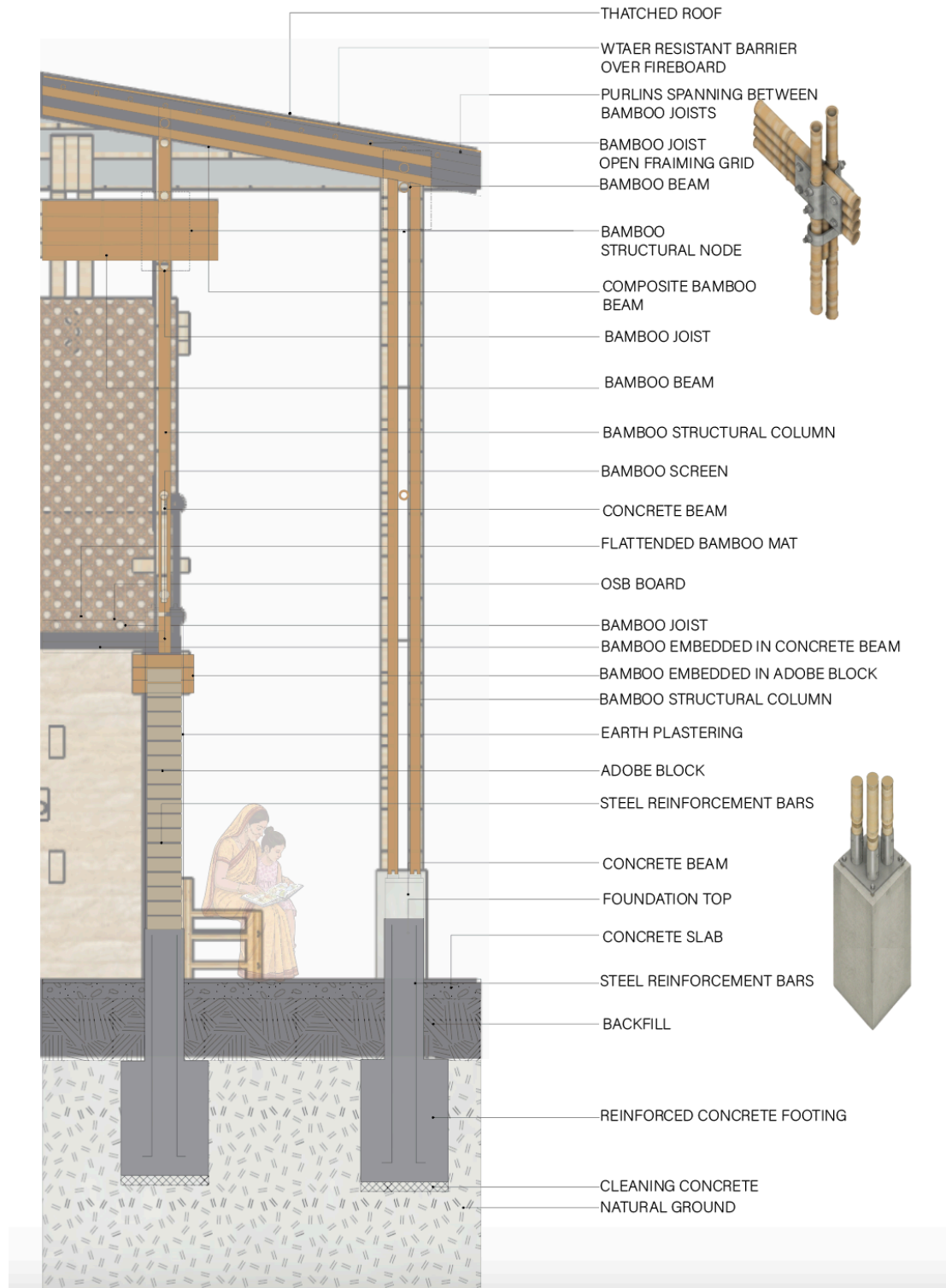


Figure 59 Wall Section Illustrated by Amina Mainuddin

Conclusion: From Shelter to Citizenship

This thesis began with a question about what architecture can do in the long middle of displacement. For many Rohingya women in Cox's Bazar, displacement is not a short emergency. It is a prolonged condition shaped by political uncertainty, restricted mobility, dependence on aid systems, environmental vulnerability, and the constant negotiation of safety. In this context, architecture cannot be limited to the production of temporary shelter. Shelter may protect the body, but it does not automatically create dignity, autonomy, or belonging.

The project therefore shifts the architectural question from emergency accommodation to civic participation. It asks how women living between displacement and belonging can access spaces for learning, gathering, care, production, prayer, childcare, and public voice. The final proposal answers this question through a women-centered civic campus located at the edge between the host community and the refugee settlement in Gundum. This edge is not treated as a boundary to avoid, but as the place where the thesis must operate.

The design demonstrates that safety and autonomy are not opposite conditions. Women do not need to be removed from public life to be protected. Instead, public life must be redesigned so that women can enter it with more control, comfort, and dignity. This is achieved through layered thresholds, shaded paths, courtyards, filtered visibility, interior-facing openings, and program adjacencies that support daily

responsibilities. The project allows women to choose when to be visible, when to gather, when to retreat, and when to move into more private spaces of care.

The program also redefines care as civic infrastructure. Care is not isolated in one room or one service. It appears in the relationship between the early education room and the classrooms, the community kitchen and garden, the counseling spaces and quiet thresholds, the marketplace and craft production, the forum and artisan gallery. These relationships recognize that women's autonomy depends on practical spatial support. A woman's ability to attend a class may depend on nearby childcare. Her ability to work may depend on a market edge. Her ability to seek help may depend on privacy. Her ability to belong may depend on repeated, ordinary encounters in shared spaces.

The project also argues that coexistence between host and refugee communities cannot be forced through a single symbolic space. It must be built gradually through shared but carefully mediated environments. The campus provides opportunities for overlap without erasing difference. Host and refugee women may use the same garden, kitchen, classrooms, forum, and market, but the architecture still allows for separation, pause, and choice. This balance is essential because trust is not assumed. It must be spatially supported over time.

Environmentally, the project shows that climate response is part of dignity. In a monsoon climate, shaded paths, dry thresholds, drainage, ventilation, and protection from heat and rain are not secondary technical concerns. They shape whether spaces can be used. The terraced bands, central bioswale, courtyard drainage, bamboo

clerestory bands, roof overhangs, and earth-based walls all connect environmental performance to social care. The architecture responds to climate not only to improve comfort, but to make daily participation possible.

The forum becomes the clearest architectural expression of the thesis. It is not simply an assembly hall. It is the civic room where women can gather, speak, display work, teach, organize, and be recognized. Its amphitheater, forecourt, and mezzanine gallery turn women's presence into public life. In this way, the project moves beyond protection alone. It creates space for authorship.

At the same time, this thesis recognizes the limits of architecture. Architecture cannot grant legal citizenship. It cannot resolve statelessness, political violence, gender-based violence, or the larger geopolitical conditions that produced displacement. It cannot replace policy, legal protection, or long-term justice. However, architecture can shape the everyday spaces where those conditions are lived. It can reduce exposure, support care, create routes to participation, and give form to dignity in the present.

The title **From Shelter to Citizenship** therefore describes a shift in architectural responsibility. It does not claim that a building can produce citizenship in the legal sense. Instead, it argues that citizenship also has a spatial dimension. It is practiced through access, visibility, participation, safety, and the ability to claim space in relation to others. For women living between displacement and belonging, these everyday conditions matter deeply.

The final proposal is an architecture of the meantime. It accepts that return may be uncertain and that permanence may be politically unresolved, but it refuses to let uncertainty reduce women's lives to waiting. It creates a place where women can learn, care, work, gather, pray, teach, sell, rest, and participate. It transforms the edge from a site of separation into a shared civic ground. Through this transformation, the thesis argues that architecture can help move the condition of displacement beyond survival and toward dignity, autonomy, and belonging.

Appendices

If needed.

Glossary

If needed.

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