



MDJ Allada is a project for an **orphanage in Benin** designed by VERSO in collaboration with the beninoise NGO “La Maison de la Joie” and the hosted children. Despite the reduced economic capacity of the house, the NGO is still trying to **give a worthy life** and a cozy home to all the orphans.

The beninoise NGO’ structure is currently in use in **Ouidah** in an existed private house donated by a gentle, illuminated local woman and precisely for this reason it is no longer sustainable to **give a right hospitality to all the children** brought by the local police or by social services. Moreover, the house cannot guarantee access to those who have serious difficulties in moving because of the architecture of the structure; certainly, this is a big obstacle to welcoming whoever needs hospitality.

For this reason, the NGO started considering the idea of a **new building** able to guarantee adapted and focused spaces for all the orphans in order to give the best for their growth and education.

VERSO accepted the **challenge** since the beginning of the project. We started studying the contest and the local necessity, talking with the volunteers and doing inspections during last summer. The project wants to **involve local professionals and artisans** and will be built with local materials according to sustainable principles, with attention to the context and traditional building techniques. In a long term prospective, MDJ ALLADA house will be also a wide site where young professionals will be trained with the goal to be economically independent and self-sufficient.

GEOGRAPHIC POSITION



THE CONTEST



46,7% of the population is less than 15 years

52,5% are the children who have to work losing their right to childhood

25% are the children who don't have access to primary instruction

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project leaders:
VERSO + Maison de la Joie NGO

Location:
Allada, Benin
6°38'40.42"N
2°7'12.14"E

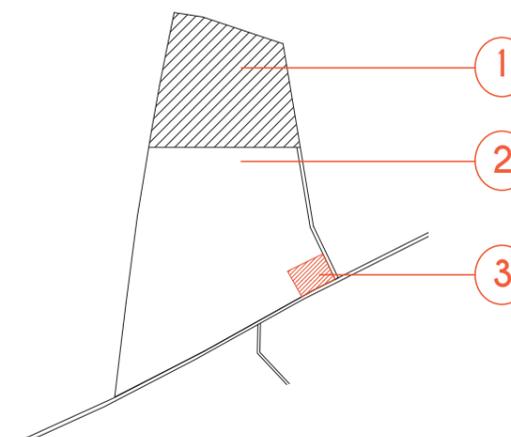
Dimension:
1340 sq.m building
2810 sq.m in total

Costs:
about 200.000 euros

Date:
August 2018 - ongoing

Stakeholders:
60 children from 3 to 18 years old

MQ SITE OPPORTUNITIES



1. 5 ha - cooperation projects for homeless guys

2. 10 ha - agriculture projects linked with the house

3. 2810 mq - MDJ ALLADA project



Meeting with local stakeholders to discuss the project



Lecture at the University of Ancona, Italy



Presentation in Bologna, Italy

A SHARED PROJECT

VERSO is a collective of italian architects linked to students, universities, professionals, companies and volunteers in order to **share the project**, raise donations and creating a **partners network**.



Taking measures with children



Individual interviews to meet personal expectations



Focus design groups to imagine collective spaces and fixing rules with children

PARTICIPATION FIRST ART. 8

The whole design process has been run in collaboration with **local professionals, neighbors and the children themselves** in order to define specific needs and personal expectations.

The workshops with children, in particular, have been studied in collaboration with an italian social scientist and pedagogist in order to guarantee a totally **free space of expression** focused on what they imagine as their "ideal space". With the children of the house we decided the functional program, the building distribution and the rules that should be applied for each space.

The **5-days-workshop** was divided into three different moments to alternate **individual interviews with collective design laboratories** and to collect different qualitative feedbacks. Each moment has been studied to fit specific needs and capabilities **according to the different ages of participants**.

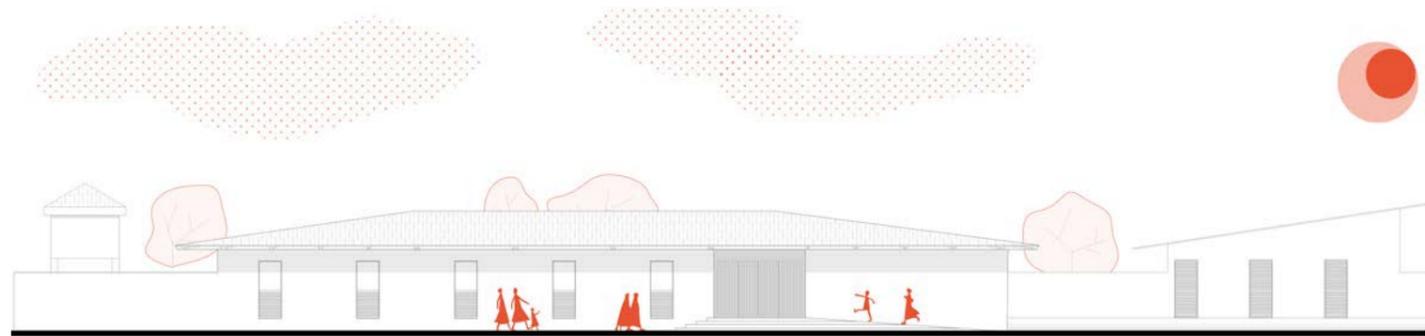
In that way, it has been possible to make the community stronger and make the project, **a project of ALL and for ALL**.

MASTERPLAN



- | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Porter's lodge | 7. Laboratory | 13. Well | 19. Director room |
| 2. Storage | 8. Refectory | 14. Maman room | 20. Playground |
| 3. Infirmary | 9. Refectory | 15. Female baths | 21. Courtyard |
| 4. Direction office | 10. Storage | 16. Female rooms | 22./23. Classroom |
| 5. Main hall | 11. Laundry | 17. Male rooms | 24. Workshop |
| 6. Acceptance | 12. Clothes horse | 18. Male baths | 25. Volunteers block |

PROSPECT AND SECTION



View of the refectory



View of the entrance



View of the playground

BE APPROPRIATE

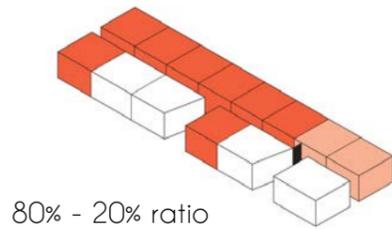
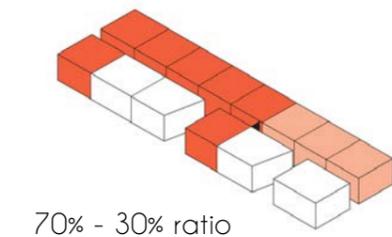
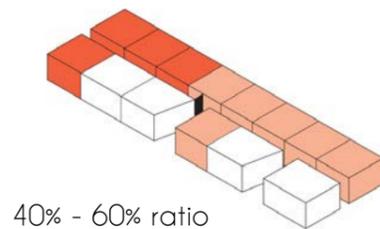
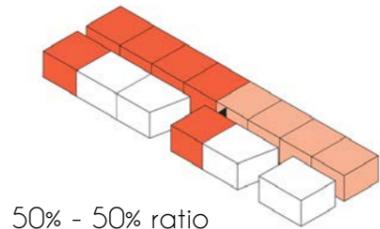
ART. 10

Since the beginning of the project, it has been taken into account the **effort and the difficulties in working and designing in Global South contexts**, understanding also all the possible social consequences. In Benin lots of orphans aren't actually orphans but abandoned children. This is the main reason why we decided to **adopt a discrete aesthetic approach** in stand of an exhibition of shapes and materials, as sometimes happens. The project should evocate a nice and cozy place of course, but it also have the responsibility **not to encourage the abandonment of children in the local community**. Finally, the masterplan. The NGO can rely only on 4 or 5 people to manage nearly 60 children of different age and sex, so the **masterplan follows a clock based concept** related to the use of spaces during the day. Inner space is divided by functions, collective and intimate spaces also according to different needs and expectations of the children.

ADAPTABILITY

The children's block is studied in order to guarantee high standards of adaptability, according to the age and the percentage of males/females hosted.

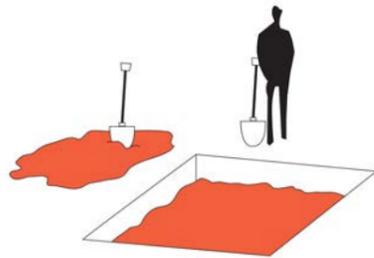
- female
- male



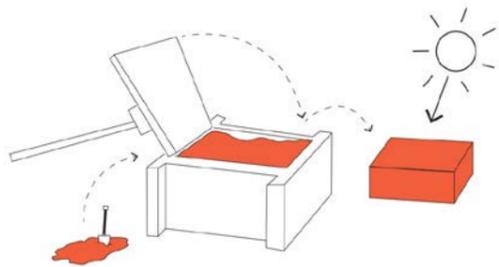
MATERIALS

The project will be realized with local materials, such as rammed earth, in collaboration with local artisans in order to incentivate traditional building systems. The goal of the project team VERSO is to make volunteers and local builders work together to share both specific local knowledge and technical innovation.

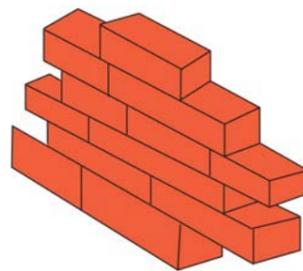
Use of rammed earth



Realization of blocks with earth and cement



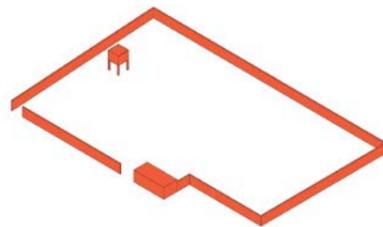
Construction of the wall



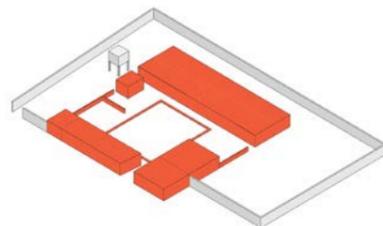
TIMELINE

The project is articulated in three steps according to the NGO possibilities and the priorities rides during discussions with local professionals.

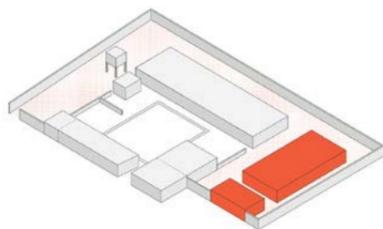
- STEP I
1. Fence
 2. Water well
 3. Porter's lodge



- STEP II
1. Orphanage

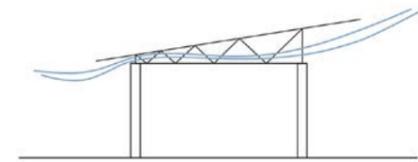


- STEP III
1. Volunteers' block

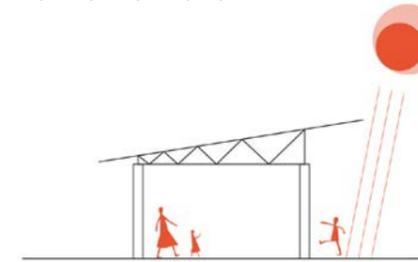


SUSTAINABILITY

The project takes in big consideration the base principles of sustainability, taking advantages from natural forces: WIND, SUN, RAIN.



natural ventilation



natural illumination and protection from too hard sun



reuse of falling water without making it stagnate

BE LOCAL

ART. 5

Another important goal of MDJ ALLADA project is the **responsible and appropriate use of sustainability technology** and local products.

As we already said, it has been important, during the idea development of the orphanage, to think about the most efficient and sustainable structure that can be realized by associating **local natural materials** (rammed earth) **with recycled ones**.

In Benin in fact, unfortunately, along streets and sea's coasts, it is common to find a great amount of plastic and glass trash. We want **the throwaway materials to be recycled** and be the prime **element of our construction**.

This kind of approach, not common at all neither in Benin nor in the nearest countries, **can be adapted**, hopefully in a near future, **by local artisans in building their own houses**.

