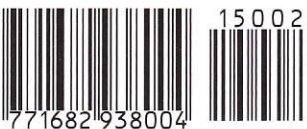


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VULAMASANGO CHILD AND YOUTH CARE FACILITY, PHILIPPI

ARCHITECT: NM & ASSOCIATES PLANNERS AND DESIGNERS – SANDRA VAN DER MERWE

PHOTOS: NM & ASSOCIATES



VULAMASANGO, A non-profit organisation aided by its German fundraising entity Positiv Leben e.V, is a child and youth care facility located in Philippi. The facility will accommodate children whose parents have passed away from an AIDS-related cause or those whose parents are not able to provide for them. A parallel aim of the project is to rehabilitate the site, a 5.2ha plot within the Philippi Horticultural Area; productive agricultural land will sustain the development, connect the children with a therapeutic and educational environment, and encourage skills development and future employment within the farming industry.

The existing site was greatly disturbed and eroded through the activities of its

previous owners, and required a catalyst like the child and youth care facility to restore its agricultural productivity. A number of planning applications, with input from engineering and landscaping consultants, preceded the detailed site development plan, which was required to facilitate the development of the facility within the Cape Town Spatial Development Framework's vision for the Philippi Horticultural Area.

Approximately two-thirds of the site is now reserved for agricultural purposes, which could take the form of vegetable gardens, orchards, tree nurseries or indigenous medicinal plants in 'rooms' formed by treed wind breaks; the reshaping of an existing hill/berm of excavated material to form a windbreak;

or the reshaping/rehabilitation of existing seasonal pond areas.

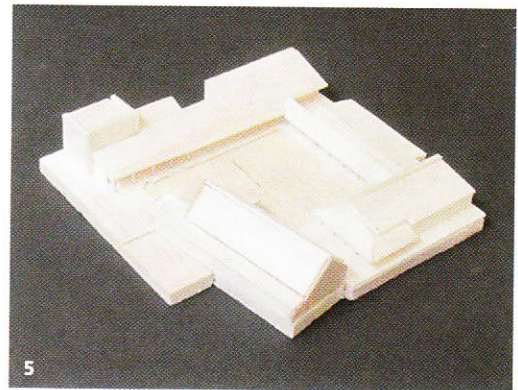
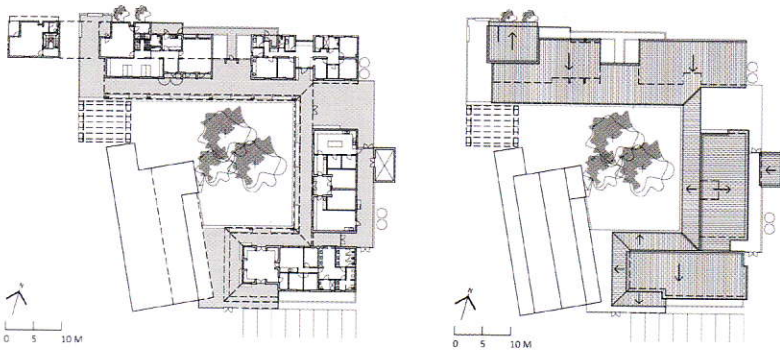
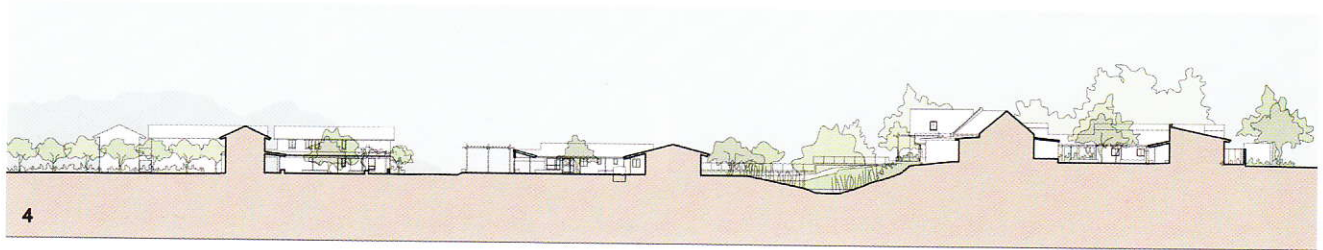
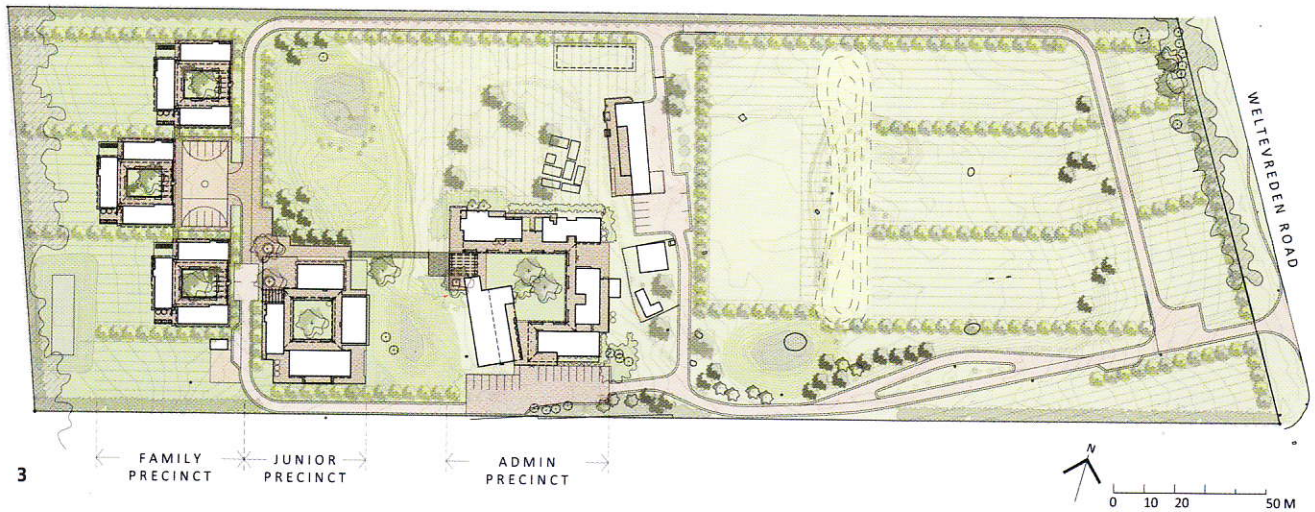
The project seeks to minimise the facility's reliance on municipal service infrastructure, through sustainable service alternatives that include reed bed-based black water treatment, grey-water and rainwater re-use, and heat pumps for hot-water generation. New buildings for the site broadly encompass three components, namely an Administrative Precinct, a Junior Precinct and a series of Family Clusters.

Vulamasango's philosophy integrates a people-centred approach with practical

1. The existing hall
2. The site, May 2009

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education, and strives to promote community and cultural identity within a dignified place of safety and care for the children. This made it important for the NM & Associates project team to uphold these values in their approach to site layout, building typology and the refinement of the brief.

The Administrative Precinct comprises admin and first aid offices, utility and volunteers' buildings set around a central court, and an existing hall that's currently in use as a crèche and aftercare facility for children from the nearby townships of Samora Machel and Siqualo.

The hall acts as a focal point in a manner that makes reference to the vernacular configuration of a homestead, with its peripheral outbuildings contained in a 'werf'. The buildings are

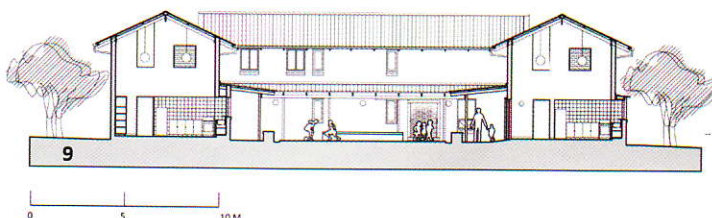
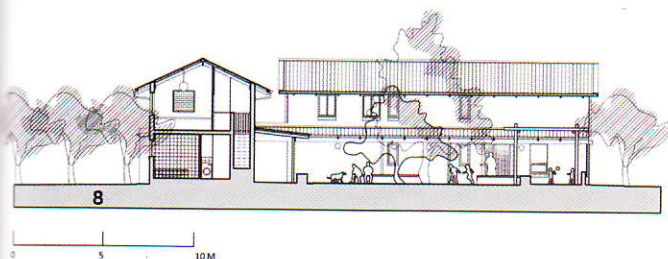
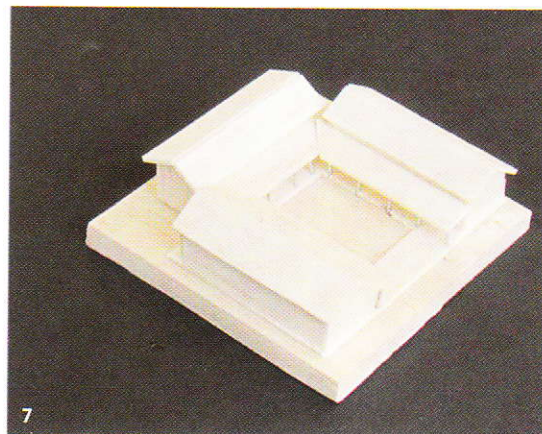
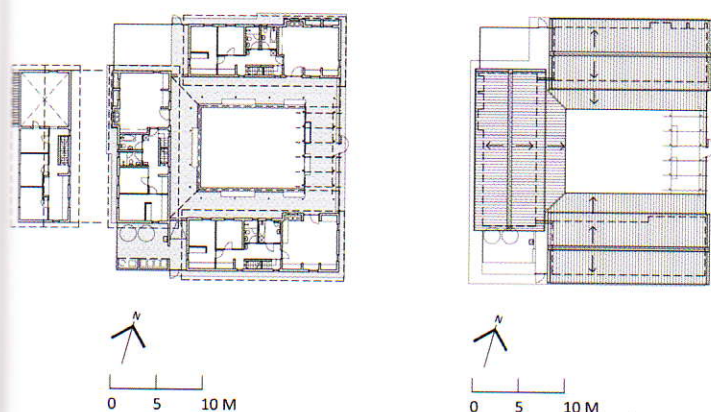
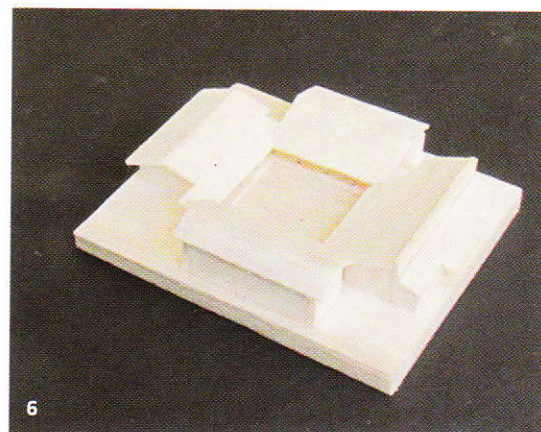
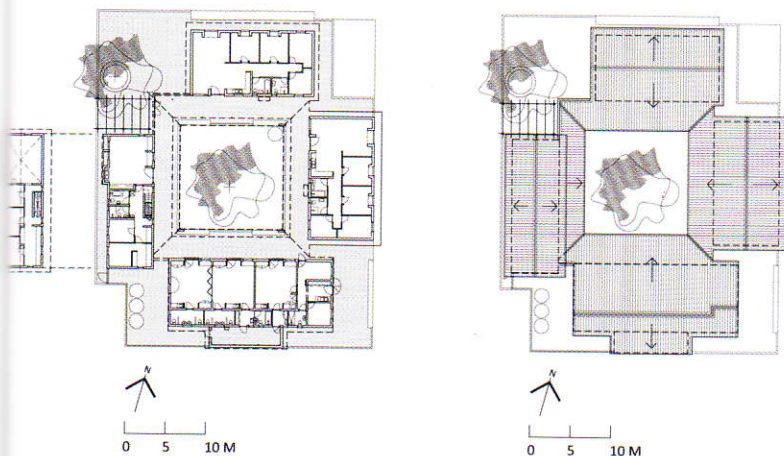
connected by means of a covered walkway, such that it forms an extension of the main roof structure of the other buildings, and includes a 'tower' component for surveillance and to give visitors an overview of the development.

The residential components are divided into Family Clusters, where (eventually, approximately 120) children of varying ages will be raised in family units with a live-in house parent; and the Junior Precinct, which will act as an 'intake' area for the youth and child care facility before children can be placed in a family unit, and will provide a space where pre-school children can be taken care of during the day.

The overall design approach at Vulamasango has been to define spatially a gradation of the public and private realms as one moves through

the site, with the main public facilities being revealed initially, followed by their supporting facilities, and then the residential clusters as one goes further into the site and the private realm of the development. The intention is to create precincts using a common architectural language with reference to the local vernacular of rural building forms and elements, but with different identities, scales and grades of public and private spaces.

The limited budget for building works (approximately aligned with the delivery of affordable housing) called for small internal spaces, and the use of standard, simple building technology and durable domestic finishes. The challenge has been to identify and develop a building element that can make a significant impact on improving



the living and spatial environment of the buildings – in this case the roofs. In keeping with the nature of agricultural shed structures, the proposed buildings have generous, simple roofs that allow high-volume single or double storeys, with deep eaves that extend to form generous walkways.

Internal shutterply panel ceilings inform the roofs' structural modules and are laid simultaneously with the roof purlins, creating a durable and attractive soffit. This height allowance improves the quality of the space and the environmental comfort of the relatively small living areas by increasing their volume, especially in the family and junior precinct homes where up to 10 children could be living with their houseparent/s. The buildings are grouped around courts so that

covered walkways connect structures and also complement the relatively modest internal areas available, with the walkways accommodating sitting, socialising and playing spaces throughout the year.

Phase 1 of the project, which comprises the Admin Building and a typical Family Cluster, is currently under construction.

THE TEAM

Client: Florian Kraemer of Vulamasango
Project Team: Jacqui Perrin, Sandra van der Merwe, Mariet Munday (Also involved: Dylan Pope, David Bennet, Emil Sinclair, Huda Tayob)
Project Architect: Sandra van der Merwe
Project Manager: Peter Jones
Structural Engineer: JTL Structures
Quantity Surveyors: De Leeuw Group, Cape Town

3. Site plan

Key:

A. Upgraded access road B. Productive area
 C. Reshaped berm D. Existing pond
 E. New reedbed

1. Existing workshop 2. Existing caretaker's home
 3. Existing hall (aftercare) 4. New crèche

4. Longitudinal section

5. Administrative Precinct

Key:

1. First floor office 2. Admin building
 3. First aid office 4. Utility building
 5. Volunteers' building 6. Connecting walkway
 7. Existing hall

6. Junior Precinct

Key:

1, 2. Single-storey house 3. Crèche
 4. Connecting walkway 5. Ground floor of double-storey family unit
 6. First floor of double-storey family unit

7. Typical Family Cluster

Key:

1, 2, 3. Double-storey family unit 4. Typical first-floor layout
 5. Central court and walkway 6. Pergola

8. Cross section of typical family unit

9. Sectional elevation of typical family units