



REINVENTING ONESELF

Shelter for Women Victims of Domestic Violence



*2021 Kaira Loro Competition: Women's House
Site: Sédhiou, Senegal
Building Area: 1,087.65 m2
Individual Work*

Domestic violence does more than threaten physical safety; it progressively erodes agency, identity, and a person's sense of control. In Senegal, where gender inequality and social expectations can make leaving an abusive household especially difficult, a shelter must provide more than temporary protection. It must support a gradual passage from crisis and withdrawal toward recovery, community, and renewed independence.

The project begins by mapping the stages of trauma recovery and examining how shelter environments can support each transition. Rather than gathering all services within a single institutional building, the program is divided into two clusters—Healing and Living—arranged around a central planted landscape. This valley-like space provides both separation and connection, allowing movement across the site to reflect the transition from therapeutic support to the rhythms of everyday life.

Three layers of planting introduce different degrees of privacy, sensory relief, and collective activity. More protected gardens provide spaces for withdrawal and reflection, while shared green areas encourage encounter and mutual support. Residents can determine when to remain private and when to participate in communal life, gradually recovering a sense of choice within a secure environment.

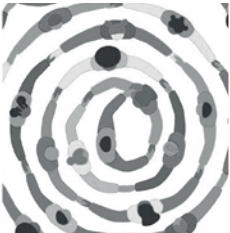
Water infrastructure becomes another form of care. Roofs collect rainfall for storage and landscape irrigation, reducing reliance on water carried over long distances while sustaining the shelter's planted spaces. The system connects environmental performance with the daily labor often placed on women. Architecture cannot resolve the violence residents have experienced, but it can establish conditions for safety, agency, and recovery—helping survivors reconstruct their identities and imagine lives beyond abuse.



domestic violence



water carrying

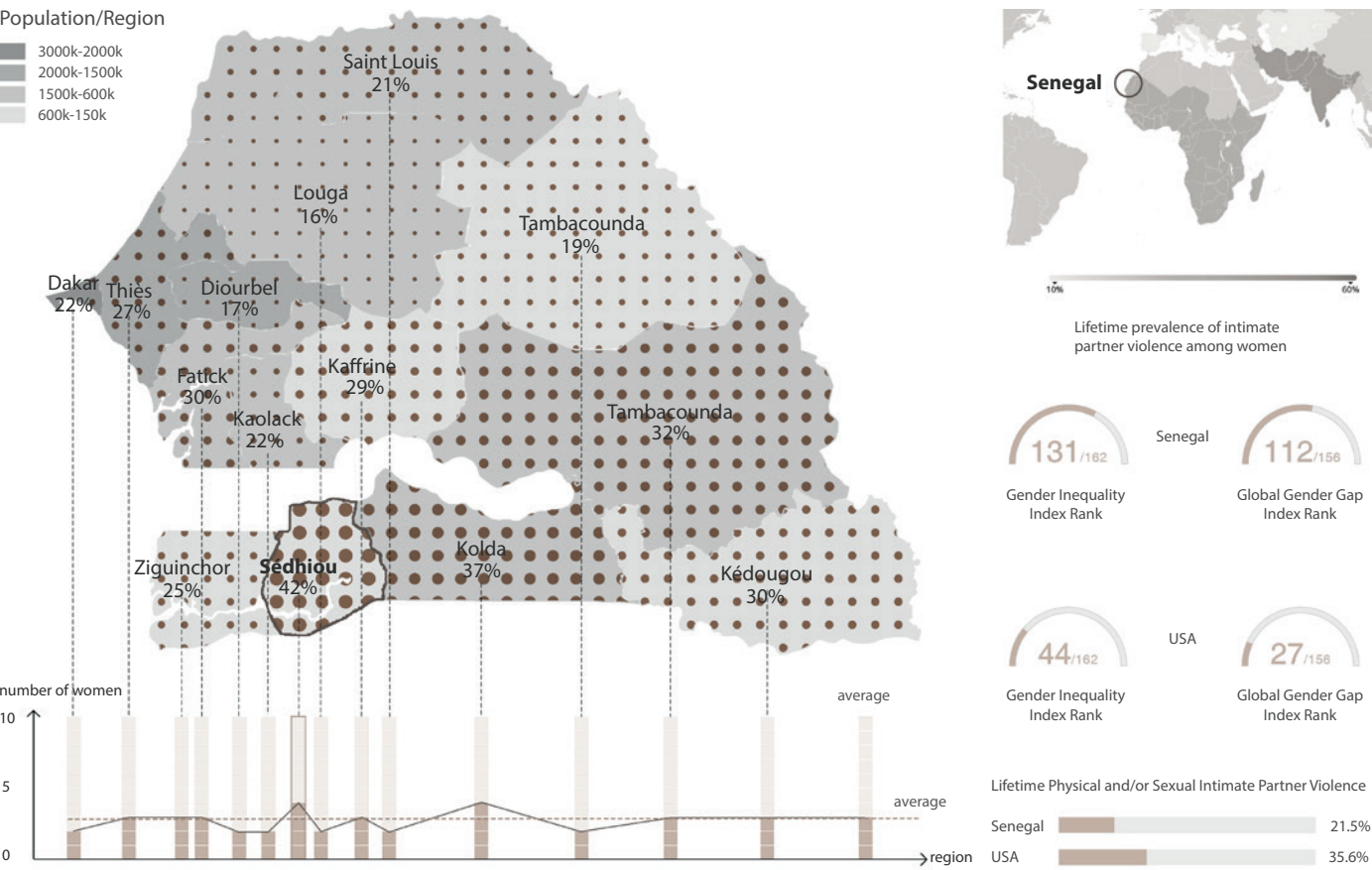


support and shelter?



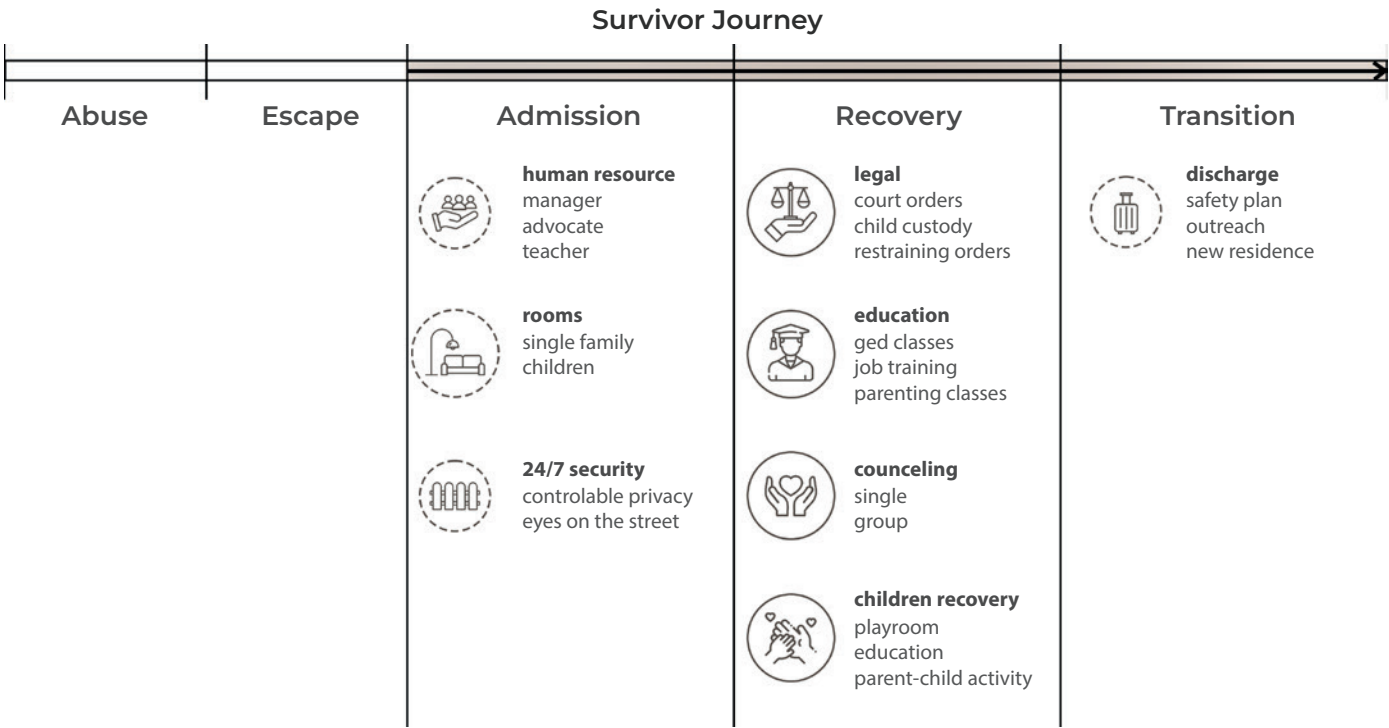
THE STRUGGLE FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN AFRICA

African women suffer significant disempowerment from patriarchal societies and harmful traditions, including genital mutilation and violence. The ongoing struggle for women’s rights highlights the urgent need for change, focusing on reducing violence as a vital step forward.



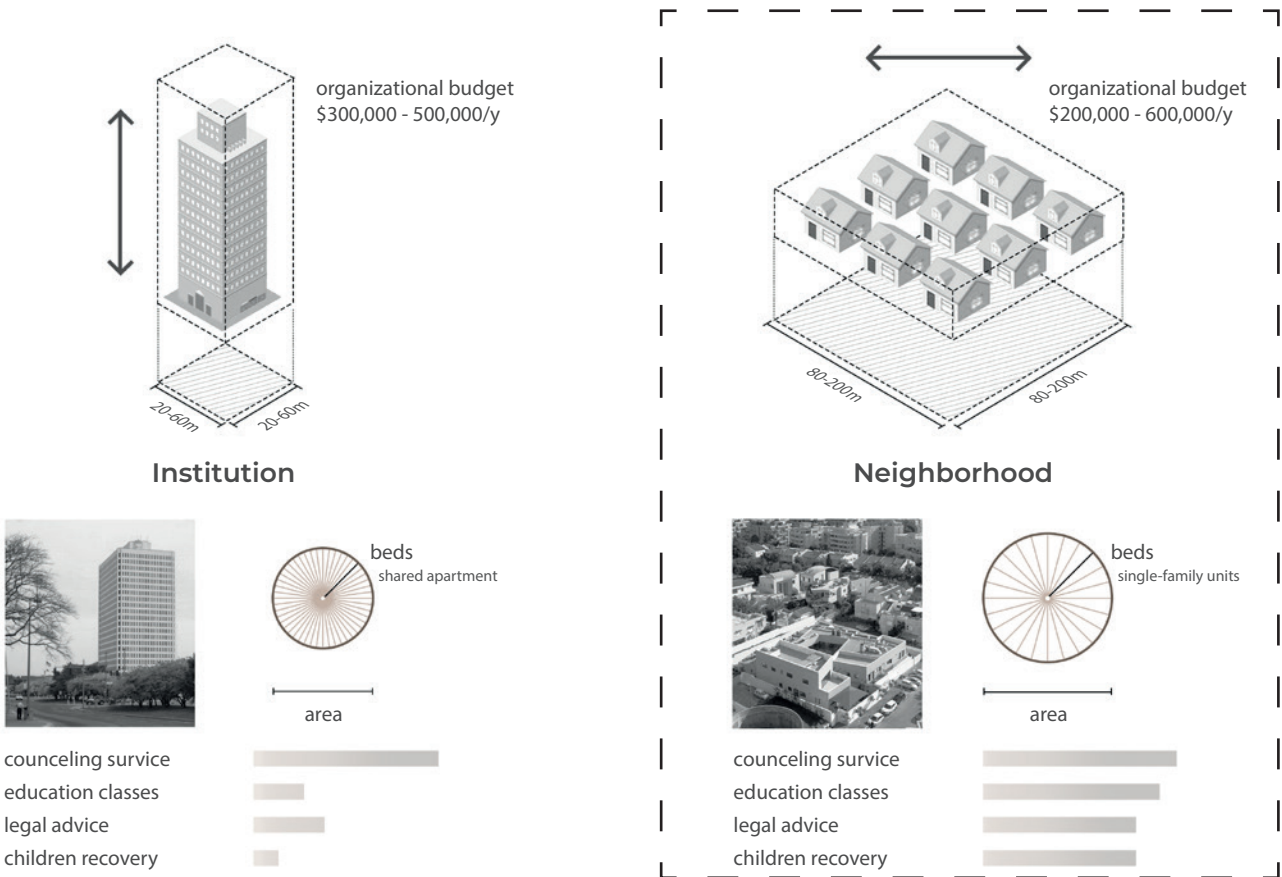
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: ONE IN THREE WOMEN EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE

Violence against women in Senegal is a significant issue, with surveys revealing that 30% of women aged 15-49 have faced physical or sexual violence. This gender-based violence is the most prevalent yet least visible human rights violation. The government’s enforcement of existing laws is insufficient, particularly regarding domestic violence, which many citizens perceive as a normal aspect of life.



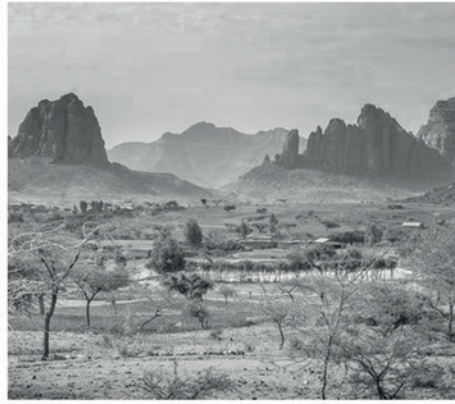
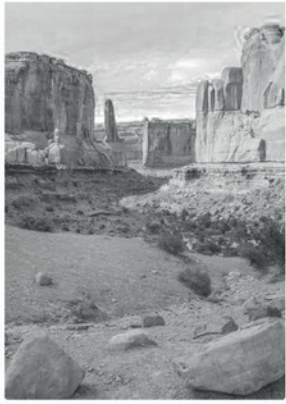
IS THERE AN ARCHITECTURAL FORM FOR SURVIVOR JOURNEYS?

The diagram illustrates a woman’s journey from violence to shelter. Architectural design must address unique needs in admission, recovery, and transition—requiring secure spaces, healing areas, and support for paperwork. How could these needs shape a shelter’s design?

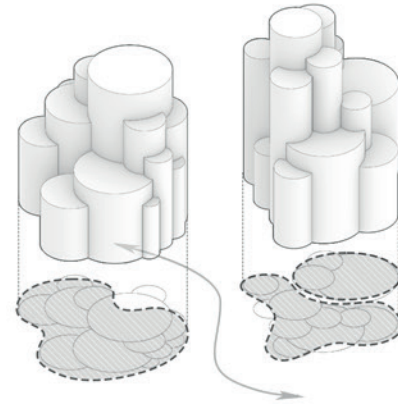


“CLUSTERED NEIGHBORHOOD” : A MORE EFFECTIVE SHELTER

Shelter designs are categorized as institutional or neighborhood. Institutional shelters provide detailed care focused on psychotherapy but overlook broader needs. Neighborhood shelters offer more privacy and functionality, often relying on women’s autonomy, which can reduce organizational costs.



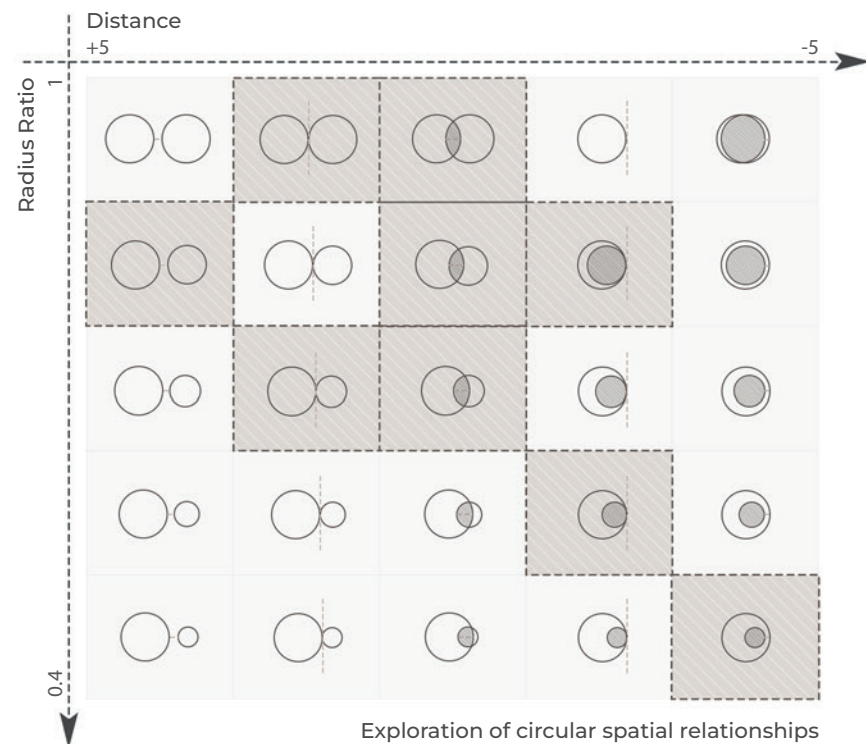
African Mountains and Valleys



Valley Element Extraction

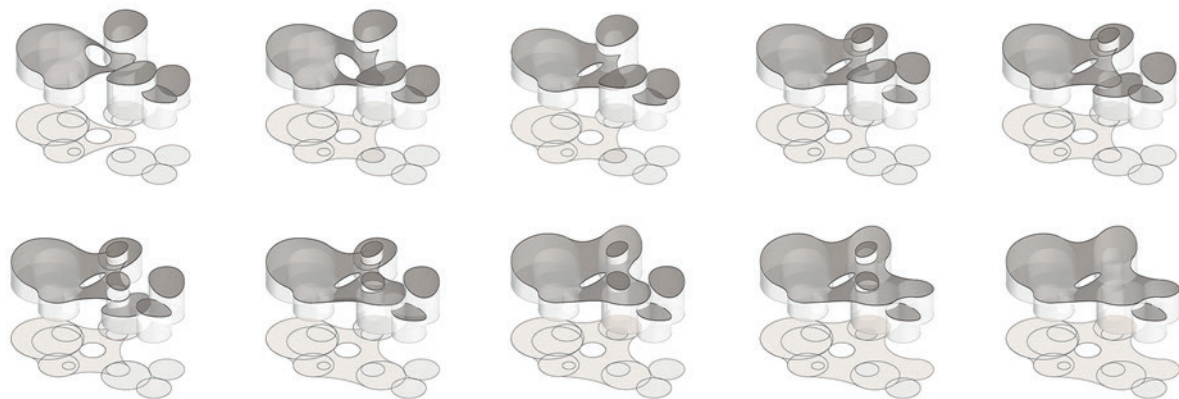
INSPIRATION AND PROTOTYPE EXTRACTION

The architectural cluster is inspired by African valleys, flanked by red and rolling hills with a lush central passage. The abstraction of these mountains into cylindrical forms creates the prototype for the spatial layout.



Exploration of circular spatial relationships

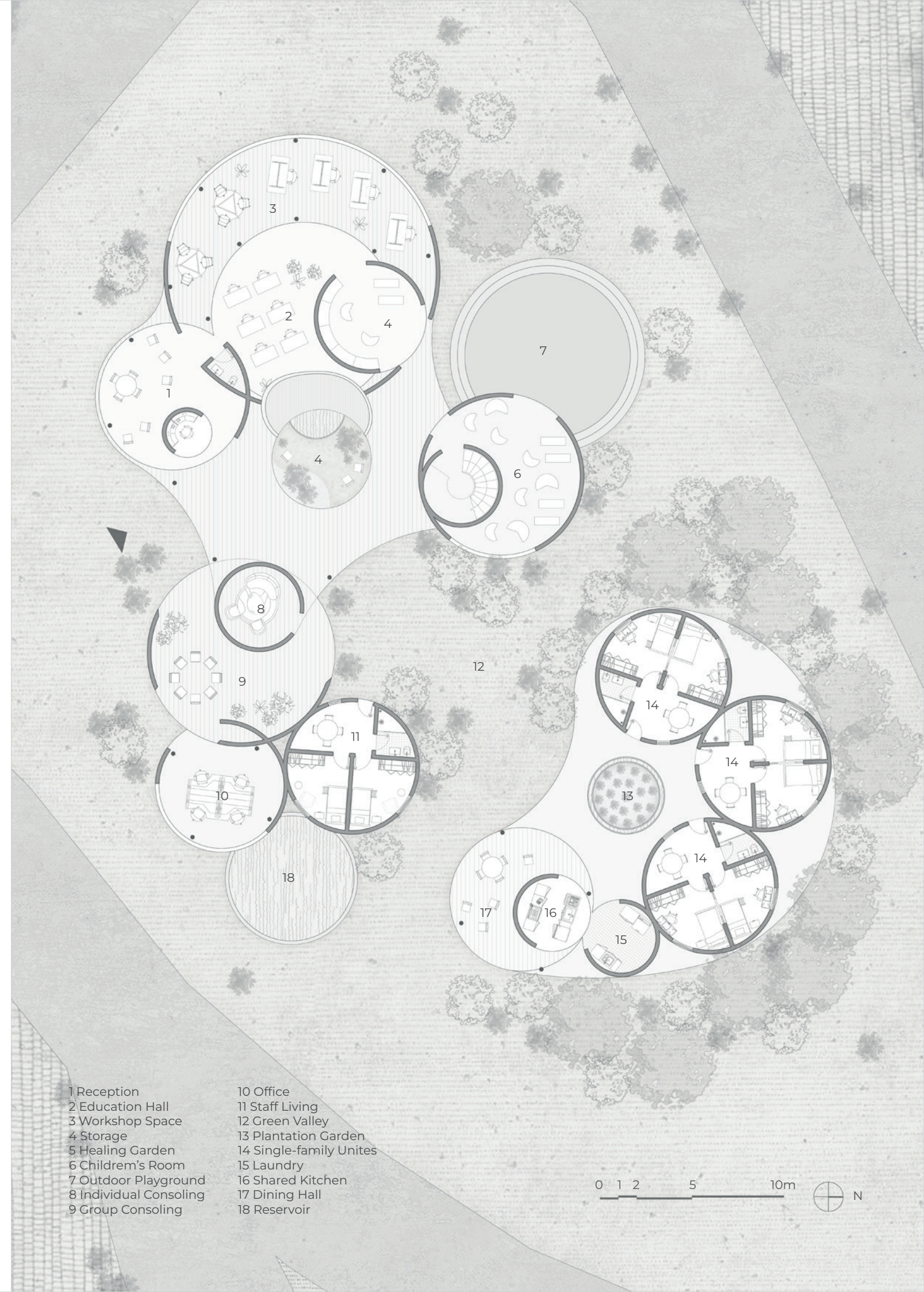
Exploration of roof forms



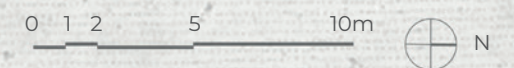
Exploration of architectural Clusters

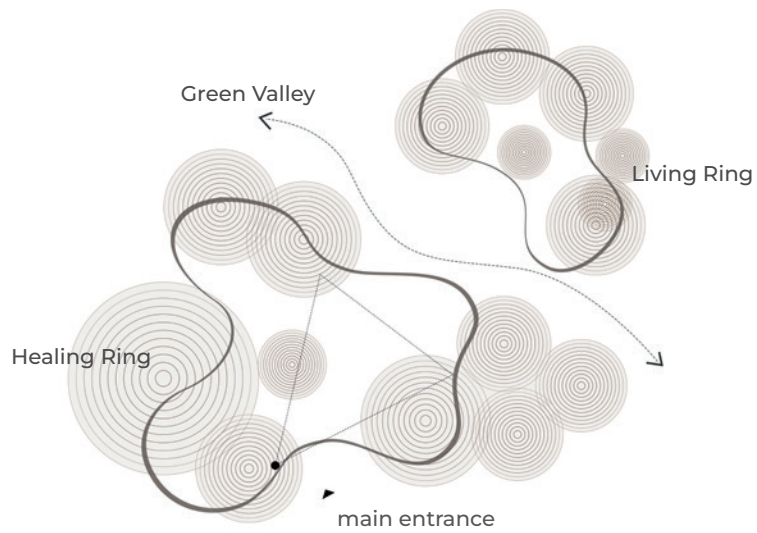
PROTOTYPING AND EXPLORING VALLEY SPACES

Inspired by African valleys, the design envisions two agglomerations and a green valley. Extracting the circle as a foundational shape, I explored archetypal spatial relationships characterized by tension and dialogue, which informed the overall design.



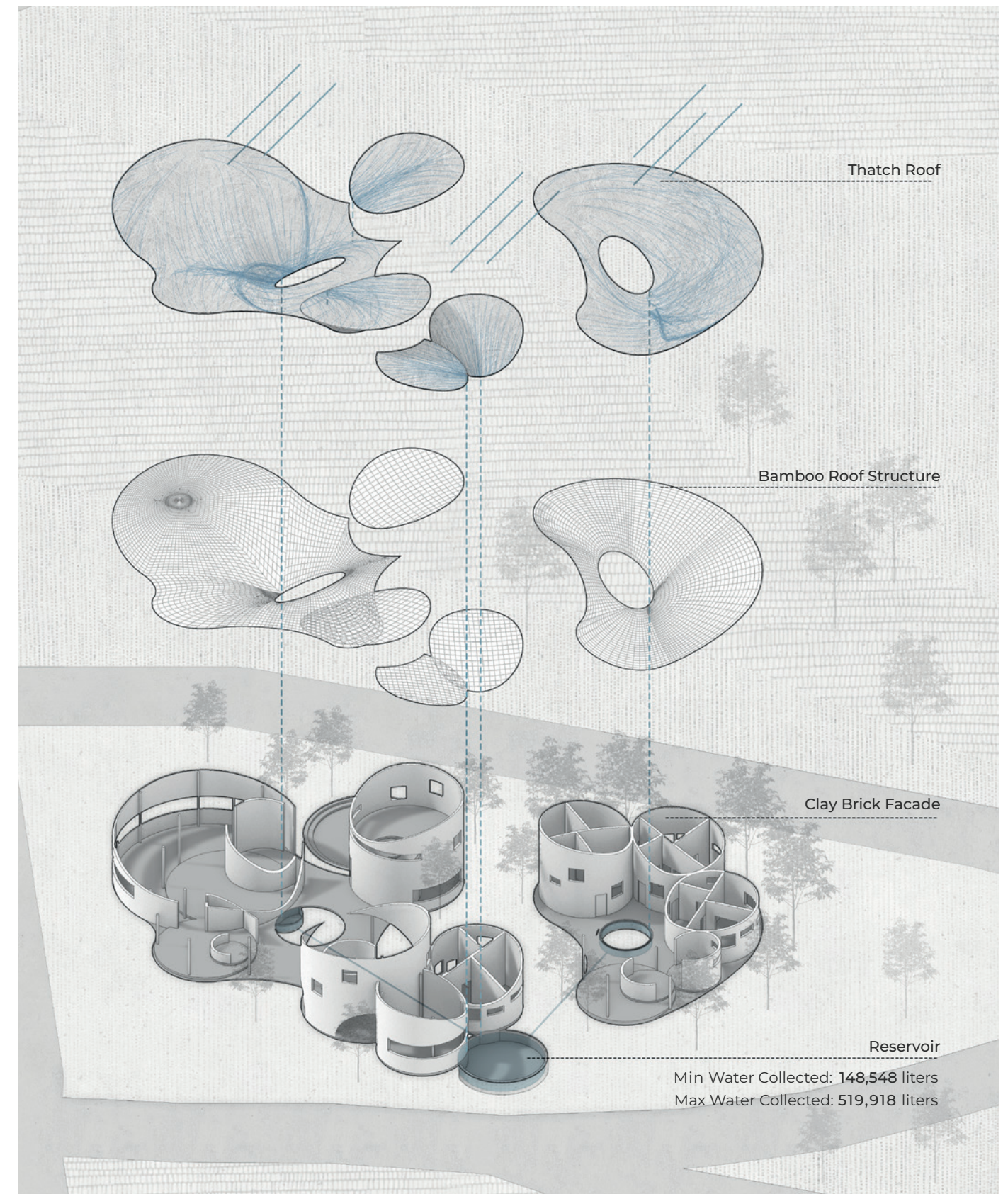
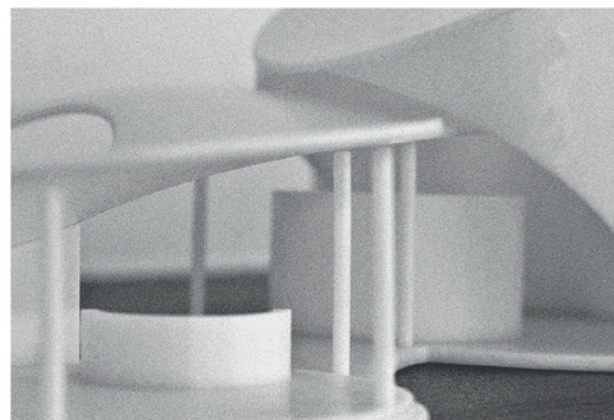
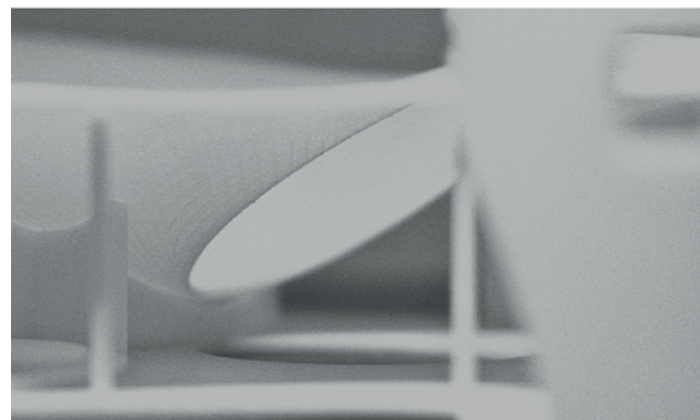
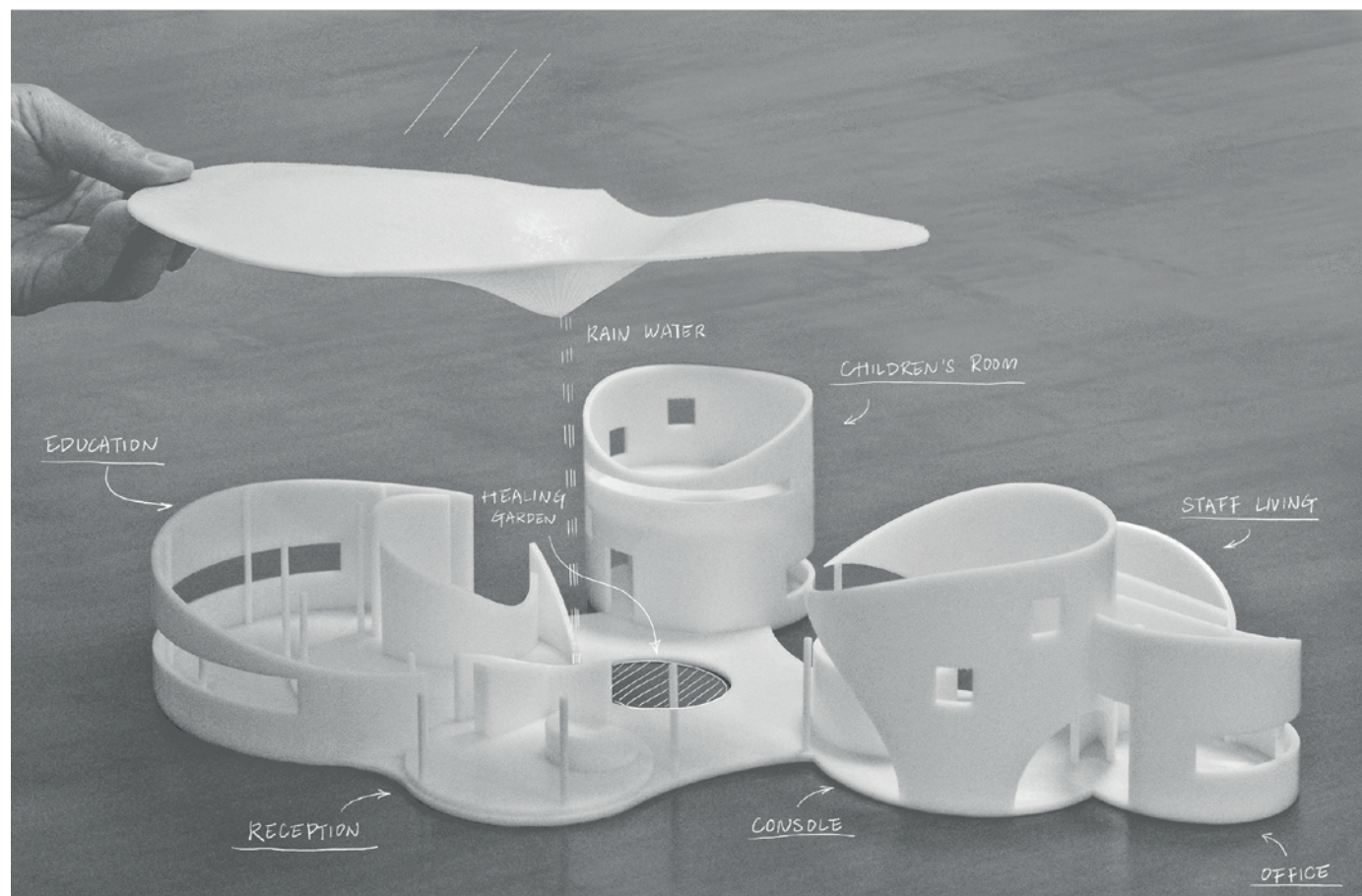
- 1 Reception
- 2 Education Hall
- 3 Workshop Space
- 4 Storage
- 5 Healing Garden
- 6 Children's Room
- 7 Outdoor Playground
- 8 Individual Consoling
- 9 Group Consoling
- 10 Office
- 11 Staff Living
- 12 Green Valley
- 13 Plantation Garden
- 14 Single-family Unites
- 15 Laundry
- 16 Shared Kitchen
- 17 Dining Hall
- 18 Reservoir





OVERALL STRATEGY: TWO CLUSTERS AND A VALLEY

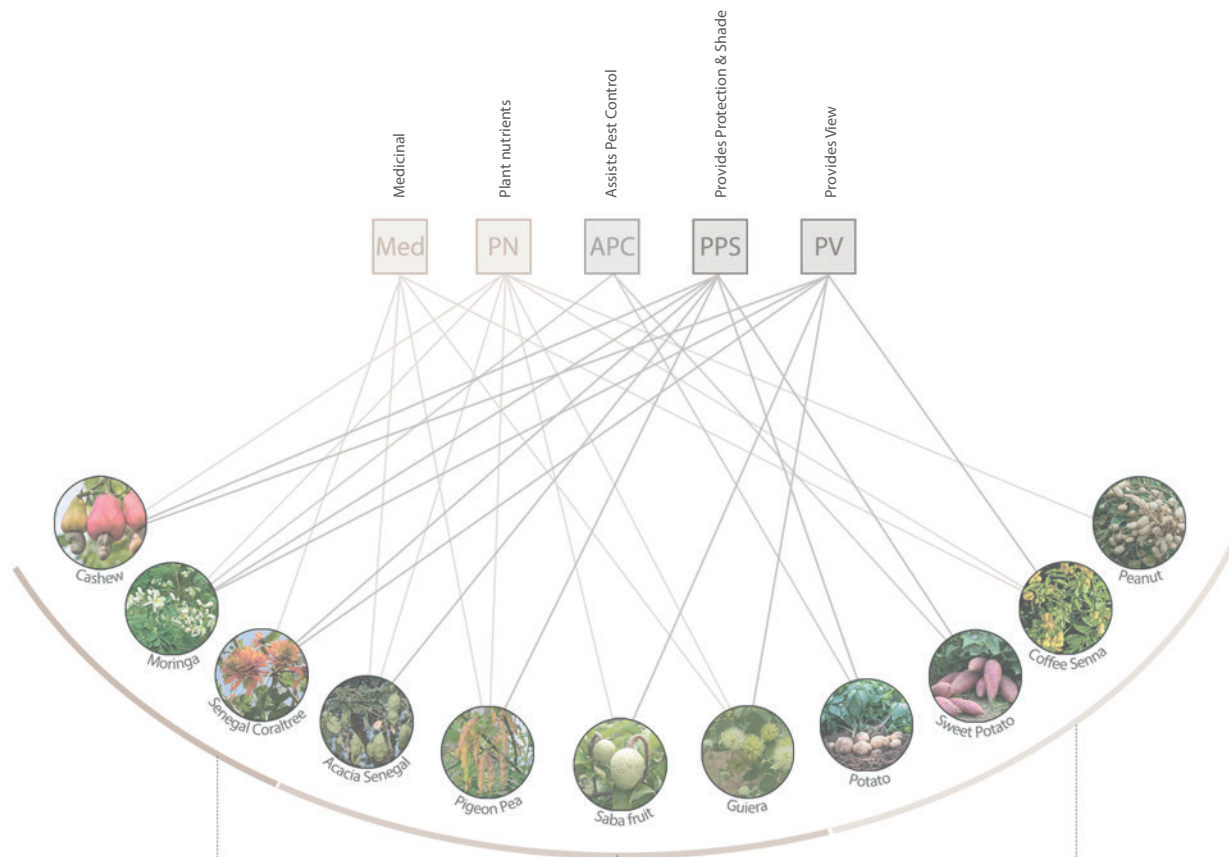
A series of design strategies that contribute to health recovery have been applied to the overall design. According to the degree of openness and functional organization, two spatial clusters are formed, each forming a circular flow: Healing and Living, with the roofs of the two clusters opening up to the green valley, creating a guiding line of sight and promoting a harmonious connection with nature.



FACILITATING WATER ACCESS FOR WOMEN

As an African country, freshwater resources have always been one of the pressing issues to be addressed. In Senegal, women still carry the burden of carrying water over long distances. By combining a series of sloping roofs, rainwater can be collected in designated locations, solving the water problem while creating a landscape.

Calculation:
 $809.086 \text{ square meters} \times 0.918 \text{ meter} \times 1000 \text{ (liter/meter)} \times 20\% \sim 70\% = 148,548 \sim 519,918 \text{ liters}$ Total Roof Catchment Area: **809.086 square meters**. Senegal annual rainfall: **918mm**. Run-off coefficient for thatch: **20% ~ 70%**



GROUP 1 : BIG

Cashew
Moringa
Senegal Coraltree



GROUP 2 : MEDIUM

Aracia Senegal
Pigeon Pea
Saba fruit
Guiera



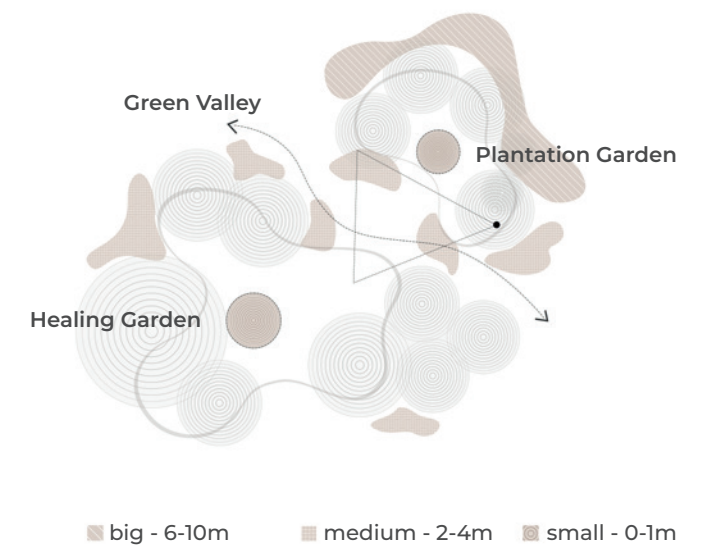
GROUP 3 : SMALL

Potato
Sweet Potato
Coffee Senna
Peanut



view of Green Valley

design strategies	health outcomes					
	colorful view	plantation	harvesting	water	noise-reducing	shading
reduced pain						
improved patient sleep						
reduced patient stress						
reduced depression						
reduced patient length of stay						
improved social support						
increased patient satisfaction						
decreased staff stress						
increased staff effectiveness						
increased staff satisfaction						



PLANT SYSTEMS FOR NOURISHMENT AND HEALING

The design categorizes plants into three height groups for shade, landscaping, and nutrition. Taller plants at the rear enhance privacy, while medium-height plants in Green Valley offer a refreshing scent and nutrients. The two gardens feature a healing garden with water and a planting garden with dwarf plants, both serving as therapeutic spaces.

INTEGRATING LOCAL MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

The design draws on the roofing forms and techniques of Senegal's traditional architecture (Jola Compluvium), which uses materials sourced directly from the local area, and a sloping form that helps to retain water in the central courtyard, and to facilitate air circulation through transpiration. The roof structure is a three-layer bamboo frame, with thatch covering the surface.

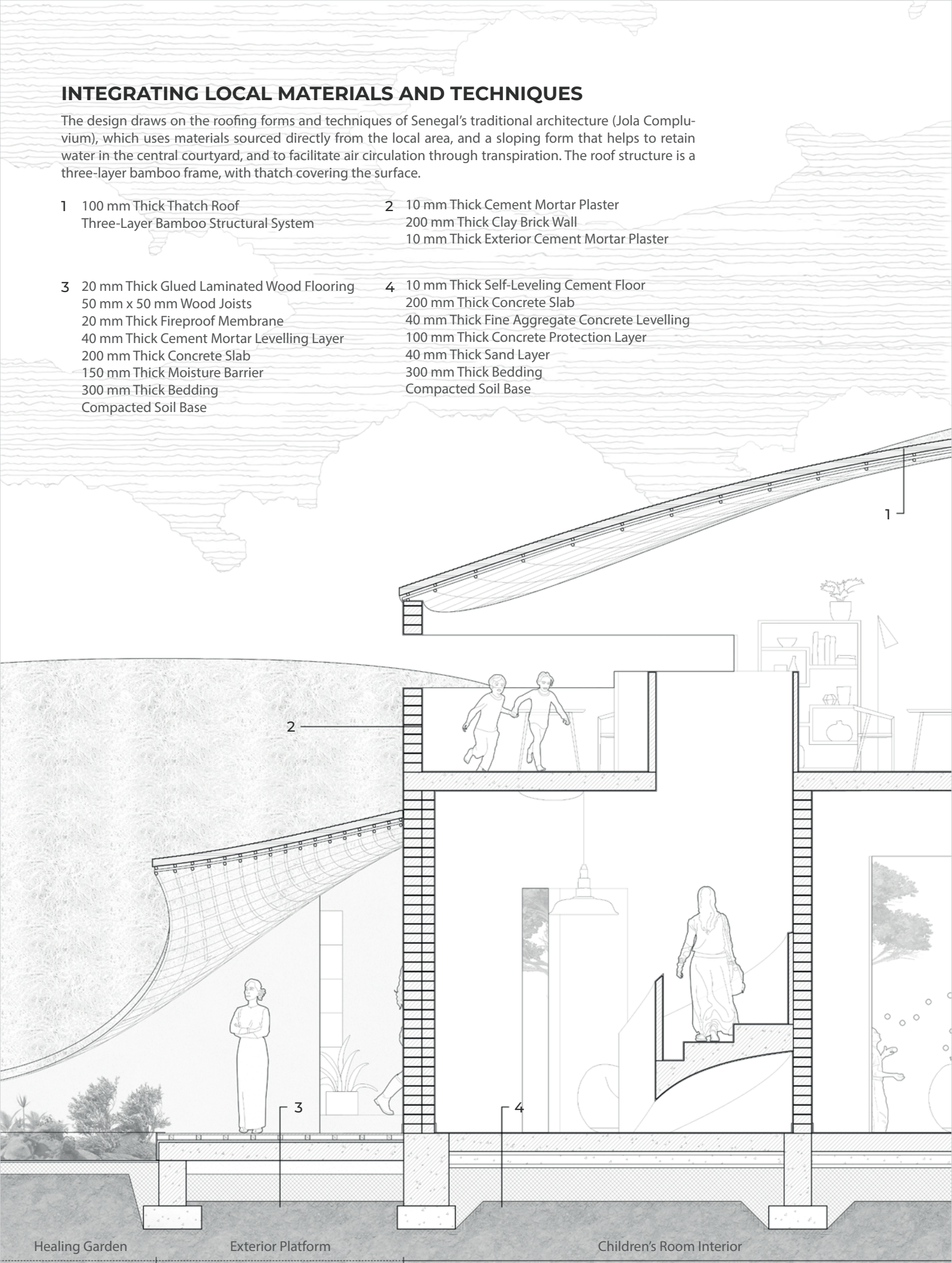
- 1

100 mm Thick Thatch Roof
Three-Layer Bamboo Structural System
- 2

10 mm Thick Cement Mortar Plaster
200 mm Thick Clay Brick Wall
10 mm Thick Exterior Cement Mortar Plaster
- 3

20 mm Thick Glued Laminated Wood Flooring
50 mm x 50 mm Wood Joists
20 mm Thick Fireproof Membrane
40 mm Thick Cement Mortar Levelling Layer
200 mm Thick Concrete Slab
150 mm Thick Moisture Barrier
300 mm Thick Bedding
Compacted Soil Base
- 4

10 mm Thick Self-Leveling Cement Floor
200 mm Thick Concrete Slab
40 mm Thick Fine Aggregate Concrete Levelling
100 mm Thick Concrete Protection Layer
40 mm Thick Sand Layer
300 mm Thick Bedding
Compacted Soil Base



view from main entrance



view of education hall