



A Nossa Casa

A Center for Children Orphaned by the AIDS Pandemic



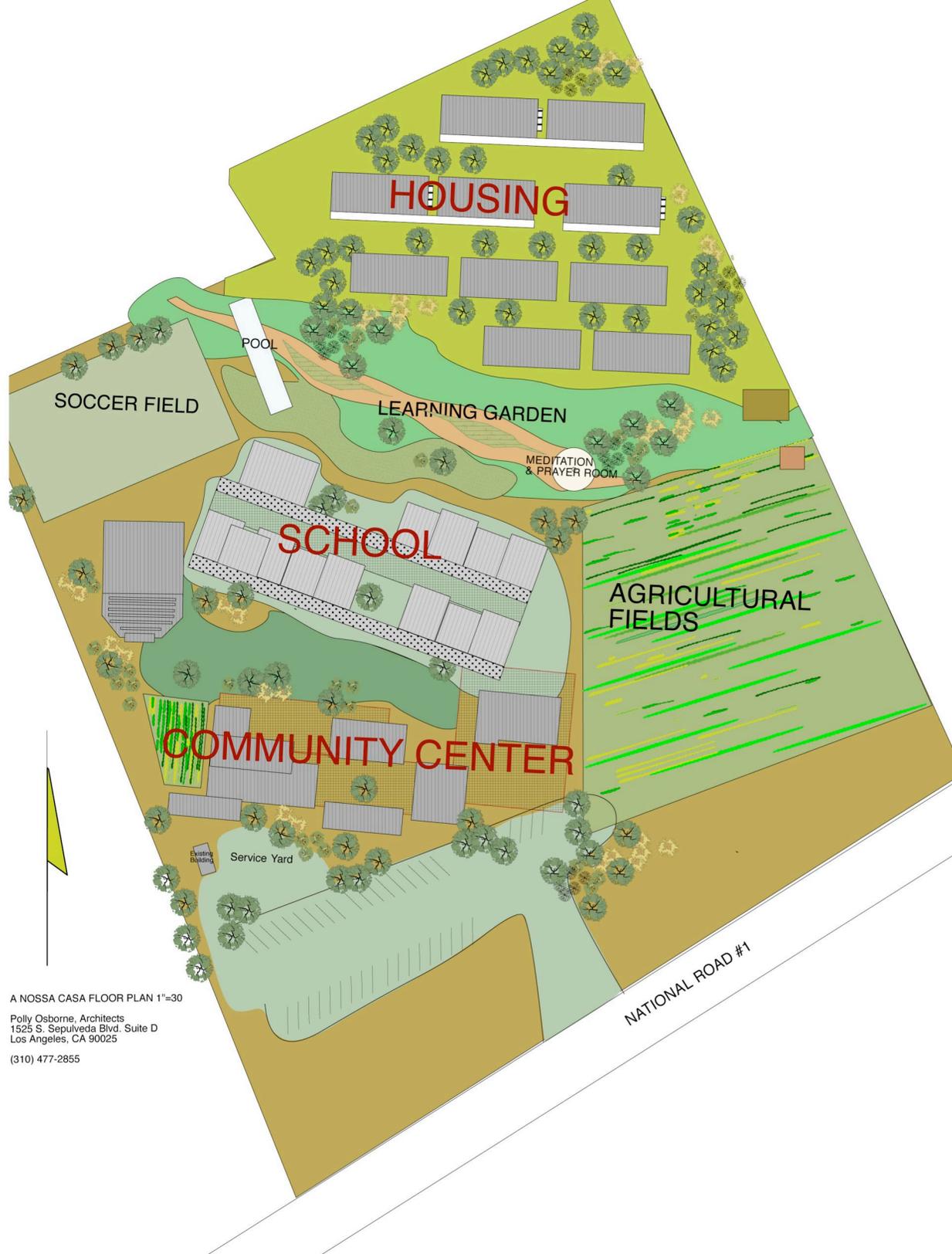
Our House

This book is about a dream I share with Malena Ruth of the African Millennium Foundation and with the staff of Reencontro: creating a safe place for the often stigmatized children orphaned by AIDS, an environment where they can grow, be nurtured, and become valued members of society.

One of the orphans we met in Mozambique suggested we call this new place “A Nossa Casa,” our house. A perfect name, because we want them to have a place of their own.

-Polly Osborne, AIA





A NOSSA CASA FLOOR PLAN 1"=30'

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A Nossa Casa

As of October, 2009, Mozambique had about 470,000 children orphaned by AIDS, a number that is projected to double by the next year. The luckier orphans continue to live in the houses their parents died in. Others are taken in by relatives, sometimes as a beloved family member, sometimes more as a servant. Still others cluster into family pods, with the eldest assuming the task of caring for the younger. There is little government infrastructure or safety net for them. Community members and organizations such as Reencontro, people with large hearts and seemingly limitless stamina, visit house to house and address their needs.

African Millennium Foundation is sponsoring "A Nossa Casa," a prototype center. Described by some as a village, it will contain housing, primary and secondary schools, vocational training, gardens for the study of farming, and gathering places not only for the orphans, but also for the larger community. I am an American architect who, in conjunction with African Millennium Foundation and Reencontro, is helping to develop this prototype. One of the orphans suggested the name A Nossa Casa, and our inspiration is that it will be *their* place.



"A Nossa Casa" Concept Drawing
Trevor Goring, Polly Osborne Architects
10/15/09

African Millennium Foundation

Over 25 years into the AIDS epidemic, the children in its path remain at grave risk. In Mozambique, one of Africa's most AIDS-affected countries, the impact of HIV/AIDS on children in the country is increasing rapidly. As the disease continues to spread, the rate of children who have been orphaned as a result of the pandemic increases, along with the vulnerabilities that come with their condition.

African Millennium Foundation is a strategic non-profit organization founded to fund the development of programs for the empowerment of African women and children. They have funded programs that have helped thousands of children orphaned by AIDS. The need to build upon this commitment and extend the reach of resources to the most vulnerable was prompted by the recent stark acceleration of the AIDS tragedy. UNICEF has projected a doubling of the orphan population by next year.

Expanding on previous work completed with Reencontro, AMF is committed to constructing "A Nossa Casa," where children orphaned by AIDS can regain hope for their futures through social services and assistance. The complete village setting will offer a nurturing environment where children may reach their individual and collective potential. Services available to the community at large will make this a dynamic place for the children's social as well as their physical well being.

To read more about AMF's projects visit www.1amf.org



Reencontro

Reencontro, meaning "reunion," is a non-profit organization created in 1998 by a group of women of good will that decided to join efforts and support the many children left without their parents because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Reencontro currently assists over 7,000 children orphaned by AIDS in Mozambique with education, health services, preventative education, professional skills and income generation empowerment, food and nutrition. They are amazingly well organized, and cover a lot of territory.





Upper left: Diogo Mbua, child nutritionist. Lower left: Reencontro staff pose with my husband and me after dressing us up in African clothes. Above: Two of the original founding members of Reencontro, Olinda Mugabe and Doroteia Balane on the site of A Nossa Casa.



Myths and Facts

Myth: Children of HIV infected parents usually have HIV.

Fact: About 5-10% of the children of infected parents over five years old have HIV/AIDS.

Myth: When parents die, the children go to orphanages.

Fact: There are very, very few orphanages in Mozambique.

Myth: There are government and volunteer services to take care of orphans.

Fact: UNICEF estimates only about 12% of orphans in Mozambique are receiving any kind of assistance.

Other harsh facts:

Mozambique has one doctor for every 38,000 people. Only nine of those doctors are pediatricians.

Doctors, teachers, nurses and community social workers are all succumbing to the disease.

With “A Nossa Casa,” we have a repeatable prototype. This offers the beginning of a new way in a seemingly hopeless situation. It will be a center of hope.



Olinda, one of her sons, her daughter and her grandchild have HIV/AIDS. Reencontro supplies them with food and pays the children's school fees. A way to deeper understanding of the crisis is through education.





The men of this family have succumbed to AIDS. The women do not have job skills. The woman above displays the things she has collected to sell from the local toxic dump. A Nossa Casa intends to focus on the education of adults as well as children, to help carve out a better future for all of them.



Passing the Torch

The women of Reencontro gather around a woman dying of AIDS. She has asked them to take care of her children after she is gone.

To the far right you see her bed, where she sleeps with her three children.



School

We think of education as a fundamental human right, but if you are faced with the immediate need of feeding your little brothers and sisters, it may not seem so important. “A Nossa Casa” will provide educational resources to children while giving them a safe place to live and flourish. Families will not be separated but allowed to live and learn together. Education provides the foundation for a child’s intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development and forms a basis for thinking deeply about the subjects of importance to their lives and their community. “A Nossa Casa” will have seven classrooms capable of holding twenty-eight children each, a gymnasium, an art room and a computer lab. Primary and secondary education will be available on site with qualified teachers leading the initiative. The “A Nossa Casa” School will serve its resident children and children from the surrounding community, helping to relieve the current overcrowded conditions in the public schools. It will have a two hundred student capacity.

HOUSING

POOL

SOCCER FIELD

LEARNING GARDEN

MEDITATION & PRAYER ROOM

SCHOOL

AGRICULTURAL
FIELDS

COMMUNITY CENTER







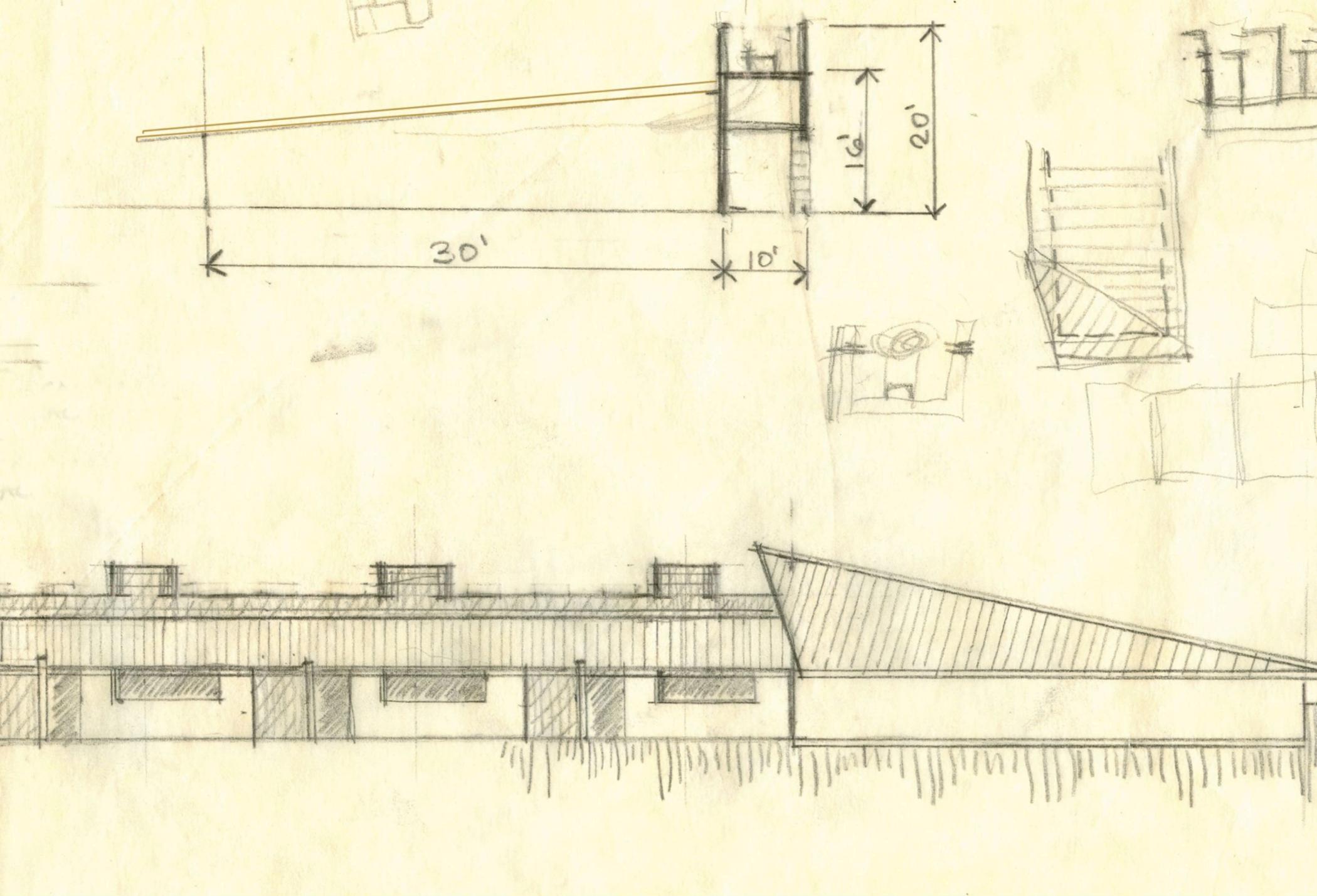
Education is important to the children. They see it as their future. Paolo holds up his report card for our review.



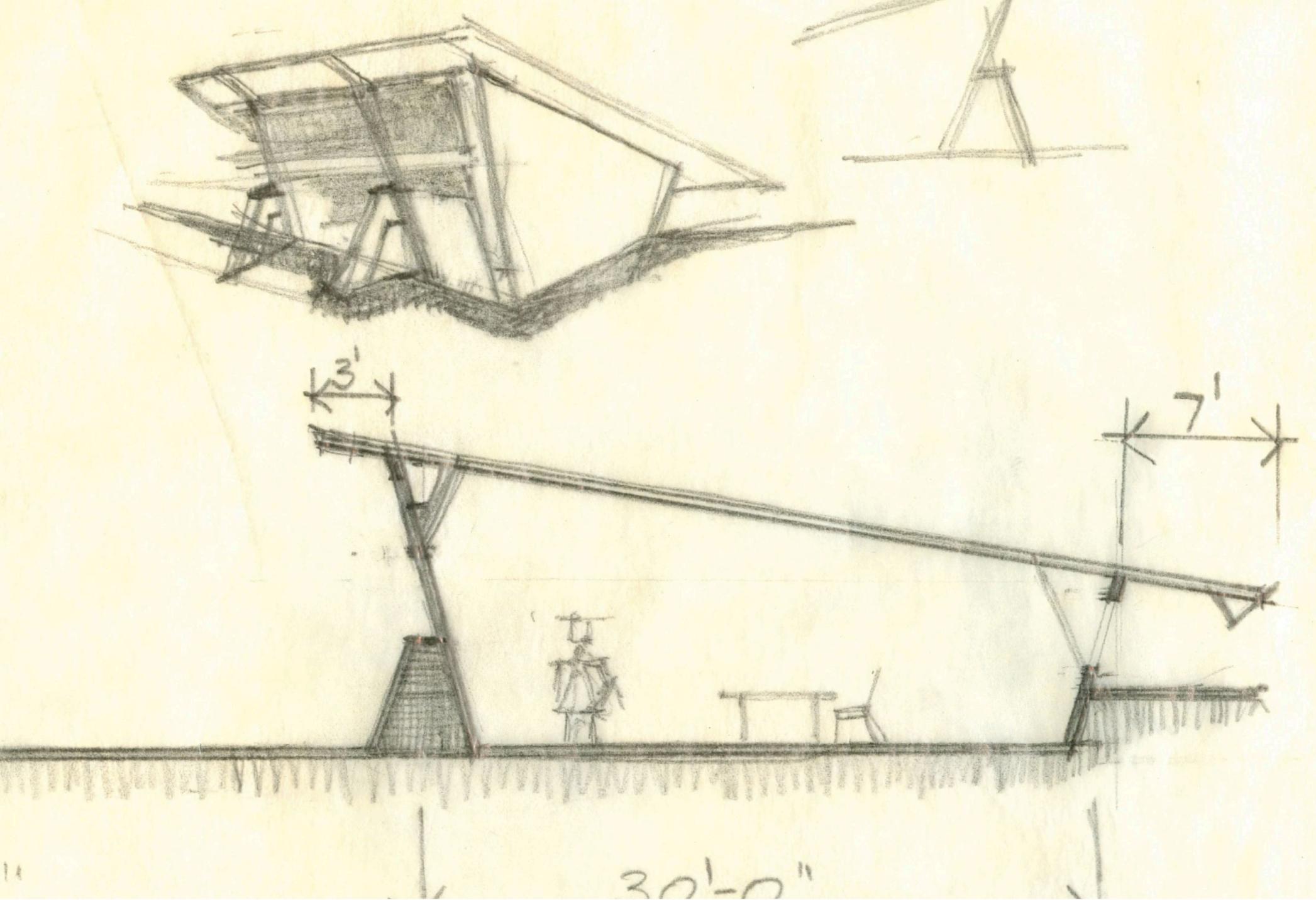
Street scene in Maputo. Children under 15 make up 44% of Sub-Saharan Africa's population.



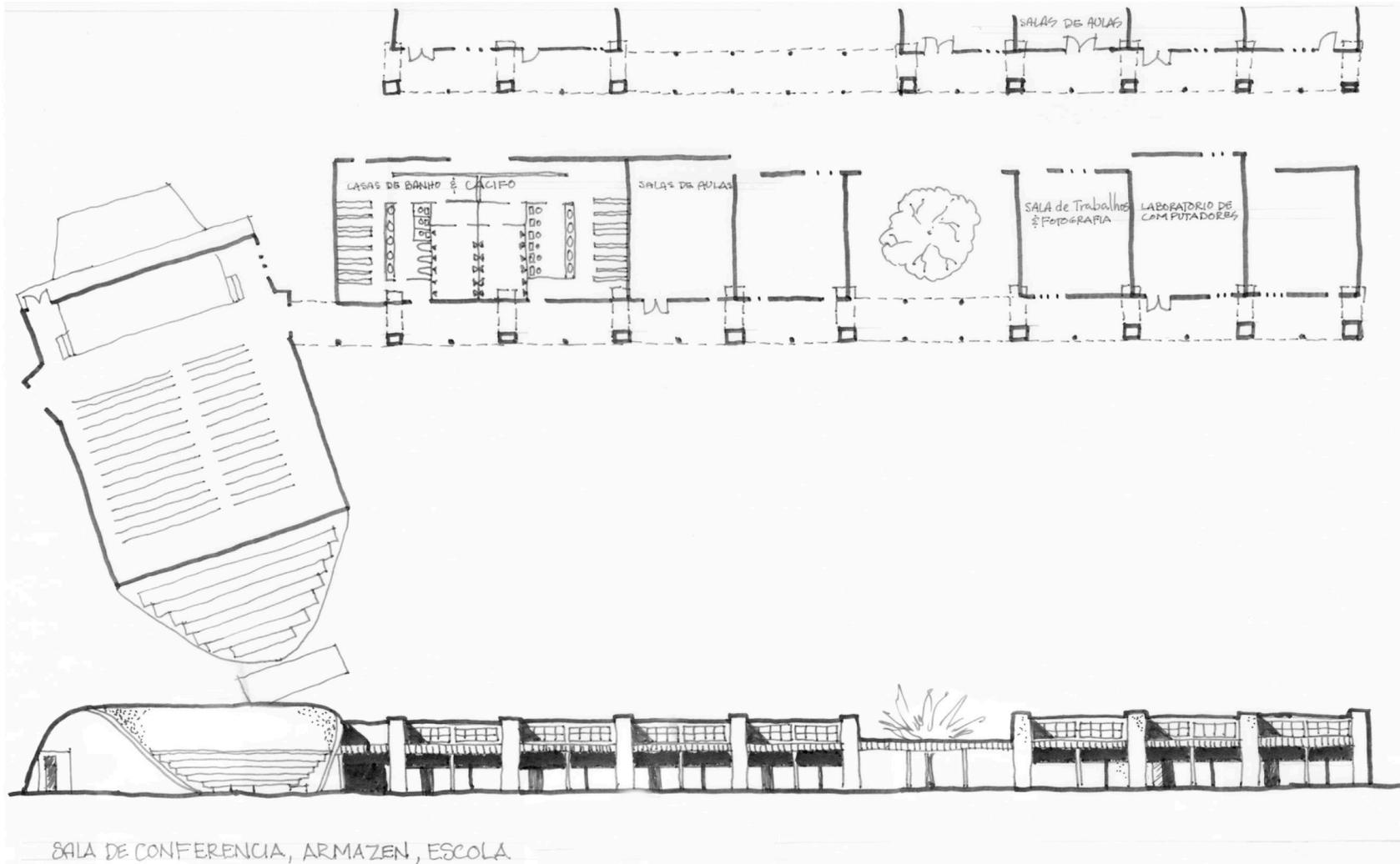
Olinda Mugabe encourages shy Ernesto. With much fun and joking, the children try out their English on us.



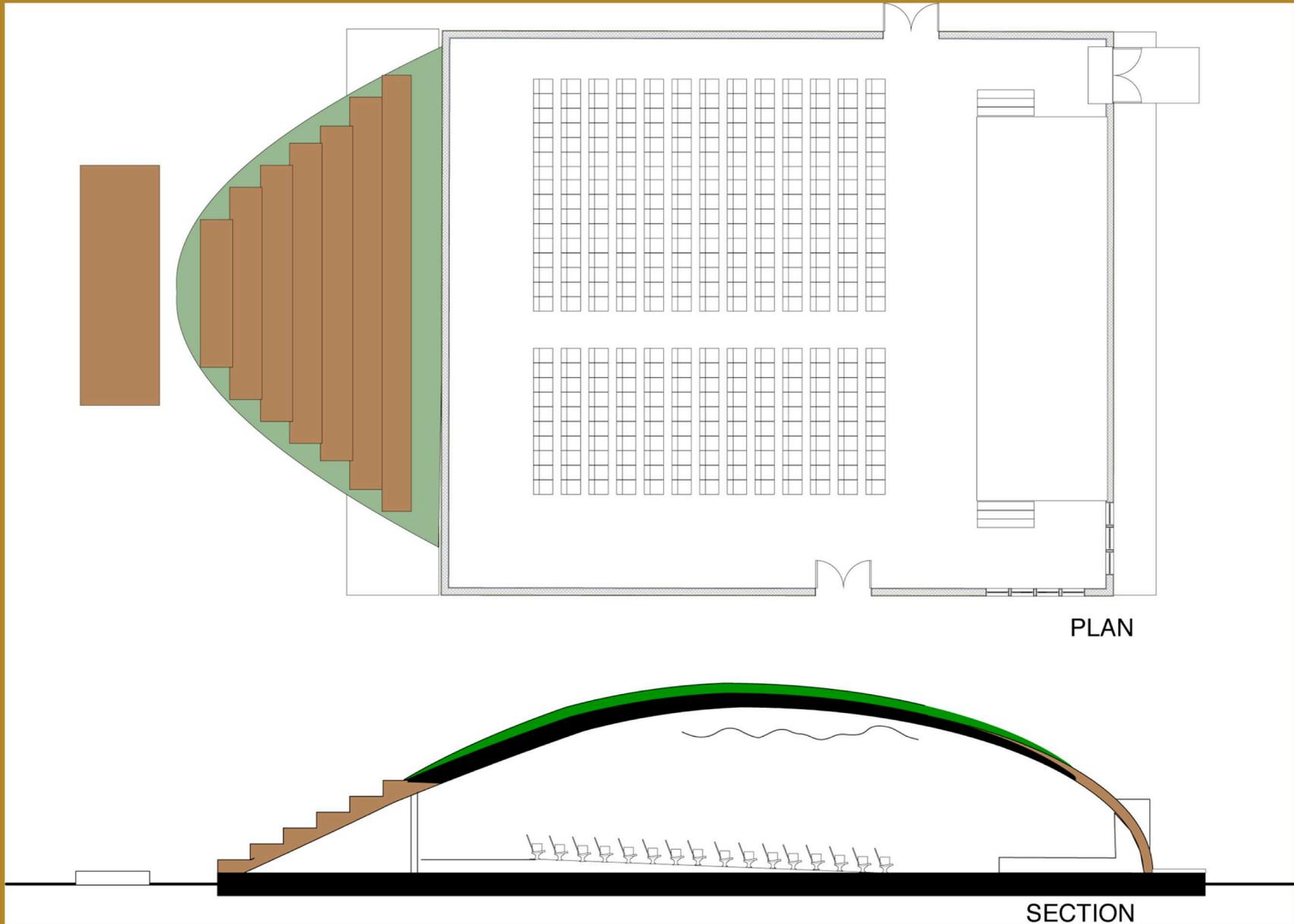
Classroom concept sketch with roof ventilators.



Early classroom concept sketch showing bermed North exposure with reflective surface for daylighting.



Partial plan and elevation of the concept for the school and auditorium as seen from the Plaza. The school sits across the Plaza from the dining room, store, and vocational training rooms. The large columns are ventilators pulling air through the classrooms. The plan also shows the school locker and shower facility.



Concept plan and section of the auditorium. The auditorium is seen as a possible income generator as a rental space as well as student performance stage and general community meeting hall. The outdoor stage is on the south slope of the auditorium's living roof. The auditorium has a 400 person capacity.

SCHOOL

AGRICULTURAL
FIELDS

Auditorium

COMMUNITY CENTER

Vocational
Training/Store

Admin., Exhibit Hall
Reception

Kitchen & Dining

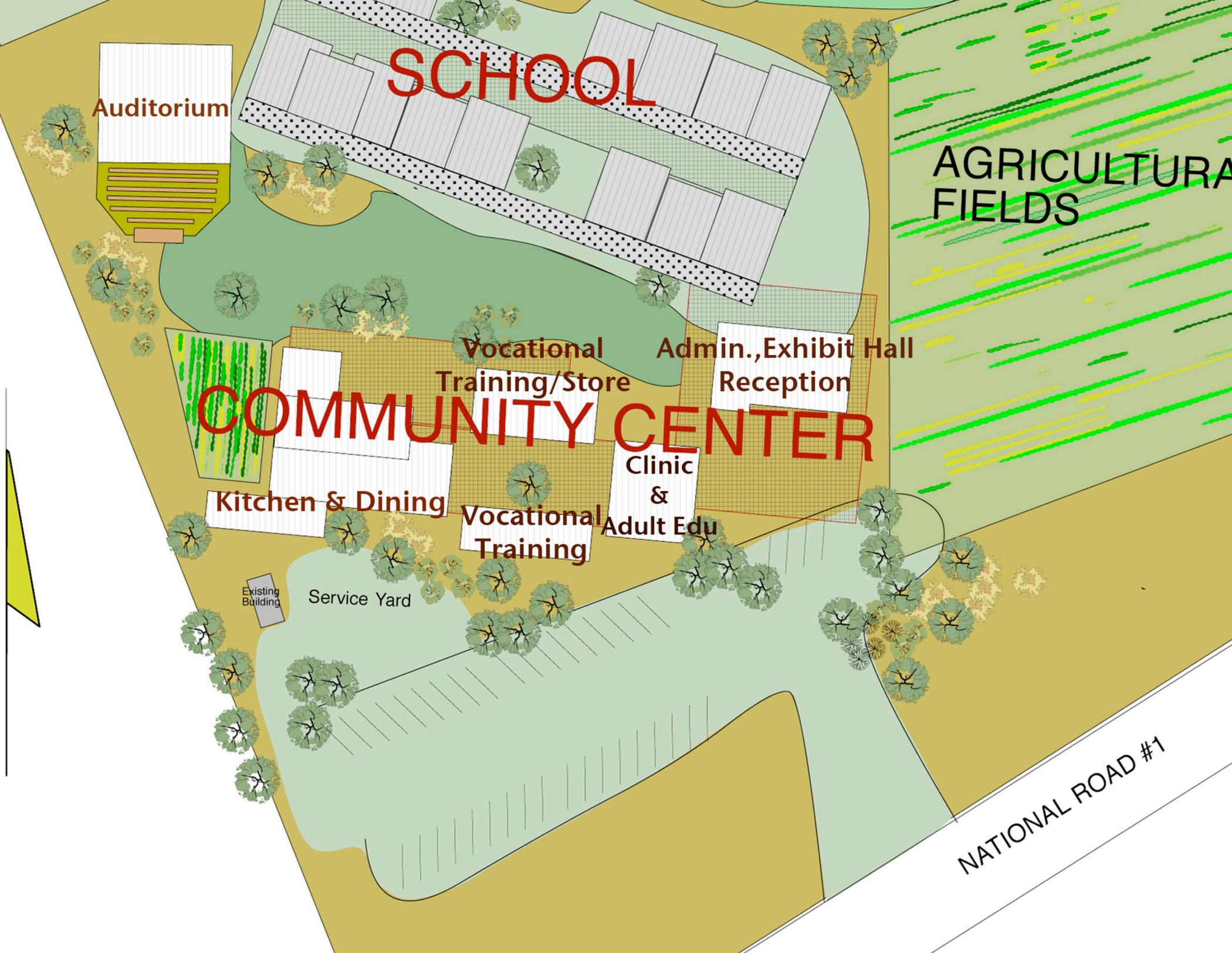
Vocational
Training

Clinic
&
Adult Edu

Existing
Building

Service Yard

NATIONAL ROAD #1



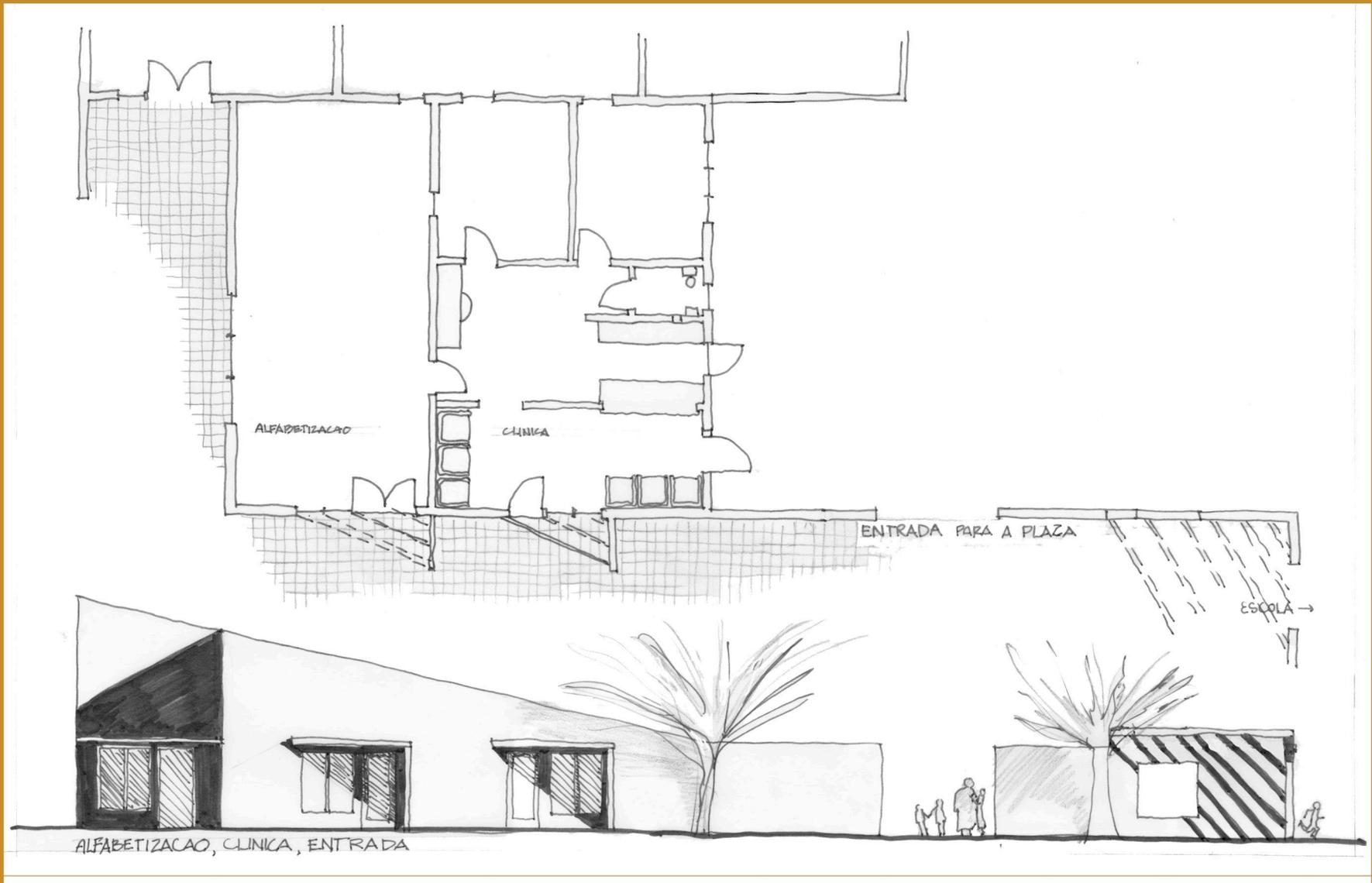
The Community Center

The Community Center will have a dining room, store, clinic, exhibit hall, vocational training rooms, offices, adult education, an outdoor stage and an auditorium. The auditorium will be used by both the school and the community center. It will also serve as a conference center to educate other social service organizations in their continuing education on childcare and other related topics.

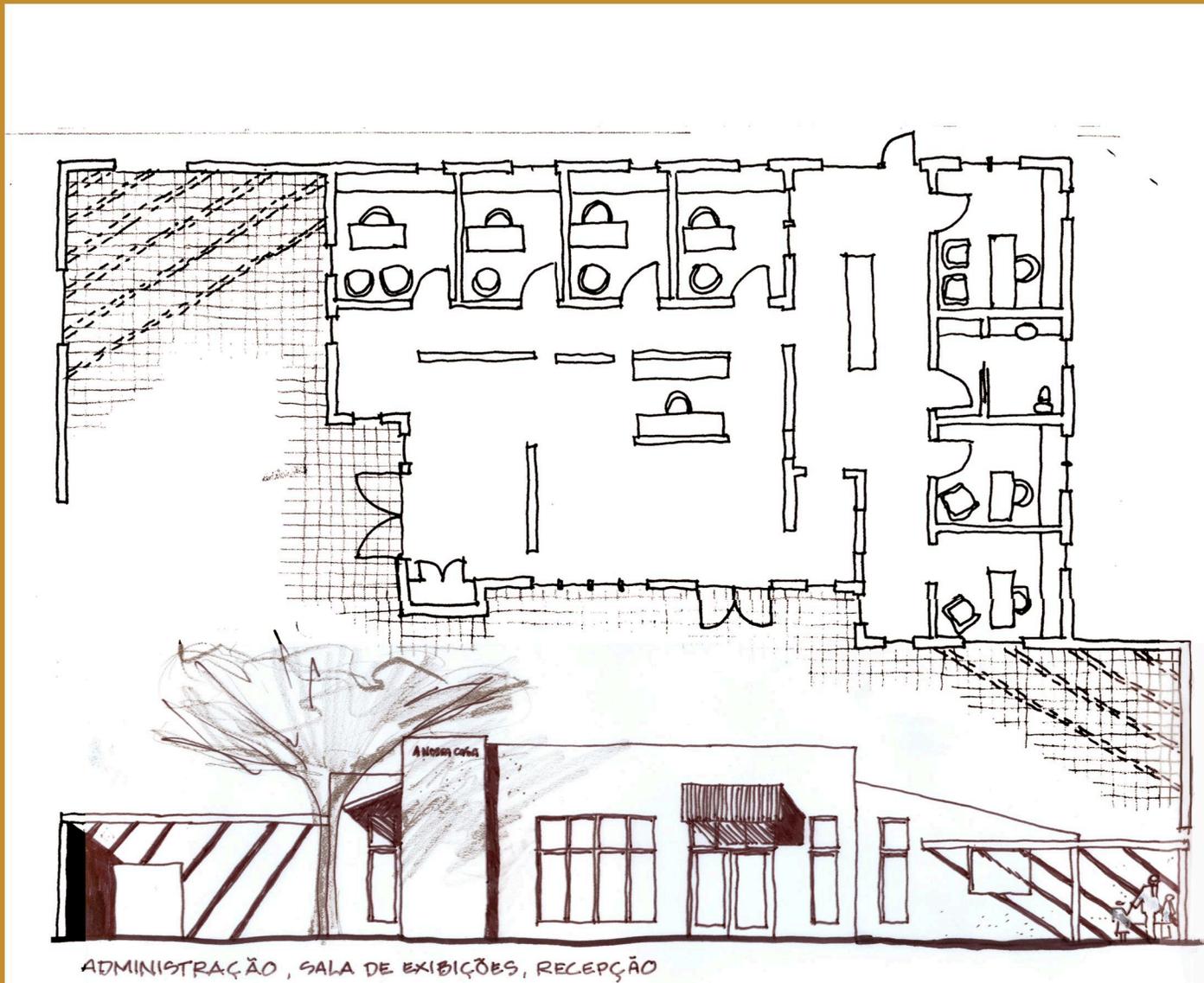
Most of the Community Center sits opposite the school on the main plaza. The administration offices, reception, exhibit hall, clinic, and adult education are at the entry end of the plaza. The auditorium and outdoor stage, shown in the school section of this book, are at the other end. The outdoor stage seating is actually on the roof of the auditorium. The dining room, store, and vocational training are across the plaza from the school.



3A FLOOR PLAN 1"=30
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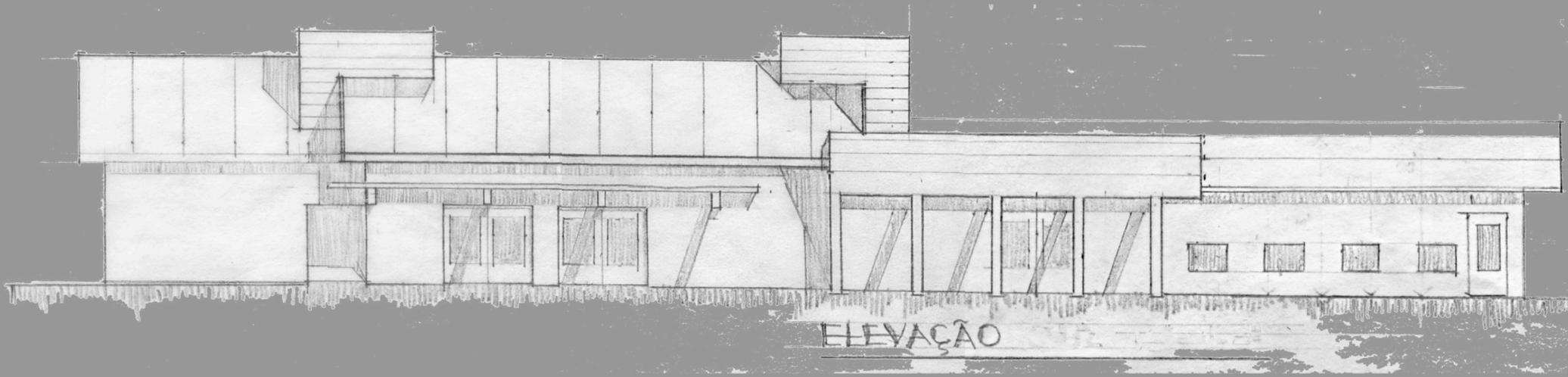
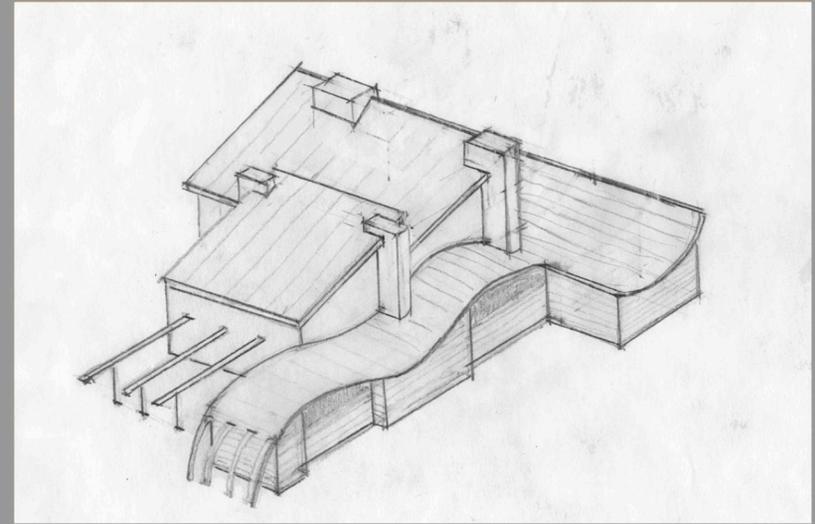
The entry court of “A Nossa Casa” is surrounded by the functions most used by the community at large: Adult education, clinic, administration, reception, and exhibit hall. The vocational training area also has an entry onto the front court, but it is set back behind the adult education room.



The building that houses reception and administration will also have displays of student work in its exhibit area.



Xai-Xai Reencontro staff reviewing handy work from their sewing program.



The dining hall will serve the students, residents, and guests and possibly have a small cafe open to the general public.

Vocational Training

Empowerment is the key to success for these emerging adults. At fourteen, Armindo is the head of his household. He would like to earn income to support his family while continuing with school. This is important. To this goal, Reencontro has a “head of household” vocational training program. The head of household takes an apprenticeship program and when he or she is ready, Reencontro awards them the tools of their trade, be it a welding torch or a sewing machine. This enables the young adult to work at the trade he or she has been trained in. Even though they no longer have the safety of parents, the family can stay together.

Without this training many adolescents faced with the burden of supporting their family drop out of school and fall prey to opportunists who may steer them toward a life of crime or prostitution.

Armindo and his family are proud of their accomplishments. They have survived as a family, even though they have lost their parents. But he has a lot of responsibility as head of the family. It is essential he be supported in his goals of self-reliance.



Adult Education

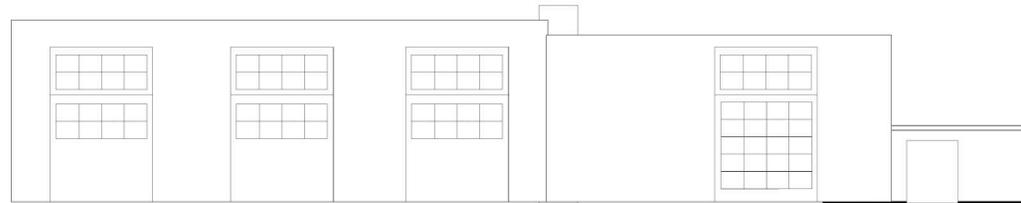
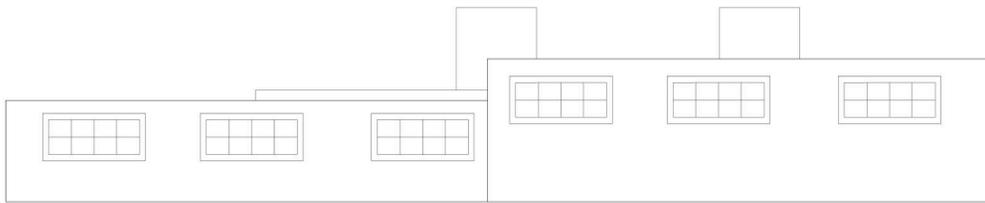
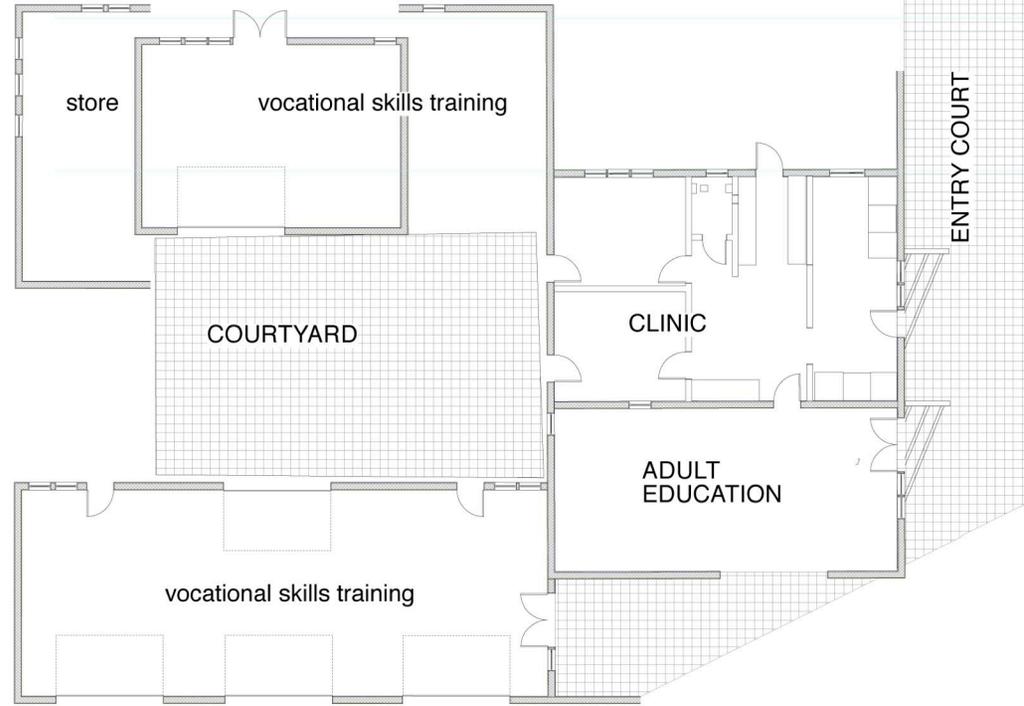
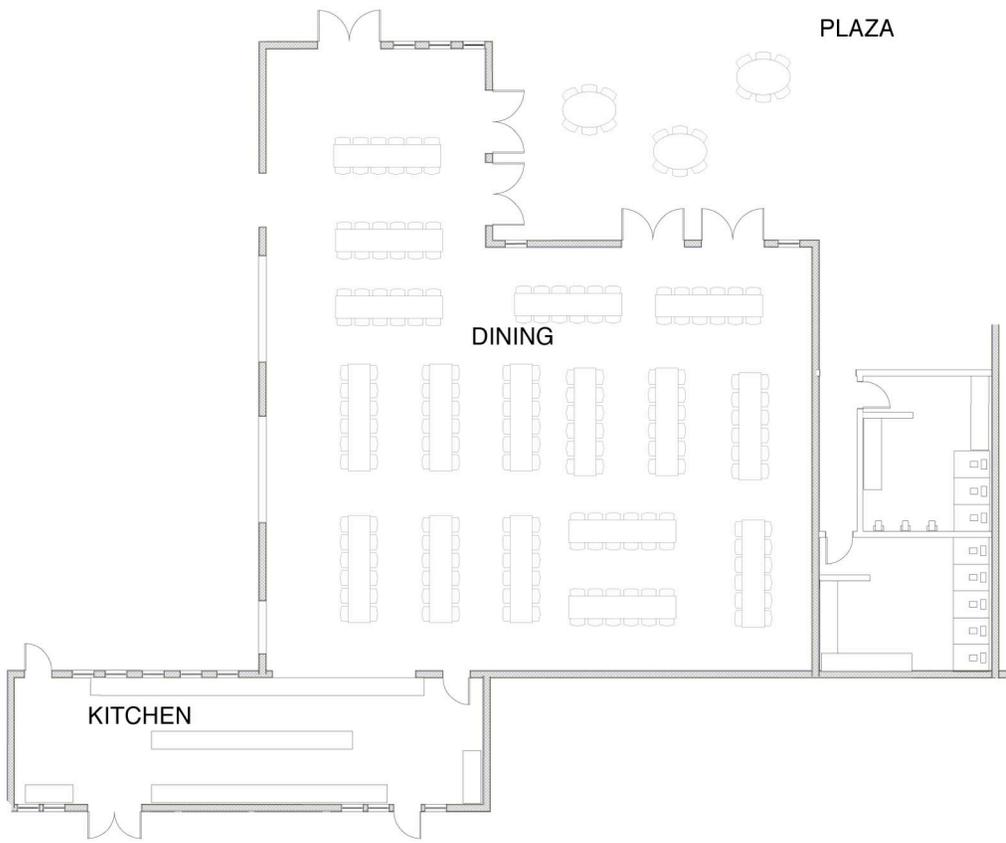
As the AIDS pandemic spreads, it takes the lives not only of parents, but doctors, farmers, teachers, and people of all walks of life. With Mozambique's high illiteracy rate among women, most women find themselves without any means of support. Studies have shown that if a large percentage of women in a community is illiterate a high rate of poverty is almost guaranteed. "A Nossa Casa" will have an adult education center for people in the local community. This not only offers a service to the community at large, but also puts "A Nossa Casa" orphans in a dynamic connection with the community. Community elders, literate or not, have a great deal to teach the children. Nothing can replace this kind of interaction.



Peer to Peer

In the peer to peer program, teens are trained to teach their classmates and friends about the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases.





Plan of dining and vocational training areas.



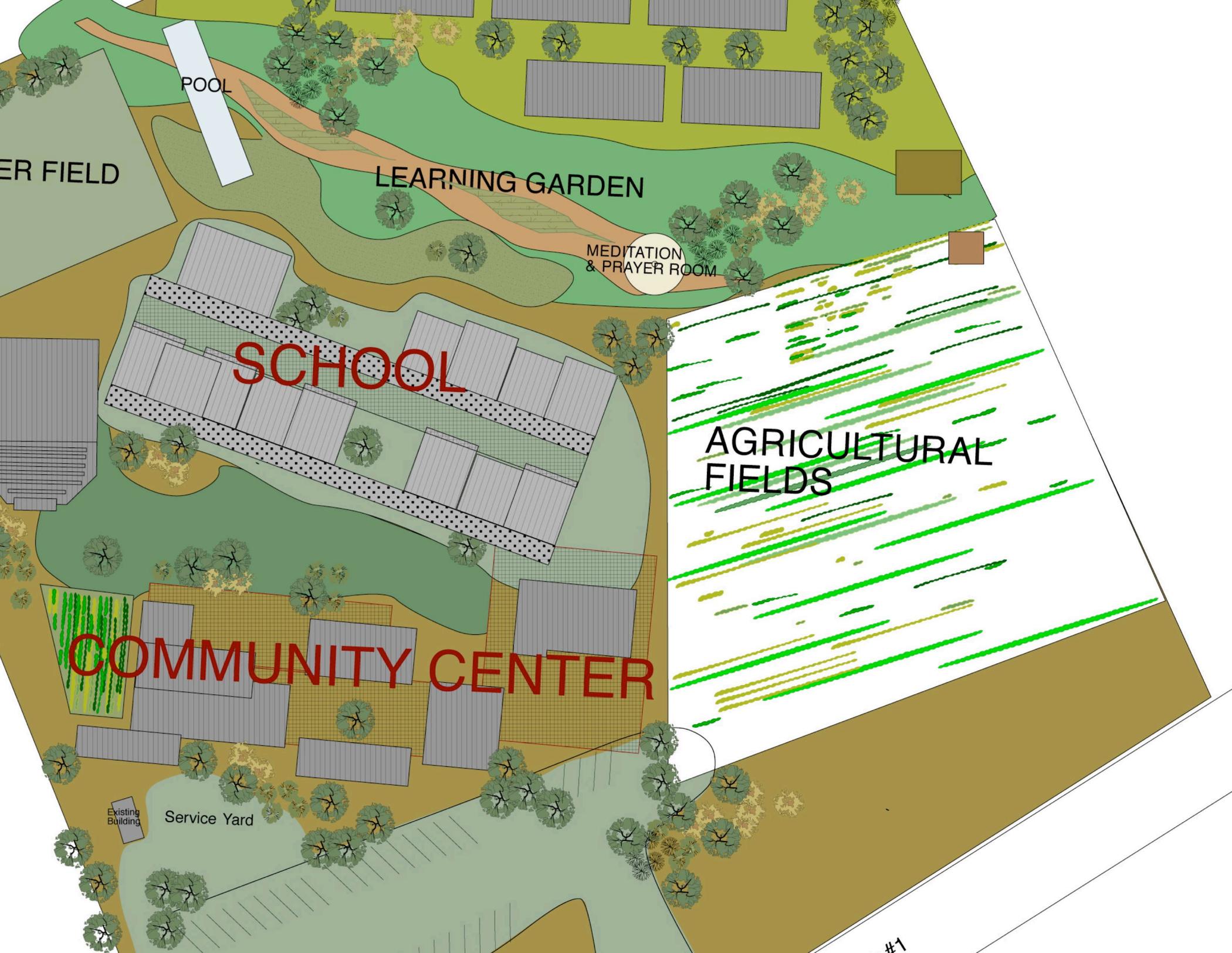
A welcoming party of dance, song and drumming at Reencontro's center in Xai-Xai, Gaza province. Gaza has the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the country at 27%.







A farm in Namaasha stands in disrepair. Agriculture is suffering from the loss of experienced farmers because of the HIV/AIDS crisis.



POOL

ER FIELD

LEARNING GARDEN

MEDITATION
& PRAYER ROOM

SCHOOL

AGRICULTURAL
FIELDS

COMMUNITY CENTER

Existing
Building

Service Yard

#1



Food production and distribution is an essential part of Reencontro's current work. This will continue at "A Nossa Casa." It will also be a part of the study program. There is a great need to teach agricultural techniques to the next generation.



Above: New onions at Reencontro, Xai-Xai. Right: A market in Maputo.







Left: A building in decay. Above: Xai-Xai children.



HOUSING

POOL

CER FIELD

LEARNING GARDEN

MEDITATION & PRAYER ROOM

SCHOOL

AGRICULTURAL

Housing at “A Nossa Casa”

There will be housing for 100 children, their caregivers, other staff, and guests. The housing will be arranged in small units, sleeping up to six people in each, twelve to a floor. The units are currently designed in one and two story structures.

African Millennium Foundation has sponsored a number of programs for talented and knowledgeable people to come from the United States to teach classes to the Mozambique orphans under Reencontro’s care. Now they will be able to stay on site instead of in a hotel. The best known of these programs is “The House is Small but the Welcome is Big,” where filmmakers and photographers from Hollywood taught the children how to use cameras to tell their stories. I saw the photographs and also the film by Alcides Soares, “Home is Where You Find It,” that emerged from this program. These experiences inspired me to go to Mozambique. AMF also sponsored USC business students and professionals going to Mozambique to help develop focused business proposals for local non-profit organizations and micro-credit applicants.

When talking to other visitors about our stays in Mozambique, we have often wished the money we spent on hotels could have gone directly to Reencontro. Now it can, and we can spend more time with the children, too.

Funding for one housing unit is requested in the first year of the project.



The screenshot shows the Venicearts website with a navigation menu at the top including 'home', 'making stories in cape town south africa', 'making stories in maputo mozambique', and 'meet the women & kids and check out their stories: photos video audio'. A video player is embedded in the center, showing a young boy holding a camera. Below the video, text reads: 'MOZAMBIQUE: Finalist. Manhattan Film Shortlist Screening around the world. Screening in Los Angeles: Thursday, September 24th, 7:30pm at the Writers' Boat Camp, Bergamot Station. Join us for a pre-screening reception from 6:30-7:30pm. Mozambique, a 17 minute cut of Mozambican teenager Alcides Soares' documentary about being orphaned by AIDS is one of 10 Finalists in the Manhattan Film Shortlist.' A 'DONATE NOW' button is visible in the top right corner.

University of Southern California

USC News | Business

Business

Business Students Develop Projects in Africa

By Eddie North-Hager on October 5, 2009 7:56 AM

A summer in Mozambique is not usually part of the required writing class at the USC Marshall School of Business.

However, professor Sandra Chrystal took nine students to the east coast of Africa to demonstrate how their writing abilities could help small businesses and nonprofits.

"For the first time, I realized you don't have to come with a big checkbook or a box of goods," said junior Hillary Buckner, 19, a business administration major. "But come with the idea of bringing your experience back home so you can spread awareness."



USC Marshall business student Jennie Giang on her class trip to Africa

The Apron Project – Maputo, Mozambique

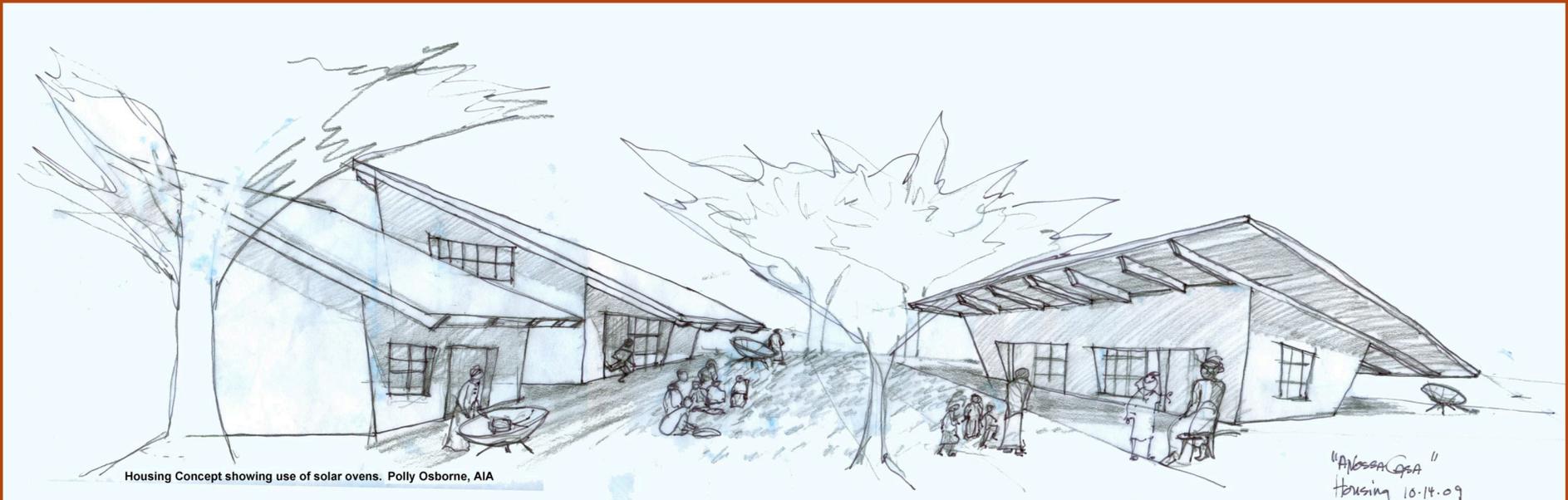
Through a partnership with Gadhia Solar, AMF has developed a replicable training program introducing solar ovens with related microcredit enterprises to the women of Mozambique.



One of the greatest challenges faced by women is getting fuel for cooking. Purchasing firewood costs almost 1/3 of an average month's income. Many women who cannot afford to buy the firewood walk several miles in rugged terrain to

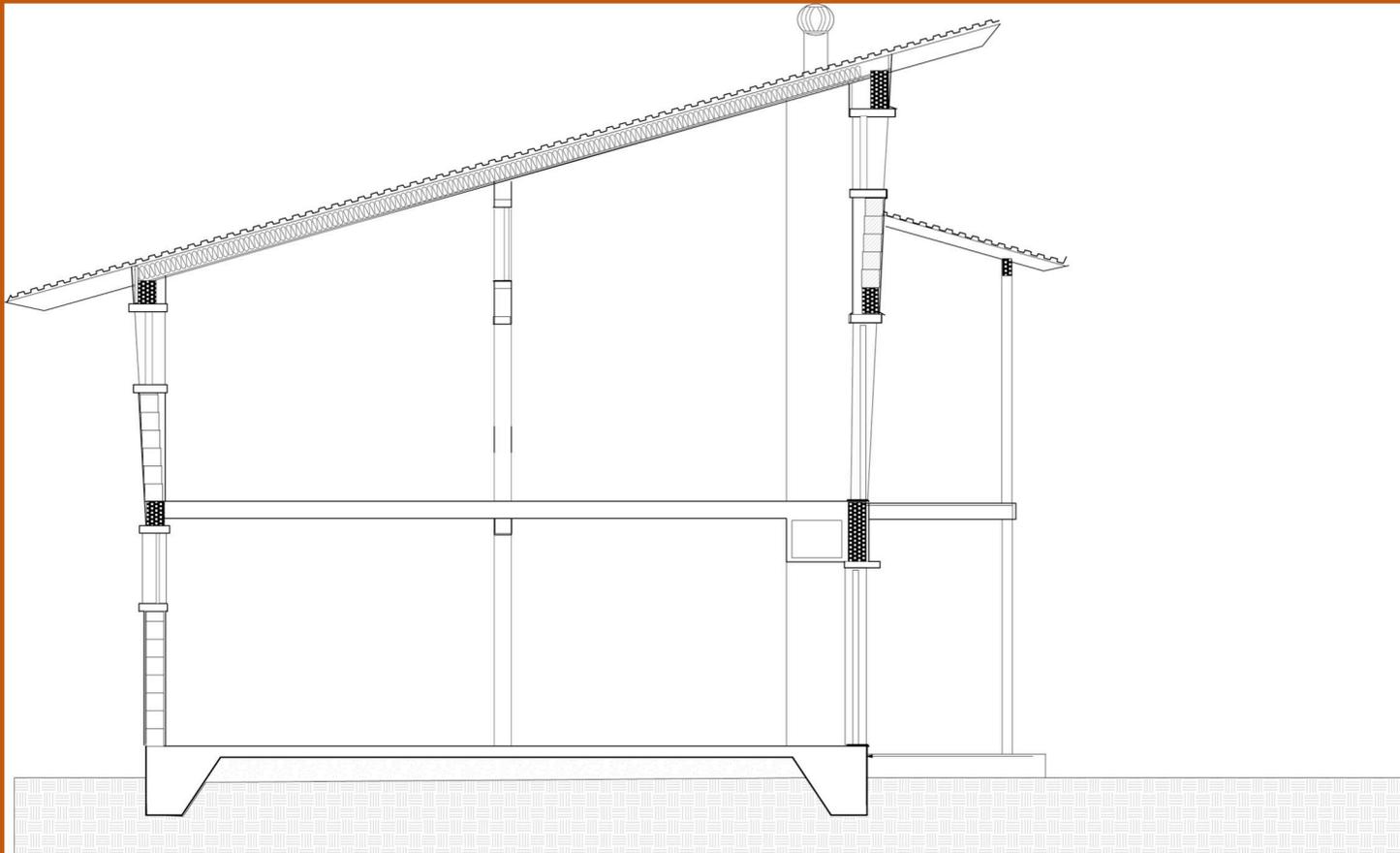


gather wood for cooking. This can take up much of their day, allowing little time for income generating activities. By introducing solar ovens, families will be able to save money and time while also reducing smoke affects on health and their carbon footprint. Through an integrated microcredit program, the solar ovens will provide families with new income generating activities including drying of vegetables, baking of cakes, and frying of chicken to be sold in the local market.



Housing Concept showing use of solar ovens. Polly Osborne, AIA

Above: one story housing units. The women in the drawing are using solar cookers. Currently many poverty stricken people are spending as much as half their income on wood, causing an economic problem as well as environmental pollution. Assembly of solar cookers is being discussed as one of the vocational programs.



Section of a two story housing unit. Roofs will be oriented North to be solar-panel ready. Cross ventilation and roof ventilators will be used for cooling. In addition, experimental solar coolers are being discussed.

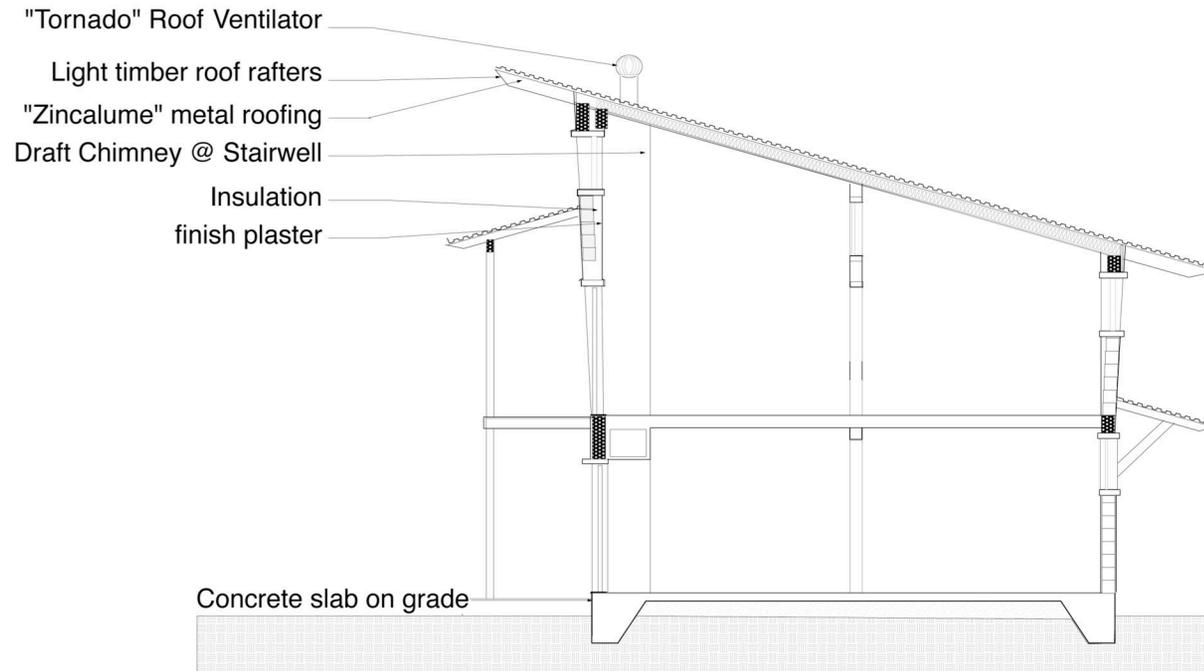
12 bed Children's House



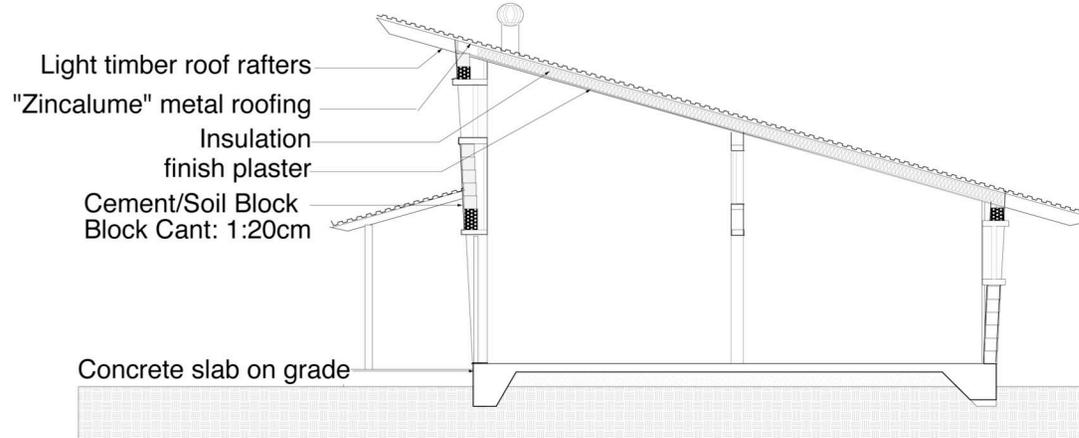
1 Caregiver Family and 6 Children's House



Sample layout of a possible two story housing unit for younger children. Each bed space has its own closet and use of the study and sitting space. The units would be modular, so bed areas can be replaced with additional studies or kitchenettes where appropriate. One unit would be completely open and used as a nursery.



Section- Typical Two story residence - Front door at South



Section- Typical Single story residence - Front door at South

The initial housing at "A Nossa Casa" should be flexible enough to evolve in time, with residents possibly building their own houses over time or at least be able to modify the interior.

The Project Location

The building site for “A Nossa Casa” is in Maluana between Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, and Xai-Xai, the next major population center north of the Capital. It is about an hour and a half outside Maputo. The location is on a flat, fertile, sandy plain. It has been donated by the local municipality.

Currently it is being used to grow a variety of field crops and trees, making it an excellent place for agricultural training. Its location along a major bus route ensures access, and its proximity to utilities makes it a practical choice.





Using the Site to our Advantage

As we learn more about the site we are learning to use its inherent properties to our advantage. Initial review indicates the soil will be good for making soil/cement blocks on site. The path of the sun will inform us how to orient the buildings, and knowing the wind direction will guide us in cross ventilation.

To the upper right is a concrete block making machine. Below that are preliminary wind and temperature reports, the lower one is from Jose Forjaz's book on building in Mozambique. On the opposite page is an initial solar path study.

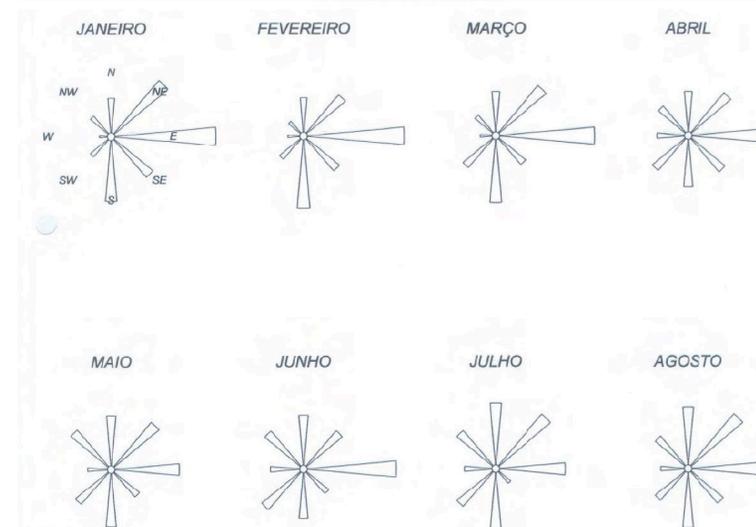


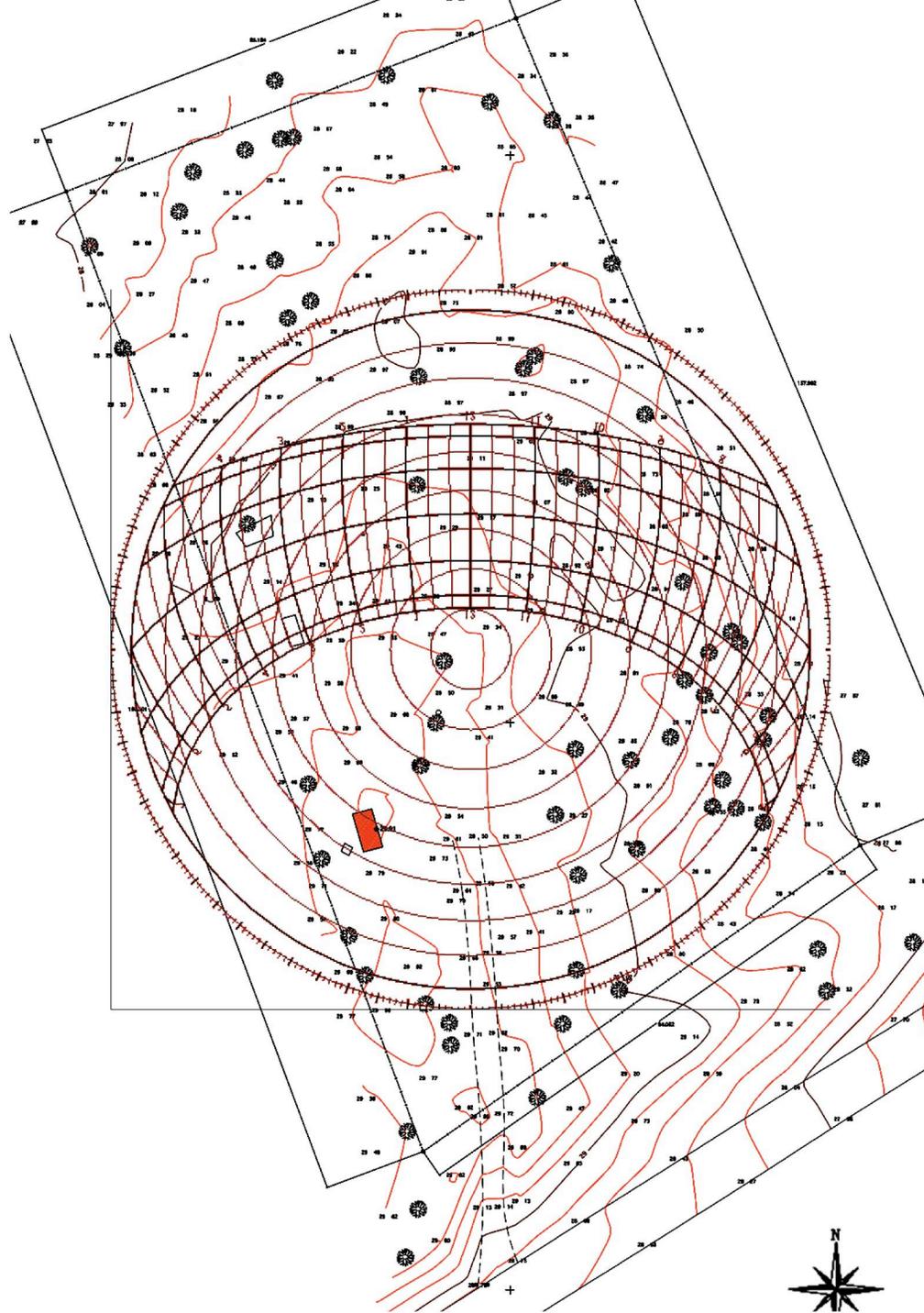
Wind-direction (January 2008 - December 2008)



e

Weather data for Maputo													[mic
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Record high °C (°F)	43 (109)	39 (102)	40 (104)	39 (102)	36 (102)	34 (93)	36 (97)	36 (102)	46 (115)	45 (113)	44 (111)	44 (111)	46 (115)
Average high °C (°F)	30 (86)	31 (88)	29 (84)	26 (82)	27 (81)	25 (77)	24 (75)	26 (79)	27 (81)	28 (82)	28 (84)	29 (84)	28 (82)
Average low °C (°F)	22 (72)	22 (72)	21 (70)	19 (66)	16 (61)	13 (55)	13 (55)	14 (57)	16 (61)	16 (61)	19 (66)	21 (70)	18 (64)
Record low °C (°F)	16 (61)	17 (63)	16 (61)	11 (52)	8 (46)	8 (46)	7 (45)	7 (45)	9 (48)	12 (54)	11 (52)	15 (59)	7 (45)
Precipitation mm (inches)	130 (5.12)	125 (4.92)	125 (4.92)	53 (2.09)	28 (1.1)	20 (0.79)	13 (0.51)	13 (0.51)	28 (1.1)	48 (1.89)	81 (3.19)	97 (3.82)	761 (29.96)





Initial study of the path of the sun over the survey of the original lot donated by the local municipality.



Despite the decay and lack of infrastructure, Maputo has a history of formal architecture. Above is the lovely beaux arts Maputo train station and a residence by Gustave Eiffel.

Architecture in Mozambique

Contemporary architect and former Mozambique minister of housing José Forjaz is advising us on building in Mozambique. Below is one of his outstanding designs. To the right we meet to discuss the site.





Building in Mozambique

Mozambique has suffered in recent years from flooding and drought, and previously from civil war, and their war for independence from Portugal. Even with these catastrophes behind them, the people of Mozambique faces a huge infrastructure challenge. Many buildings have been destroyed or seriously degraded. To the left is what once was a Portuguese villa, abandoned to this day.

In the top photo, right behind Felismina and her grandchildren, you see a typical reed hut common throughout Mozambique. This type of home is plentiful, not only in the country but in the city as well. Felismina lives in the center of Maputo.

In the center, Felismina and her family visit a new home Reencontro has built for them. The new concrete home may not look as quaint as her old one, but it has security, fire resistance, better ventilation, and protection from the elements.

Our intention is to keep the construction of A Nossa Casa simple, using readily available materials and construction methods.





Reencontro and Construction

Reencontro is no stranger to construction. On the left is a center for orphans they are building in the heart of Maputo. It will have beds for twenty-four children, plus a meeting room and staff offices. Like the home they built for Felismina and the one shown below, they build houses for orphans and families who live below reasonable safety standards. To the right Olinda Mugabe and some of the Reencontro staff discuss the layout for “A Nossa Casa.”





Where There is Life, There is Hope

“A Nossa Casa” approaches the life of a child holistically. As important as food and shelter are, the community must be there to expose children to tradition, social skills and an understanding of one’s place in the world. Education will give them the intellectual skills to face the modern world. The concept of offering a place that nourishes the children and the local community gives back to both.

“A Nossa Casa” will do this while maintaining a focus on sustainable principles, which include the principle of creating the healthiest place possible for both people and the environment. To this goal the buildings and open spaces of “A Nossa Casa” are balanced to allow the natural elements to heat and cool the buildings. At its heart is a botanical garden for learning about the natural environment. Within the garden is a prayer and meditation room, to feed the soul.

“A Nossa Casa” is a beacon of hope for the future of amazing children struggling to survive in a troubled world. Their will is strong, now we must find the way.



Support after Adulthood.

During a child's stay at "A Nossa Casa" there will be a work/study program designed to give the children a way to save for their future. Chores done, objects made and sold, and crops grown and sold all could contribute to each child's future. As of this writing we have been discussing home ownership investment, possibly on or off site.

The conceptual guidelines for this aspect of "A Nossa Casa" are still evolving, but the intention is to offer not only tools for a successful life, but to lay the ground work for property and business ownership.

Donate

Help “A Nossa Casa” become a reality by sending a tax deductible donation to:

African Millennium Foundation
468 North Camden Drive
Beverly Hills, California 90210
United States of America

Please designate you want your donation to go to “A Nossa Casa.” You will receive a letter for your tax records.

You can also donate online with paypal at www.1amf.org. Again, please indicate your donation is for “A Nossa Casa.”

Empower the Powerless.

(Logo and photo copyright AMF.)



The screenshot shows the African Millennium Foundation (AMF) website. At the top left is the AMF logo, which features a stylized map of Africa with a silhouette of a person's head inside it. To the right of the logo is the text "African Millennium Foundation". In the top right corner, there is a red button with the text "DONATE NOW" and a small heart icon. Below the header, there is a paragraph of text: "A Nossa Casa is built on the belief that every child has the right to a standard of living adequate for the physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development." This is followed by instructions on how to donate online: "You can donate to 'A Nossa Casa' with your paypal account through the AMF's website by going to www.1amf.org, clicking on the 'Donate Now' button and selecting Mozambique: A Nossa Casa." Below this is the mailing address: "Or mail your donation to: African Millenium Foundation, 468 North Camden Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90210". A note states "All donations are fully tax-deductable." To the right of the text is a map of Africa with Mozambique highlighted in orange. At the bottom left of the page is a photograph of a young child with a joyful expression. The footer of the page contains the copyright notice: "Copyright ©2009 African Millennium Foundation. All Rights Reserved."

Notes on photos, drawings, and people to thank.

The plans in this book are concept drawings only and may not reflect the final design of “A Nossa Casa.”

All Photos in this book, except as noted, were taken by Polly Osborne and Tim Curnen, all rights reserved. All drawings were done by Polly Osborne and Oren Lavee except as noted and are the property of Polly Osborne Architects, all rights reserved.

Images on Housing description page: The House is Small website, USC News, and AMF website, are the property of those organizations.

A giant thanks to my beloved husband Tim Curnen for editing this book! Thank you Oren Lavee for your hard work and talent and to Trevor Goring for the same.

Thank you Malena Ruth for your vision and for sending us to Africa. Thank You Neal Baer and Gerrie Smith for your encouragement and to my mother, Mary Shaw.

There are 14 copies of this book at this printing. 11/22/09. Fourth printing.





A Nossa Casa

Polly Osborne, AIA