



top right:
school corridor

bottom right:
inside a classroom

left:
classrooms by the
big tree



In the lime-green landscape of Mae Sot (Tak Province in Northern Thailand), by a round lotus pond, the second construction phase of Kwel Ka Baung school took place between October 2013 and March 2014. The project aims to provide education to displaced children who arrived with their families from the neighboring Karen state, recent scenario of a civil conflict, across the Thai-Burma border.

However not only students will learn at Kwel Ka Baung, but also all people involved in the two phases construction process. Several of the local Karen workers are refining their skills in adobe making while also contributing to the overall design. The project aims to give a feasible example to the community of how to pursue affordable architecture without compromising spatial quality and still maintaining a strong connection to the surrounding landscape.

Phase-I started after the Canadian organization Casira contacted us in March 2012 with the request to allocate a project in which they could get involved in and for which they would be able to fundraise money. After

Kwel Ka Baung Migrant Learning Center a.gor.a architects



top right:
The kitchen

bottom right:
the school complex
at dusk

left:
the school bell



collecting an amount of 25000\$, ten members of Casira traveled to Thailand to participate to a four weeks workshop. In November 2013 the same Casira team-El Grupo- raised another 18000\$ and returned to Mae Sot to assist with the completion of the new Kwel Kah Baung School campus.

CULTURAL

Due to its location on the Thai Burma border, Mae Sot has a noticeable community of Burmese immigrants, who came mostly from the nearby Karen state during the civil conflict and who still cross daily the Thai checkpoints. Burmese refugees are often victims of human traffic and labor exploitation, since their illegal condition doesn't ensure them any right.

The affordability of materials and human labor, as well as the huge lack of urban regulations, allowed the building sector to grow significantly during the recent years. As a result, the wild use of concrete strongly affects the fertile landscape of Mae Sot and its surroundings.

Kwel Ka Baung schooling project will

Kwel Ka Baung Migrant Learning Center
a.gor.a architects



top right:
Lifting up the frame

bottom right:
preparing the frame

left:
the physical roof
model



try to continue the support of educating around 450 migrant children on the Thai-Burma border. Kwel Ka Baung School is the only purely Karen Migrant learning Center in Mae Sot. While the new School campus was under construction, the old school was located on a land whose lease expired in May 2014 which put the whole project under a lot of pressure. The school teaches all grades from 1 to 13 as well as Kindergarten and Nursery, while 200 kids stay permanently in boarding houses on the school premises. The food is mainly provided by local community based organizations.

MATERIALS

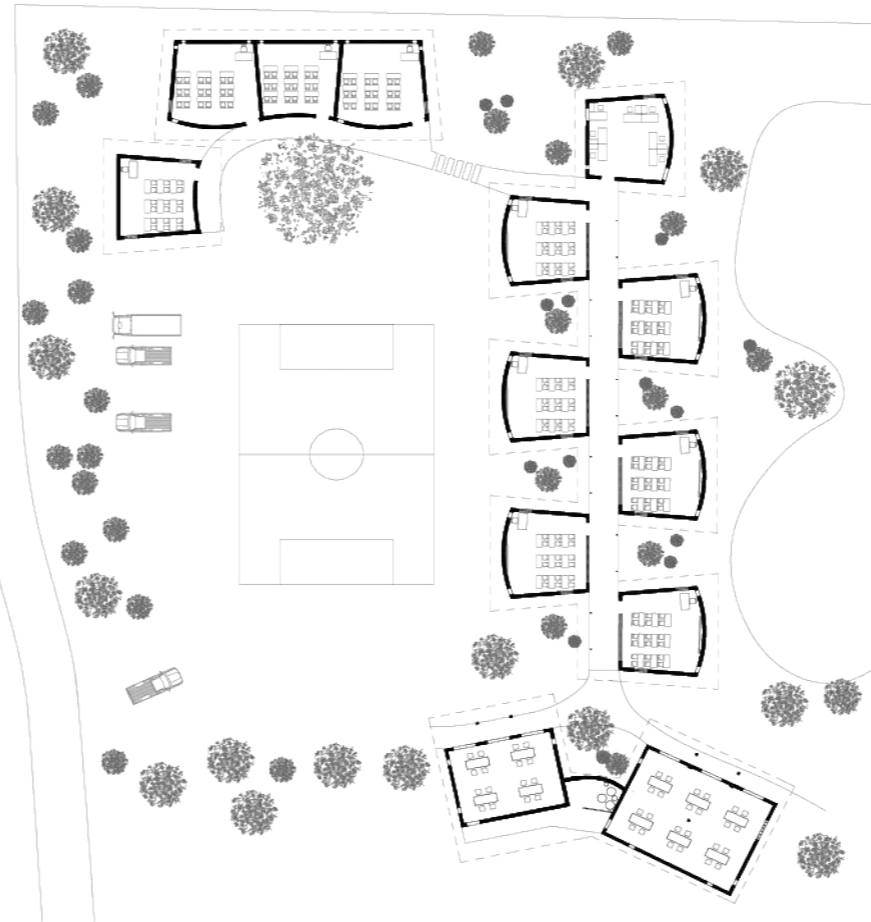
All classrooms as well as the dining/ kitchen facilities and the library were made out of earth, in form of adobe bricks. Beyond the cost-effectiveness, adobe has the advantage of being always available. The soil in of rural landscape of Mae Sot has a high concentration of clay and comes with natural reddish color. Although it's not a traditional building material for Thailand, adobe perfectly



top right:
overview plan of the
Mae Tao Clinic
Training Center

bottom right:
section/ elevation

left:
the internal corridor



meets the challenges of a tropical climate: indoors are kept cool through the day and just little maintenance is required after the rainy season. The adobe bricks are formed on site by the Karen team, helped by the local community and by a large group of volunteers. The roof is supported by second hand timber trusses. Enclosures are made of bamboo sticks and eucalyptus branches, combined in different patterns and painted in bright sharp colors.