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Inside view of the Temporary Classroom prototype for CDC School.

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Thailand-Myanmar border map showing the location of the refugee camps and the migration flows

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Students at STTC in the workshop



The students of the Science and Technology Training Centre (STTC), and a.gor.a Architects, designed and built a light-frame “Temporary Classroom” prototype in Mae Sot, on the Thailand-Myanmar border.

Over the last 30 years, Mae Sot has seen a steady flow of migrants from Myanmar who have escaped ongoing civil war or who are seeking better livelihood, healthcare and educational opportunities in Thailand.

The 60 schools providing free education to migrants experience many challenges, including lack of resources and insecure land tenure. This project provides schools with a dignified space for learning. The building also has the added benefit of being easily erected and disassembled, allowing it to be transported to various school sites depending on their changing needs.

The first design was built for the CDC School, a migrant learning center in Mae Sot which needed a temporary space for 60 students. After 6 months of use, the building was then relocated to another school in the remote village of Phop-Pra. Over the last two years, two more prototypes have been built in the region.

Also crucial to this project was the process which saw the students from STTC gaining new design and construction skills, enabling them to secure better employment opportunities.

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Group photo of STTC (Science and Technological Training Center) students and teachers at the new center

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Students testing out an early design of the prototype

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Lifting up the roof of the new center



The creation of the Temporary Classrooms provided opportunities for students from low socio-economic backgrounds to improve the local conditions of their migrant community.

The Science and Technology Training Centre (STTC) is the only vocational center on the Thailand-Myanmar border focusing on construction and technology, providing young migrant students pathways to access qualified jobs. The forced eviction of the students from the centre, gave STTC and a.gor.a Architects the opportunity to deliver hands-on training in designing and constructing a new learning centre.

After completing the construction of the centre, the students - with their newfound skills and confidence - were hired by a local NGO to design a temporary structure that could assist other migrant learning centers also experiencing uncertain circumstances.

Assisted by a.gor.a Architects, the students came up with a foldable construction system that would provide a quick construction process and disassembling system that would allow the migrant schools to move to a new location in case they would need it.

STTC has become self-sufficient thanks to the money generated from this project and subsequent projects they have been hired for.

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One of the main topics taught during the workshops at STTC was selecting the appropriate tool and construction material for the job. Steel was chosen as a main material for the structure of the classroom as it allows for a longer life-span, and can withstand potential damage during transportation from one school site to another. Buildings in the Mae Sot area are highly exposed to severe weather conditions so the choice of steel also prevents deterioration caused by climate.

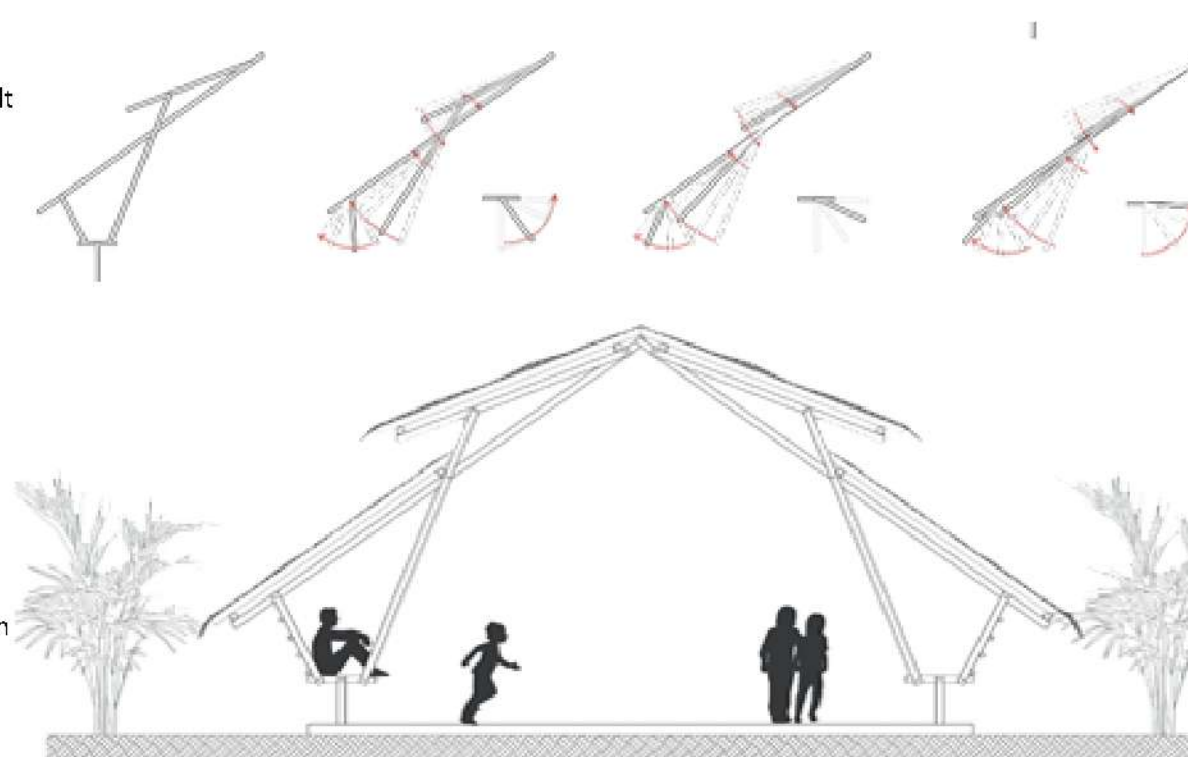
A single bolt placed in the edge connects both frames allowing the system to be lifted up easily.



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View of the classroom prototype built for CDC School

Sequence showing the lifting up of the frame. Students at STTC building the frames at the workshop

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Architectural section showing how to disassemble the structure →



A much lighter and cheaper secondary structure made out of eucalyptus and thatch roof – commonly used in the area – were used. These materials allow the school to easily maintain the building.

The Temporary Classroom responds effectively to the tropical climate in the region. The roof is designed very low, breaking the gable into two elements. This prevents the rain from coming inside the building and also brings natural light and ventilation throughout.

The inventive construction system and the steel material do not compromise on the overall traditional building aesthetic.

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The quality, funding, and services provided by migrant schools varies from one school to the other on the Thailand-Myanmar border. Providing low cost and dignified learning spaces is one way this project can ensure migrants from various backgrounds have access to a basic education.

As the structure can be easily assembled and transported to any location, a forced eviction or a remote school location are no longer barriers preventing students from having dignified places to learn.

Encouraging the communities to decide for themselves which school requires the structure and for how long, also fosters sharing and self-determination amongst the migrant community.

While this building has been used for educational purposes, it can also be used for many different functions where the context requires a dignified temporary building response.

The design of the Temporary Classrooms prototype has since been shared as an open source design.



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New classroom
relocated in the rural
village of Phop-Pra



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Students at CDC
School transporting
the frames to the
new location

→
Local construction
team placing the
thatch roof on the
new classroom



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