

Kintobo Health Center

Contacts details

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Project data and description:

Project title: Kintobo Health Center, Rwanda

Author: ASA studio + TAMassociati

Client: Health Builders + Rwanda Government

Intervention: Design and construction supervision of the new Health Center in Kintobo, Rwanda

Design phase: January 2014 – April 2015

Construction: May 2015 – March 2016

City, Country: Nyabihu District, Rwanda

Kintobo Health Center is located in Nyabihu District, Northern Province of Rwanda. In Rwanda every hill is not only a topographical entity, but a social space. Traditionally the hilltop was reserved to the house of the chief of the village, which allowed the members of its community to use the fields on the slope. Therefore the mode of occupation and use of the land did not only depend from the specific geographical and environmental features of a site, but also reflected the hierarchical organization of society.

The decision of placing the Health Centre on a conspicuous position, where one climbs to, where the patient is brought by his family, also holds a strong symbolic value. On one hand it conveys the idea that a Health Centre is an important building in the landscape, on the other it tries to conceive the illness not as a stigmatizing event for the individual, but as something that touches and concerns the entire community.

Landscaping, functionality and humanization of spaces are the key aspects of the project. The programmatic organization of functions and circulation together with a flexible layout, foresees an optimization of spatial qualities and a better accessibility to each functional department. The design focuses on the creation of a topographical architecture where the landscape belongs influences the project. The Center is organized in four different levels that follow the natural slope of the land: the entrance and the Maternity, the OPD courtyard and nutrition block, the ward courtyard, and the laundry area.

Inpatients areas are located on the perimeter and kept separated from the outpatients areas, located in the center of the facility.

All different blocks are accessible by wheelchairs and the connections are covered and protected from the heavy rains. The use of the colors helps in the organization and distribution of the departments: same functions have the same color, helping the inpatients to orientate and reach the correct location.

The Health Center is connected to the piped water and the electricity but the integration of passive systems guarantees the Center to operate off the grid when the power gets cut and there is lack of water pressure.

Sustainable design solutions characterize the entire intervention: natural cross ventilation achieved throughout the courtyards distribution; harvesting of rain water in plastic tanks and its reuse for cleaning and irrigation; use of septic tanks for the waste collection; control and distribution of the natural light in each room through windows sheds and skylights.

The main construction materials are found close to the site, reducing the costs of transportation and offering job opportunities to the neighboring communities: the main walls are built out of volcanic stones, found on site during the excavation; the exterior pavers and blocks are produced on site; the canes for the shading systems are collected from the valley and cleaned and cut in the neighbor village.

Finally, the integration of landscape design in the general layout is used as a healing device: the ward and the maternity buildings are located in main position to guarantee the inpatients nice views towards the valley or interior courtyards. The gardens are provided with trees and flowerbeds and benches are located everywhere in the Center as waiting and resting areas.

This project aims at becoming a physical and social landmark among the hills of Kintobo, carefully touching the ground and defining a new language in the rural architecture of northern Rwanda.