

together tomorrow shelter project 24/25



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editorial

Thank you for your interest in our project to build an urgently needed shelter for LGBTQ+ people in need in Ghana. This brochure provides a wealth of background information to help you decide whether to support us financially.

Over the past two years of preparation, we have purchased land in a suitable location and have dealt intensively with all issues relating to the construction and operation of such a shelter; we have gained wellknown supporters, not least the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. In all of this, we were thankfully able to draw on the experience of the Ugandan LGBTQ+ community in particular, where several dozen such facilities have been operating safely and successfully for many years in a difficult environment.

The aim is to guarantee those affected in Ghana accommodation and social safety for a period of three to six months, but above all to provide them with the skills they need to successfully return to Ghanaian society.

This brochure can certainly not answer all your questions. We therefore look forward to hearing from you. We would be even happier if you decide to support this important project financially in difficult times.

We rely exclusively on personal contacts for our fundraising, due to the nature of the project we must do without public appeals or methods such as crowdfunding.

More reason for us to hope for your support!

With best regards,

The House of Yolo Foundation and its allies



ghana is not lost yet...

In Ghana, a horrendous anti-LGBTQ+ law is about to come into force. But it's not too late.

In May 2023, Uganda passed a draconian anti-LGBTQ+ law that even provides for the death penalty in individual cases. After three years of sometimes absurd debates, Ghana's parliament has now passed a similar „Sexual Human Rights and Family Values Act“ in its third reading on February 28. Among other things, the law prohibits healthcare for trans people, identifying as LGBTQ+ (intersex people are excluded) is punishable by up to three years in prison, and so-called LGBT propaganda is punishable by up to ten years. This would affect journalists just as much as medical staff or landlords.

All that is missing now is the signature of outgoing President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo to make this madness law. He has initially passed on responsibility to the country's Supreme Court, which is to review the constitutionality of the law. However, the bill is already having an effect: violence against LGBTQ+ people in the country is exploding and healthcare facilities are reporting a dramatic drop in the number of visits.

Yet the West African country cannot afford to persecute LGBTQ+ people financially: the country is in crisis following Covid, the war in Ukraine and mismanagement, with over three billion in financial aid up for grabs. Its reputation as a champion of human rights and a model African democracy is also at stake.

The fact that it has nevertheless come this far is the success of a decades-long, multi-million-dollar campaign by US evangelical churches such as the Church of Pentecost and front organizations such as the World Congress of Families. For decades, these organizations have been bringing our „culture wars“ raging in the West to the African continent through missionary work, propaganda and bribery.



Ghana's young LGBTQ+ movement, which is almost completely financially dependent on Western donors, has courageously opposed this development, but it has never had a real chance. Western governments act without a long-term strategy and often ignore the needs.

Nevertheless, there is hope. Since it was passed in parliament, opponents of the law have become louder in Ghana itself and a young generation of LGBTQ+ people are campaigning for their rights in unprecedented numbers and with unprecedented vehemence. A study from last year also shows that the acceptance of LGBTQ+ lifestyles online has risen from 19 to 35 percent in just two years. Visibility obviously helps even when it is a result of hatred, blindness and religious extremism. Ghana does not have to become a new Uganda. The time to act is now!

the foundation

The House of Yolo Foundation is a registered non-profit organization in Ghana. Its three directors are also founding members of LGBTQ+ Rights Ghana. They are committed to addressing the unmet needs of the LGBTQ+ community in Ghana.

Ghana's current climate is increasingly hostile to LGBTQ+ individuals given the recently passed anti-LGBTQ+ bill in parliament now awaiting presidential assent, and a significant rise in anti-LGBTQ+ violence.

This underscores the urgent need for a safe haven – a sanctuary offering temporary refuge, empowerment and training to displaced LGBTQ+ individuals during trying times.



Kunst akademie Düsseldorf

who's who ?

Abdul-wadud Mohammed - is the Deputy Director at LGBTQ+ Rights Ghana, an organization he co-founded. Since 2014, he has been involved in advancing LGBTQ+ rights in Ghana and Africa. In 2022, he played a vital role in the communications working group that championed the renewal of the Independent Expert on SOGI's mandate at the UN.

Halil Mohammed is an experienced LGBTQ+ rights activist and feminist based in Ghana. He has focused on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and grassroots community welfare projects. As a founding member of LGBTQ+ Rights Ghana, Halil has worked in various capacities to promote social justice and human rights.

Jalude Rashid has a degree in Family and Consumer Sciences from University of Ghana. He is good at production and resource management, with ample experience working with marginalized communities predominantly the LGBTQ+ community in Ghana.

Marcel Odenbach is one of the most internationally recognized German video artists. His works, which have been exhibited worldwide, deal with topics such as German history, racism and current political events. He has lived in Ghana for many years.

Dirk Ludigs is a journalist and LGBTQ+ activist who has been campaigning for the interests of LGBTQ+ people for four decades. His work has focused on HIV/Aids, anti-racism and, for over a decade, supporting LGBTQ+ movements in South Africa, Uganda and, above all, Ghana.

Thomas Kröger is a multi-award-winning German architect. He has been Professor of Architecture at the Düsseldorf Art Academy since 2019. Under his direction, the architecture of the Ghana Shelter became the 2024/25 student project.



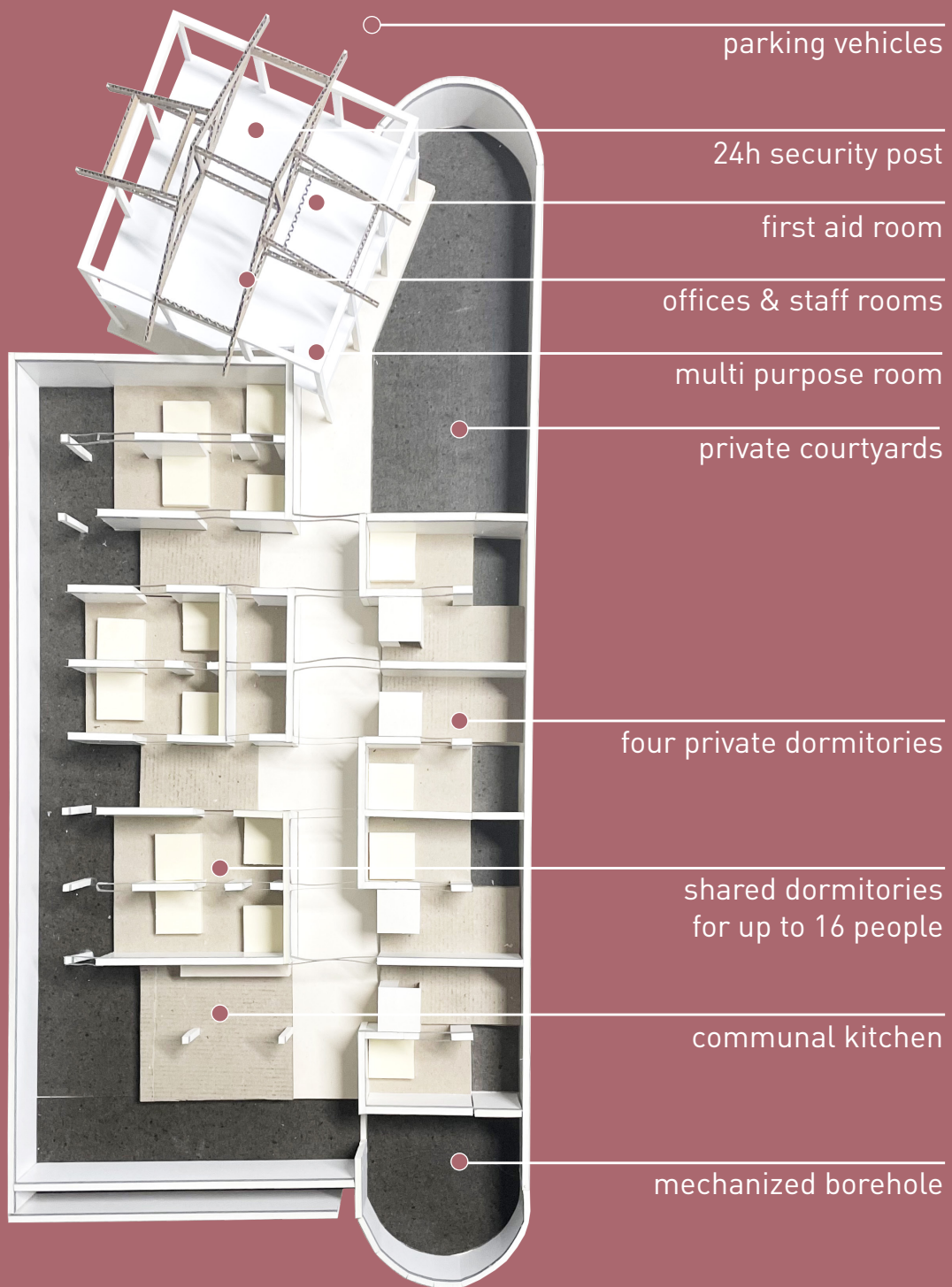
the shelter

The architectural design of the project “together tomorrow” was developed by students of Kunstakademie Düsseldorf together with Alexander Horbach (research associate) and Prof. Thomas Kröger. The students were given the opportunity to regularly meet with different experts on architectural theory, local construction techniques as well as with activists from the Ghanaian LGBTQ+ community. The insights shared in these meetings were continually woven into the architectural design.

The purchased land is located near the coast of Ghana, in a rural area close to the coastline, with the nearest small village approximately 600m from the designated plot. The proximity to the ocean is a relevant factor for the design process due to its climatic impact, such as the possibility of corrosion of different materials or heavy rainfall. More importantly, there is a specific direction of wind flow – namely wind coming dependably from the southwest. The wind flow was a determining factor in the urban orientation of the future building and to use its power as natural ventilation.

A second factor in determining the urban layout of the shelter were local dimensions. To blend in with the surrounding villages and to offer a known scale to the future residents, local dimensions of homes, public buildings and squares were used as a reference for the size and spatial division of the acquired land.

The spatial division further followed the spatial programme provided by the YOLO foundation. The programme asked for shared and private dormitories, a communal kitchen as well as offices, multi-purpose rooms and a first aid office. The main premise was safety and protection for the residents, which is why a wall surrounding the whole compound was necessary. An equally important premise was a welcoming atmosphere, not only within the shelter, but also beyond that in order to foster relationships without endangering the residents.



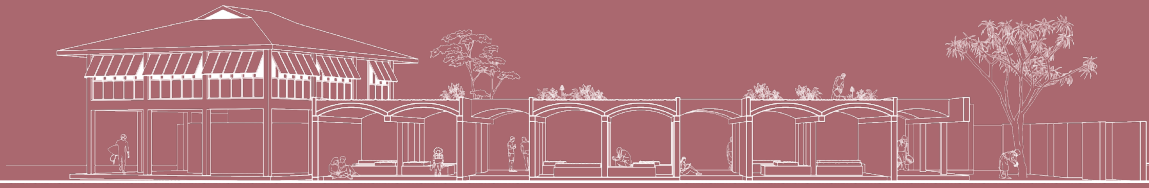
This resulted in a compound with three main buildings. The front building is the elevated office, that serves as the entry and meeting point just in front of or above the rest of the shelter. This is where the conference rooms, offices and first aid office are located. The other two buildings are located strictly within the wall accommodating the private and shared dormitories separately, whereby the shared dorms end in a communal kitchen area and feature a roof garden, that is accessible through the office building and offers a view beyond the wall. All dorms also feature smaller gardens for more privacy.

There are three more larger communal garden areas as well as a shared slightly elevated “street” that connects all buildings. The wall is also in part more than just a wall and features additional WCs, showers, a laundry room and a second emergency exit.

The structure of the dormitories’ building is that of a concrete skeleton structure, filled with rammed earth brick walls that features barrel vault ceilings (providing excellent natural ventilation). While the structure seems rigid at first, its principle allows for a very flexible spatial division. The main walls are the vertical walls supporting the barrel vaults, while (apart from the washrooms) horizontal walls are kept to a minimum. This allows for a structural principle that can result in private one person rooms, or divisions in 3, 2 or 1 large dormitory depending on the number of residents at any given time.

At this point in the design process all climatic, structural, sociological, and aesthetic requirements were taken into consideration, while always prioritizing the shelter’s main function as a safe space for people to recuperate and reenergize.

On behalf of Kunstakademie Düsseldorf the Team of Sebastian, Mathias, Kaya, Alexander and Thomas are very grateful to be a part of this important task and appreciate the trust given to us. Thank you!



objectives and safety

Safety and security is the center focus of this project. The guiding principles will mirror the extensive safety and security procedures developed by the Uganda Minority Shelters Consortium through a cross learning process for their twenty-five shelters safely running in Uganda.

the objectives

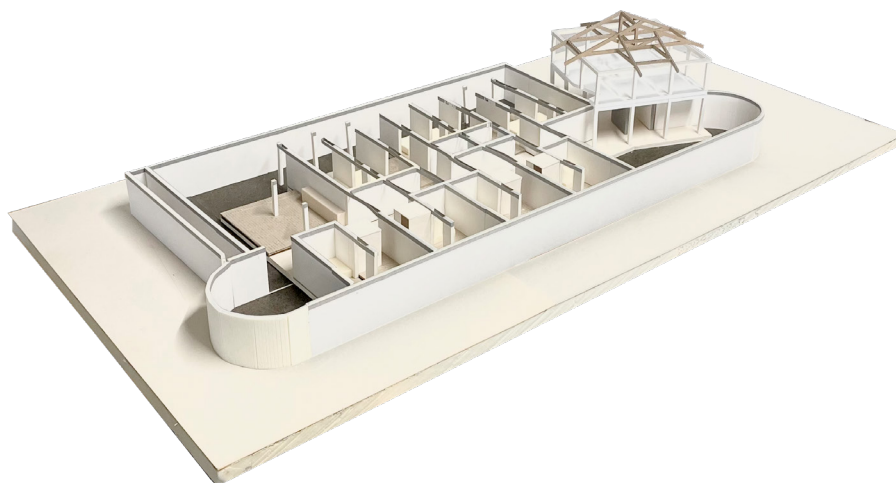
- Provide safe and inclusive shelter for displaced LGBTQ+ people
- Foster a supportive community
- Empower the next generation of LGBTQ+ activists

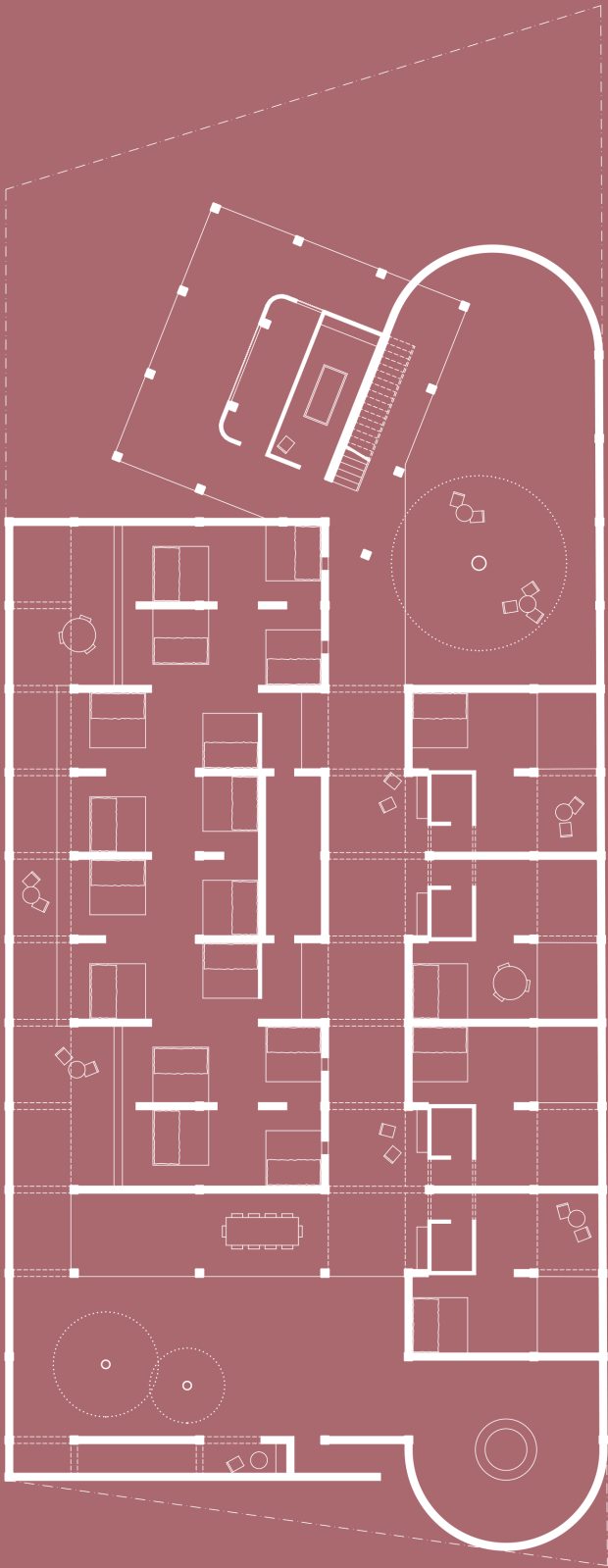
examples

- Proper vetting of each applicant
- Provision of general services to the local community to foster a relationship
- 24 hours security post

the land

- 0.27 acres (2 plots) in a central region owned by the activists
- coastal village, secluded & secure





construction and costs

- Concrete skeleton construction as bracing structure
- filled with concrete and rammed earth brick walls
- barrel vault ceilings (providing excellent natural ventilation)
- walls will be plastered with low-hydraulic lime plaster
- landscaping and greening of outdoor facilities to prevent flooding
- Roof overhang for mainly shuttering and further more collecting rainwater, which will be then collected in underground cisterns
- The roof surfaces are to be equipped with solar panels for autonomous power generation. An emergency generator guarantees security of supply.
- No load-bearing timber structures close to ground due to termites

ground floor

253 m² shared dormitories

172 m² private dormitories

96 m² entrance, first aid room and 24 hours security post

42 m² communal kitchen and outdoor dining area

31 m² outdoor toilets and storage spaces

first floor

96 m² multi purpose rooms and offices

232 m² roof garden and terrace (50% GFA)

Subtotals of the areas

806 m² total built-up areas (GFA)

308 m² landscaping communal and private gardens (GFA)

Taking into account local construction prices, a price per square meter of around 300 € is assumed for construction with a medium standard of finish and a price per square meter of around 30 € for landscaping.

This results in total costs of around 252.000 €

ghana shelter: supporting the LGBTQ+ community means challenging the colonial legacy

The LGBTQIA+ community in Ghana faces significant challenges and systemic discrimination, rooted in historical colonial legacies and reinforced by cultural norms and religious beliefs. In seeking foreign aid to safeguard their rights, the LGBTQ+ community isn't surrendering to neocolonialism but rather engaging in an anti-colonial struggle for justice and equality.

Historically, Ghana was under British rule until independence in 1957, leaving a lasting imprint on its societal structures and norms. Colonial powers imposed their values, including rigid notions of gender and sexuality, often through punitive laws criminalizing non-heteronormative expressions. Post-colonial Ghana inherited these laws, with colonial-era legislation like the Criminal Offences Act of 1960 criminalizing same-sex relations.

Critics might argue that seeking foreign aid perpetuates neocolonial dependencies. However, this perspective oversimplifies the complexities of the situation. The shelter project by the House of YOLO Foundation in Ghana isn't seeking aid to reinforce colonial structures but to challenge them.



Foreign aid serves as a tool to amplify the voices of the LGBTQ+ community, empower grassroots movements, and push back against oppressive laws and societal attitudes inherited from colonialism. Foreign aid isn't a means of imposing Western values but a form of solidarity with marginalized and minoritized communities fighting for self-determination and autonomy. It supports local initiatives, providing resources for healthcare and community support services that are often inaccessible due to governmental neglect or active repression especially in the case, the passage of the anti-LGBTQ+ bill by the Ghanaian parliament.

Critics of foreign aid may argue that it undermines national sovereignty and self-determination. However, sovereignty isn't an absolute concept divorced from the realities of power imbalances and systemic oppression. For marginalized communities like the LGBTQ+ population in Ghana, sovereignty must include the ability to challenge oppressive laws and societal norms that deny their humanity and dignity.

The struggle for LGBTQ+ rights intersects with broader movements for social justice and decolonization. It's crucial to recognize that the LGBTQ+ community in Ghana isn't isolated in its fight; it intersects with movements for gender equality, human rights, and decolonization. Solidarity across these movements strengthens the anti-colonial struggle by challenging systems of oppression at their roots.

The House of YOLO Foundation's quest for foreign aid isn't a surrender to neocolonial forces but a bold assertion of our anti-colonial struggle for justice and equality. By seeking support from the global community, we challenge colonial legacies, demand recognition of the rights of the LGBTQ+ persons in Ghana, and assert our agency in shaping a more inclusive and equitable society. Foreign aid, when wielded in solidarity and with respect for local autonomy, becomes a powerful tool in the fight against oppression and for the realization of human rights for all.

long-term plans



Acquiring additional lands for the expansion of the project across Ghana. Strengthening the Ghanaian LGBTQ+ community through economic empowerment programs such as teaching IT, photography, arts and crafts or farming.



why you should support this cause ?

The Ghanaian LGBTQ+ community endures discrimination, violence, and social exclusion. Our project will provide a sanctuary offering essential support services, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment. Here, individuals can live authentically without fear.

By supporting this initiative, you will make a tangible difference in the lives of marginalized individuals, promoting human rights and dignity. Your financial contribution will address immediate needs and drive long-term societal change, setting an example for other regions facing similar challenges.

mail to House of Yolo Foundation:
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All donations from Germany are tax deductible

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