

TOAST: A Home For Growth

Migrant Women's Empowerment Centre in Marsa

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BSc Yr3 Design

Apart from the usual dangers and challenges that refugees have to face on a daily basis, migrant women must face specific threats simply for being women: mainly being gender-based violence and increased risk of exploitation. Such threats are further multiplied for unaccompanied women. There is also an issue of labour exploitation among migrants. It is often forgotten that many refugees had stable careers before being forced to leave their country. Instead, they must now settle for jobs irrelevant to their field and with an extremely low pay.

The aim of this building is to provide 24 refugee women a safe home as well as the proper resources to find a job that is more suited to their existing skills, and that allows them to develop their skills and adapt to a new European life. In turn, they will empower other women, both migrant and local, to do the same. And just like that, the building transforms into a Female Powerhouse.

The building combines both public and private areas with the aim to draw activity to the building from outside communities. The public area accommodates a childcare centre with the aim to bring together the resident migrant women, migrant women with children who need to work, and local Maltese mothers. There are also libraries to act as flexible spaces to host the residents who are working their own businesses and careers; giving them a hub for creativity and entrepreneurship, where the woman can share ideas and access resources which may otherwise be limited to them. The private area contains a residence for the 24 refugee women making the most of the centre. They would be allowed to stay as residents for a maximum of one year, but may choose to leave earlier should they feel stable enough to do so. To cater for them, there is a mix of common spaces as well as private spaces. Flatlets are to be shared by two women, therefore efficient use of space and privacy were two elements important to design. On each floor, there is also a shared balcony between rooms, acting as another space for discourse and leisure.