

**"MRO- CHA"- A HUB FOR MRU INDIGENOUS PEOPLE
PROMOTING THE "MRU";
RETAINING THEIR ETHNICITY**

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Prologue

Chittagong Hill Tracts are among the very few hilly areas of Bangladesh, comprising an area of 13,295 km² in southeastern Bangladesh and border India and Myanmar (Burma). This area was undivided until 1984. But now it is divided into three districts, Rangamati, Khagrachari, Banderban. With 13 small and large indigenous communities living in the hills, forests and river-valleys, these districts have a population of around 1,58,700. The tribal peoples, collectively known as the Jumma, include the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tanchangya, Chak, Pankho, **Mru**, Murung, Bawm, Lushai, Khyang, Gurkha, Assamese, Santal, and Khumi and a large number of Parbatya Bangali. 50% of the population are indigenous peoples and mainly followers of Theravada Buddhism; 49% of the inhabitants are Parbatya Bangali Muslims and Hindus; the remainder are Christians, or animists.

Banderban is the district, where tribal groups can be seen; less affected by the outer influence. Mainly because of the remoteness and rough hilly nature of the place. These people have not come very near to the mainstream society, where Chakmas and Marmas from Rangamati have the most access to this society. Mainstream society is what the majority of the population is in, who has to obey and follow the rules and regulations of that society and they get their rights from the society without any major discrimination. But no ethnic communities are that much involved with the mainstream society. But it has made no harm to their rich culture, heritage, lifestyle and religion. But over the centuries they have been victimized of cruelty of the ruling power. Many times they have faced challenges to live in their very own place. But now the situation is slowly changing. These communities have always tried to retain their ethnicity, and now they are trying to be educated as well, which is helping them to cope up with the situations they are facing. And Bangladeshi people are realizing the fact, that these people are the part of our country, though it is a really slow process, and still land encroachment and terrorism taking place in these communities. But the communities are trying to leave some of their superstitions which made them feel helpless throughout centuries. Though it is a very good sign, but it also leaves them in danger of losing their own culture. So it is a very contradicting situation. Many communities are partly losing their culture to come in the mainstream society and also the curriculum they are taking is not helpful or resembles with their own lifestyle or culture. **MRU** is one of the communities from Banderban which is still very isolated from all these developments

taking place in other communities. Due to geographical position and also some socio-economic problems have made them stay aloof from Bangali people, as well as other tribal communities. Chakmas and marmas who are more developed in the mainstreaming sense, consider this tribe as lower caste, they call them Lengta, Kuki or langye or wild/primitive people. Mru/Mros are contemptuously called Mro-Dang or Myawktong, meaning lower type of animal being, but Mru introduce themselves as **Mro-Cha**, which means man being. They are mostly uneducated and live a remote life and are very poor. They think they have been cursed by their God and excluded from other communities. The lifestyle of them is very rich and simple, natural. Though poverty and illiteracy are the main problem. May be a bottom up approach for this sort of communities can show them the right directions for self-help. But also they have to realize the need of their rich culture, language and religion, only then they may be able to self-help without losing their ethnicity.

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Abstract

There are different ethnic groups reside in the Chittagong Hill Tracts(CHT) speaking different languages , practicing different religions, and following different cultural rules. Living mostly in the hills of Banderban, the “Mru”; are one of these ethnic groups, facing challenges of discrimination not only from the Bangali people, but also from other tribes. They are very isolated from other tribes, because of their topographical location and some other problems causing them utmost poverty. The “Mru” tribe is currently aspiring to become socio-economically solvent. They are greatly influenced by the development of their neighboring tribes and local Bengalis, and their desires come at the expense of their rich culture, language, traditions, customs and religion. This community is at a transitional point and there is a great chance that their aspiration might derail them. What they fail to realize is that their own culture, language and religion can fulfill their aspirations if they are nurtured properly. For this a descriptive research method and field study are done with the “Mru” people and organizations (N.G.O.), professionals dealing with them and a project based on a bottom up approach has been proposed. This project aims to give the “Mru” tribe a direction in which they might evolve without forgetting their roots. Moreover, they have already been able to move forward religiously by getting rid of certain taboos, introducing texts and preventing other religious influences. Their development is engraved within their own culture and the possibilities are immense only if they can realize it before it is too late. The juxtaposition of both knowledge and creativity of this community with the little help of training and awareness can lead them to build an ideal community where they will not have the feeling of isolation ,social negligence and influence of other society, but they will have the courage to promote themselves in terms of their unique culture, language and religion.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Brief & Background

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Project

1.3 Given Programme

1.4 Methodology

1.1 Project Brief & Background

A very small minority ethnic group “Mru” , among the thirteen ethnic groups of CHT, living scattered in the hills of Banderban. The Mrus (Murang) are a tribe which formerly dwell in the Arakan hill, they now live principally to the west of the river sangu and along the Matamuhori river within Chittagong Hill Tracts. Mru are also Known as Mro and Murong. Chakmas and Marmas call them Lengta, Kuki or Langye or wild/primitive people while some people of the plains designate them as Murongs. Despite, having such rich culture and heritage, they are facing discriminations among their tribes. Their socially isolated living pattern and superstitions are driving them into poverty. These people are lacking behind in terms of education, socio-economic condition. But now, Understandably a wind of change is blowing in the CHT for many reasons, the 1997 Peace Agreement, the development activities, the change in government, the lessening of ethnic tensions, the new roads, etc have transformed the CHT. These changes have also affected the Mru community, but it is a slow process and might not have a positive impact, as other tribes like Chakma or Marma are more forthcoming and confidently dealing with situations. This change is not intensively for each tribe, it is dedicated to all the indigenous people in CHT. Where each tribe has different lifestyle, culture, religion and language. Already, Mrus are suffering from their own problem, as the ideology that their GOD “TORAI” did not give them any instruction, any written language and they were excluded and cursed to be poor for some reason, and due to lack of communication they have remained like this. And also they have continuously been deprived through battles with other tribes and now by armies. All the other tribes consider Mrus to be of lower caste, and led them to complete isolation. Though the scenario has changed a little bit, but still they are very poor and their migratory instinct prevented them from progress in daily life, due to having larger population; now it has been difficult to move to places. And a new scenario has also been emerged. Which is the neighboring tribes of MRU are involved in economic transaction with local Bengali settlers, which is giving them easy money and for that many things are being changed, the way of their housing (tin, brick are being introduced), causing them lose their unique culture in certain extent. The “Mru” tribe is currently aspiring to become socio-economically solvent. They are influenced by the development of

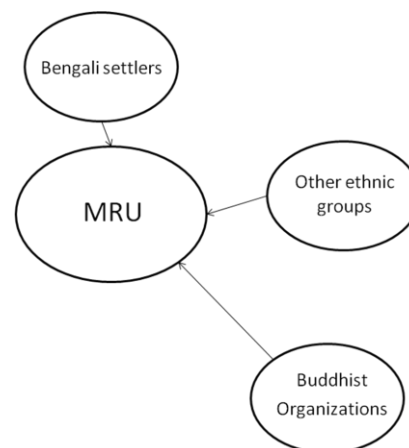


Diagram 01: Discrimination of MRU

their neighboring tribes and local Bengalis. This community is at a transitional point and there is a great chance that their aspiration might derail them.



fig :1 current scenario



aspiration which can cause losing their culture and natural setting source: Saiffee

But there are some positive things, that these people have improved their lives spiritually. They did not have text, they had many taboos but a person among them emerged as a prophet and introduced them text of their own and that is how they advanced forward with the help of their own religion. Besides this, MRU people are very hardworking and rich in lumber and hydroelectricity potential. They pride themselves in “self-sufficiency”. They have the most beautiful, creatively and naturally built community houses with no use of artificial techniques. There are opportunities and scopes for them if they get little help. They lack the technology and knowledge to improve their economic condition. So, if they get some help with education, technical training and social awareness, they might be able to promote their own community with the use of their local wisdom and make it economically “self-sufficient” community. That may help to enrich their culture, lifestyle, language and religion and take these rich assets to furthermore, introducing to the world. Community based development can be started within a small village, which can play as a role model for all the other ethnic communities, inspiring to promote their identities with economic welfare.

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Project

The thought of facilitate these ethnic people as well, the awareness of the mainstream society evoked a recommendation or proposal in my mind. The proposal which is already mentioned above, “community based planning”. I showed in my seminar I report, a case study of khagrachari Buddhist monastery, which is helping the minority to be educated in their very own language and culture and also it is providing the primary education which mandatory for all citizens of Bangladesh. So, this place creates comfort and enhance their learning process as it is their own people, language, place, culture and their very own lifestyle. So, It shows

- promoting their LANGUAGE, CULTURE and RELIGION can be very effective to groom them and prepare themselves as the true part of the nation
- also it will help them to come out from the social deprivation and discrimination and create their own identity.
- It will actually make the society better if they are well prepared and contribute with their unique culture.
- Maybe this will take a long time, but the process should start for the betterment of our society where we all belong to and it will help the people to be connected with the root.

Architecture is a tool with which this idea can be manifested. May be, it will have only one ethnic group (MRU) as a target group. But it will show how the system works for other groups. A community based bottom up approached design will have several programs, but the main thing is to prepare them in their own way

- promote their self-sufficiency in every sector (example- socially, economically, educationally) and making way to self realization (of their potential).
- also make the mainstream society aware of them. So it might be a combination of both.
- This project can be environmentally sustainable. Because the basic idea of their lifestyle is to keep the nature as it is.
- they have excellent sense of making their own houses. So their techniques and local material can be used for this project.

I personally think, culture ,heritage are the comfort zones of mine. I am very passionate about my own place, my language, my culture and I feel my culture shows what I am. My upbringing and the knowledge I gathered from my childhood , is the main drive force of my life. And I feel for everyone it matters a lot. That is why I came up with this idea, and I passionately feel this is where I can utilize my senses most.

1.3 Given Programme

As the objective of the project, is the development of their community through enrichment of their own culture, religion and language, so it will not be confined in only one type of program, rather, it will have diversified programs. The programs will be categorized by educational aspect, economic aspect and cultural aspect. The programs might include

- A main centre which will represent their spirituality and the other programs will evolve around it
- Educational facilities up to high school with other research &complementary trainings example- agro forestry technique, seasonal fruits and vegetable harvest training, handicraft training.
- A cultural centre, representing Bangladesh's indigenous people's rich culture, history, handicraft industry
- A dormitory for students.

1.4 Methodology

For the study, mainly reviewing of many relevant literature regarding this issue has been done. Such as Govt. and non Govt. official documents, reports, articles and books on indigenous people, their history have been reviewed to get the proper situation and information. To analyze the situation, Some interviews are taken and surveys are done from the MRU community and also some well-established indigenous people, anthropologists. Primary data sources were newspaper reports, interviews etc. And secondary data sources were relevant articles, books, reports from different organizations. Apart from quantitative research, some qualitative researches have done to establish the reasons and the situation. The interviews and newspaper articles directly reflect the existing situation, where books and relevant articles helped to analyze the situation.

CHAPTER 2: SITE APPRAISAL

2.1 Site Analysis

2.2 Site Surrounding

2.3 Reason For Choosing The Site

2.4 Photographs

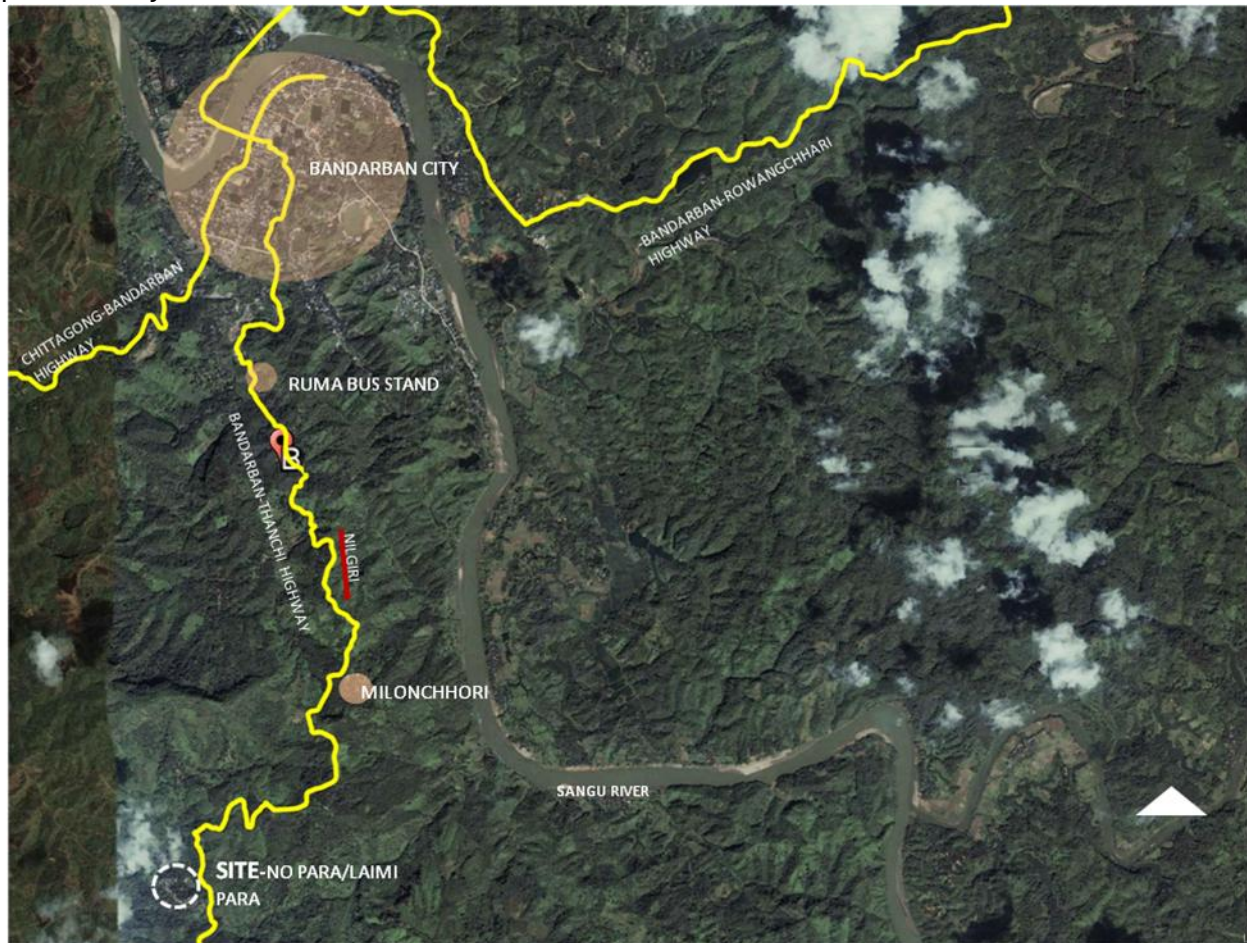
2.5 Climatic Situation

2.6 Social Background Of Site

2.7 SWOT Analysis

2.1 Site Analysis

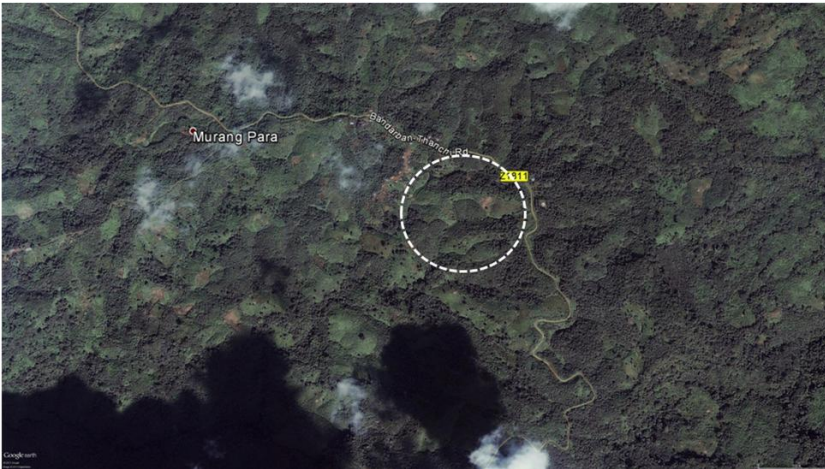
The site is situated 9 miles away from Bandarban city, (Murongi para, area-25 acres) beside the Bandarban-Thanchi highway. This particular site was chosen because of the higher density of Mru people who are willing to accept the good changes for them, live mostly in this area. Importantly the particular site is a village of newly migrated Mru people, which is not very permanent yet.



Map 01: site location source: google earth

2.2 Site Surrounding

The site is surrounded by some other small "paras" or villages of Bawm ethnic groups. Basically the site is a wonderful piece of nature surrounded by green hills and a small stream. The thanchi highway is just beside the site. so, communication is not a very big problem. There is a primary school and a rice bank established by Upasshok humanitarian foundation NGO. and a small housing of 10-12 families of Mru community.



Map 02: Site
source: google earth

2.3 Reason For Choosing The Site

This site was the nearest from the city. And the Mru communities living here have sense of adaptability and acceptability more than the Mrus living in the remote corner of hills. But these Mrus are originally from the remote areas, and they have well connection with the Mru living in the isolated area. These Mru communities are willing to learn and explore new things as well as eager to spread their local knowledge not hampering their culture, religion or lifestyle. And also the site is very well connected with road and easy for other ethnic groups, nearby Bangalees to come and see the place. Even tourists can come easily to this place.

2.4 Photographs



fig 02:Site images
source:Saiffee,2013

2.5 Climatic Situation

topographically the elevation of site varies from 330-350 ft from the sea level and it is surrounded by higher hills. there is valley between the site and the hill. Normally, floods do not take place here, but natural disasters like cyclone, tornado sometimes take place.

the chosen site has a tropical climate. In most months of the year, there is significant rainfall in this area. There is only a short dry season and it is not very effective. According to Köppen and Geiger climate is classified as Am. The average annual temperature in site is 25.5 °C. The average annual rainfall is 2560 mm.

Climate graph

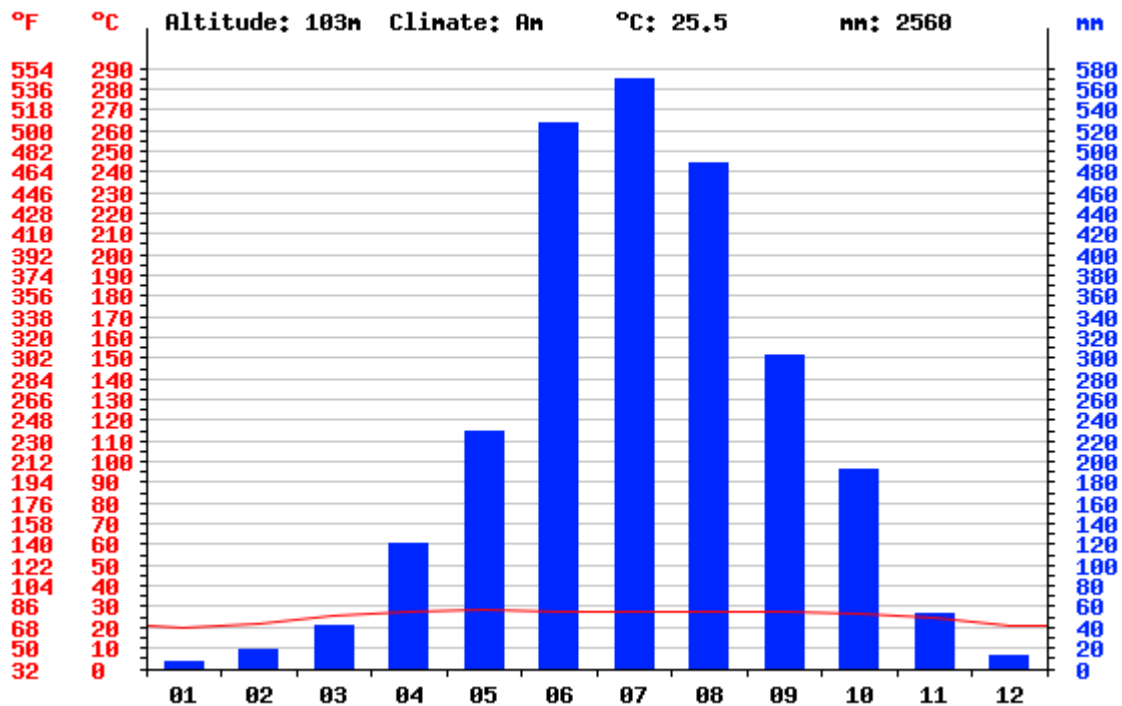
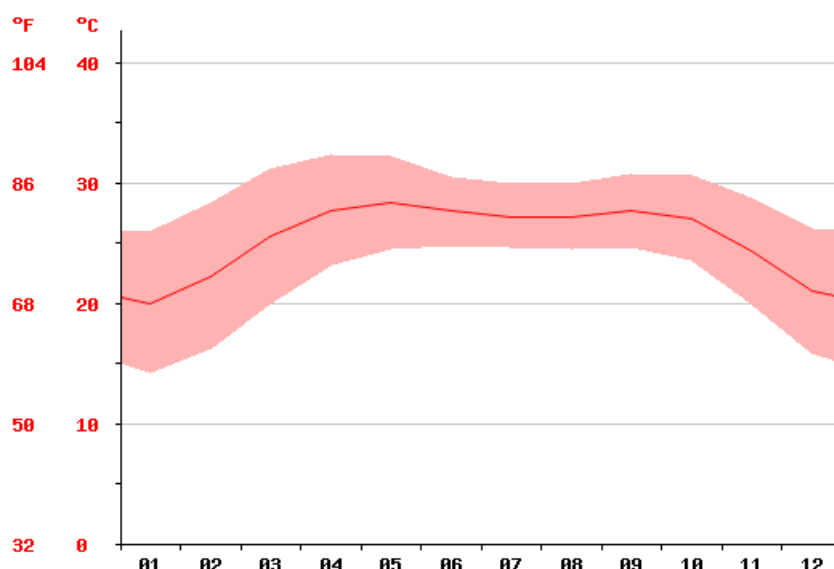


fig 03:Climate graph

source: <http://en.climate-data.org>

The driest month is January with 6 mm. Most precipitation falls in July, with an average of 569 mm.

Temperature graph



The warmest month of the year is May with an average temperature of 28.3 °C. In January, the average temperature is 20 °C. It is the lowest average temperature of the whole year.

fig 04: temperature graph

source: <http://en.climate-data.org>

Climate table

month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
mm	6	18	42	121	229	527	569	488	302	192	53	13
°C	20	22.2	25.5	27.7	28.3	27.6	27.2	27.2	27.7	27	24.3	21
°C (min)	14.2	16.2	19.9	23.2	24.5	24.7	24.6	24.5	24.6	23.5	19.9	15.8
°C (max)	25.9	28.3	31.2	32.3	32.2	30.5	29.9	30	30.8	30.6	28.7	26.2
°F	68	72	77.9	81.9	82.9	81.7	81	81	81.9	80.6	75.7	69.8
°F (min)	57.6	61.2	67.8	73.8	76.1	76.5	76.3	76.1	76.3	74.3	67.8	60.4
°F (max)	78.6	82.9	88.2	90.1	90	86.9	85.8	86	87.4	87.1	83.7	79.2

fig 05: Climate table

source: <http://en.climate-data.org>

The difference in precipitation between the driest month and the wettest month is 563 mm. The average temperatures vary during the year by 8.3 °C. (<http://en.climate-data.org>)

2.6 Social Background Of Site

The site and the surrounding places have evolved after liberation war, though it mainly evolved in a time span of 1990-uptill now. Surrounding places have some original villages previously established, but the site area has been recently chosen as a "para" for the Mrus. Because of the water facility from the stream with a pipe, initiated by Ngo; some of the Mrus shifted here as their population is increasing. Site and the surrounding areas have some other ethnic villages which are maintained by the Govt. to some extent, as tourists visit these villages and area.

The people in this area are more adaptable as they live nearby the city. some of them migrated to christian or buddhist religion. And they have accessibility to all the new technology, specially cell phone. But basically most of them are very poor, and they have fear of land encroachment. The positive thing is the people here did not forget their culture or lifestyle as most of them migrated to these places to get the facilities of city life and for better income, but they have actually improved themselves by leaving many superstitions and taking education.

2.7 SWOT Analysis

Strength

- Very good communication because of the nearby highway
- Not very far from the city
- Some schools are built here
- Magnificent natural beauty
- Good water facility
- Use of solar power energy
- people have very good skill of building structures with local materials
- besides joom harvesting, seasonal fruit and vegetable harvesting is done too.
- People are hardworking here

Weakness

- because of recent rat flood there is scarcity of bamboo can be seen
- materials which are not local and which are costly are being used.ex-brick, concrete, rod, polethyne
- The unique building style of huts are being changed due to natural disaster
- site is near the road so land encroachment can be seen

Opportunity

- scope of development as there is school, and saving concept are being evolved
- The road will attract tourists to visit the place
- there are scopes of training centers, as the local people are interested and the site is itself very suitable for this type of program
- as there is water stream, fishing related center might be helpful here
- natural beauty is the plus point of the site which will create peaceful environment for any sort of environment
- as it is their (MRU) own place, they will feel comfortable with the programs in this site

Threats

- Land encroachment
- other powerful ethnic groups can pressurize them and demand the land
- intrusion of building materials which are not natural might cause losing their unique identity

CHAPTER 3:LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 History Of The Indigenous People In Chittagong Hill Tracts

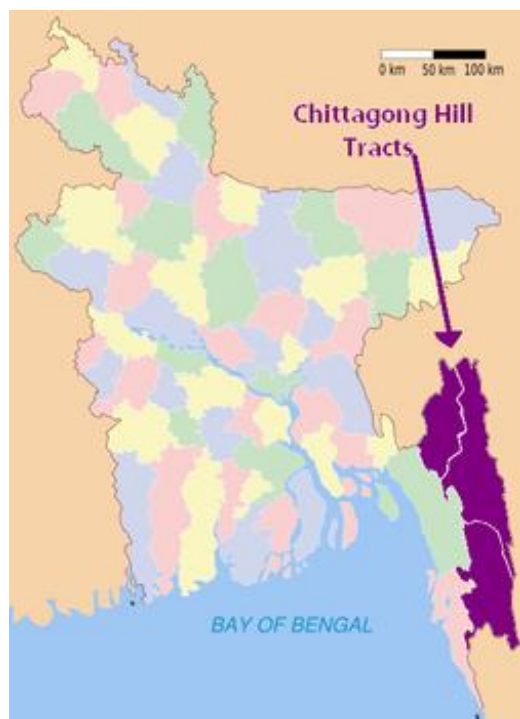
- *Background*
- *Current situation*

3.2 Policy For The Indigenous People

3.3 History And Background Of The “Mru” Community

- *Geographical Distribution and population Size*
- *Origin and History of Migration*

3.1 History Of The Indigenous People In Chittagong Hill Tracts



Map 03: Chittagong hill Tracts



fig 06: Chittagong hill Tracts -people & places

source: Internet

Background

With diversified natural beauty and variety of language and culture, Chittagong Hill Tracts is divided into three districts, Bandarban, Rangamati and Khagrachhari. Covering 1/10th percentage land of the country it has a population of almost 1,587,000 according to provisional returns of the census of 2011(Uddin,2011). About 50% of the population are tribal or indigenous peoples and mainly followers of Theravada Buddhism; 49% of the inhabitants are Parbatya Bangali Muslims and Hindus; the remainder are Christians, or animists. CHT has 13 small and large indigenous communities living in the hills, forests and river-valleys. The tribal peoples, collectively known as the Jumma, include the **Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tanchangya, Chak, Pankho, Mru, Murung, Bawm, Lushai, Khyang, Gurkha, Assamese, Santal, and Khumi** and a large number of **Parbatya Bangali** (Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs,2007).

Their history dates back to Mughal period from when they have started living here. They are mainly mixture of Arakani and Tripura tribal people ,with Mogh.They have gone through repression from British period because they had to go through many raids and operations. “Chittagong rule 1900” was the first attempt of British rule which created distance between

indigenous people and Chittagong Bangalees, they were under the rules of British Govt. appointed district councilor (A British personnel) , they did not have right over their lands and they had to pay taxes for their own land to the district councilor (Uddin,2011) And the inhabitants of Chittagong were restricted to go to CHT, and it was controlled by District Councilor. So.the British period actually lowered their respect ,and they did that purposefully so that the movement against British rule in Chitagong could not reach in CHT. But in this process the relation between the Bangalees and indigenous people became weaker.

During Pakistan period, they tried to improve Chittagong's situation and undertaken two projects, "Chandraghona paper mill" and "Kaptai bank and hydroelectricity plant"(Uddin,2011)."Kaptai hydroelectricity plant" is a case study for this study, which will be discussed in the next chapter. But for this plant ,many indigenous people along with Chittagong's farmer families lost their land, which created deep anger among them, mainly "Chakma" and thousands of them migrated to India.

In Bangladesh period, they were suppressed under the military rule (Uddin,2011) where many of them lost lives, and it totally made them aloof from us. The situation is being changed now, we are learning to respect their culture and them. Some projects have been undertaken to improve their lives, but they are very few in number. But still now, there are armies deployed in many parts, and news of violence can be heard from these places.

Current Situation (Educational sector)

Indigenous peoples mainly live in isolated areas, outside the mainstream of national economies and development support. The areas they inhabit are even more likely to lack basic infrastructure such as roads, markets, schools and health facilities. Indigenous peoples also enjoy fewer opportunities in education and skills development compared to their mainstream counterparts.

Community	Literacy Rate
Chakma	36.2%
Marma	26.6%
Mru	2.9%
Tripura	18.5%

Table 01: literacy rate of ethnic groups map
source:(Unlocking the potential, 2005).

Percentage of literacy is higher in Rangamati as the the first school was built in this district .

only one in five villages had primary level schools in the CHT. In contrast, at the national level, there are two schools for every three villages. The institutions are very less in number, and also the education is little bit different and difficult for them as they do not know “Bangla”, their national language, they have their own language. But the

schools do not have any program that will help them to cope up with this situation (Unlocking the potential, 2005).



Diagram 02: indigenous people facing discrimination

Current Situation (Socio-cultural sector)

From Bangladeshi people, many differences can be seen in indigenous people. Socially, economically, politically, and culturally they are very different. The indigenous people mainly practice Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Animism as their religion. Each group has its own distinct language, culture, religion and customs. The mainstream population know little of the indigenous cultures of the country and because of this they are ignorant of the ceremonies and rituals that the indigenous people celebrate. With the help of different organizations, like Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, Jatiyo Adivasi Parishad, Bangladesh Adivasi Odhiakar Andolan, Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD), the indigenous people are now organizing various cultural events in the capital city and district towns. Aborigines organizations now celebrate the International Day of the World Indigenous Peoples every year on 9th August and the Santal Upsurge Day on 30th June. But there is no government initiative at all in this regard (Tahmina, 2007). On these occasions, different indigenous communities come together, share their happiness and express their demands in front of the mass population. Media coverage and attention of the civil society of these events are making the mass population aware of the indigenous culture. These activities are very recent so the impact is still not visibly effective. (Unlocking The Potential, 2005)

The culture of the indigenous peoples is regarded as inferior. The Social Science text book for 4th and 5th grade students published by the National Curriculum and Text Book Board (NCTBB) inform readers that indigenous peoples lead backward lifestyles, eat whatever they find here and there, live in forests, and that the diet of Santals, Garos and Marmas consist of animal products mostly. Indigenous peoples contested this discriminatory portrayal of themselves. Mr. Sanjeeb Drong, General Secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum said that this

issue was taken to the NCTBB for rectification; however, till today no attempt has been taken to change the information in the textbooks. Furthermore, in *Banglapedia* published in 2003 by the Asiatic Society, the different indigenous peoples were described in a derogatory manner.

In the CHT, indigenous peoples have been living with each other applying and developing their traditional socio-economic-cultural and political system under the framework of their traditional *Jum* economy. *Jum* Cultivation was not only a mode of cultivation but constituted the core of the cultural values of the indigenous people in CHT which over a period of time became their way of life. The indigenous people in the CHT are more familiar and comfortable with the traditional administrative system and it is this system that forms the basis for decision making at the local levels within communities. This system still remains as the most common way of resolving disputes and conflicts within the community.

Current Situation (Employment & Urban Migration)

Indigenous people are very much neglected in the field of lucrative govt. and non govt. jobs. They get less priorities in these jobs, even if they have the qualification. It is only because of the racial distinction from the mainstream people. Although government reserves 5 percent of the jobs in the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) for indigenous peoples, this is not actually practiced. (Halim, 2007). According to the 5 per cent quota, this means a total of 1,483 indigenous persons are supposed to be given BCS jobs. But, as indigenous activists have commented, in reality, the figure is far lower than that. On the other hand, they said, no measures have been taken on the part of the government to provide quotas to indigenous peoples for overseas' employment (wherein each year thousands of Bangladeshi laborers are sent to Middle East and South-East Asian countries). So it is evident that, even though Government is claiming to have a proper quota system, there is no sign to show that, this is actually working, and indigenous people are unsatisfied with this.

Lack of opportunities in their very own land, mass eviction, social and political problems lead indigenous people to a crisis of earning livelihood in their village. For this, many of them migrate to cities where better options of livelihood are available. As an example, we can see many GARO girls working in the beauty salons in cities and jumma youths working on EPZs. One of the beauty salon worker, KHUKU RANI told, that she had to come to city because it was not possible for her family to bear the expenses anymore due to not having good harvest and also market crisis. So, she took training in a local center and came to city. But she complains, that for being an indigenous people, she faces various problems of wage discrimination. And

many of them face mental or physical assault also. But these opportunities are also limited to some communities, most of the communities are not even aware of them.

3.2 Policy For The Indigenous People

Bangladesh has been criticized severely in international sectors for violating human rights in most of the cases. Specially, for indigenous people there are no detailed and clear policies taken.

Apart from dispossession of lands through development and forestry projects, the most serious problems faced by indigenous people in Bangladesh include the limited access to education and other social services, discrimination at the hands of non-indigenous people (including government functionaries) and the imposition of other inappropriate and socially and economically destructive development projects.

Ratification And Implementation Of International Treaties

Bangladesh has ratified most of the international human rights treaties including the ILO Convention 107 (1957) that guarantees indigenous and tribal peoples certain rights, such as the right to land, self-governance and development. In addition, it has endorsed the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development that recognizes the “vital role of the indigenous peoples in sustainable development” and the Economic and Social Council Resolution 2000/22 that establishes the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues with the mandate to advise and recommend to the Economic and Social Council on six subjects: (1) Economic and Social Development, (2) Human Rights, (3) Culture, (4) Education, (5) Health and (6) Environment. (Roy, 2006)

The international human rights treaties ratified by Bangladesh include, among others, the following:

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR),
05 January 1999
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
06 December 2000
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
11 July 1979
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

06 December 1998

- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (OPCEDAW)
22 December 2000
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)
04 November 1999
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
02 September 1990
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OP CRC AC)
12 February 2000
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OP CRC SC)
18 January 2000
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW)
07 October 1998
- ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Populations (Convention No. 107 of 1957)
22 June 1972
- ILO Convention on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) (Convention no. 111 of 1958)
22 June 1972
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
03 May 1994

Bangladesh is legally bound to comply with these international human rights treaties. But it does not comply with them so far as the indigenous peoples are concerned. The treaties that are grossly violated by Bangladesh in the CHT are: The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT); International Covenant on

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESR); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

(ICCPR); and International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

Constitution And Specific Legislation For Indigenous Peoples

Article 27 of the Constitution of Bangladesh states that all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law. Article 28(1) outlaws discrimination on grounds of race, religion and place of birth and Article 28(4) states that nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making special provision in favor of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens. Though the Constitution of Bangladesh does not directly mention the indigenous or tribal peoples, it is understood that the indigenous peoples form part of the disadvantaged part of the citizens, which the constitution terms 'backward section of citizens'.

As opined by the interviewees, it is widely recognized that indigenous peoples do not enjoy equal treatment before the law and administration.

In addition, Article 29(2) of the Constitution states that nothing in this article shall prevent the State from: (a) making special provision in favour of any backward section of citizens for the purpose of securing their adequate representation in the service of the Republic; (b) giving effect to any law which makes provision for reserving appointments relating to any religious or denominational institution to persons of that religion or denomination; (c) reserving for members of one sex any class of employment or office on the ground that it is considered by its nature to be unsuited to members of the opposite sex. This provision provides the scope for affirmative action for indigenous peoples in the name of the 'backward section of citizens'.

Under these provisions of the constitution, the government undertakes some affirmative actions in favour of indigenous peoples. Notable among these are:

- setting up of a Special Affairs Division under the Prime Minister's Office particularly for plains land indigenous peoples;
- signing of the CHT Peace Accord with the PCJSS as a solution of the CHT problem through political and peaceful means and accordingly establishment of CHTRC and HDCs as special administrative arrangements for the CHT;
- enactment of the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act of 2001;
- amendment of CHT Regulation in 2003 for establishment of a separate district judge court in CHT;

- inclusion of the term ‘adivasi’ and indigenous peoples’ issues in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP);
- continuing of quota reservation in the government jobs and educational institutions for ‘tribal’ people, etc. (CERD, 2001)

3.3 History And Background Of The “Mru” Community

The Mru are an ethnic group that is scattered across the hills of the Bandarban district, whose numbers are reported to be a little over 50,000(Dorgabekova,2009).

As mentioned before, this tribe formerly dwell in the Arakan hill, they now live principally to the west of the river sangu and along the Matamuhori river within Chittagong Hill Tracts. Mru are also Known as Mro and Murong. Chakmas and Marmas call them Lengta, Kuki or Langye or wild/primitive people while some people of the plains designate them as Murongs.

Geographical Distribution and population Size

Mru community mostly found in Bandarban district. They live in Lama, Ruma, Alikadam and Thanchi Upazilas near Chimbuk mountaion of Bandarban district. Mru also distributed in Toin, Mangu, Toinfa, Luloing, Uttarhangar, Dhakkinhanar, Tankabati, Harinzuri, Takerpanchari, Renikyong, Pantala Thankhyong, Swalock, Tindow, Singpa, Alikhaung and Bhariyatali Mouzas. The Mro population in Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1956 was 17000 and 1981, it stood at 20000 in 1991.(www.ebbd.info)

Mru Population Since 1872 their Distribution:

Serial	Year	Population	Reference
1	1872	2,378	Sangu research paper, year six, Volume – One
2	1956	17,000	National Encydopedia of Bangladesh, Asiatic Society of BD.
3	1959	16,121	Parbottgo Chattaqramer upajati translated by Sufic Khan
4	1981	17,811	B. H. Swarowardi
5	1981	20,000	National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh, Asiatic society of BD.
6	1991	22,129	Govt. Census of 1991.

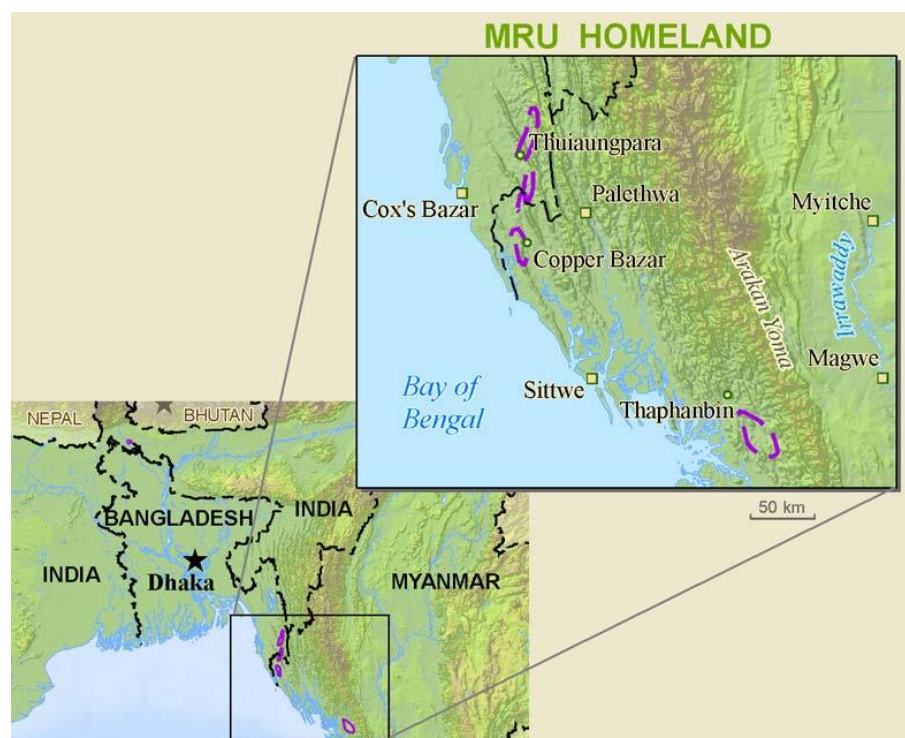
Table 02: Mru population timeline

source: Bangladesh ethnobotany online database

Serial	Name of Upazila	Population	Year	Reference
1	Bandarban Sadar	5,223	1995	Survey of Mro social council
2	Roangchari	3,541	1995	Survey of Mro social council
3	Ruma	4,970	1995	Survey of Mro social council
4	Thanchi	10,191	1995	Survey of Mro social council
5	Lama	11,721	1995	Survey of Mro social council
6	Alikadam	21,861	1995	Survey of Mro social council
7	Naikhangchari	2,241	1995	Survey of Mro social council
8	Total	59,748	1995	Survey of Mro social council

Table 03: Mru population thanawise source: Bangladesh ethnobotany online

Origin and History of Migration



Map 04: Mru migration map

source: www.joshuaproject.net

Mrus are famous aborigines of Arakan and the two Mru kings who ruled Arakan in the tenth century, were A-mya-thu (957) and Pai-phyu (964). At that time wathaly was the capital city of Arakan.

Mru had a bloody war with Khumi on the bank of the Koladain. The Khumi tribe defeated the Mrus and ousted them from Arakan. They moved to Chittagong Hill Tracts some times between the 17th and 18th centuries. Many however, believe that this happened in the 14th century. Mrus living in the district of Khagrachari are in fact a clan of the Tripura. There is a linguistic affinity between the two groups of people. In the Indian state of Tripura, the counterparts of Mrus are Known as Riangs. However, on many occasions, Mros are contemptuously Called Mro-Dang or Myawktong, Meaning lower type of animal being. But Mros introduce themselves as Mro-cha. The word Mro means man and cha stands for being.

In the 14th century, Mros were driven out from Arakan by Khumis, a powerful tribe. They moved to the Hill Tracts of Bandarban and settled Sangu along the Matamuhuri river. This is supported by a letter of the king of Burma to the chief of Chittagong district. The king stated in the letter that that some Murongs Arakan and took refuge in the Chittagong region, from where they operated raids on the both sides of the border. (www.ebbd.info)

CHAPTER 4: EXISTING SITUATION

4.1 Background

- (i) Lifestyle*
- (ii) Cultural Background*
- (iii) Beliefs*
- (iii) Social Background*
- (iv) Economic Background*
- (v) Educational Background*
- (vi) Case Studies*

4.2 Need For Promoting “Mru” Community

4.3 Community based development for “Mru” People

- (i) Community based developments (in general)*
- (ii) Need for Community based development (For Mrus)*

4.4 SWOT Analysis Of The Mru Community

4.1 Existing Situation

(i) Lifestyle



fig 07: Mru people & their lifestyle
 (top left & right) mru children working with local materials
 (top 2nd row left) mru men working in local paddy machine
 (top 2nd row right) mru child having local cigarette made of natural element
 (top 3rd row left) mru men women going to work with their bascets
 (top 3rd row right) leisure time entertainment & (bottom) a man in his workshop making hukkah



Birth

Birth of a baby in an Mro family is a matter of great joy. Before birth the child's sex is predicted with the help of a plant called 'law-haw'. After a little digging, the plant is uprooted. If the root is found to be straight without branches, the child is predicted to be a boy. If the root has branches, the child is to be a girl.

At the time of delivery, the pregnant mother is taken to the special 'kimsa' room where one or more midwives wait to provide all support for safe delivery. According to English travellers Klaus Dyter Blaunze and Laurence G Laughler, a thin slice is taken out from a special bamboo pole in the room to cut off the baby's umbilical cord. The newborn is placed on a banana leaf bed. No farm work is done on the day after the child's birth. This custom is aimed at protecting the paddy crop of jhum. On the ninth day after delivery the mother is allowed to go of the kimsa room.

According to the Mro custom, a new-born has to be named within the first week. They follow a lunar calendar. The midwife has to pronounce the child's name. The parents hand over the selected name to the midwife. She pronounces the name as she puts half a piece of raw turmeric on the forehead of the child. In the evening the midwife and her assistants are given a feast with chicken and pork. They are also given presents.

The mother has to take liquid food during the days of her confinement in the kimsa room. During those days she has to take the heat of fire for about twelve hours a day to restore her health. She has to follow some other rites to cleanse herself. The Mros believe that if a pregnant mother takes egg, fish caught with a hook or meat of trapped animals she will have problem in delivery and her child will face bad luck. (www.ebbd.info)

Death

According to the Mro custom, two things have to be done immediately after someone's death - killing a chicken and a dog since they lead the dead person's soul to the heaven. The dog is the soul's pathfinder and the chicken is its companion. The dog's body is kept at the end of the area's main road. The chicken is cooked and along with some rice is kept in a clay pot on the right side of the dead person's body. It is called 'lulukoiim' and is regarded as the last meal of the dead.

It is the general belief in the Mro society that all the dead go to the heaven. It is believed that in this journey the devil take the form of insects and cause the soul a good deal of trouble. The chicken eats up the insects. During its lifetime the dog guarded the house as a faithful servant and alerted the inmates of the house whenever any fierce animal appeared on the scene. In the same way the dog guides the dead person's soul on the way to the heaven. A pig is also killed after the death. A feast with pork and a bottle of liquor is arranged.

The dead person's body is washed with warm water and covered with new clothes. If the body is of a man a turban is put on its head and if it is a woman's body it is decorated with ornaments before keeping it inside the house for up to a week for the visitors and relatives to see. All visitors are entertained to a meal of pork and chicken.

According to the Mro tradition, the dead person's body is to be identified by someone from the maternal side as without their consent the body cannot be cremated. The maternal side has to be told the cause of death and the body is to be kept for a number of days to remove any suspicion regarding the death. Cremation without the consent of the maternal side may lead to litigation and problems. This is why someone from the maternal side has to be present before cremation.

In some cases the relatives of the maternal side and other relatives live far away behind hills and it takes them days to reach the dead person's house. For these days the body is kept in the house amidst playing of musical instruments. The Mros believe this keeps the dead person's soul in peace and helps its departure from this world less painful. The people from the community keep a whole-night vigil on the dead. When the relatives have gathered the women go out to collect the firewood for cremation. The Mro families also contribute bundles of firewood. Men are forbidden to collect the wood.

On the day of cremation, the body is taken out of the house early in the morning and with great care taken to the burning ground ceremonially. Men's bodies are burnt with three layers of wood and women's bodies are burnt with five layers. The Mros call a crematorium 'chengprang'. Women's bodies are burnt with more wood as during lifetime they collect wood.

For cremation, the face of a dead man is turned towards the east as they have to face the rising sun while going out for jhum cultivation. A woman's face is turned towards the west as at

sundown women have to return home for cooking food. Someone from the family ignites the face.

The crematorium of the Mros is located usually close to a river or a canal so that its water can be used to extinguish the pyre immediately after the body has been burnt to ashes. It is believed this brings peace to the soul of the dead. For this purpose a tiny hut is built at the centre of the crematorium and on a bamboo pole of the hut a piece of white cloth is hung. The Mros believe the soul lives in the hut for up to seven days.

After cremation all the people take a bath in the river or the canal to purify themselves before returning home as otherwise evil spirits may enter their households. Before entering their hung houses by ladder they throw a fistful of ashes into a fire so that the evil spirits are destroyed. The Mros observe purification as a matter of religious rite known as 'yang siri'. (www.ebbd.info)

Appearance of Mru

Mros have mongoloid features but are tall and strong and have dark complexion. They are peaceful and timid. Moustache and beard are hardly seen on their face. Physically they have a close resemblance with Semang of Malaysia. (www.ebbd.info)

Food Habit

Mros take boiled rice twice a day and consume all types of meat but hardly use spicy items in cooking curry. Dry fish is their favorite food. Drinking is popular and they have no taboo as regards any food. Rice and home made beer are their main food and drink. Their delicacy is “nappi” made of fermented fat of fish, frog, deer or boar mixed fermented rice. (www.ebbd.info)

Habitat and Occupation

They build their houses on hilltops. The houses are big and seem to be built for community dwelling. Mros build houses on Machangs (plat forms) on the top of the hills. Their houses are bigger than the houses of other tribes. This main profession of the Mros is jhum cultivation and lumbering wood from jungle. Women work harder than the men. Mros depend mainly on hunting but many of them are now engaged in jhum cultivation, jautha Khamar (collective farming) and gardening. Mro women are very active in economic pursuits, weave their own clothes and manage all affairs of the house. (www.ebbd.info)

Dresses

Mro men wear round the waist a strip of cloth called lengti, which is passed between the two legs. The female use a small piece of dark blue cloth (wanglai) to cover the private part of the body. The wanglei is 6 inches in width from top to bottom. The women hardly cover their breasts. They bind their hairs on the left side of the back of the head. Male wears a lungi and a shirt and female uses a piece of cloth on the upper part of her body when they go to the market. (www.ebbd.info)

(i) Cultural Background

Language

Mros do not have any written language. But recently they have been introduced with text which will be discussed in "Krama" religion part. The language they speak has some similarity with the Burmese and it seems to belong to the Tibeto-Burman family. In all probability, the Mro language was separated from Tibeto-Burma group at an early period, The Mro vocabulary, syntax, and grammar, to some extent, resemble the Kuki-Chin languages of northeastern India and northwestern Myanmar. Nowadays, some Mros receive modern education at Shialoa school (near Bandarban town) established by the government. Mros talk to their neighbors in the local tongue and know Bangla. In this sense, they are bilingual.

Housing

Like other aboriginals, the Mros also live a life characterized by clans. Since the dawn of civilization, the human beings began to live in modest thatch houses built on the plains, on river banks or on the hills. In modern times people have started building concrete houses but the Mros have till now clung to living in their traditional 'machang ghar'. It is said the ancestors of the Mros settled on hill tops at the dawn of civilization. In this belief the Mros established their settlements in the deep forests high on the hills.

It is said once upon a time the Mros lived in mud houses. As part of their tradition they used put their new-born on the ground but when they observed that ants and insects from the jungles came to bite the babies they decided to build machangs or huts 9 to 12 feet above the ground with the help of wooden poles. Unlike the other aborigines living in such machangs, the Mro huts are bigger in size and uniform in pattern. (Baten, 2008)

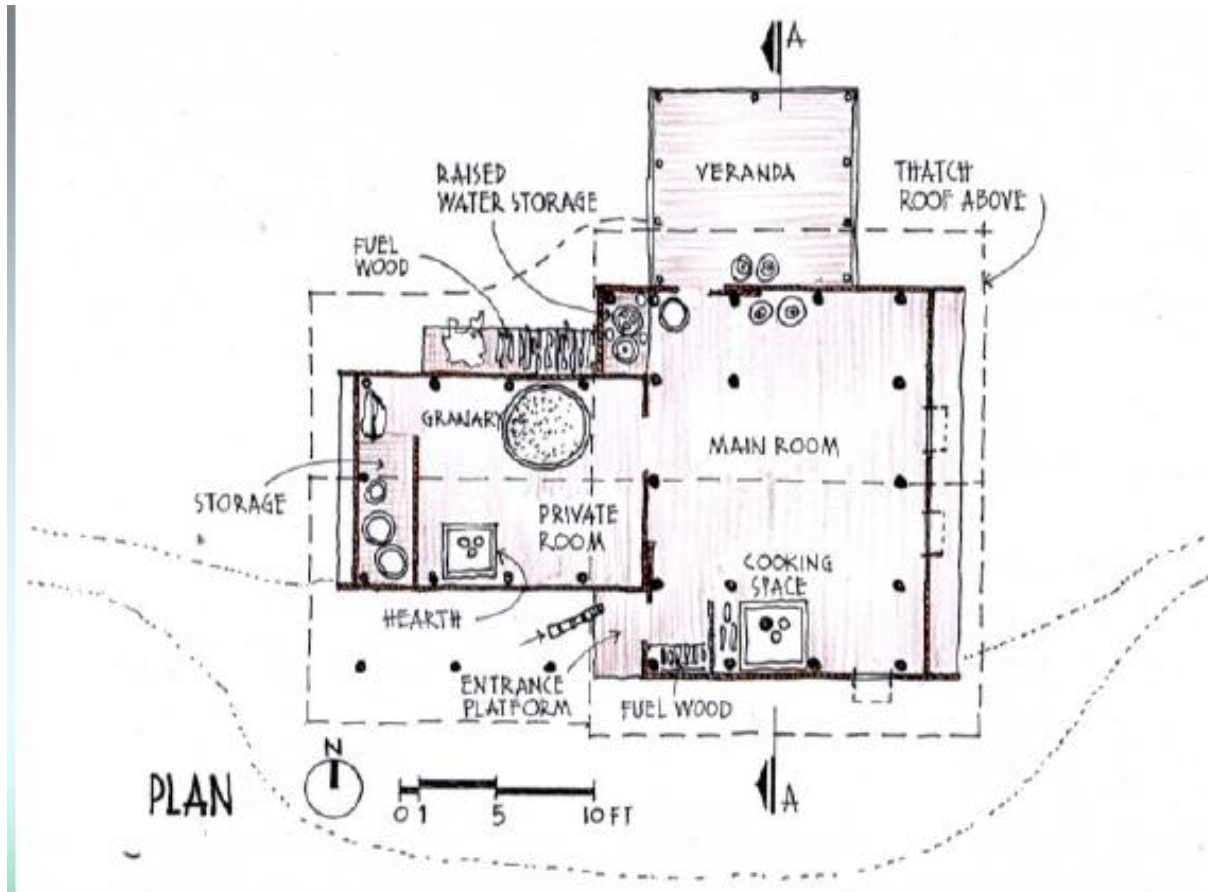
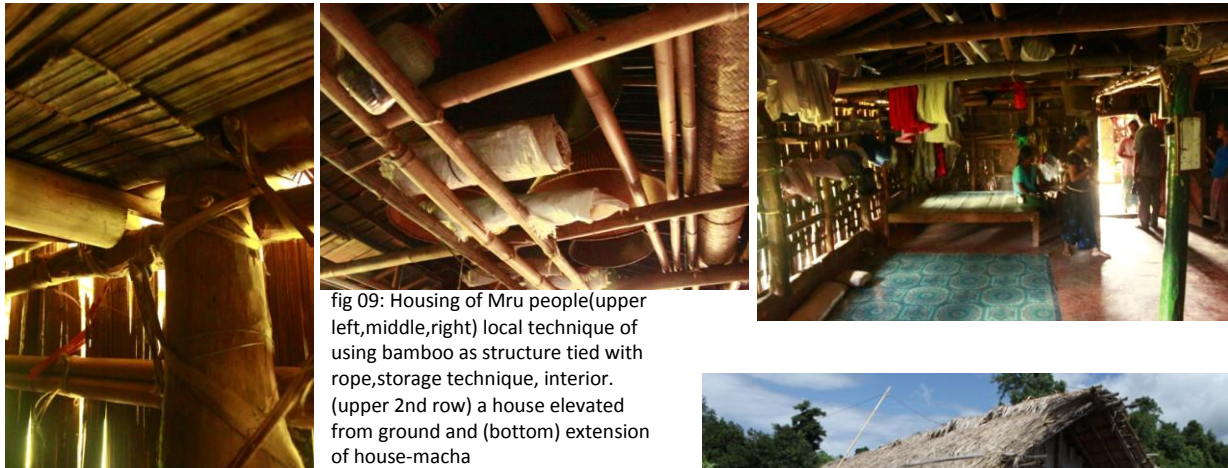


fig 08: (up) plan of a typical Mru house

(bottom) section of a typical Mru house

source: (ahmed & Kabir, 2005)



The Mros call their huts 'kim'. They build these huts in the hills with the help of easily available timber, bamboos, canes and thatching grass. Various kinds of leaves are used for roofing. Bamboo is used for making fences. The space below the machang is made into compartments and used for keeping the domestic animals, as kitchen, for entertaining guests, storage and as bedrooms of unmarried children. The valuables of the house are also kept here. (Baten,2008)



source: saiffee, 2013

The Mro huts look outwardly similar to the huts of other aboriginal communities but are different in inner partitions. As one climbs up the ladder one can see a bamboo-made cubicle where chickens are kept. In the past they used to hang in various rooms cow horns, head of monkeys, shell of tortoise, feathers of birds, dried fruits and leaves, tree trunks etc seeking wellbeing of the family. The Mros regard their houses as safe and secure abode of peace and tranquility. The kim are a symbol of their creative technical skill. (Baten,2008)

(iii) Beliefs

The Mros worship ghosts and spirits. They sacrifice cows and pigs on such occasions and eat their meat. They have no temples or fixed places for worship. Although the Mros are believers in Buddhism many of them have lately been converted to Christianity. Despite being Buddhists, they worship many inanimate objects. 'Thorai' is their principal deity and they believe that he created the world. According to them. Thorai once called a meeting of all peoples to grant them books of religion but there was none to represent the Mros. (Baten,2008)

After waiting for a considerable time, Thurai decided to send a book to the Mros. Coming to know of this the Mros began dancing and singing in joy and organised a festival of food and drinks. Thurai sent the book of religion, written on banana leaves, on the back of a cow. On its way to the Mro village through the hills, the cow became tired and hungry and ate up the banana leaves that contained the book. Consequently, the Mros did not receive their book of religion. When the Mros went to Thurai to represent their case he ordered them to kill the cow. Till this day the Mros celebrate the festival of sacrificing cows. (Baten,2008)

Cow Sacrifice or Siasat-ply Festival

In Mro language, sia means cow and sat means killing with spear. This is why cow sacrifice festival is called siasat. Ply means dance. Such a festival is arranged by affluent landowners after jhum crop is harvested, usually during December-February. Mro youths in traditional costume dance in tune with the 'pung' flute around the cow already tied up; As the host orders, a young man kills the cow with a spear. As the cow bleeds the Mros rejoice. They eat the cow's meat in great delight. They draw the animal's tongue out, cuts it and hoists it on a three-pronged spear as punishment since the cow used its tongue to eat up their book of religion. For observing this festival a committee known as 'riwachawa' is set up with elders in the society. No priest is present on the occasion. (Baten,2008)

Worshipping and Rites

The Mros worship or perform puja twice a year - in the months of Falgun and Ashar. Puja in Mro language is called 'khang'. Cakes are made in every house with new jhum crops. The festival continues for three days. Cows, pigs, goats and chickens are sacrificed in the name of their deity. Such worshipping is arranged to seek the deity's protection against evil spirits. They perform basumati puja if an epidemic breaks out in their village. (Baten,2008)

Champua Festival

The Mros observe champua or banana leaf cutting festival. This festival rhymes with cow sacrifice festival. Cows are killed as the animal ate up the banana leaves that contained their book of religious and banana leaf cutting is celebrated as it contained their sacred book. On the day of festival young Mro boys and girls go far into the forest and cut the banana leaves amidst dancing and singing. This is called champua festival. (Baten,2008)

Roikkharam

This is a festival relating to piercing of the ears. Ears of both boys and girls have to be pierced. Children of the age of three years have to do it. A trained physician performs it. At the festival a pig and a chicken are killed to feed the neighbors who are also offered liquor to drink. Ear piercing through this festival is done to accept the child into the Mro society. (Baten,2008)

Krama Religion

Krama religion was introduced by Mro youth named Menley. It is said that the Mros found in their meditation before a hill suffering erosion due to torrents of water that the stones of the hill will give them solace and that behind the hill is a deity. In course of such meditation in the eighties of the twentieth century, Menley reached a miraculous juncture. He asked and got from the deity alphabets for the Mros and after this he introduced krama religion. (Baten,2008)

(iii) Social Background

Marriage

Mros do not marry within the same clan or sub clan. Their boys and girls are also not allowed marry within two different clans involved in war even after when they enter into peace agreement and become friends, since in such situation, they become brothers in practice and therefore, their children cannot marry each other. Mros have many different ways of performing marriage ceremony but the ceremony is usually very short. Once a couple is selected for marriage, they slaughter a cock in presence of the couple.

When the blood gushes from the vein, someone dips his middle finger and rubs the forehead of the bride and groom. Then follows the declaration that they are husband and wife. After this brief ceremony, the bride and groom eat together and the invitees and guests sprinkle water and rice to bless the couple.

Divorce is allowed in the Mru society. But the husband cannot divorce his wife without a legitimate cause. If a man divorces his wife without any cause, he will be left alone in a deep jungle only with an axe to defend himself from wild animals. A widow may marry but the remarriage is allowed only with a plebian. Bigamy or polygamy is not socially allowed.

Social Custom and Clan Features

Although they introduce themselves to the outsiders as Mros, the outsiders know them as Murong. Within the community they call themselves as 'Marucha'. In the Mro language, 'maru' means human beings. Many people believe 'Mro' has emanated from 'maru'. One of the Mro customs is the formation of a clan with a few families.

The Mro society is patriarchal. Although the father is the head of the family, women play a dominant role in social life. The property goes from father to son but the lion's share is given to the youngest son. In old age, father and mother live with him. Elementary and joint family system are prevalent in the Mro society. Mros are divided into several clans.

Some of the currently known clans are

1. yangrua
2. naichah
3. tam-tu-chah
4. yomre
5. yanringcha
6. tang
7. kanbok
8. prenju
9. deng
10. khou

The yangrua clan has four sub-clans. These are: **khatpo, chimlung, chongnow, and chowla**. Tang clan also has three sub-clans. In the Mro social system, the clans enjoy special importance. For instance,

(a) the boys and girls of a particular clan cannot marry within the clan. A boy of the deng clan cannot marry a girl of his clan. He has to marry a girl from another clan,

(b) Even if two clans become close to each other after a war or truce, their children cannot marry within these clans. It is expected the two clans united fraternally shall support each other in important matters. For instance, the khatpo sub-clan of the yangruas has fraternal relations with tam-tu-chah and yomre clans. Therefore, their children can never marry among these clans,

(c) According to Mro custom, the boys of a particular clan can marry girls of another clan but the boys of the girls' clan cannot marry in the clan of the boys. They have to marry in another clan. For instance, boys of khatpo sub-clan have traditionally been marrying girls of khou, kanbok and naichah clans but their girls cannot marry boys of those clans.

In the past the Mro society ran on the basis of dependence on the chiefs of clans. But after introduction in 1900 of headman system in the Mro areas, and creation of the post of 'roaza' in the villages, the village-based society is now in vogue. (www.ebbd.info)

(iv) Economic Background

The Mrus are very poor people. Although they inhabit a region that is rich in lumber and hydroelectric potential, the villagers lack the technology and knowledge to improve their economic conditions. For this reason, they continue to live as poor farmers.

The Mru excuse their poverty because they believe that Torai intended them to live this way.

The economic life of the Mros depends largely on jhum cultivation for cereal crops and on gardening for other crops. In some areas they also cultivate agricultural land. The Mros in the areas of Chimbuk, Rooma and Thanchi depend on jhum cultivation and gardening. The jhum season begins in March. For jhum they select a hill and clear its jungles. Then they wait for rain. Once rain comes the Mro men and women have no time to breathe.

They make the hill slopes ready for planting seeds and taking care of the young plants. They start shearing the ripened crops in September. As repeated jhum cultivation reduces the yield of crops, they constantly look for new hills. In the past they used to move their settlements with the change of hills but these days it is not possible as with higher population the land for jhum is becoming scarce.

Mro women are more hardworking than their men. At market places, Mro women do the business of buying and selling. Except salt and kerosene, the Mros produce all other commodities themselves. Early in the morning they eat some rice and leave for jhum cultivation, wrapping in banana leaf some food for lunch and after a hard day's work return home at sundown.

The crops they produce are rice, wheat, chillies, beans, kakrol, sesame, cotton, tobacco, mustard, peanuts, turmeric, ginger, banana, pineapple and a variety of vegetables like marfa, ladies finger, cucumber and gourd. They make cheroot. With tobacco leaf. This leaf is also chewed for intoxication. Like Mro men their women also collect timber from forests. In the face of harder economic life some of the Mros these days work as day labourers, woodcutters, fishermen and have taken to other professions like contractors. Lately many of them have taken up employments with the government and non-government organizations.(baten,2008)

(v) Educational Background

Nowadays, some Mros receive modern education at Shialoe school (near Bandarban town) established by the government. But the number of educational institutions are very few, and the percentage of students is very less. The percentage of education rate among Mros are the least (2.9%).(baten,2008)

4.2 Need For Promoting “MRU” Community

As per field study, many issues and changes can be seen among Mru community. The built environment is very diversified in a positive sense, but at the same time numerous problems are occurring due to lack of proper education, health issues, poverty, land crisis, population increase etc.

In the survey the SWOT analysis has been done. But before that a general description should be given in terms of knowing the “actual current scenario”. Currently there are two types of Mru living in Bandarban. One type is living nearer the city and trying to accept and follow the facilities and lifestyle provided by city which are fruitful for them. And another type is living far away from the so called civilized locality, in the remote hills and in an isolated clustered manner. But the Mrus living nearer the city, have actually coming from the remote places as they want to become economically solvent. But it does not mean that the remote Mru communities are not doing good in their own way, in a very basic natural and unique way. But as the globalizing is taking place, a little impact can be seen among the ethnic communities as well. Many of them are coming out of their very basic “down to earth” lifestyle. It can happen either because of the globalization or to reduce poverty, need of education. But concerned ethnic group Mru has also another point to add, they have a tendency to migrate and shifting places. A specific change can be seen among these two types. The remote type is rigid in terms of their religion and beliefs, but the other type is flexible and actually altering and doing necessary changes to their beliefs to

make it more workable. The Krama religion is the sign of their change. In this religion Mrus have alphabets and written language which was not there before, also they have stopped cow killing festival as they have got their alphabets which was the reason behind it. They always used religion as an excuse of their poverty and did not want to come out of the situation, So education was never a part of their life. And considering themselves as a cursed realm was a very common thing. But now some of them are realizing that if they continue giving such excuses, it will only hamper their lives and development and nothing else. But this realization is among very lesser population, where other communities have crossed a far way. Now many problems have been acute which were not much previously. Government and other organizations are working for the ethnic communities and giving them education, health care, work and other facilities like roads, transportations etc. But Mrus are not yet ready to accept these. As they are smaller community and lack behind in education and economic solvency and have always been suppressed and neglected by the other communities. As a result, now-a-days poverty is extreme in Mru community as they are lacking behind all the other communities they are living with. But the positive thing is, unlike neighboring tribes Mrus are still believer of their own religion and has been holding on their roots (culture, religion and language) but they have desires and aspirations to be equal in socio- economic aspect as other tribes which are to some extent lost their culture to become part of mainstream society. So now Mrus can go both way. Either they get derailed to fulfill their aspiration and lose their ethnicity, or they realize their potential and work and develop through their own culture. So the need for starting this journey towards SELF REALIZATION of Mru community has become a necessity, **And it can be set as example and guide other tribes that one tribe explored their own potentials and used it to develop themselves but never lost the originality.**

4.3 Community Based Development for Mrus

Community-based development is a form of development that takes place within the community, emphasizes **maximum participation of community** members in its design and implementation, is ongoing, meets **real needs**, and is basically **self-reliant**. To achieve this, the community needs to have a structure, and persons trained in appropriate methods of implementation. Usually, community-based development will be **small-scale, low-cost, and use simple technologies**. The model must be equally available to all communities, irrespective of their location, denomination or means, and provide for all members of the community according to their needs. (vail, 2009)

In a sentence, “**Community based development** is a development initiative that provides control of the development process, resources and decision making authority directly to community groups.” (Wikipedia)

(i) Community based developments (in general)

Community based development is amongst the fastest growing mechanism for channeling development assistance. It is an umbrella term for the projects that actively include beneficiaries in their design and management. And they play key roles in decision making and designing. The potential gains from community based development are large. It has the explicit objective of **reversing power relations** in a manner that creates agency and **voice for poor people**, allowing them to have more control over development assistance. This is expected to make the allocation of development funds more responsive to their needs, improve the targeting of poverty programs, enhancing their own way of living, improve the services, make government more responsive and strengthen the capabilities of the citizenry to undertake self-initiated development activities. In a general note, if a development takes place based on the people themselves, the outcome is ought to be good without any doubt.

Case study 1: Bhashantek Rehabilitation Project, Dhaka, Bangladesh



The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) took Bhashantek Rehabilitation Project to provide housing for the Slum Dwellers in 1998, who have so long been objects of neglect and suffered even though they played important roles in the economic activities of the city. The project was expected to provide shelter to more than 80,000 urban poor. This was the first, in its type, joint venture rehabilitation project by the Government and private organization. GoB has provided land at Bhashantek in the outskirts of the city. Total land area of BRP is 20 hector where 15,024 apartment units were planned to be constructed. Gross dwelling units density was 748 dwelling unit/ha. Residential land coverage was about 58% of total

land. The project had been planned for implementation in co-ordination with government land, investment of private companies and deposits from the **beneficiaries**. The private developer has developed the land and constructed affordable low-cost flats for poor people who would pay the costs in installments. But the condition of the slum dwellers appeared to be really tough to pay the monthly installment. Existing housing finance system is also not supportive to access housing loan for them.



fig 10: Bhashantek construction

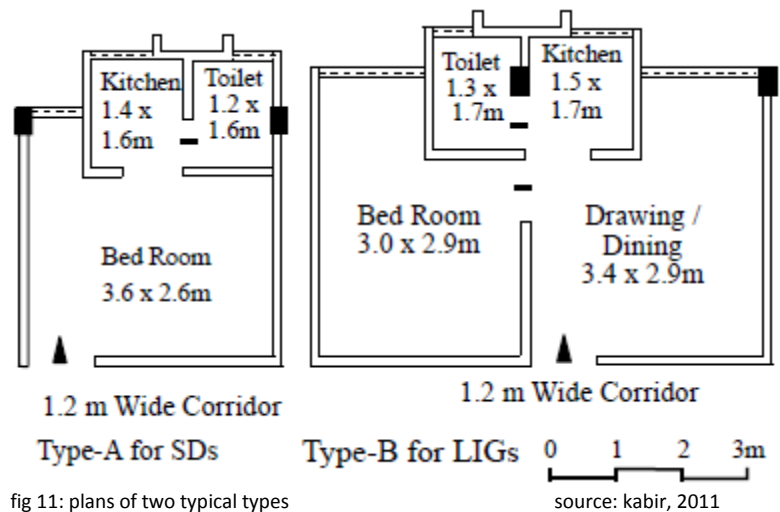


fig 11: plans of two typical types

In reality, Around 3260 slum dwellers were evicted from the project site without any relocation to start the construction works in 2003. There were two types of apartments in the project, one for the evictee and scattered slum dwellers and other for the low income people. By 2010 only 20% of the project work was completed. Among the completed buildings, 288 apartments in 2 buildings were for the evictee and scattered slum dwellers. But reportedly, no evictee slum dweller or even any slum dweller was found in these apartments. Even no document was available showing the evidence of stay of the evictee slum dwellers in the new apartments. This has made the project's initiatives critical to improve the life of the slum dwellers. (kabir, 2011)

Hence the resettlement project was failing.

The reasons behind failure of this project are many. But the concern is to focus on the community participation.

1) This project was dedicated to the slum dwellers of Bhashantek, but as we can see Government and private organizations made the plan, designed and initiated without consulting and taking any kind of opinions from the dwellers.

2) Without any consultation the amount of installment was decided which was not in favor of slum dwellers and they were unable to pay this amount as getting house loans were not even easy for them.

3) without studying their life pattern and built environment the project was built, which failed because of its huge physical structure which was not familiar and comfort zone for the slum dwellers.

4) the knowledge and expertise of local artisans, local materials were not at all used, which was a total top down process. It was a give and take situation in a very negative way which did not attract the slum dwellers at all.

5) without rehabilitating the slum dwellers were evicted during the construction phase, which created anger among them and they sort of rejected the whole uninviting plan of government

Case study 2:Matina crossing community, Philippines

With the affiliation to the Philippine Alliance in Mindanao, the community near the Matina river in Philippines was given the opportunity to be exposed to modern bamboo construction in the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights supporter (ACHR) National Process Workshop last February 6-7, 2010. Conventional construction methods like steel and reinforced concrete were not viable options as they are expensive to construct. Thus, after a series of lectures and hands-on training on bamboo propagation, harvesting, treatment and construction – facilitated by the technical team, the community was able to come up with designs. And it was totally their own design where three communities contributed with their knowledge and experience.

As a result, the Matina Bamboo Footbridge in Davao City became a symbol of unity and hope for the three community associations of Barangay 74-A Matina Crossing Communities residing in the Arroyo Compound. Each bamboo member of the bridge represents each member of the association who are joined and connected to achieve a unique and amazing piece of architecture and engineering. Together, these bamboo members form an arched bridge with a span of twenty-three meters over the silent and very unpredictable Matina River.

the community had to previously utilize a rickety makeshift bridge of lashed bamboo poles that often are swept away when the river, rises well beyond the banks submerging most of the houses in waist-deep muddy waters. The makeshift could not support heavy loads and it only allows a single line of passersby making the transfer of goods and transportation difficult. Thus,

the three community associations united to come up with a solution. Which resulted the amazing bamboo footbridge. They realized the value of their tremendous work when the bridge survived a dreadful flood which took many lives and houses apart from being made of bamboo,



and became the only source of the reliefs and help from the outside world.



fig 12: construction process of matina bridge and discussion of local people

As the days go by, the Matina Crossing Communities' leaders are now finding themselves at the forefront of another battle: rebuilding their lives. With the ease of access because of the bridge, they hope to be able to do this faster than expected. In fact the Matina Communities are known to exceed expectations. The hardened people in this area will definitely be able to pick up the pieces and build a better life and community out of it as they have the unity to withstand anything with their local materials and knowledge. (ACHR, 2011)

(ii) Need for Community based development (For Mrus)

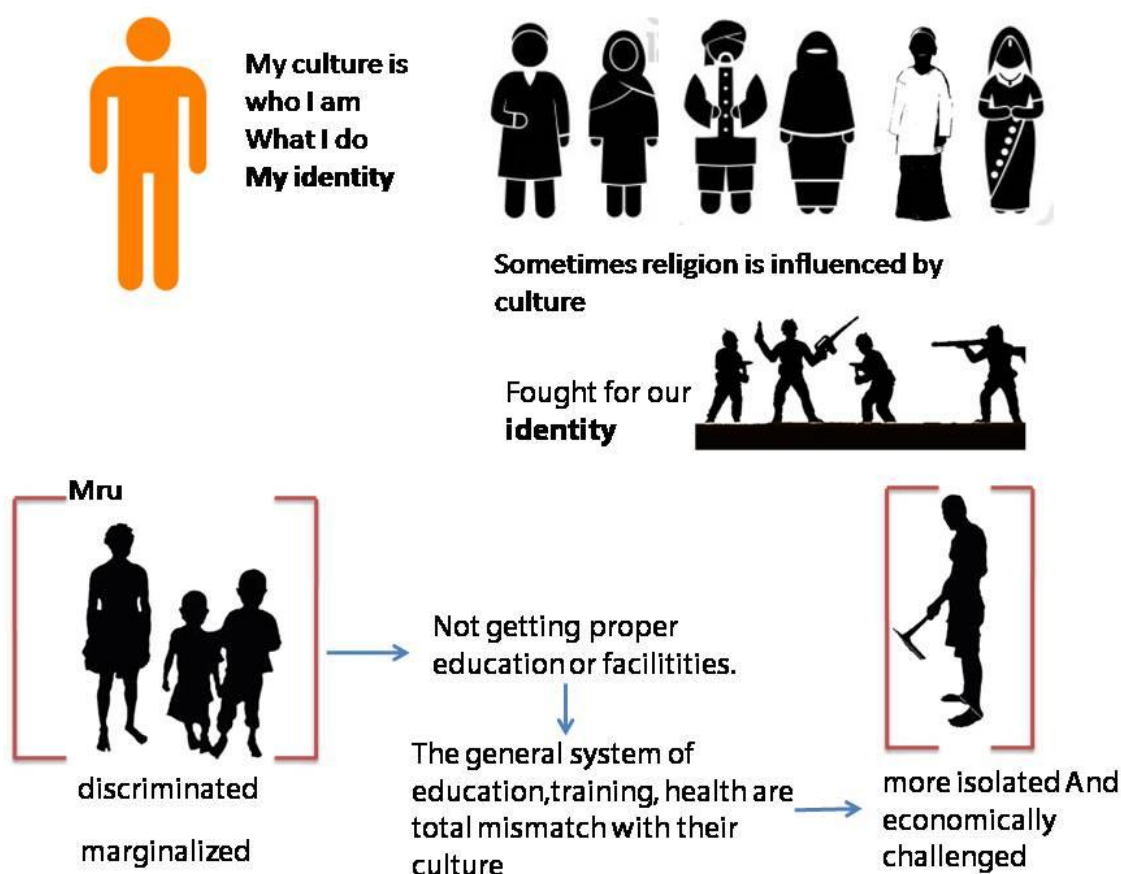


diagram 03: Necessity of culture

Any ethnic and aboriginal group who has unique and different lifestyle, culture, tradition, religion and lived in an isolated manner for hundreds of years should always be given most priority when it comes to any development dedicated for them. Because as we can see from the case studies, the communities were very near to city and they were having the same culture or religion like the other 80% population of the nation. But still than, a project failed because it did

not include the community people, local techniques, knowledge and material. So in a case of ethnic minority like Mru, community based work should definitely be a main concern. And also during field study, they have always mentioned about how they want to continue with their tradition and lifestyle. and also there are some consequences which can affect adversely if the development does take place without consulting “Mru” people. Such as,

- (1) If the development takes place in a top down process , the ethnic minorities might lose their rich tradition and culture.
- (2) They might not feel comfortable with the development process and exclude them from the process
- (3) They might get more isolated and go to remote places thinking it as an act of oppression, as they have always been suppressed and faced negligence.

So, according to above points “ethnic group” as a precious asset of our country the development process should take place according to their demands and will.

4.4 SWOT analysis of the Mru community

Based on the survey in “No para” village the swot analysis has been done.

Strengths:

- (1) Rich and different culture, religion , tradition and language
- (2) A very beautifully built house in local technique with local materials known as “machang ghor”
- (3) Situated in the beautiful natural landscape of green, without any artificial touch
- (4) Traditional agriculture harvesting –Joom
- (5) Traditional way of sewing-"TAT"-supplier of their own clothing.
- (6) make beautiful baskets, fish picker, and different accessories with bamboo.
- (7) Unity amongst the people
- (8) Hardworking people, and women are very active
- (9) Gender discrimination is much lesser than other places of the country.
- (10) A very unique culture of various festivals which include different type of songs, dances and instrument playing.
- (11) Self-dependency and honesty, bravery among the people

Weakness

- (1) Poverty is extreme, due to some superstitions and also due to population increase, land encroachment and discrimination and negligence
- (2) Agricultural land is not in a sufficient quantity
- (3) Education rate is much lesser, schools are only up to primary level and few in number, people have to go to town for further education which is only affordable for people with good income.
- (4) Migration to nearer places of town are making them do adjustments. As a result they are losing many of their unique life patterns.
- (5) Some superstitions like, not giving meat or protein for 1 month to a mother with a new born baby, sending girls to schools hamper economic activity, they are cursed by their God are actually pulling them backward
- (6) Lack of land hampering the process of joom cultivation resulting economic crisis
- (7) Recent flowering of bamboo caused “rat flood” which is resulting crisis in house making materials
- (8) Very remote area, weak communication system
- (9) Aspiring to become equal to so called superior mainstream society, thus losing ethnicity.



fig 13: Influences intervening the Mru society

source: Mahmud,2007

Opportunities

- (1) A new technology has been invented for efficient joom harvesting which can help to hold their traditional agriculture-but need proper training.

- (2) beside joom harvesting, they are being interested of harvesting seasonal fruits and vegetables, which can be a profitable business if proper supervision is done.
- (3) They are realizing the problems of middleman in a business or any kind of economic transaction, so now they are forming groups, team (local organization) to take care of it.
- (4) Very optimistic outlook about education, and really interested to get proper education- only little awareness and proper system for them needs to be introduced.
- (5) Creativity skill in building houses which can endure natural disaster, -this local techniques can be taught and exhibited to others.
- (6) Developing a culture of saving with the help of NGO. ex- Rice bank
- (7) culture is shaping up their religious belief, with the better lifestyle they are leaving behind the superstitions. but they are more cautious of saving their religion and culture from any kind of intrusion.
- (8) they believe in spirituality, and prayer hall is the place where they listen. learn the moral and ethic values. They believe in peace and nature, and these are their driving forces.

Threats

- (1) Threat of land encroachment
- (2) Competition in local businesses (vegetable and fruit market, handloom market) with other ethnic groups which are more powerful.
- (3) pressure of other powerful religious group may end in losing their own unique culture.
- (4) Lack of education may lead them to much more worse situation, regarding economic condition.
- (5) nature of migratory instinct may hamper economic development.
- (6) due to "rat flood" the recent scarcity of their local material "bamboo" can threaten the art of building their unique huts, resulting poor and weak structures of the houses and also intervention of other artificial materials and outside labours

CHAPTER 5: CASE STUDIES

5.1 Shakkomuni Monastery, Khagrachhari, Bangladesh

5.2 Yorkin Community, Talamanca, Costa Rica

5.3 Paruku Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), Great Sandy Desert and Tanami, Australia

5.4 Na Jaqna Conservancy, Namibia

5.4 Philosophical ideology-Auroville (A universal city), South India

5.1 Shakkomuni Monastery, Khagrachhari, Bangladesh



fig 14: Students studying in Shakkomuni Monastery

source: Rahman, 2013

In Mahalchhari under Khagrachhari district, there is this Buddhist monastery named “Shakkomuni monastery” where a school is held called “Proggabongsho shodon”, currently there are 57 students(shramon) staying and studying in the nearby institutions, officially it started in 2007, but it has been actively working for 36 years. It is an unique and peaceful combination of knowledge, religion, culture, and livelihood. The poor families who want their children to be educated but cannot provide sufficient service for that, they bring their children to this place, here they do basic study in the monastery, living in a peaceful place, and they harvest vegetables in their garden and local people also provide food for them. These children learn their own language here, also they learn math, geology, science. And they also go to nearby schools to complete their education. Many students have went to school, colleges and later completed their universities from this monastery. Mongshion Marma who is currently studying in national university, talks about the principal of this institution who is 74 years old, Proggabongsho Mohathero, who has inspired them to gain knowledge. That is why they are here after so much of trouble so much of hardship (Rahman, 2013).

These people are now part of the mainstream society, but they never forget their root, where they have come from, so these sort of ideal institutions or ideal village should be built, this institution is built with one person’s effort, Govt. and NGOs can take initiative to patronize these sort of institutions and communities indirectly, so that indigenous people do not feel aloof from their society and culture and do not feel threatening, later they will realize the helpful role of the country to make them big and will try to replay them. In this way they will be thinking the country as theirs own and mainstreaming of them will be easy in both the ways.

5.2 Yorkin Community, Talamanca, Costa Rica

The Bribri are an indigenous people of Costa Rica. They live in the Talamanca(canton) in Limón Province of Costa Rica.They speak the Bribri language and Spanish. There are varying estimates of the population of the tribe. YORKIN community is situated along a river of the same name which serves along part of its course as the boundry between the countries of Panama and Costa Rica.

The community is habited by the BriBri people. It is principally a farming community with the main economic base in the organic production of cacao and bananas as well as many subsistence crops.

fig 15: Yorkin community,Costa rica



Fig: a typical house



Fig: Local techniques of making roof with palm leaves



Fig: Active women worker, drying corns and coffee beans



Fig: A bridge made by local people with local materials, used as a tourist attraction

source: <http://www.ateccr.org>

The Bribri have lived in the hills and valleys of the Talamanca Mountain Range for hundreds of years. They have managed to hold on to their traditional beliefs and customs while integrating into mainstream Costa Rican society. This small community have created so many opportunities

for them, that they are now very much self sufficient and eager to share their knowledge with city people and other tribes.

This community is always trying to retain their very own culture and identity, as they know it is their pride, and will be shameful to lose the identity. Until now they have kept their life as it is, very natural and unique, and this is what attracts the tourists most. So the economy has flourished because of tourism, but still then they were self-sufficient as in 1985 with the help of NGO the women of this community organized themselves and made a group called Women Artisans Group, in order to diversify agriculture and develop because earlier they were thriving with it. They made some hostels which they call “Women’s House”. The women group makes souvenir here at a small scale which is a now very good business. Tourists are very much attracted to learn the local techniques. The tourists are taught here the traditional method of making roof with palm leaves which work perfectly. These people made two ecolodges in their simple local method, which are very close to nature. They have built a hanging bridge with rope and wood connecting mountains where tourists can hike, enjoy the view. This community has no electricity, no telephone, but they have been facilitated with solar power, now they have installed solar power system with fixed antenna and use cell phones with the power. Each family is a piece of tropical forest itself. the families are benefitted from the womens artisan group. But protecting environment has been their top most priority, they protect 1,235 acres of forest(UNDP,2013). They have some missions which are

- they promote culturally and ecologically sound tourism and small-scale, locally owned businesses.
- they stimulate conservation through education and by helping local families derive economic benefits from their natural resources.
- they arrange memorable activities for visitors to Talamanca and help visitors participate in sound eco-tourism activities.

This community is very hospitable, they invite people to come and share the knowledge and tradition. So it can be seen the community participation has made them prosper without hampering their unique tradition or culture. But they were facilitated with some training and technological method to do so. But very successfully they have retained their identity, it was possible because of their participation and humble wish and cooperation of other citizens of the nation.(<http://www.ateccr.org>)

5.3 Paruku Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), Great Sandy Desert and Tanami, Australia



fig 16: Paruku Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), Great Sandy Desert and Tanami, Australia

source: (kennedy,2008)

Paruku Indigenous Protected Area was declared in September 2001. It covers around 430,000 hectares on the borders of the Great Sandy Desert and Tanami bioregions, south of the township of Halls Creek.

Paruku's spectacular wetlands are an internationally renowned haven for hundreds of thousands of birds. The IPA covers a collection of aquatic habitats known as Lake Gregory, including Mulan Lake (the largest waterbody), Lera Waterhole, and Salt Pan and Djaluwon Creeks. Paruku is the Walmajarri name for Lake Gregory. Paruku/Lake Gregory is the only lake in the region with a reliable source of fresh water for large numbers of birds and other animals, supporting over 70 species of waterbirds and 175 aquatic species.

Paruku IPA encompasses a variety of desert and semi-desert landscapes, undulating red sand plains, salt pans and occasional dunes with stunted eucalyptus. The land covered by the IPA is held under two pastoral leases purchased by the Aboriginal Lands Trust in 1978. Paruku/Lake Gregory and Billiluna properties are managed by the Mulan community with the assistance of the Kimberley Land Council. **IPA status helps Traditional Aboriginal Owners protect their places of cultural significance, to develop an ecologically sustainable pastoral enterprise and conserve the Paruku wetlands.**

The IPA has several groups of Traditional Owners, including Walmajarri, Jaru and Kukatja peoples. Paruku is at the end of a long Dreaming track binding together a large number of

people living across a wide area. The way the projects of land and waters are managed, including the placement of fences, bores and living camps, is governed by Tjurapalan Tingarri Law. The law also binds the Traditional Owners together and expresses their communal ownership of native title.(kennedy,2008)

Over time the projects grew into a large collective of two-way learning projects based on Traditional Owner's knowledge of country and modern scientific research techniques., creating best practice models for looking after country based on strong cultural foundations.

- The Traditional Owners who sustain the transfer of knowledge, and instill a sense of pride in reconnecting young people with country and culture.
- The rangers, whose personal and professional skills grow with each new experience.
- The dedicated staff that often live in remote communities and work alongside rangers and Traditional Owners leaving with them new skills and a different perspective of the world.

The project partners who support the important work being undertaken and develop new understandings of people country and place with the outcomes of each project. (Gorring,2013)

Background

In the late 1970s,the late Rex Johns, arranged for the Walmajarri people to go back to the lake country after they were moved away in the 1950s and 1960s during the mission days. After a long and protracted campaign, in 2001 the Walmajarri people, with the assistance of the Kimberley Land Council, had their native title rights recognized. In that same year, the IPA was declared, once again initiated by Rex Johns. It was the first IPA in Western Australia.

fig 17: Paruku Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), local people, their community and homestead

source: (Gorring,2013)



Fig: a walmajarri child in traditional attire



Fig: (Left) Paruku's red sand plains. (Right) Paruku homestead. (Bottom) Paruku community meeting

Rex's vision was to "Keep the story alive. Keep the land alive, too." He believed the IPA could help to do this.

The IPA has now grown significantly, employing many efficient indigenous staffs.

The activities of the Paruku IPA are varied, **covering projects related to conservation, tourism, art and culture, language and the management of cattle and horses.** There is a **major focus on education, facilitating the intergenerational transfer of traditional knowledge, married with scientific and contemporary land management techniques.**

The Walmajarri people of Mulan and Billiluna have a strong connection to their land and their IPA. Throughout their history they **have shown a collective strength of character to protect their land and preserve their culture**, first by moving back to the Lake which is such a significant site, eventually establishing their native title rights and subsequently setting up the IPA. Because of this there is a genuine sense of ownership over the IPA that suggests that it will continue to remain strong. (Kennedy, 2008)

5.4 Na Jaqna Conservancy, Namibia

With 912,000 ha of communal land, Na Jaqna Conservancy combines the sustainable management of endemic wildlife and natural resources with the **empowerment of Namibia's Kung San people**. Established as a conservancy in 2003, the organization trains local Kung San as wildlife managers, committee members and game guards. Objectives include re-establishing game populations and sustainable forest management through sound planning, management and monitoring. The governance structure for the conservancy, is prescribed by Namibian law as part of its **successful Community Based Natural Resource Management Programme**. A community-based natural resource management system that gives people more security and sovereignty over their land.

Using a highly inclusive management system that matches the unique leadership system of the Kung San people, the conservancy has successfully repopulated the area with big game and traditional medicinal plants while providing employment opportunities for local people as guides, in anti-poaching patrols, and as plant harvesters.(UNDP,2012)

5.4 Philosophical ideology-Auroville (A universal city), South India



fig 18: Auroville (from left) matrimandir, laboratory,diversified people from different corners of world
source: (<http://www.auroville.org>)

The concept of Auroville - an ideal township devoted to an experiment in human unity - came to Mirra Alfassa, "The Mother". She was spiritual collaborator of [Sri Aurobindo](#), who believed that "man is a transitional being". In the mid 1960s the Sri Aurobindo Society in Pondicherry proposed to Her that such a township should be started. She gave her blessings. The concept was then put before the Govt. of India, who gave their backing and took it to the General Assembly of UNESCO. In 1966 UNESCO passed a unanimous resolution commending it as a project of importance to the future of humanity, thereby giving their full encouragement.

"Auroville is meant to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realize human unity."

Mother expected that this experimental "universal township" would contribute significantly in the "progress of humanity towards its splendid future by bringing together people of goodwill and aspiration for a better world." Mother also believed that such a universal township will contribute decisively to the Indian renaissance. In the inauguration ceremony attended by delegates of 124 nations on 28 February 1968, Mother gave Auroville its 4-point [Charter](#) setting forth her vision of Integral living:

1. Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole. But to live in Auroville, one must be the willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.
2. Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages.
3. Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realisations.
4. Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity. (wikipedia)

Overview of the city plan

Peace Area, City Zones & Green Belt

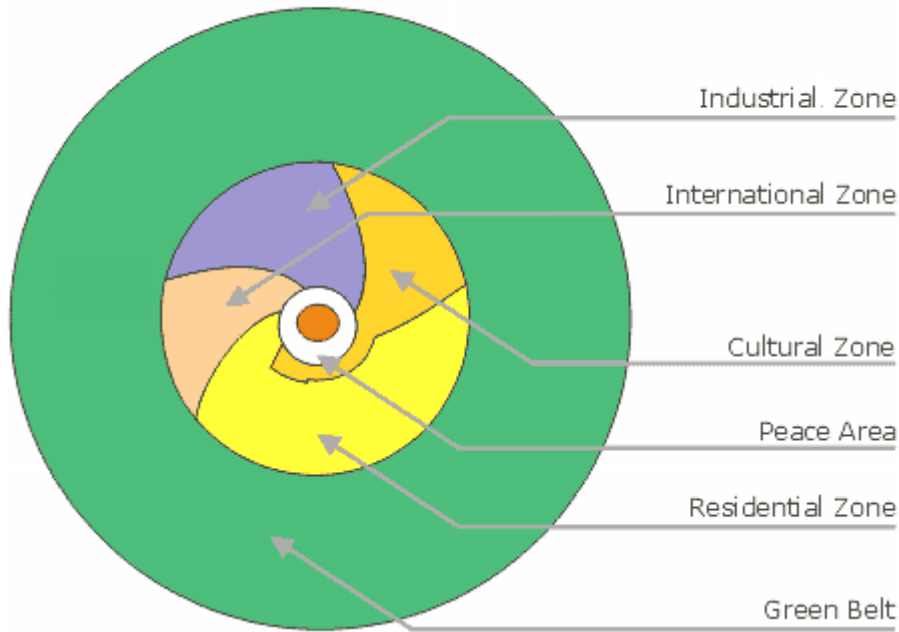


diagram 04: overview of the Auroville city plan

Peace Area

At the centre of the township lies the Peace Area, comprising the Matrimandir and its gardens, the amphitheatre with the Urn of Human Unity that contains the soil of 121 nations and 23 Indian states, and a lake to help create an atmosphere of calm and serenity and to serve as a groundwater recharge area.

Industrial Zone

A 109-hectare area to the north of the Peace Area, the Industrial Zone, a zone for "green" industries, is focused on Auroville's efforts towards a self-supporting township. It will contain small and medium-scale industries, training centres, arts and crafts, and the city's administration.

Residential Zone

The largest of the four city zones, comprising of 189 hectares, the Residential Zone is bordered by parks on the north, south and west. Main access to the zone will be through the crown road with further traffic distribution via five radial roads that divide the zone into sectors of increasing

densities. This zone wants to provide a well-adjusted habitat between individual and collective living. 55% of the area will be green and only 45% built surface, thereby creating an urban density balanced by nature.

International Zone

The International Zone, a zone of 74 hectares to the west of the Peace Area, will host national and cultural pavilions, grouped by continents. Its central focus is to create a living demonstration of human unity in diversity through the expression of the genius and contribution of each nation to humanity

Cultural Zone

Planned on a 93-hectare area, situated to the east of the Peace Area, the Cultural Zone will be a site for applied research in education and artistic expression. Facilities for cultural, educational, art and sports activities will be located in this zone.

Green Belt

The city area with a radius of 1.25 km. will be surrounded by a Green Belt of 1.25 km width. As a zone for organic farms, dairies, orchards, forests, and wildlife areas, this belt will act as a barrier against urban encroachment, provide a variety of habitats for wildlife, and serve as a source for food, timber, medicines etc. and as a place for recreation.

Presently an area of 405 hectares, the Green Belt - though incomplete - stands as an example of successful transformation of wasteland into a vibrant eco-system. Its further planned extension with an additional 800 hectares will make it into a remarkable demonstration site for soil and water conservation, ground water recharge, and environmental restoration. As lungs for the entire township, it will complete the healing process that Auroville started several decades ago. (<http://www.auroville.org>)

CHAPTER 6:PROGRAMME AND DEVELOPMENT

6.1 PROGRAMATIC LAYOUT AND AREA

The programs are planned as MRU tribe's priorities and needs. It will help them to promote their Ethnicity and originality.

SCHOOL

Requirements	Number	Sqft
Classroom(nursery-10)	11 (25 students per class)	$\{(25 \times 25) \times 11\} = 6,875$
toilets	10	$\{(4 \times 4) \times 8 + (5 \times 5) \times 2\} = 178$
Teachers room	2	$\{(25 \times 15) \times 2\} = 750$
Headmaster's room	1	$(15 \times 10) = 150$
Asst. headmaster's room	1	$(10 \times 10) = 100$
Toilets(admin)	4	$(5 \times 5) \times 4 = 100$
Labs	3	$(25 \times 25) \times 3 = 1,875$
Computer lab	1	$(25 \times 25) = 625$
Cafeteria	1	$(50 \times 50) = 2,500$
Health center	1	$(20 \times 20) = 400$
Child Care (incl. kitchen, lobby)	1	$(30 \times 30) = 900$
Library	1	$(70 \times 40) = 2,800$
Total		17,253
	25% circulation	4,314
		21,567
		0.5 acre

Dormitory

Requirements	Number	Sqft
2 persons room	26	$(26 \times 152.5) = 3,965$
Common & Reading	2	$(20 \times 20) \times 2 = 800$
Supervisor	2	$(10 \times 10) \times 2 = 200$
Staff	4	$(10 \times 10) \times 4 = 400$
Dining	1	$(40 \times 40) = 1,600$
Kitchen	1	$(20 \times 20) = 400$
Pantry	1	$(20 \times 10) = 200$
Store	2	$(4 \times 4) \times 3 = 48$
Toilets & baths	8	$(16 \times 4) \times 2 = 128$
Total		7,741
	25% circulation	1,935
		9,676
		0.2 acre

Training Center

Requirements	Number	Sqft
Workshops (indoor)	Vegetation training 1 Bamboo (handicraft) 1 Handloom 1 Bamboo treatment 1	(25x25)= 625 (25x50)=1,250 (25x50)=1,250 (25x25)= 625
Workshops (semi-outdoor)	Vegetation 1 Cow shed 1 Poultry 1	(25x50)=1,250 (50x50)=2,500 (25x50)=1,250
Tutors	1	(20x20)= 400
Staffs	1	(20x20)= 400
Stores	3	(10x10)x3=300
Head authority	1	(10x10)= 100
Total		9,950
	25% circulation	2,488
		12,438
		0.3 acre

Cultural area

Requirements	Number	Sqft
Gallery	2	(70x40)=2800 (20x30)= 600
Collection store/workshop	1	(20x30)= 600
Office (admin)	1	(10x10)=100
Office (staff)	1	(10x15)=150
Multi-purpose hall	1	2,500
Meeting room	1	(20x15)= 300
Toilets	4	(4x4)x3= 48 (5x5)= 25
Total		7,123
	25% circulation	1,781
		8,904
		0.2 acre

Religious center

Requirements	Number	Sqft
Prayer hall (250 ppl)	1	6,000
Meditational Space (shaded with outdoor space,water)	1	1,100
Caretakers	3	(10x15)=150
Store	2	(5x5)= 25
Washroom with toilet	1	(20x20)=400 (16x4) = 64
Total		7,739
	25% circulation	1,935
		9,674(0.2 acre)

CHAPTER 7: CONCEPTUAL STAGE AND DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Self realization

7.3 conceptualization

7.4 programs conceptualization

7.5 Design Development: Phase 01 (idea of spaces)

7.6 Design Development: Phase 02 (Zoning)

7.7 Plans, Sections, Renders and Model images

7.1 Introduction

The "Mru" tribe are currently on the verge of changing, it is a transitional point for them where their desire of becoming socio-economically solvent and equivalent to the so called superior Bengali settlers can take shape in reality and they might lose their own culture, lifestyle. Or they realize their specialty, their unique potential of culture, religion and language and follow the path of self realization. The second option is a very challenging way for them. Because they see now, what they are doing for hundreds of years for living is not fruitful, they have these feelings that this culture and religion are becoming useless and they should move forward and live life like the mainstream Bengali settlers are living. But the question is being influenced by the neighboring tribes and Bengali settlers and choosing the path of theirs, can it be called moving forward? Or this is actually taking them backward? This thing is currently not visible to them, because any person who is living in a poorer condition will aspire to live like a person who is more solvent, whether this desire floods away their hundred years old culture, it will not matter to them. But after 20-30 years when this person will look back and see that he/she along with his/her family have no connection to root and they do not know where they have come from, it will be then question of self existence. And this things have taken place in many places of our society, many of us have blindly followed the wealthy culture of western society and our desire and aspirations won over our rich culture and heritage. But this question can arise, why it is so important to hold on to roots and culture. This may lead to debate but a very simple example can be given. The current scenario of Chittagong- the megacity. We are blindly following the western civilization not knowing what is actually good for the city. There are big highways, buildings, but what we actually fail to see how it was built before, how the environment of the city was taken care of, how the hills were respected, but now the aspiration and population increase is such, we build high-rises not thinking that this might affect the nature of the city. Making the hills flat, disrespecting the nature, building so called modern structures not knowing if it is suitable or not, have become a regular thing for us. Resulting landslide, decrease of green, natural disaster, water blockage. So it is not only the question of preserving culture, but also a question of protecting our own environment. In this case we are talking about ethnic and indigenous people of our country who are the assets of Bangladesh. We realize the fact that they are very special, the way they have merged themselves with nature and lived there for hundreds of years are the examples of sustainability in their very own way. And they should improvise this way of living, and not just follow neighboring solvent tribes and Bengali settlers who are disrespecting everything only for economic solvency.

7.2 Self Realization

Mru ethnic group has not been yet completely influenced, or derailed, but there are possibilities that they realize their self importance. If this very group can set an example of improvement through originality, then it will be easier for other groups to follow. the main reason for choosing this tribe were their positive attitudes towards their culture and religion.

"KRAMA" - a religious solution which came from their very own people, which has been discussed before, but in brief, through this new religion the Mrus were being introduced with their new text, which is a step forward, and this religion stopped many of their taboos which were holding them back. And most of them accepted the religion, but it would not have been possible if this sort of solution was proposed to them. The positive thing is, this change merged with their way of lifestyle, did promote their identity and it enriched them. So we can see, spiritually this tribe has move forward which can set as an example on their way of self realization, that any positive solution can come from their society and it can be utilized for their own prosperity. Like the way they move forward through spirituality, they can move forward through culture and lifestyle, it just needs a starting point. **So this project aims to give them a starting point where this journey will start. The sense of originality** might come in 20-30 years, but they need to see some **immediate benefits**, which will drive them to that path .

7.3 Conceptualization

Program formulation ideology

Using their potential for strengthening them

Culture, religion and language

Religion as key point



Diagram 05: program formulation, functions revolve around spirituality
source: Saifee

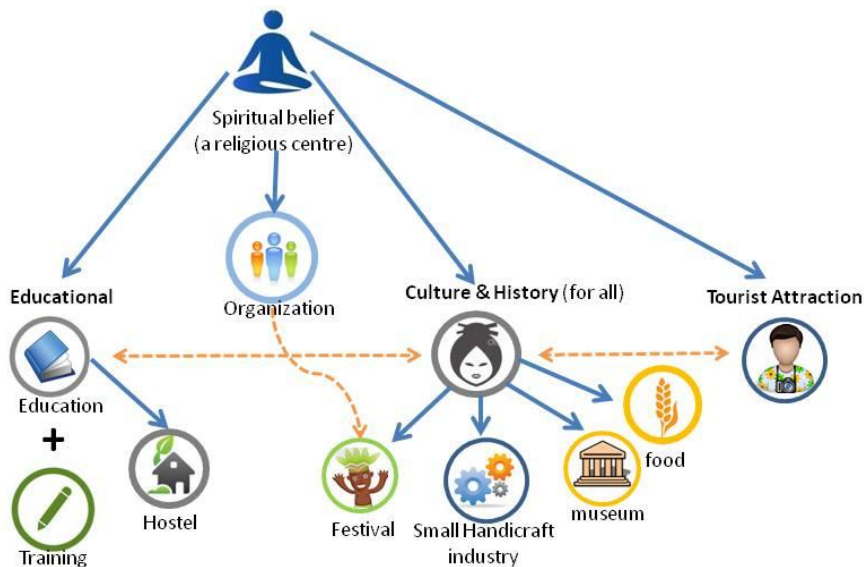


Diagram 06: Interconnection of programs
Source: Saiffee

7.4 Programs Conceptualization

Cultural part

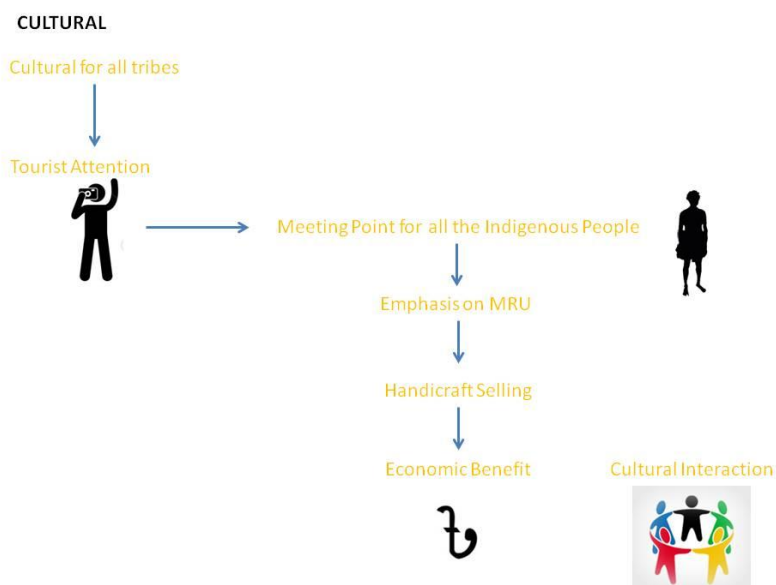


Diagram 07: Conceptual diagram for cultural part
Source: Saiffee

Cultural part of Mru community will not only represent Mru, but also it will represent all the indigenous people of CHT. As we the mainstream society of Bangladesh know very little about all these tribes, this can be a tourist attraction for us. We will go there and know, learn and understand their rich culture of these people. On the other hand, indigenous people will feel the importance of their culture. And it will be a interaction and meeting point for all the tribes. From the training centre Mrus will be able to sell their products in here without any middleman, and interact with Bengalis as they will be getting education. in this way, they will interact, emphasizing on their lifestyle and have economic benefits.

Educational and Training part

EDUCATION



Diagram 08: Conceptual diagram for educational part
Source: Saiffee

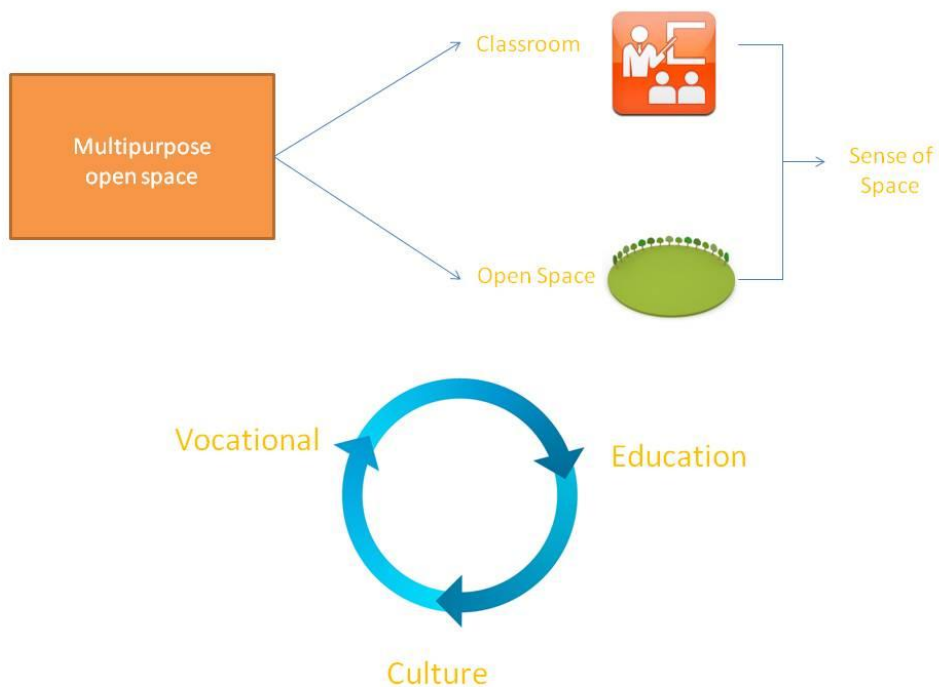


Diagram 09: Conceptual diagram of spaces for educational part
Source: Saiffee

VOCATIONAL

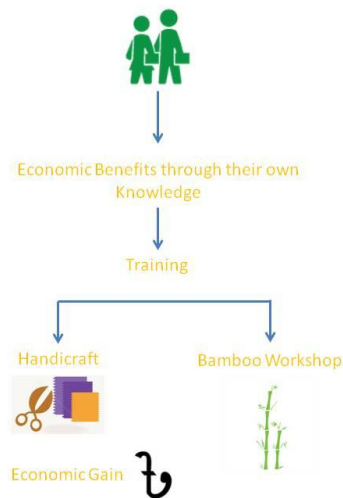


Diagram 10: Conceptual diagram of spaces for educational part
Source: Saiffee

The education they are currently receiving is a system followed all over the Bangladesh, which is not contextual and not beneficial to them. But at this point of time they need to be convinced and at the same time it has to serve the main purpose. So, the main visible conflicts between their life and the typical system are:

- The Mru children who are more than 9 years old have to go to jhoom harvesting in day time, so they cannot afford to go to school on that certain time.
- Maximum Mru girl children who are more than 6 years old have to stay back home to look after their younger siblings.
- Mrus do not see any economic benefits from the school
- Mrus cannot relate themselves to school because they are not in their mother tongue, and the syllabus they are being taught is the national curriculum system of Bangladesh which do not emphasize or give any importance to their history.

Proposed school:

- The school will have a daycare centre, where the infants can be kept and they can also start learning through playing on their own way.
- In that way the other Mru girls can come to school
- There will be different timing based on their work.
- The spaces will be more open and comfortable for them, with interaction spaces, semi open multipurpose spaces for painting, making handicraft stuffs which they can actually sell later.
- Parallel co-existence of national curriculum and history of indigenous people

- Training centre will be interconnected which will help to produce handicrafts in a larger scale and amount, many women, men and children can take the training and earn through selling them in cultural part.

Agroforestry

The traditional jhum cultivation is becoming a threat now a days, where Agro forestry can be considered as a very good solution for the soil of hills and also for the economic benefits.

“JHUM” CULTIVATION

- This system involves clearing a piece of land by setting fire or clear felling and using the area for growing crops of agricultural importance such as upland rice, vegetables or fruits.
- A rotation of fields rather than by crops, accompanied by slashing and burning.

Slash and Burn



Shifting and Cultivating



Fig 19:system of jhum cultivation
Source: Saiffee

IMPLICATIONS OF “JHUM” CULTIVATION

- **Soil Erosion**
Clearing of natural vegetation for cultivation of pineapple, ginger and turmeric along the slopes has a negative effect, which increases soil erosion in the hilly areas.



About 75% of the hilly areas have very high susceptibility to erosion leading to landslide.

- **Landslide**



Diagram 11:Diagram showing implications of jhum cultivation
Source: Saiffee



Fig 20:jhum cultivation-occupation of Mru people
Source: Saiffee

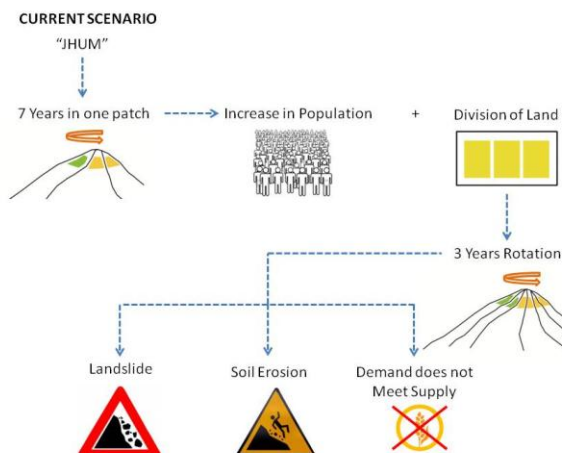


Diagram 12:Diagram showing current scenario of jhum cultivation
Source: Saiffee

POSSIBLE REMEDY : AGROFORESTRY

A sustainable management system for land that increases overall production, combines agricultural crops, tree crops and forest plants and/or animals simultaneously or sequentially.

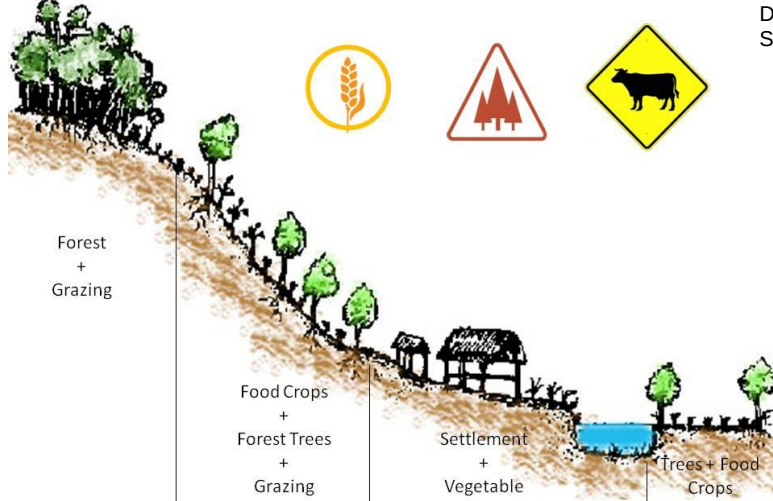


Diagram13: Agroforestry as possible remedy
Source: Saiffee

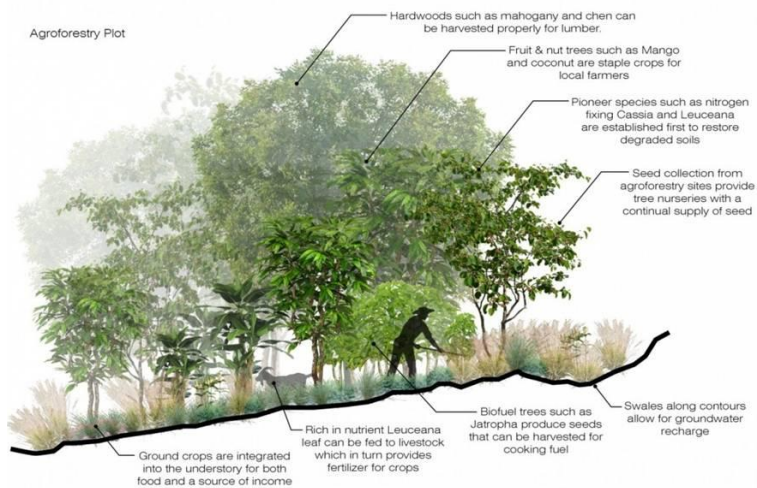


Diagram14: Agroforestry system
Source: Saiffee

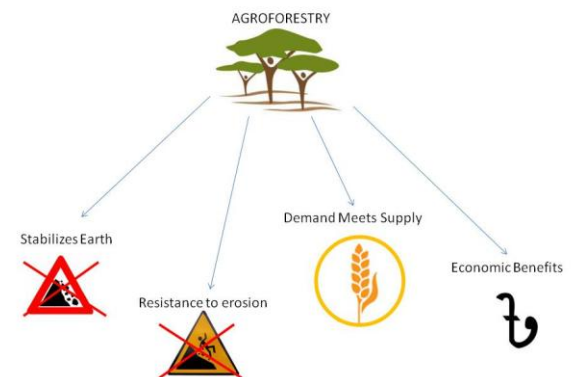
BENEFITS OF AGROFORESTRY

Diagram15: Benefits of Agroforestry
Source: Saiffee

7.5 Design Development: Phase 01 (idea of spaces)

As we know the standards of everything varies in Mru tribe. They have a different lifestyle, different topography, different spaces, different sense of privacy. All of these things were main concerns, because the idea was to design in their own way, a bottom up approach. And it has to come from them.

Comparison of spaces

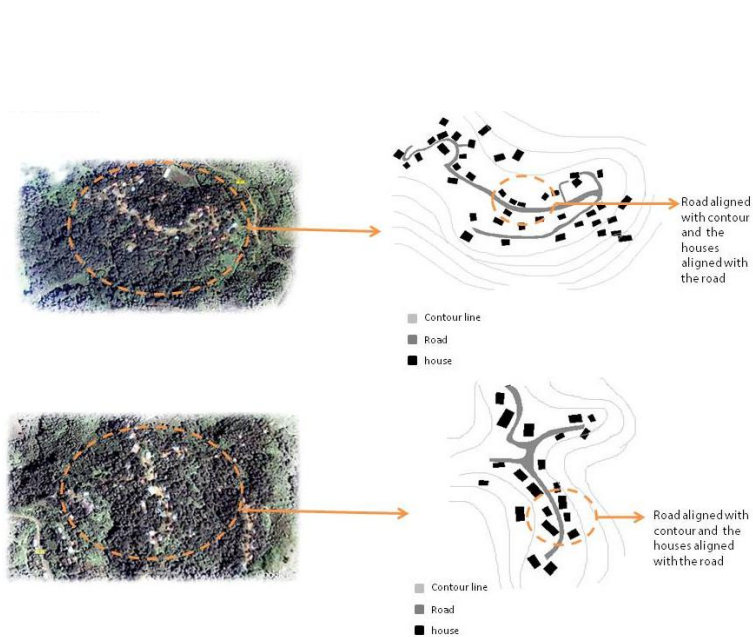


Diagram16: Orientation and placement of settlements
Source: Saiffee

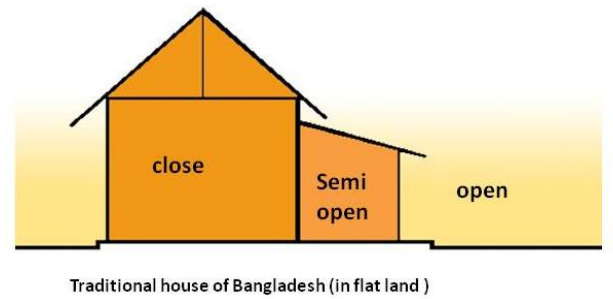
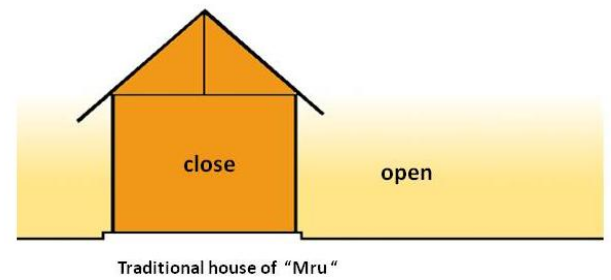


Diagram17: Relation of open-close
Source: Saiffee

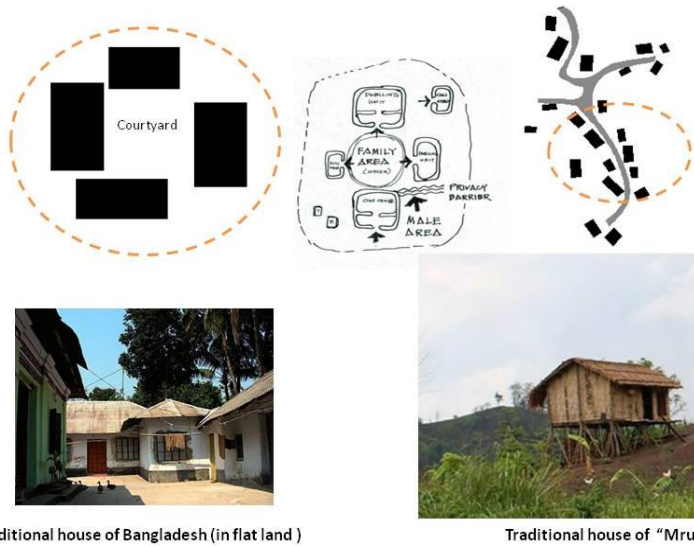


Diagram18: Different arrangement of spaces
Source: Saiffee

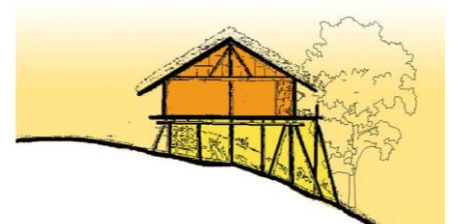
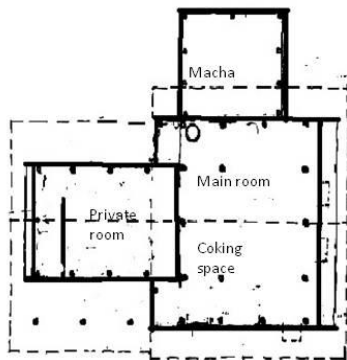


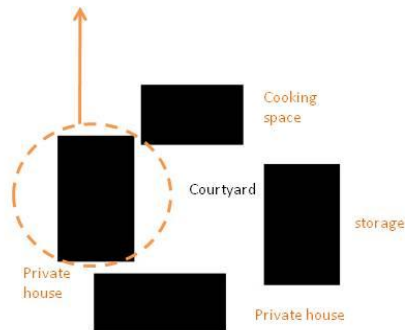
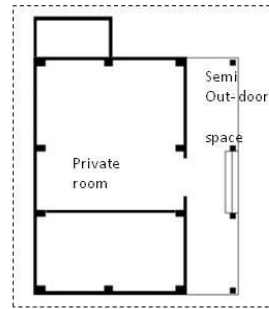
Fig 21: Placing of a stilt house respecting contour
Source: Saiffee

PLAN



Traditional house of "Mru"

Plugged in spaces



Traditional house of Bangladesh (in flat land)

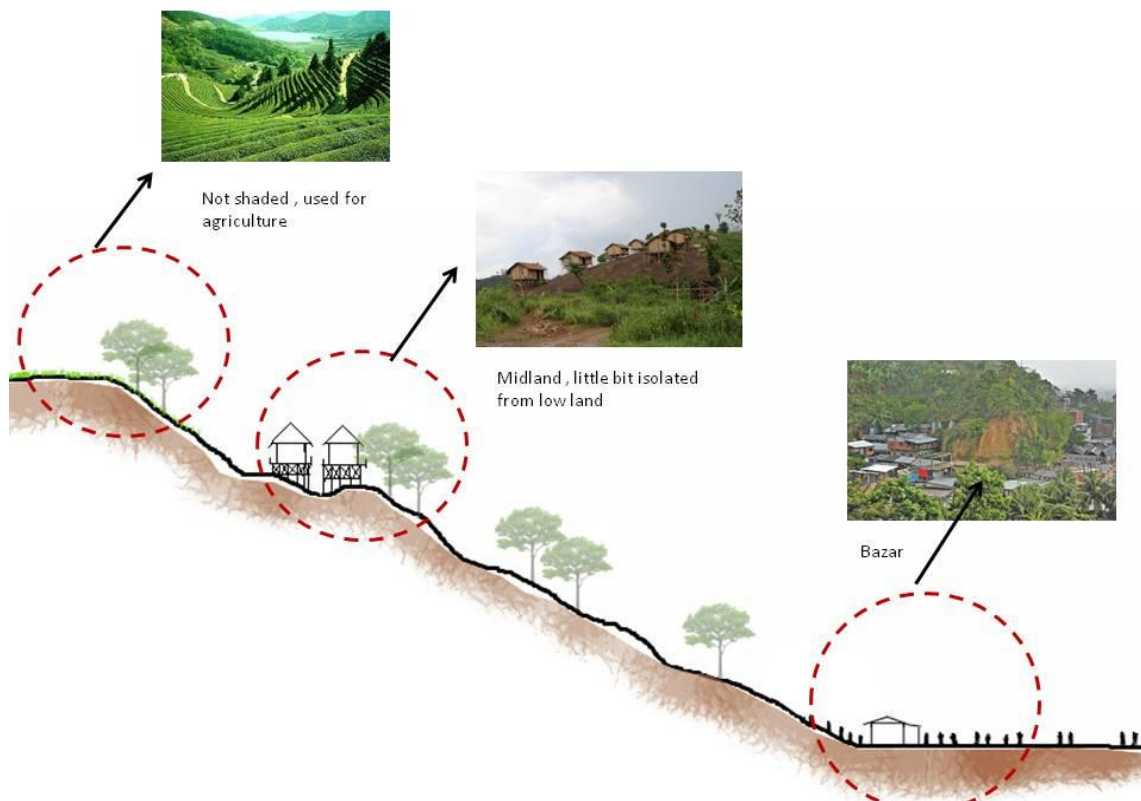
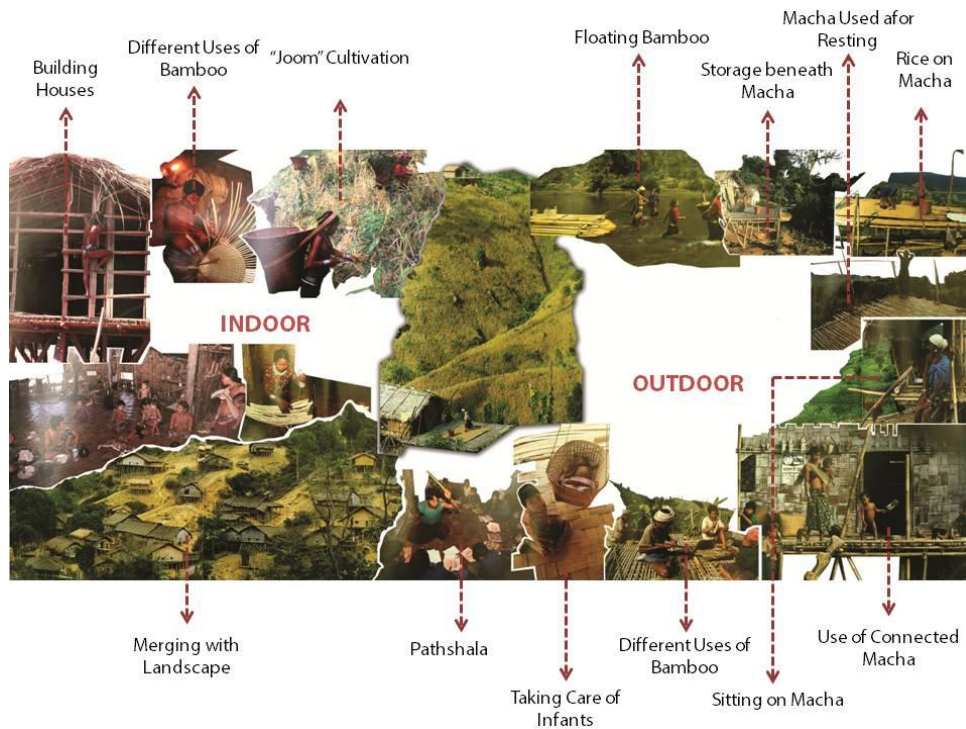
Diagram19: different arrangement of interior spaces
Source: SaiffeeDiagram20: Zoning of Mru
Source: Saiffee

Fig 22: Idea of spaces
Source: Saiffee



7.6 Design Development: Phase 02 (Zoning)

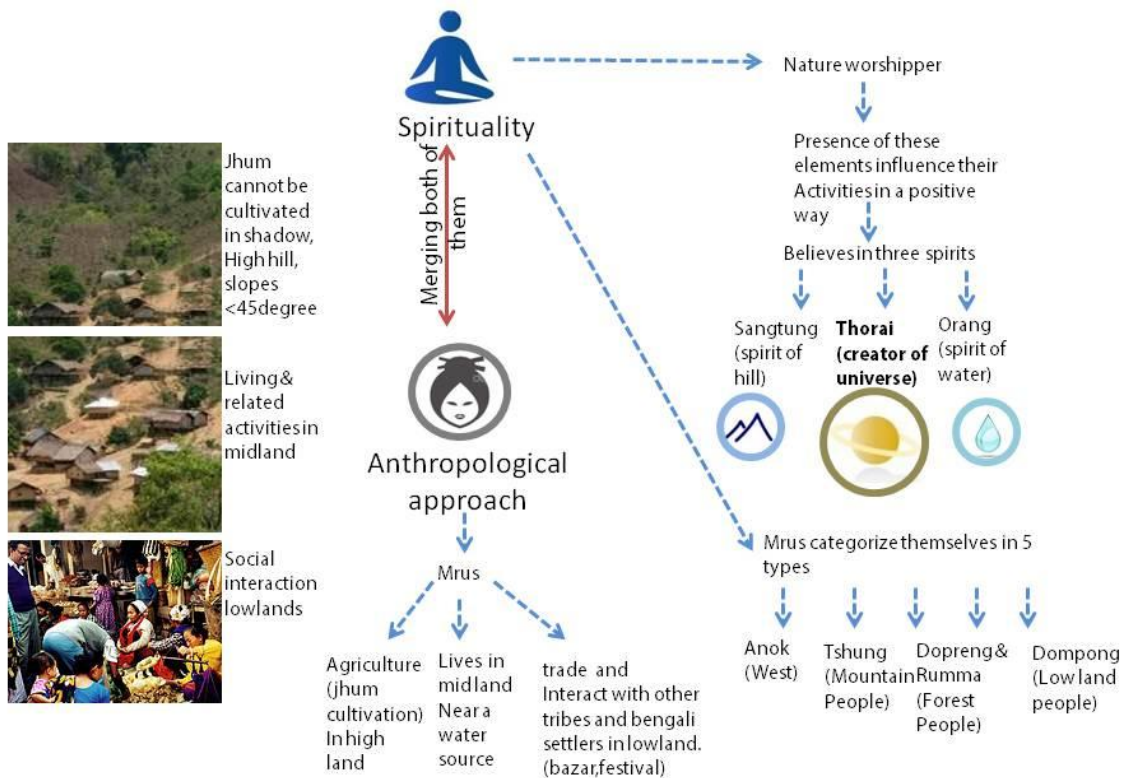


Diagram21: Concept of Zoning
Source: Saiffee

ZONING

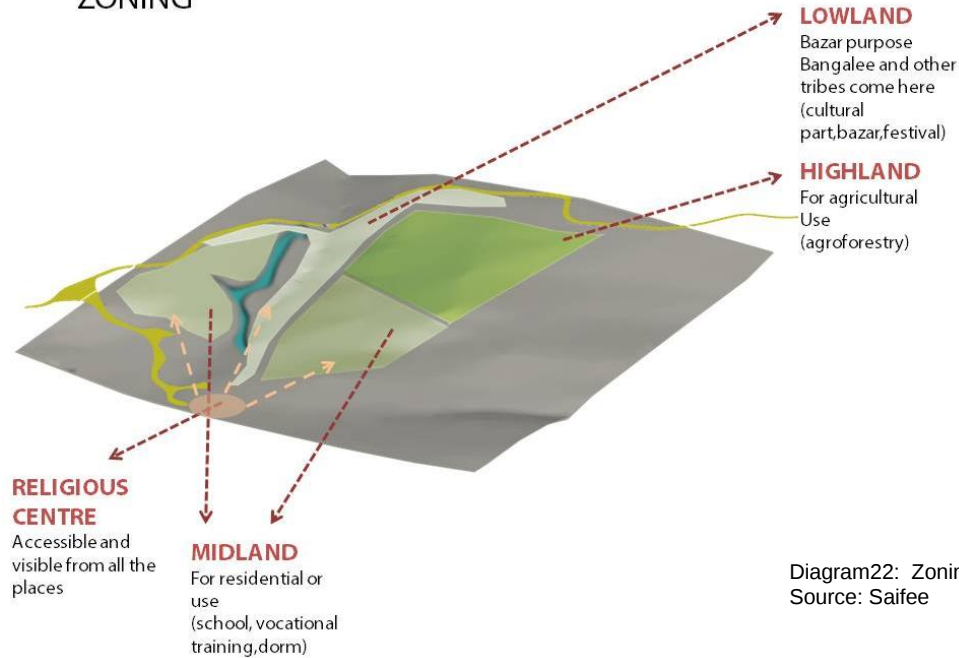


Diagram22: Zoning
Source: Saiffee

The initial planning started with the idea of spaces Mrus are currently living in. It is a very simple approach of design which came spontaneously with the orientation of contour, connected macha perceived as pathway in hilly area, stilted forms leading to the spiritual identity. People and spirituality are in the two end of a string, and that string is a moving water body called "jhiri" and along the string comes the other functions.

BUBBLE DIAGRAM

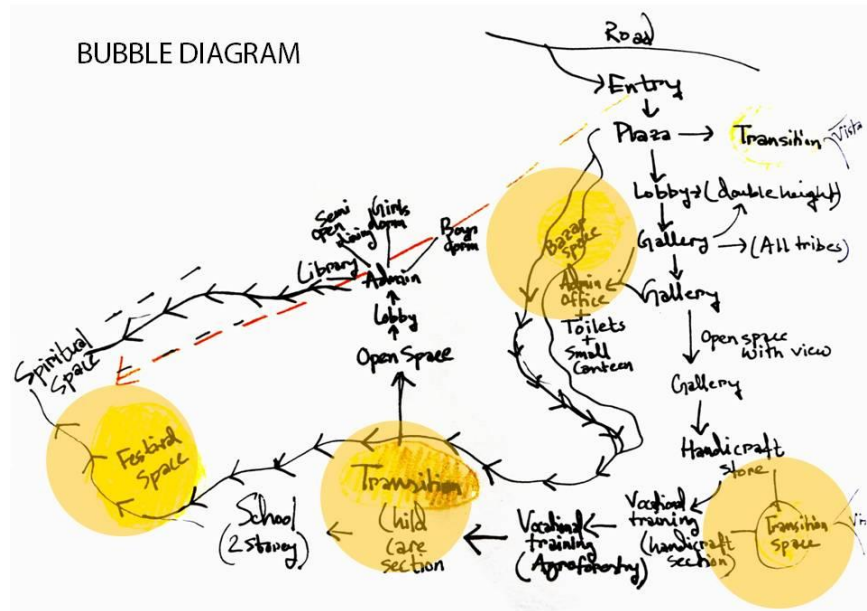


Diagram22: Bubble diagram
Source: Saiffee

INITIAL PLANNING

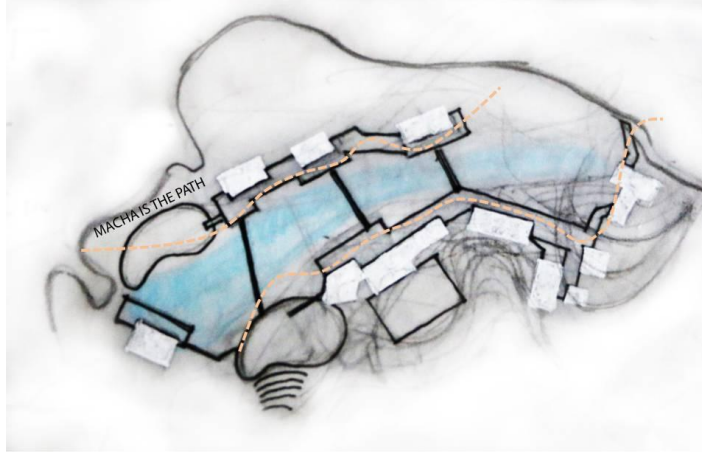


Diagram23: Initial planning
Source: Saiffee

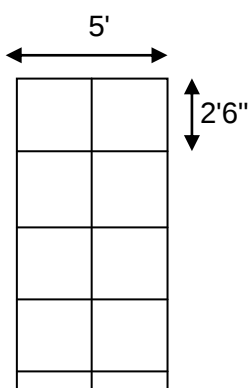


Diagram24: Machas along the contour
Source: Saiffee

7.7 Plans, Sections, Renders and Model images

BAMBOO STRUCTURE

Diagram25: Bamboo window panelling
Source: Saiffee



a panelling system in Mru as they make it with bamboo, so the pivoting windows are just as similar as Mrus, only improvisation is the whole panel of 10'x5' will rotate to make a space more open. and the individual smaller panels can be manually opened also, depending on how much light or wind needed

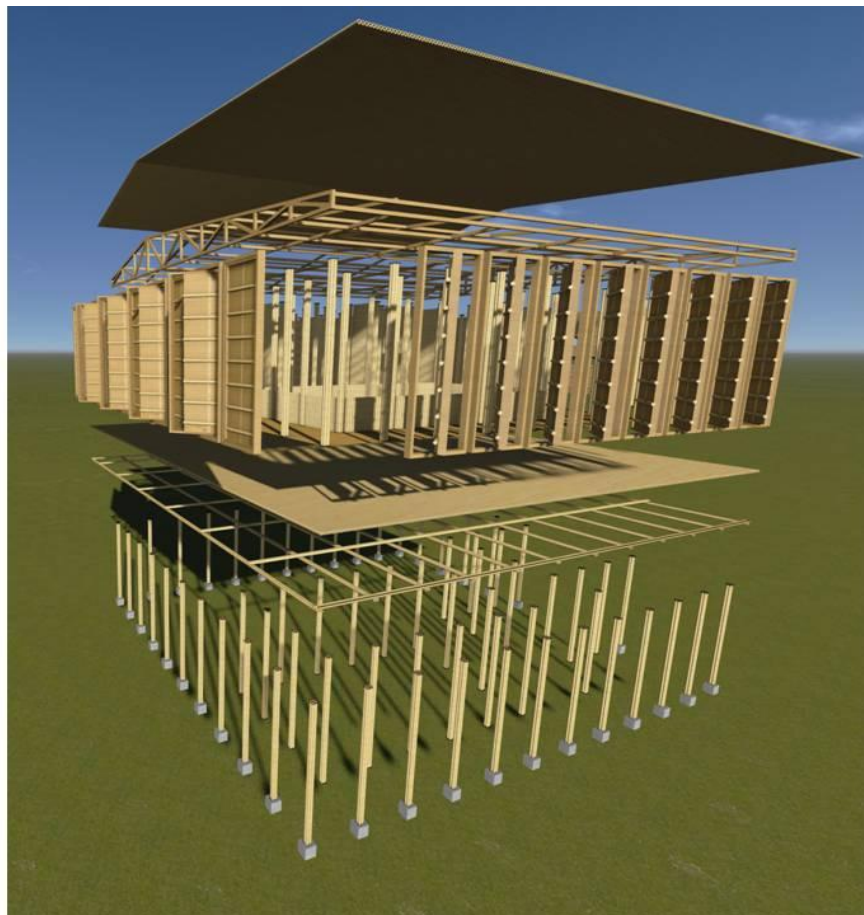


Fig 23: Bamboo structural system
Source: Saiffee

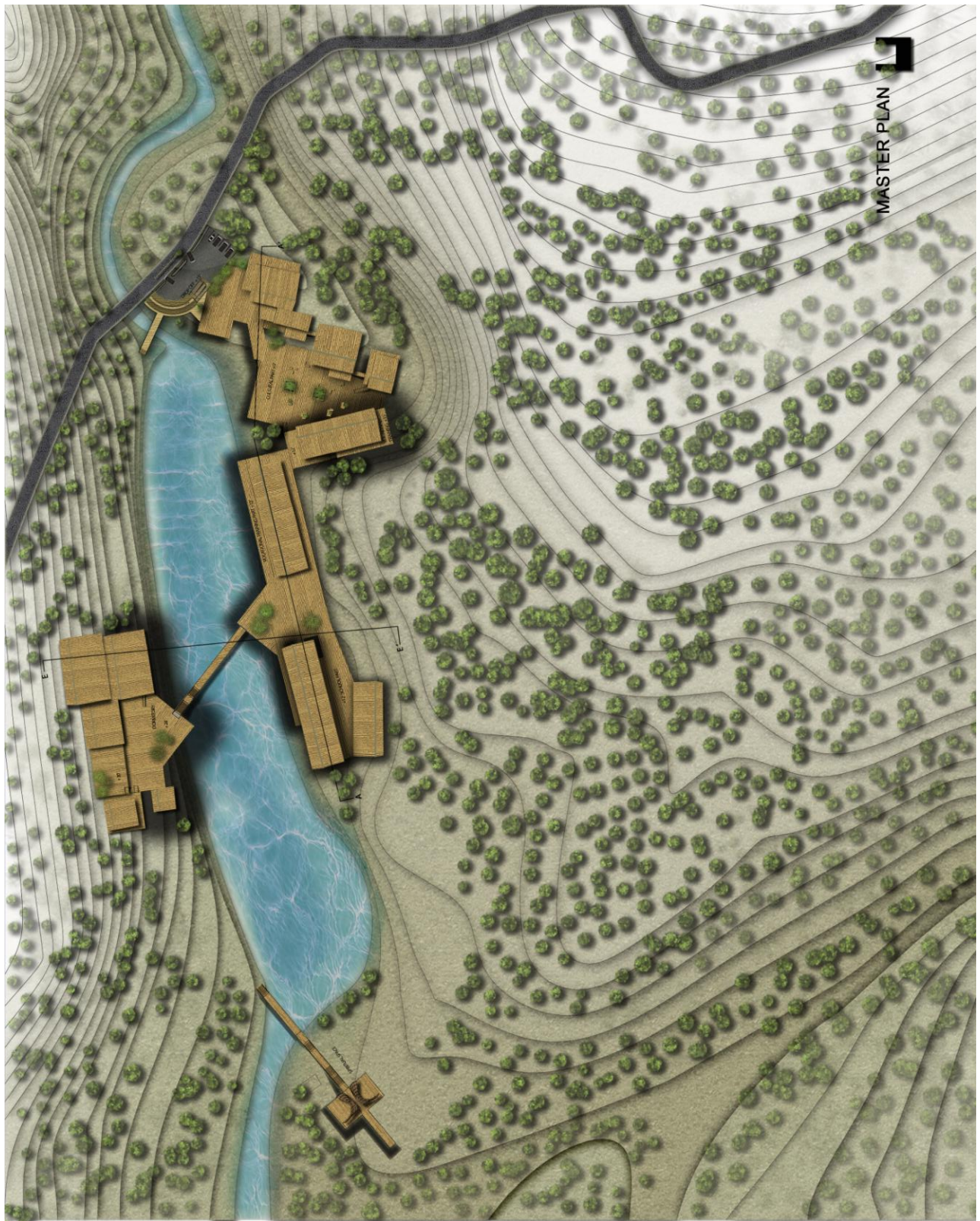


Fig 24: Master plan
Source: Saifee

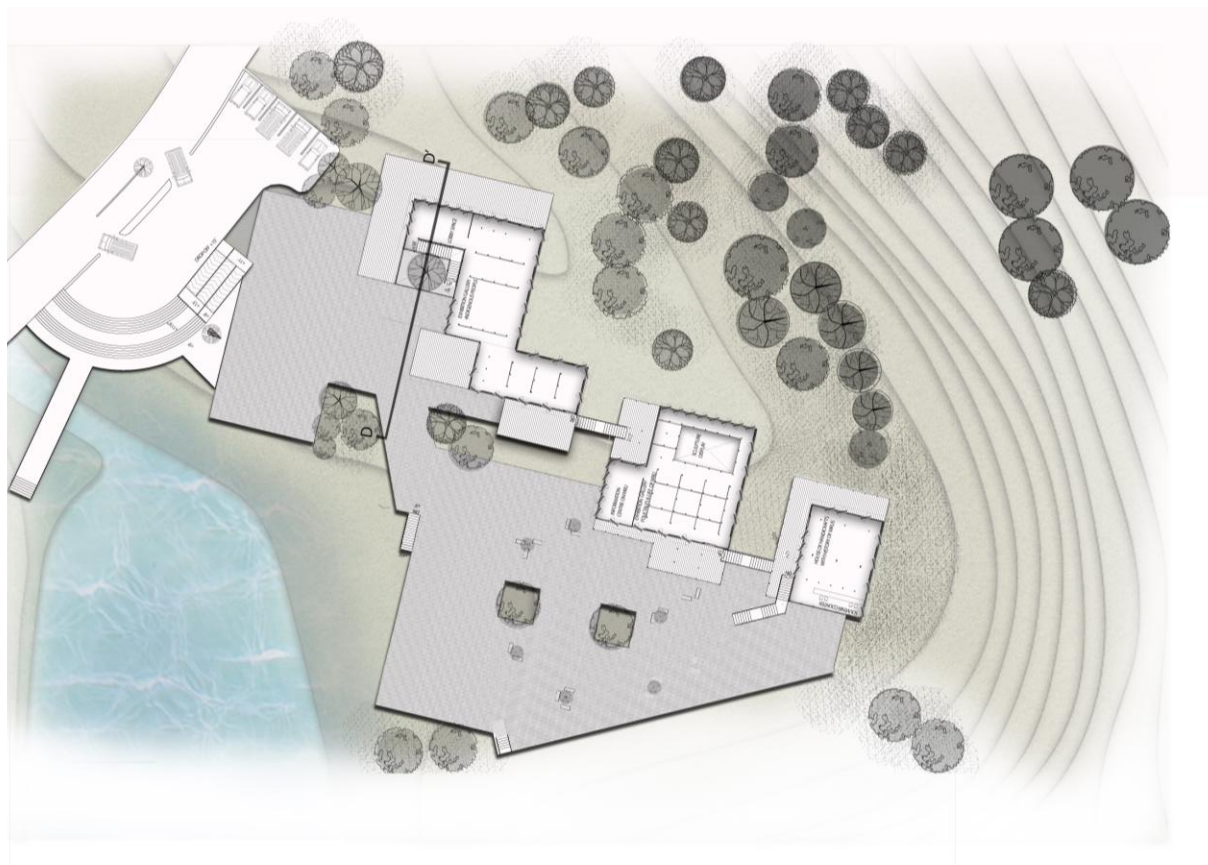


Fig 28: Cultural part , first floor plan
Source: Saiffee



Fig 25: Cultural part , ground floor plan
Source: Saiffee

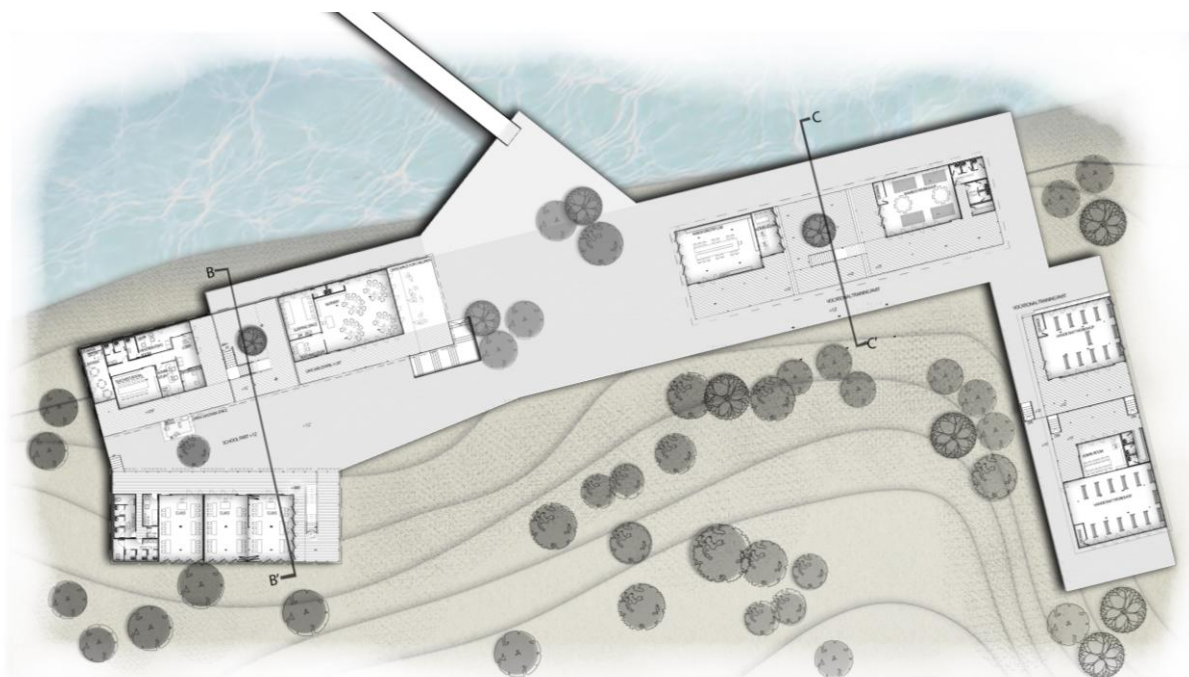


Fig 27: School & Vocational Part, Plan at +20'
Source: Saiffee

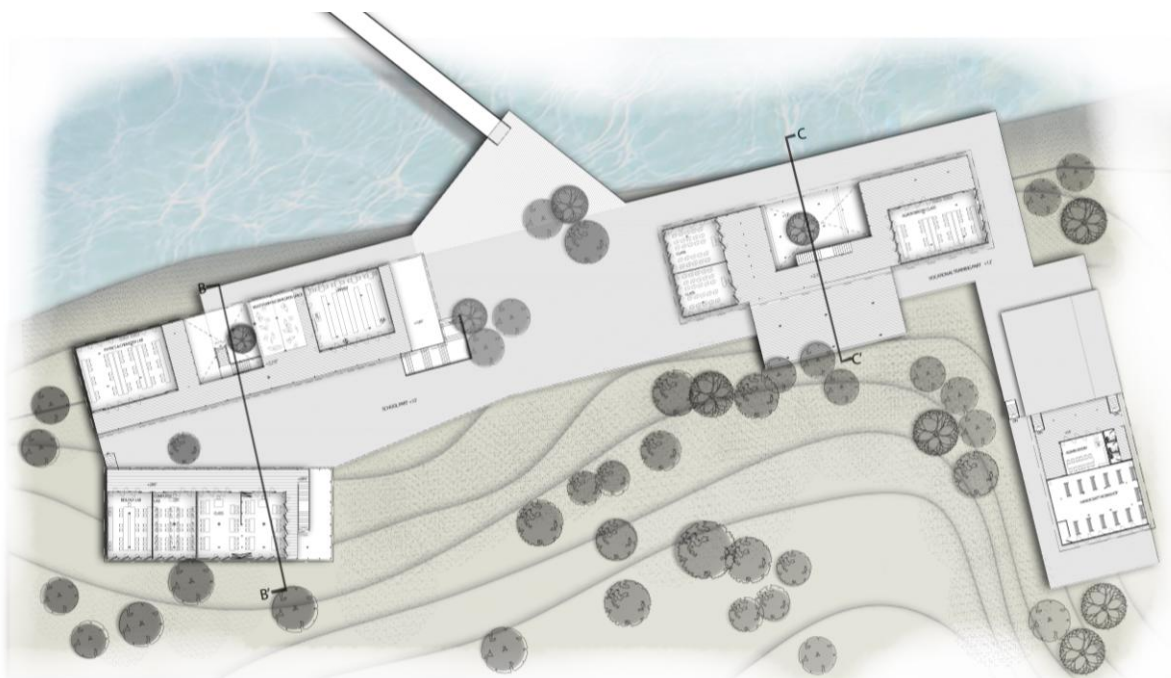


Fig 28: School & Vocational Part, Plan at +30'
Source: Saiffee

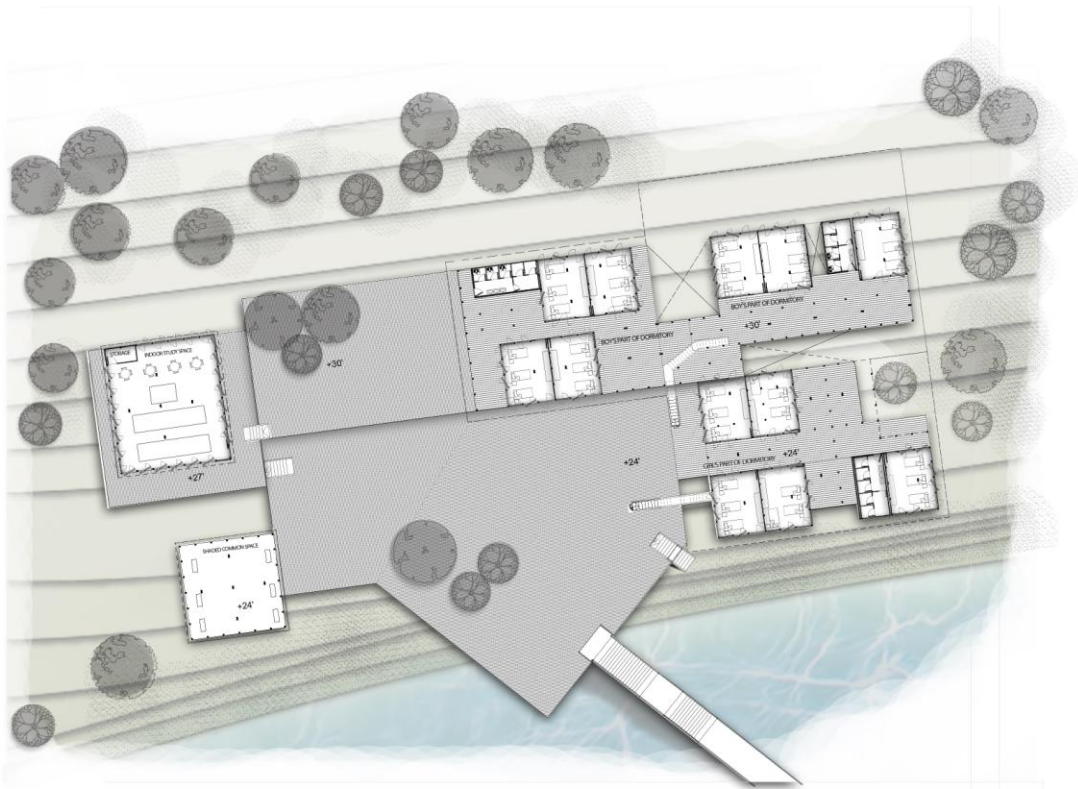


Fig 29: Dormitory, Plan at +32'
Source: Saiffee

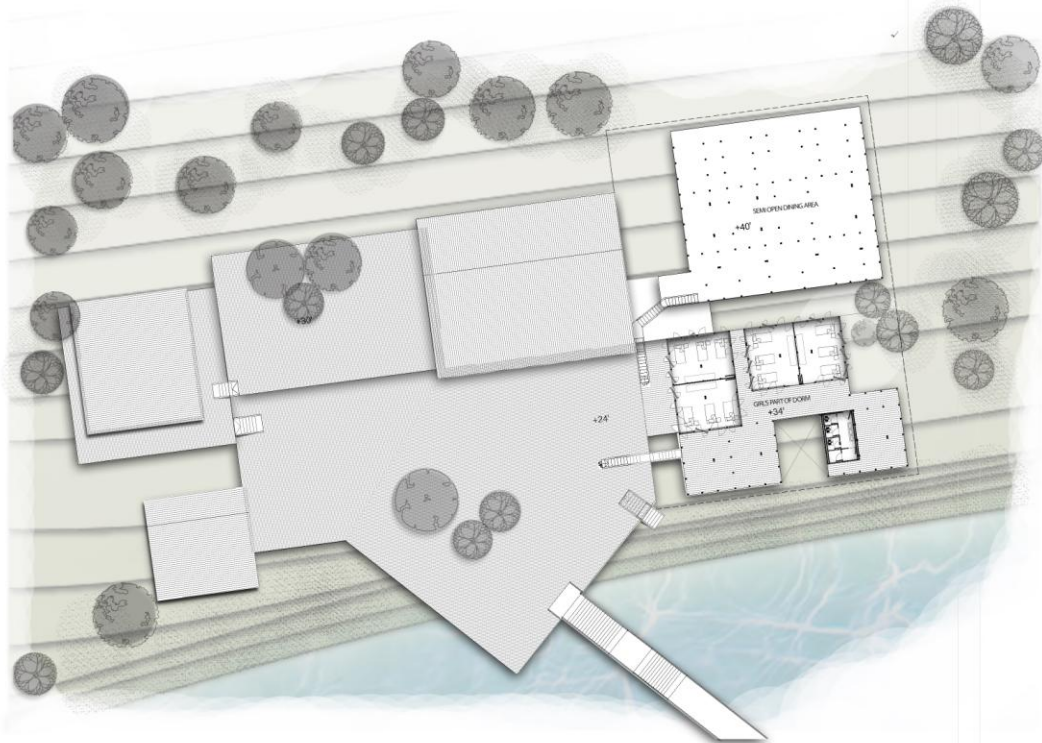


Fig 29: Dormitory, Plan at +42'
Source: Saiffee

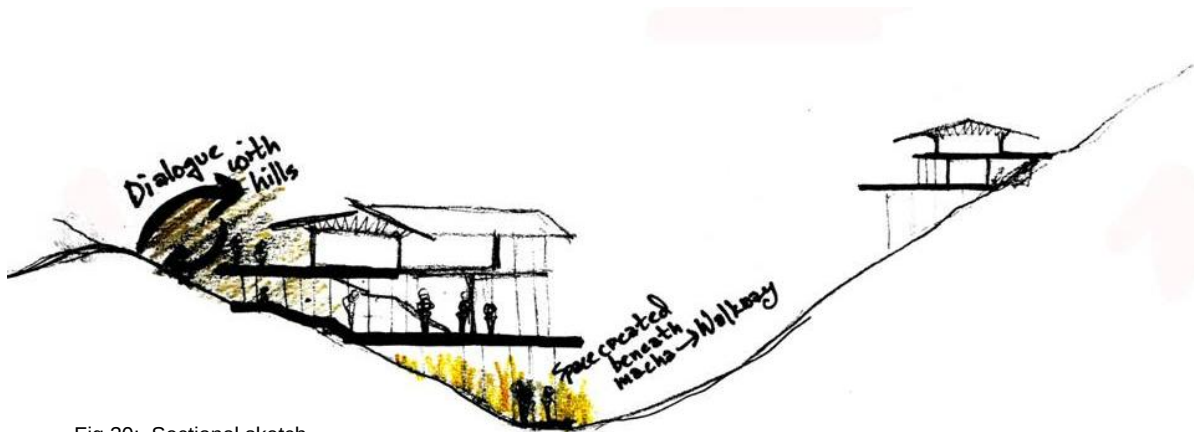


Fig 30: Sectional sketch
Source: Saiffee

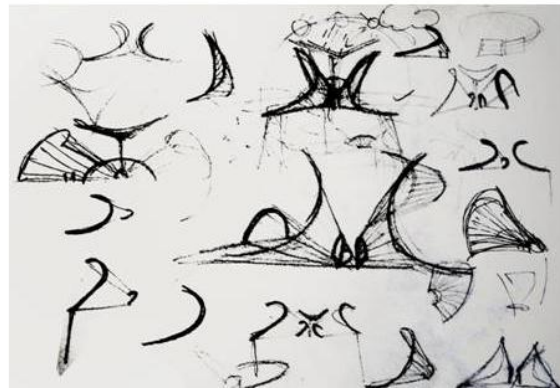


Fig 31: sketches of the spiritual place, derivation from the letter "m" of Mru text
Source: Saiffee



Fig 31: Spiritual space,
a landmark for the Mru

Source: Saiffee

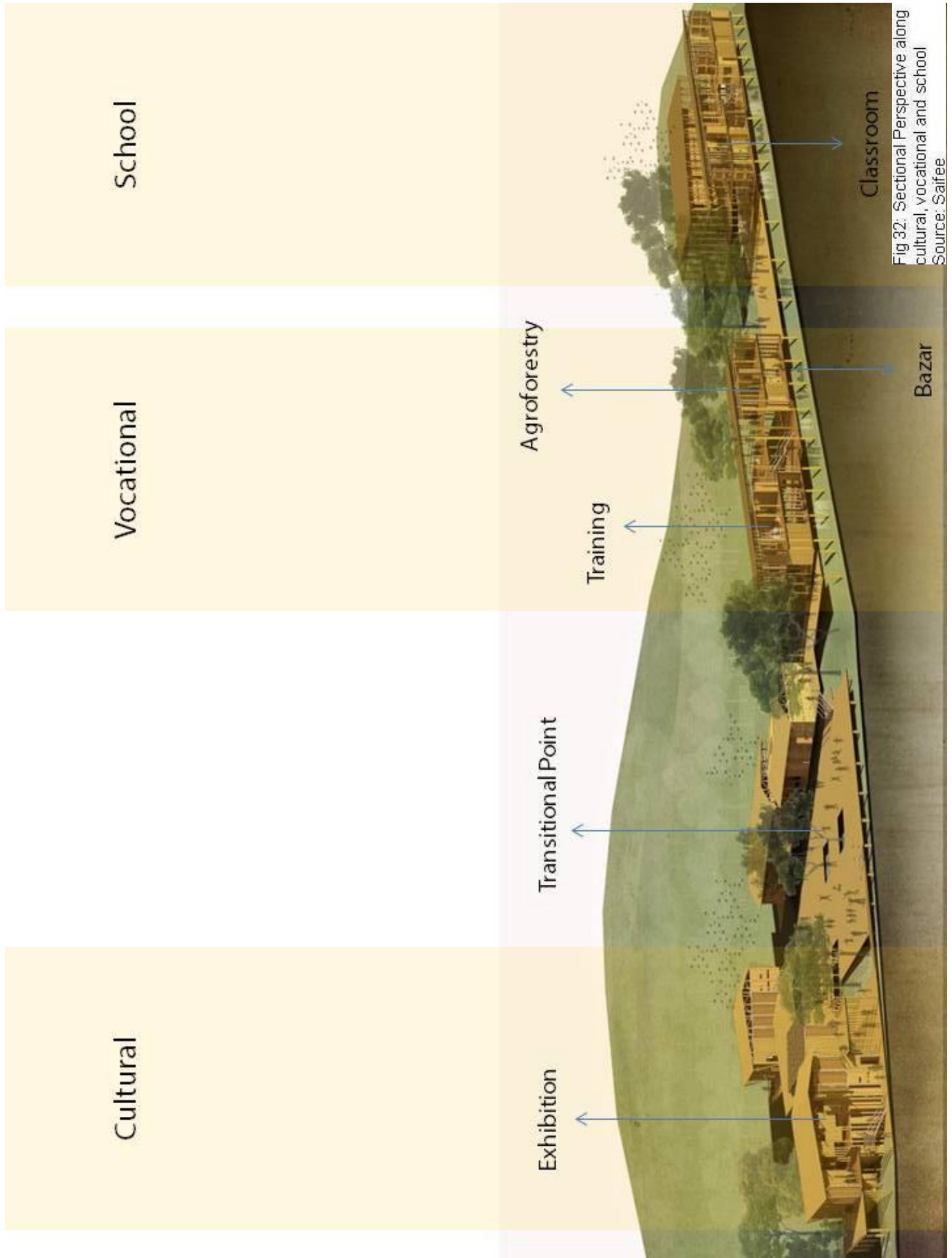


Fig 32: Sectional Perspective along cultural, vocational and school
Source: Saiffee



Fig 33: Sectional perspective BB' (section through school)
Source: Saiffee



Fig 34: Sectional perspective CC' (section through cultural part)
Source: Saiffee



Fig 35: Sectional perspective DD' (section through vocational part)
Source: Saiffee



Fig 37: Render of Cultural part
Source: Saiffee



Fig 38: Render of Dormitory
Source: Saiffee



Fig 36: Parallel section EE"
Source: Saiffee

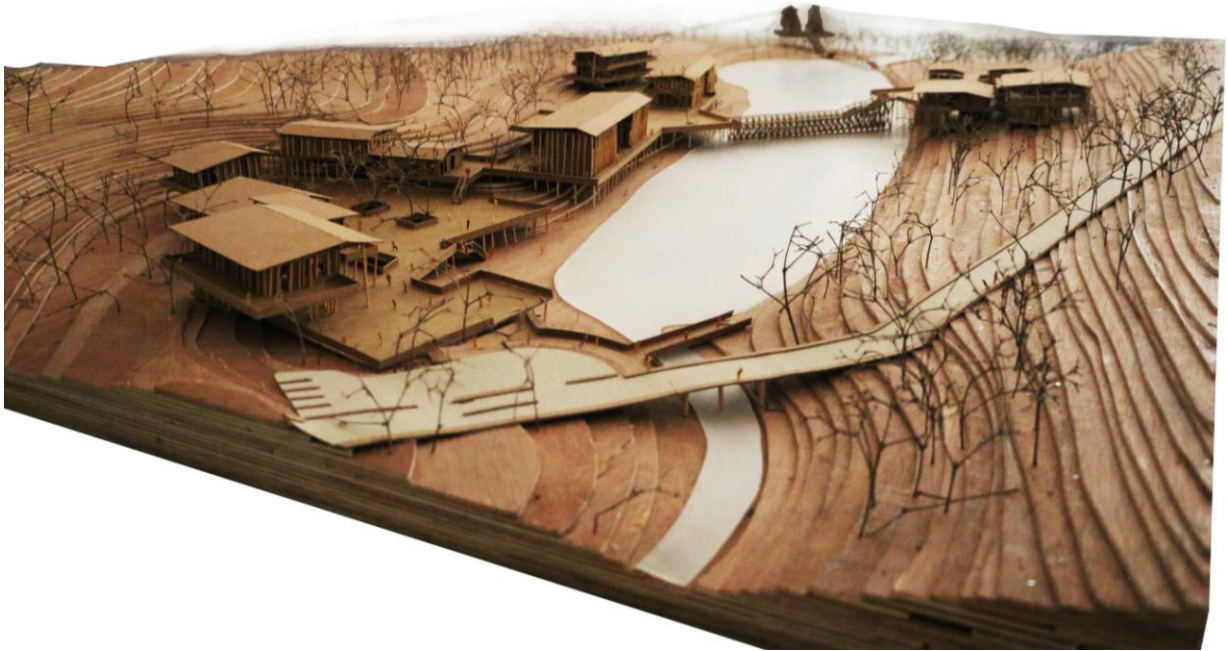


Fig 39: Model images
Source: Saiffee



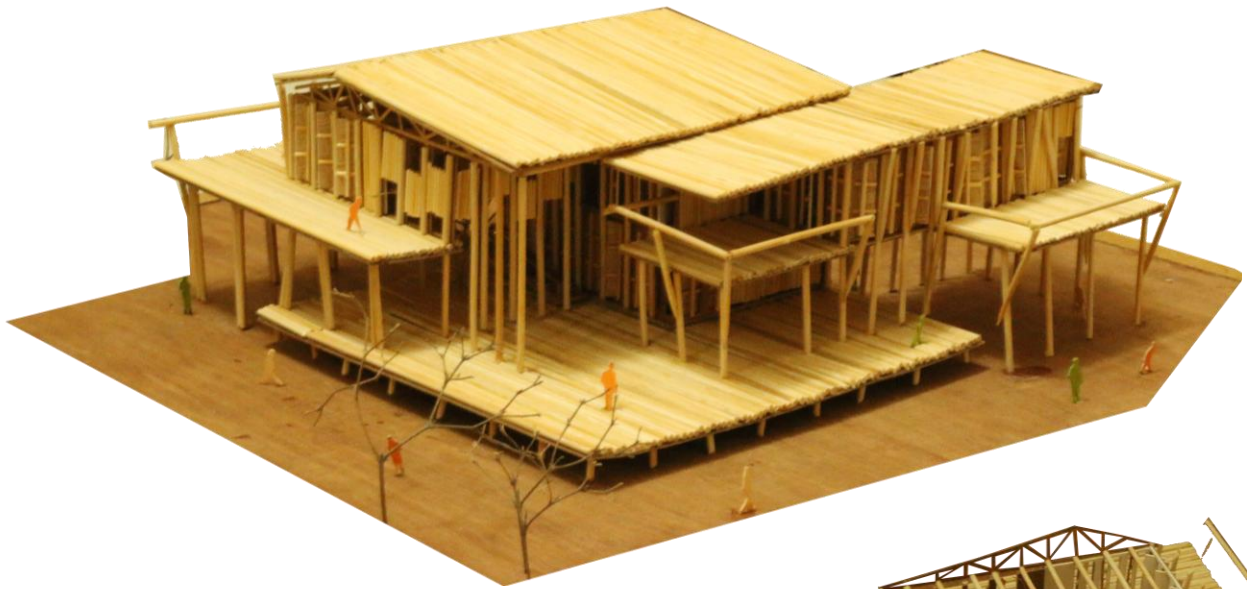


Fig 40: Model images (Blow up model of cultural part)
Source: Saiffee

CONCLUSION

The aim of the project is to start a journey towards the **self realization**. This is just not for the MRU people, but an example for all of us. It is an effort to make them realize their potential and make us realize that how these people have survived and merged with the nature and respected surrounding. With the help of local technique and knowledge how a tribe can promote their culture, religion and lifestyle. This is a struggle towards attaining self esteem and improvising life using very unique natural way. As an architect, the design intervention is very little, it will all come spontaneously from the people Who are of concern. But an architect's role from a neutral point of view I feel, to give something to the society which they can be proud of, and work with the people, understand their demand and need, and then taking a decision for the grater welfare. The process of this project was more important than the end result, because the study focused intensely on the positive achievements and their lifestyle. And then the design came as the outcome of this process. But the design focused on their cultural system which will promote local tourism, and training and educational part will enhance their wisdom and knowledge, removing many superstitions they have and also it will bring economic benefits. The hub will be an inspiration for them and help them to retain their identity and move forward.

In the end I would like to quote ,

“Let people, be the solution.”

Somsook Boonyabancha

secretary-general of Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR)

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