

Shack dwellers scheme grows bigger and stronger

By Asser Ntinda

The Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia, SDFN, is growing by bounds and has impressed so many stakeholders that assistance from various companies is pouring in to help improve the living standards of shack dwellers under SDFN's umbrella.

The Federation, which started with a small group of people and a few cents, has grown to reach all the regions, with 617 saving groups and 23 086 members. They have succeeded to save over N\$5, 5 million, which they now use to build better houses with flush toilets.

Last week, the Federation invited Regional and Local Government and Housing and Rural Development, Jerry Ekandjo, to a brick making ceremony which was aimed at showing support to the shack dwellers who have raised money on their own to build houses for themselves, rather than waiting for the government to build houses for them.

Various stakeholders were also invited to the brick-making event and participated in making bricks, led by Minister Ekandjo. Standard Bank donated its annual N\$50 000 sponsorship to the Federation, while Built It donated trolleys and spades.

AfriSam Cement, which donates over N\$300,000 to the Federation every year, has also offered to give technical assistance. It also bought moulds



Minister Jerry Ekandjo

that are being used to make bricks throughout the country.

As part of the government overall plans to improve the living standards of people, especially those living in informal settlements, the Minister said that the government plans to spend over one billion dollars over the next six years.

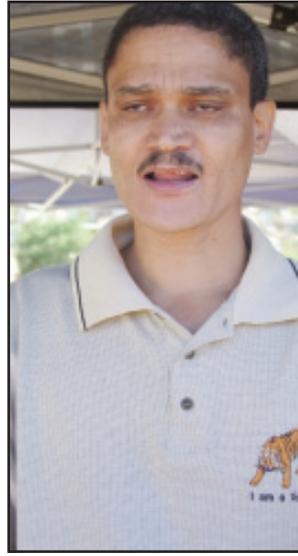
This is in addition to the N\$500 million already provided for in the Third National Development Plan, NDPIII, which is being spent every year during the duration of NDPIII. A large chunk of that money goes to help people who live in informal settlements by providing them with decent houses.

Minister Ekandjo said his Ministry had built offices in all the 107 constituencies to the tune of N\$165 million, and has set aside N\$30 million to build rural development centers. Better toilet facilities would also be built over the next years.

"The bucket system has been eradicated in all towns and settlements in Namibia and, in this respect, the installation of flush toilets for all households previously affected by the neglect of the past colonial and oppression regime of South Africa will soon be completed," said Minister Ekandjo.

Soon after independence, he said, the SWAPO Party government made housing one of its priorities and created enabling policies that encouraged and allowed greater participation by its citizens in addressing challenges pertaining to shelter and poverty alleviation.

SDFN has taken it upon itself to mobilize the poor and homeless communities throughout the country. It is now busy assisting low income communities throughout the country by providing them with affordable housing. So far it has built over 1800 houses through-



Standard Bank's Deon Alcock

out the country.

Government is now stepping in to help SDFN by providing them with land. Minister Ekandjo has appealed to local authorities to give his Ministry virgin lands. He said his Ministry will pay for the cost of servicing such lands to ease the burden on SDFN.

"A larger portion of households in urban areas do not have secure tenure yet, mainly because they cannot afford the costs of developing land, while



AfriSam's Johan Burger

unhygienic conditions and remain poor."

Head of Home Loan Department at Standard Bank, Deon Alcock, commended the government for being instrumental in making sure that every Namibian was housed properly.

"This task cannot be left to government alone," he said. "It needs the involvement of everybody, including the private sector. Standard Bank Namibia has made a commitment to assist SDFN to improve the living con-



Hon. Zuku Shitongeni

ditions.

"The political will to support this programme goes a long way in encouraging these members to meet government halfway and in realizing Vision 2030," said Burger. "We are each time heartened by the participation of the top government ministers in these events."

SWAPO Party Councilor for Tobias Hainyeko Constituency, Zulu Shitongeni, commended all the participants



Deon Alcock handing over a cheque of N\$50, 000 while Minister Ekandjo looks on. On the left are trolleys and spades donated by Built It. Photo by Asser Ntinda.



Minister Jerry Ekandjo participating in the brick making event at Okahandja Park in Tobias Hainyeko Constituency. All photo by Asser Ntinda.

the smaller local authorities do not have funds or capacity to develop the land," said Minister Ekandjo.

"For as long as land with basic services is not accessible and affordable to large portion of the urban dwellers, they will continue to be vulnerable, living in

conditions of low-income people living in shacks."

Country Manager of AfriSam Cement Namibia, Johan Burger, also commended SDFN for the efforts they have put in to help people living in shacks. He added that it was not easy to raise over N\$5, 5 million, as SDFN

and the members of SDFN for their efforts in making sure that they do not just wait for the government to help.

"It is good to help ourselves," he said. "This is commendable. Keep it up. Let others emulate your example."

VOTE SWAPO
For unity, peace and stability

SWAPO PARTY

VOTE SWAPO
For Human Capital Development

SWAPO PARTY