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 better 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 to the Federation every year, has also donated moulds over N$300,000 to the Federation.

Minister Ekandjo said his Ministry had built offices in all rural development centers. Better toilet facilities would also be 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 six years.

This is in addition to the NS500 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.

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“If we can make bricks using our own labour, why not use it to help our poor countrymates who are not having land to build houses?” said Minister Ekandjo.

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

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

Hon. Zulu Shitongeni

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Minister Jerry Ekandjo participating in the brick making event at Okahandja constituency. All photos by Asser Ntinda.

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