

Poor Should Help Themselves

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Despite their poor backgrounds, disadvantaged communities can make a difference in alleviating the housing shortage in line with the country's developmental goal of Vision 2030.

According to Regional and Local Government, Housing and rural Development Minister John Pandeni, the time is long overdue for Namibians to stop sitting around and just wait for handouts from government, but they should actively become involved in development by helping themselves out of poverty and unemployment.

He said this when he officially opened the brick-making initiative of the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia (SDFN) in Goreangab informal settlement in Katutura on Saturday.

"We would like to call upon all the people of our country, particularly the rural and urban poor, to participate in their own development because it is only through hard work that we will achieve our national Vision 2030. Don't sit back, work hard," urged Pandeni.

Through a Public Private Partnership deal, the SDFN with assistance from Holcim Namibia and Standard Bank Namibia decided to do something practical by constructing low-cost houses in Katutura.

Pandeni sees this move as a practical demonstration of communities taking responsibility in their own hands and thereby making a positive difference for themselves. Previous shack dwellers can now be called proud owners of decent housing.

"We should also be aware of the dangers facing our people living in shacks, which includes fires, leaking roofs, the risk of losing your roof when heavy winds blow and so forth. It is imperative therefore that we do everything to provide reasonable, good housing and thereby give a sense of security to these homeowners," added Pandeni.

As part of the brick-making project to build 12 new houses in Goreangab settlement, Pandeni was dressed in overall gear, all set to get dirty and make the first brick that day.

Alongside him were community members as well as some staff from the Katutura Standard Bank branch.

This is not the first time that Standard Bank has thrown its support behind the noble ideals of the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia in building activities and construction of houses for less privileged Namibians.

Last year, the bank donated N\$20 000 to SDFN, while more funds are expected to be handed over in a few weeks' time.

Recently, a memorandum of understanding was also signed between the federation and the bank for the current activities of making bricks and building houses.

Speaking at the same event, Manager of Standard Bank Namibia, Katutura branch, Aloys //Garoëb, said the assistance comes above the existing financial programmes that the bank has provided to this community-based organization.

"Standard Bank Namibia's participation with the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia programmes are fuelled by our business responsibility of housing provision to the market in Namibia, thus we want to echo this very principle through this project," said //Garoëb.

On its part, Holcim Namibia funded five of the houses that were built on the site that day, while the remaining seven are supported by the line ministry. In March this year, the company donated 1 640 bags of cement for this purpose.

The company also plans to present a cheque of N\$200 000 to SDFN and sign a memorandum of understanding with the federation next month.

The brick-making project, which will be carried out on a bi-weekly basis, will also be held in Ondangwa in two weeks' time.