



## **Shack Dwellers Now Become Proud Home Owners**

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By Surihe Gaomas

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Financial institutions like banks have now joined in alleviating the huge housing backlog challenge of 300000 countrywide, by aiding poor people who previously lived in shacks to become proud home owners of decent houses.

This became a reality with the latest signing on Saturday of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Standard Bank Namibia, the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia (SDFN) and the Namibia Housing Action Group (NHAG) on Saturday.

Through this agreement, shack dwellers can now save money whilst, at the same time, being exempted from cash deposit fee charges through group saving schemes under the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia.

Ultimately, this means that the bank's support of the SDFN aims to become a long-term support system to the federation's capacity building to sustain and broaden community-based poverty alleviation activities in Namibia.

Furthermore, financial support will be provided to SDFN whereby the federation will become a social leg of the bank's Home Loans Incentive Campaigns. At the same time, property maintenance education programmes will also be introduced to help new homeowners of SDFN on "how to take care of your house."

Officially addressing the audience on behalf of Erastus Negonga, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development, the Deputy Permanent Secretary, Erica Ndiyepa, commended this valuable Public-Private Partnership in housing delivery.

"This partnership deserves all-round support from all of us to unlock a backlog of 300000 in the supply of houses to the needy communities by 2030," said Ndiyepa, urging other commercial banks to follow suit by looking at ways and means of how to make banking and banking services more affordable and accessible to all Namibians.

For the past five years the Ministry has been supporting SDFN with annual grants of one million dollars per year to a total amount of N\$5-million to construct houses for their members.

In addition, government funded an amount of over N\$14,7-million for 36 community groups affiliated with SDFN and NHAG, as well as 14 other non-affiliated groups during the period of five years from 2002 to 2007.

In the same vein, Ndiyepa gave a word of advice to SDFN to make good use of the services provided by Standard Bank by saving responsibly in order to meet their housing needs.

"Seriously embrace this initiative and increase your savings because the service is now at your disposal and this will help you to keep your funds safer. I am (also) appealing to the Federation to make sure that financial reports are available to all members to ensure transparency," added Ndiyepa.

Speaking at the same occasion, Managing Director of Standard Bank, Mpumzi Pupuma, said the bank is more than willing to assist such initiatives where poor people make an effort to help themselves out of poverty and changing from residing in shacks to decent housing. This comes especially in light of the fact that Namibia has been battling with a housing backlog of 300000 for many years.

"Housing is a third basic need - after food and clothing. Looking at the current prices of real estates, as well as the high cost of construction and demand being higher than supply, it becomes obvious that not all Namibians are privileged to own their own house," said Pupuma, adding that this in turn makes it even more difficult for poor people to realize their dream of owning their own house.

However, as a network of saving schemes in Namibia, the SDFN has been making great strides in changing this situation for the better for many lower-class groups countrywide.

"Currently, the federation consists of 430 saving schemes in all thirteen regions, and we saved N\$4,6-million. I am happy to announce that 120 groups have opened accounts at Standard Bank and an amount saved is N\$1342344," stated SDFN National Coordinator, Edith Mbanga.

At the end of the MOU signing ceremony, four top regions were awarded prizes as the best in saving and managing their finances properly. The first was the Erongo Region, followed by Caprivi in second position, Oshana third and the Ohangwena was awarded the fourth position.

In addition to MOU, Standard Bank of Namibia also awarded a cheque of N\$20000 to the SDFN."

Caderstanding on Housing Delivery - Managing Director of Standard Bank, Mpumzi Pupuma, SDFN National Coordinator, Edith Mbanga, and National Coordinator of NHAG, Anna Muller.