

Annual report 2008-2009



Creating and
building opportunities



Solid House Foundation



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Creating and building oportunities SHF 2008-2009.

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Interested parties are also welcome to contact us to discuss specific wishes or possibilities.



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Structurally improving habitat

Sustainable development

Solid House Foundation (SHF) aims to make a contribution to the sustainable development of a healthy, safe and privileged habitat for vulnerable groups in developing countries.

SHF's management, policy and the work it carries out are professionally organised. SHF has an office with a small number of staff in Utrecht, the Netherlands, which is supported by think tanks. These comprise creative and authoritative experts who support and advise SHF in diverse areas.

Transparency has been of paramount importance to SHF since its inception. Overhead costs are deliberately kept as low as possible. This enables SHF to deploy the available resources optimally for the intended people. We are currently implementing programmes in Bolivia, Kenya and South Sudan. Tandems have been created for this purpose and comprise a programme manager working on location in each country, who is 'paired up' with a programme officer in the Netherlands (Utrecht) who makes the relevant arrangements.

Self-participation

We believe it is important for the underprivileged to develop into independent individuals who are aware of their own power and potential. Empowerment: that's what it's all about. An important principle in this context is that they themselves actually want to participate.







The integrated approach of professionals

"The Supervisory Board has noted that Solid House Foundations has become more professional over the past two years. Not only in terms of quantity (13 highly qualified individuals are now on the payroll) but particularly in terms of quality. Solid House is presenting itself more prominently as a small-scale and energetic habitat organisation with a no-nonsense approach. Local independent development, wide local involvement and a broad approach form the essence of this approach. Habitat means more than 'housing' alone, it's about the social context and reinforcement but it also most definitely encompasses safety, water and sanitation and energy supplies. We are well aware that we are working with people whose circumstances are often dire, and that each successful achievement, no matter how small, can have a huge impact on their lives. We are achieving small successes more often and they indeed represent our ray of hope. We consider receiving the full subsidy amount we applied for under the 2009-2010 Dutch Co-Financing Scheme (Medefinancieringsstelsel) as a token of respect and appreciation."

Marinus Jan Veltman
Chairman of the SHF Supervisory Board





Together with local partner organisations SHF is working to strengthen and create self-sufficient communities. That partner in many cases is a local NGO or an organisation providing technical assistance when building or improving houses but may also be an institution that provides micro credits or supports and strengthens organisations (community-based organisations), such as a women's group or an agricultural cooperative.



We dare to dream

SHF emphatically pursues sustainable development and long-lasting, usable and useful results. This means that our efforts are specifically directed towards complex projects having a longer duration, averaging around 10-15 years. This also means that the perspectives we seek lie in the distant future. We dare to dream. At the same time, we are able to analyse the entire course of events in clear steps that produce concrete results. But we also carefully consider when to withdraw from a programme because the partners are capable of handling it themselves from that point onwards. This exit strategy is self-evidently developed in close consultation with the local partners and stakeholders and is always determined on the basis of the pre-conditions and the specific local situation.

Pragmatic and creative

Commitment and ownership are the elements of sustainable development that must be achieved step-by-step. Sometimes change occurs rapidly but it is usually a long, involved process. This means that we must have the ability to continue to persevere to achieve our ambitions at Solid House Foundation. We are not easily discouraged by sudden setbacks and issues that crop up daily but our strength also lies in devising alternative routes. We think in terms of 'opportunities' instead of 'problems'.

In short, we are pragmatic and creative.





Our primary aim is to pursue sustainable development

“Solid house is a habitat organisation. Our efforts are directed towards people who do not have a healthy and safe habitat because of poverty, bad management and conflicts. The essence of our work is to support and encourage people so that they can independently improve their own habitat and quality of life. In this context, we incorporate all manner of things, such as housing, water and sanitation, economic development, the formation of communities and financial intermediary.

Issues that crop up daily, tasteless sensationalism and quick wins all mean nothing to us. Our primary aim is to pursue sustainable development and to strengthen the capacity of local partners. They must ultimately be able to carry this out on their own – and they can. I am absolutely convinced they can.

Solid House would be the first to admit that this not altogether easy. But thanks to our projects in various countries we know that Solid House Foundation possesses sufficient commitment, knowledge and creativity to achieve this. We do this in collaboration with our local partners. Both for today and for the future.”

Wim Stroecken
SHF Director

Micro mortgages in Bolivia

Your own home, paid for yourself

In the Guarayos (Santa Cruz) district of Bolivia, Solid House Foundation is implementing a programme, which is not only interesting for the participants themselves but which may also be of interest to habitat organisations elsewhere.

Guarayos is one of the provinces still inhabited by the Guarayo indigenous people, who mainly speak their own language and still live according to ancient tradition. The community of around 12,000 indigenous Guarayo earns income from collecting the fruit of the Cusi palm. Until recently only a small portion of the fruit was used to produce oil, shampoo and soap. Research carried out by ICCO and Cordaid has shown that the residual material is extremely suitable for use as alcohol and fuel in the activated carbon and steel industries. In the long term this may result in the income of the Guarayo increasing from under one dollar to around seven dollars a day.







We have meanwhile grown a lot wiser

"Since starting our first activities in Bolivia in 2004 we have grown a lot wiser about sustainable development. The socio-economic aspects are of overriding importance in carrying out successful habitat programmes. If you do not pay any attention to these aspects, the programme is doomed to fail. 'Giving away' houses, the minimum economic development of residents and the low organisation level of the group form huge obstacles in further sustainably developing the group as well as the living environment.

As a resident of Nayan Utaja, a SHF pilot programme carried out in 2004, says: "The house is lovely but it will never really be ours because we haven't paid for it ourselves."

Rinske Wessels
Programme Manager, Bolivia



Micro mortgages

As a result of having higher income it will be possible to apply for a micro mortgage, a form of long-term micro credit. Oikocredit is an international development financing expert who has worked on fighting poverty for over thirty years by making available loans to enterprising people in developing countries. A (micro) credit enables people to provide for their own income, for instance by setting up a small business or market stall.



Better habitat conditions

As suggested by Oikocredit, SHF is studying how the living conditions of the Guarayo can be improved based on a financially achievable housing programme for the poor. In 2009 a number of trial buildings were erected in Guaguazú, all built in a different way and using different building materials. This should ultimately result in a selection of various sustainable buildings having the most appeal to residents. People can buy these homes with a micro credit at a later stage. This situation is rather new to them since they have limited experience in borrowing money, know little about repaying a mortgage, seldom have made sustainable investments and insufficiently understand the consequences. SHF organises training sessions and provides information on the best way for people to manage their own money.



Indirectly this will lead to an improved standard of living. We also hope to reduce illiteracy and poverty and increase financial knowledge. Deforestation will decrease because the fruit from the Cusi palm will have become more valuable. This, in turn, will create more employment opportunities and greater awareness for the value of the countryside.

In 2010 Solid House Foundation will conduct a large-scale socio-economic feasibility study into micro mortgages for the rural population.





Sustainable investment

The programme provides added value by promoting financial awareness and long-term thinking among the Guarayo people. They also learn how to make sustainable investments using their income and how to improve their own quality of life. This programme enables vulnerable groups to develop into self-sufficient individuals.

Negotiating in a Babylonian tongue

"Working in Bolivia can be really tough now and again because you talk to so many different parties. They all have their own jargon, their own agenda and their own interests. In particular, perpetually dabbling in Spanish, English and Dutch is part of the job. I always have to remind myself who I am talking to and what 'hat' I should wear."

Mireille Velthuis
Programme Officer, Bolivia

Rolling up our sleeves in Kenya

Getting the right parties around the table at the right time

During and immediately after the elections in December 2007, Kenya was struck by a widespread surge of violence. SHF was forced to halt its efforts for some time as a result. Now that the situation in Kenya has calmed down, SHF has started up two activities: developing a long-term policy vision for housing in Nakuru town and a school sanitation programme.

Huge housing problems

Kenya has the largest slums in East Africa. There are not enough houses, especially for low income, and there is an acute shortage of water and sanitation. Slum formation is growing strongly. The potential of the city and towns is used only on a very limited scale. Solid House Foundation opted to expand its work area because of the huge housing problems.

Nakuru is the capital of the Rift Valley province in Western Kenya with now over a million inhabitants. The mayor of Nakuru approached us in May 2008 and asked SHF as an independent consultant to think about how to upgrade the rental houses of the Municipal Council. It soon appeared that the problems were much broader. Nakuru is undergoing vast expansion







It's a matter of perseverance

"In Kenya thinking about town planning and systematically building houses is in its infancy. The Ministry of Housing has existed for a mere five years and Nakuru has only had a planning department since 2009. If we want to work sustainably and make the city the process owner, it shouldn't come as a surprise that this will take many, many years."

Eelke van der Werf
SHF Programme Manager, Kenya



across the fertile farmlands which should in fact function as the city's source of food. Together with the Municipal Council we are examining how the town's growth can be managed properly and how to use its potential more efficiently. SHF takes the lead in the development of a strategic housing vision for the whole Municipality of Nakuru and makes sure that it can be implemented in a sustainable manner.



In consultation with the local government we are developing a multi-year programme in line with the central government's policy 'Vision 2030'. Our programme involves coordinating infrastructure improvement, economic development, municipal services and a housing policy. To maintain transparency and control of this improvement project, the housing vision will include implementation plans and will be divided into phases to match the growth of local government's capabilities. This will ultimately serve to promote an integrated approach to habitat.

One of the implementation plans is a Pilot housing programme to be built by a Housing Cooperative; SHF will advise on the design and financing. In turn, these experiences will provide proof of concept for Nakuru's strategic housing vision. Top-down and bottom-up in this context follow on naturally. As a matter of interest, it is quite a challenge to get the right parties around the table at the right time. SHF fulfils a key role in this process.

School sanitation – an absolute necessity

Here are some dramatic statistics:

- Only 72% of Kenyan girls complete primary school (Ministry of Education, 2002).
- Almost 70% of all schools in isolated rural areas and city slums do not have proper toilet facilities and safe drinking water. On average one hundred children use one toilet (UNICEF, 2006).
- Girls fail to attend school for 30-60 days annually (menstrual cycle) because of the lack of toilet facilities and hygiene. This form of absenteeism often leads to dropping out of school altogether.
- Diarrhoea-related illnesses cause 19% of mortality among children aged 0–5 years (> 30,000/year). This is almost 11 times higher than the HIV/AIDs mortality rate (Ministry of Health, 2006).
- 75% of parents and 71% of teachers do not wash their hands with soap (WSP Kenya, 2006).



Key programmes for the whole of Kenya

“Small local NGOs have good ideas but find it difficult to survive. Their ability to manage their finances is often lacking and donors shy away as a result. If SHF can work with them and help to set up the organisation properly, we will have a strong group of partners who will be able to roll out an immensely important programme across the whole of Kenya. When talking about cholera and diarrhoea, experts refer to water-related illnesses but that is simply a euphemism for the truth. Defecation-related illnesses are at issue here. That’s why creating awareness for hygiene and providing schools with toilets is just as important as supplying clean water.”

Jorike Schmal
SHF Programme Officer, Kenya



Educating a girl is educating a community.

(A Masai saying)

We are performing a pilot by attaching a toilet building with shower facilities to a boarding school for 80 girls in Oloika, a Maasai village. This sanitary building contains a biological component, a biodigester. The biogas created will be used for cooking and lighting. The water and sludge that remains is after treatment clean and will be used for the girls' vegetable garden.

The second pilot is a toilet building for a 600-pupil school in Kawangware, a Nairobi slum. This is a joint project with the Minister of Health and Sanitation Beth Mugo. The ten toilets will generate enough biogas to eliminate the use of firewood to cook the 'school lunch programme'.

It is our aim to identify the exact needs of a large group of Kenyan schools in the future. Based on this, two routes can be followed:

- a large-scale route for 100-1,000 schools involving widely installing new water facilities, sanitary buildings and biodigesters;
 - a small-scale route involving the custom-upgrading of water and/or sanitary facilities at a maximum of 200 schools, working in association with carefully selected partners.
- Both routes apply different donor processes: one route for larger donations and the other for smaller donations.

In order to achieve a sustainable result SHF is developing a hygiene awareness and facility maintenance training programme in conjunction with partners. This programme will be implemented at all schools.

To conclude, we are forming partnerships for management, hardware and software programme components so that SHF can withdraw from the programme when it becomes evident that the various parties work well together. We can subsequently still offer sufficient support through fundraising activities and by monitoring progress and finances.



Flexible approach in Southern Sudan

Complex country, complex culture with an uncertain future

Partly at the request of UN-Habitat, SHF has elected to carry out its activities in Rumbek in Southern Sudan. On account of the radical outbreak of violence and conflicts, this country faces insurmountable problems, including water and sanitation. Construction will have to start from scratch.

Complex circumstances

Sudan is the largest country in Africa. Since its independence from Great Britain and Egypt in 1956, it has been plagued with conflict. With an interval from 1972-1983 the Islamic north and the predominantly animistic and Christian south of the country have been at war since their independence. The signing of the *Comprehensive Peace Agreement* (CPA) officially marked the end of their conflict in 2005. However a number of unresolved issues still remain, creating the usual internal tension, such as defining the exact border between North and South Sudan and the distribution of oil proceeds. All in all, these are highly complex circumstances under which Solid House Foundation must work.







We must be conversant with divergent issues

"In South Sudan we are confronted with highly complex issues. This means that Solid House cannot focus on one or two sub-projects but that an integrated approach alone is likely to succeed. In addition to building up the local community and the formation of communities, we provide technical building support. Good hygiene is vital and that's why biodigesters are so important. During workshops we make people aware of hygiene and everything that should and shouldn't be done in this respect. To that end, we have started with tomorrow's residents, who are in fact today's children."

Andrew Colin Nelsen
Programme Manager, South Sudan



Everything has broken down

Following UN-Habitat's request, SHF conducted Fact Finding Missions in 2007 and 2008 into reconstruction options. Water and sanitation issues were also identified. This has brought to light that there is a fundamental lack of good infrastructure. There is absolutely nothing, everything has broken down and been demolished right down to the ground. Less than 20% of the people have clean drinking water and only one per cent have access to good sanitation. They hardly know anything about good hygiene; water-related illnesses are rife here (including cholera).

The Southern Sudan government has therefore given priority to improving among other things the quality of life, good governance and developing a private sector. In order to achieve this in the short term, the government wants to increase access to clean drinking water, install good sanitation in schools and clinics, train staff and improve private sector capacity.

SHF's programme makes a major contribution. We work constructively with the (local) government by providing technical building support and developing appropriate building methods. The primary focus is on promoting entrepreneurship, providing water facilities and sanitation for children, using biodigesters and organising workshops on hygiene and the quality of life at schools.

A pilot building programme

One of the most important activities in our 2010 programme in Southern Sudan will be the implementation of a pilot building programme. A great deal of preparatory work was already carried out in 2009 but the implementation is scheduled for 2010. The rainy season in the second half of the year rules out any building work.

SHF has recently worked on many projects in association with BB-Con in the Netherlands. BB-Con is a design agency specialised in architecture and building-related concept and product development. The agency has developed a special building method involving the use of mainly local materials, such as water-tight and sustainable loam. This building method reduces the required material by 50% and even the required steel by 80% while CO₂ emissions are 70% lower.

SHF will continue to research organisation and building methods that can improve the living conditions of the Southern Sudan population. This must be carried out at the lowest possible cost with a programme that is culturally acceptable and practical to implement. It remains a complex country, with a complex culture and an uncertain future. Against this background, SHF's approach in Southern Sudan will have to remain highly flexible.



We do not have any standard packages

"The pilot building programme is essential in finding new ways to build larger scale projects. This is highly important for Sudan today but has not yet been successful to date.

We have learned meanwhile that a 'one issue' approach does not work. In close collaboration with the government we have therefore also incorporated economic development processes in our programme, looking at how we can use the strengths of the local population, and design appropriate business models for development together with them. This means that SHF does not have any standard packages; everything is always custom-built. This is because you are working with people."

Suzanne Damman
Programme Officer, Southern Sudan



Sri Lanka

Completion of the Inspector Eatham scheme

In spring 2008 SHF completed the Inspector Eatham development project in Sri Lanka after a three-year period. A total of 54 houses and a community centre were completed together with an infrastructure of roads, electricity, water and sanitation. This project was successful in its own right and was well received by the people in Sri Lanka. While working on this programme, we concluded that this type of short-term project does not completely match SHF's vision for sustainable development. A period of three years is much too short to be able to achieve long-term goals as well, such as developing a community, entrepreneurship, achieving higher income and actual target group participation.

Organisation

No-nonsense approach works wonders

Solid House Foundation has been a small-scale professional organisation from its early beginnings. Transparency, efficiency and quality are our guiding principles.

Professional network

SHF has an office with a small number of staff in Utrecht, the Netherlands, supported by think tanks. These comprise creative and authoritative experts that support and advise SHF in all kinds of areas. Our philosophy evidently works wonders since countless people donate their services to us and wish to contribute to Solid House's direction, strategy and concrete solutions.

The five Supervisory Board members work for SHF unsalaried just as the eight members of the Recommendations Committee. In addition over 50 professionals contribute by participating in our think tanks: Architecture (22 members), Marketing and Fund Raising (8 members), Ethics (5 members) and for specific country knowledge (10 members).







We have initiated two new think tanks in 2010:

1. Think tank for SHF's strategic framework for capacity development (CATCH, Comprehensive Approach To Community based Habitat, 6 members);
2. Think tank of creative experts for graphic communication issues (8 members).

SHF also has a long-term collaboration with the academic world. Over the course of time 25 students have graduated in subjects in which SHF is involved or have obtained work placements at one of our projects.

All in all, Solid House enjoys a huge professional network which continues to grow.

Rolling up our sleeves

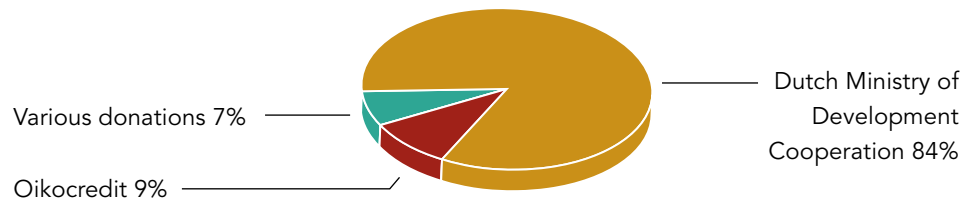
Transparency has been of paramount importance to SHF since its inception. We have meanwhile been registered as an ANBI (Public Welfare Organisation) and received the Charity Quality Mark (Keurmerk Goede Doelen) in the Netherlands.

SHF now has 13 permanent employees (mid-March 2010), who have a no-nonsense approach to work. They are always seeking quality and substantiation and are prepared to seek the roads less travelled. Our partners in the Netherlands and in Bolivia, Kenya and Southern Sudan know that we have a 'can do' mindset. This comes down to rolling up our sleeves.

Quantitative data 2009

Received income sources

Total income € 667.010



Expenses



The Meerwijk Allister Group has audited the financial statements 2009 of Solid House Foundation, which comprise the balance sheet as at December 31 2009, the profit and loss account for the year then ended and the notes.

The auditor has issued an unqualified opinion to the 2009 annual accounts. These annual accounts are available through the website of SHF.

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