



SEED Awards 2011

for entrepreneurship in sustainable development

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The Nubian Vault Association : Burkina Faso

Sustainable housing for as many people as possible, as soon as possible

Project description

The Nubian Vault Association (Association la Voûte Nubienne, AVN) offers a global solution aimed at resolving housing problems in the Sahel zone. The solution draws on an ancestral building technique that does not use wood, sheet metal or cement, and can be mastered by skilled masons according to the local market situation.



Business model

AVN has developed an innovative solution to housing problems in the Sahel zone. AVN contacts local institutions and informs them about its new approach, "1 roof, 1 skill, 1 market": "1 roof" refers to the Nubian vault, a construction technique developed by AVN that can be used to build sustainable housing. "1 skill" refers to the fact that AVN has standardised the technique used by skilled masons, who in turn train apprentices. "1 market" refers to the involvement of local extension agents trained to raise awareness about the AVN concept.

The local institutions contract with AVN's local extension agents to pass on this approach to members of the community and stimulate demand for the comfortable, robust and environmentally friendly housing constructed using this new technique. Networks of such extension agents enable the large scale dissemination of the Nubian vault market.

Scaling up activities in 2012

- Increase the market for Nubian vaults in the Boromo region, Burkina Faso
- Stimulate markets in new regions in countries where the initiative is already established
- Expand into new West and East African countries, particularly Benin and Zambia
- Train new extension agents – both in-house agents and franchisees – to stimulate existing markets and enable greater geographical coverage

Immediate needs

- Financial support and expertise for training new and existing extension agents
- Financial assistance to support extension projects currently underway as well as pilot projects
- New partnerships with local organisations, both public and private
- Technical support and advice on improving the programme's development strategy and global marketing strategy





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Partnership

- ❶ **Association la Voûte Nubienne – Burkina Faso (AVN-BF)** is in charge of implementing AVN's strategy in Burkina Faso
- ❷ **Association la Voûte Nubienne – International (the Nubian Vault Association, AVN)** manages the international network of Voûte Nubienne subsidiaries and provides technical and financial support
- ❸ **Local NGOs (e.g. Via Nebba, Association la Tortue Voyageuse)** support the initiative by popularising the Nubian vault concept at the local level
- ❹ **The Hermès Foundation and Abbé Pierre Foundation** are financial partners



Social, environmental and economic impacts

Social impact: AVN helps to improve people's living conditions by facilitating access to sustainable, comfortable housing that is adapted to the local climate. Some 7,000 people already use or live in houses with vaulted roofs in Burkina Faso, more than 70% of them located in rural areas. Around 500 people benefit directly from lasting employment thanks to the market for Nubian vaults. Approximately 240 Nubian vault builders and 250 apprentices have been trained already.

Environmental impact: The Nubian vault technique protects the environment by providing an alternative to the use of trees and metal sheeting – techniques

with a high carbon impact in terms of production and transportation. So far, approximately 1,200 trees have been saved, 10,000 metal sheets not been used and more than 2,500 tonnes of CO₂ emissions avoided.

Economic impact: The Nubian vault technique leads to medium and long-term savings that can be injected back into the local economy. In addition, AVN promotes the development of income-generating trade. 1308 Nubian vaults have already been built, which implies an economic impact of 990,000 USD. The Nubian vault market is expected to grow by 35 % each year.

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SEED Partners

SEED's founding partners are the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and SEED is hosted by UNEP-WCMC. Other current partners are the governments of Germany, India, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States of America; the European Union; Conservation International; and SEED's corporate partner, Hisense.



About the SEED Initiative

The SEED Initiative identifies and supports promising small scale social and environmental entrepreneurs around the globe, entrepreneurs that while working towards a greener economy also tackle poverty, marginalisation and social exclusion.

SEED provides these social entrepreneurs with know how and networks, taking the lessons learnt at local level up to decision-makers to promote evidence-based policy making.

More information: www.seedinit.org

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