

Brick-making in Shambob, Sudan

In 1998 the brickmakers of Shambob were so poor that many could not marry or raise families. In 2000, for the first time, they could pay for their children's education and health care. Shambob is a village near Kassala in eastern Sudan where two thirds of the village were poor brickmakers working for wealthy merchants.

ITDG helped the brickmakers organise into a legal co-operative, to manage their own enterprise

Each member contributed S\$20. ITDG trained them in production

and in business skills – co-operative management, book-keeping and marketing. ITDG also helped secure a bank loan to purchase new land. Together, ITDG and the brickmakers researched new techniques: fuelling their kilns with organic residues such as cow dung and bagasse (waste from the local sugar industry), improving the moulding and drying of bricks and installing a new, more efficient kiln.

Demonstration buildings convinced the community the technology could work. A community centre for Shambob gives the village an organisational focus. Production and sales have tripled. The co-operative produced one million bricks last year. Its working capital increased 24-fold and the bank loan was repaid on time.

Technical efficiency has increased. Wood for the kilns is expensively transported from afar. Now, other fuels substitute for half the wood.

Result: a 67 per cent rise in income in 1999-2000, following a 20 per cent rise the previous year. Women are among those benefiting, having been accepted as co-operative members.

Through Shambob and two similar co-operatives, ITDG already reaches five per cent of the 5 000 Kassala brick-makers directly, and is generating lessons for the others. The high quality of the larger, more regular bricks has influenced Sudan's national brick standards, which ITDG helped produce. And the Shambob Co-operative has become internationally known, winning a Best Practice Award for improving living environments from the United Nations Centre on Human Settlements (Habitat).

For more information go to: www.bestpractices.org

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