

THE SEMONKONG HOSPITAL PROJECT

Pilot phase: Semonkong Veterinary Centre

THE SEMONKONG HOSPITAL TRUST
To the greater glory of God



HOW CAN A HOSPITAL BE MORE THAN A HOSPITAL?

How can a veterinary facility help create systemic benefits to an impoverished community?

The Semonkong Hospital Project seeks to create sustainable impact through a holistic approach to health, veterinary care, community development, building design and construction uniquely rooted in Semonkong's way of life.

CREATING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

The Semonkong Hospital Trust

The Semonkong Hospital Trust is an interdenominational faith-based organisation which envisages erecting an ecologically regenerative, financially self-sustaining training hospital in Semonkong, Lesotho, coupling it with holistic community development projects already underway. We are committed to creating sustainable social and economic change through unique bottom-up development planning, poverty alleviation, education and contribution to improved standards of living for marginalised people.

The Semonkong Hospital Project

Over 100,000 Basotho people living around the mountain communities of Semonkong are hours away from the nearest hospital, and many lack the means to travel for proper medical care. Over the years, we have worked with affected people and have endeavoured to build a lasting relationship with the Semonkong people. Having gained their trust, many residents in the proposed hospital's catchment area look to the Semonkong Hospital Project with hope for a better, healthier future. The project takes a holistic approach to health care, seeking to use the construction and operation of a 120-bed hospital and supporting facilities as a means to support local initiatives, upskill construction workers, develop sustainable tradecrafts, improve agricultural production, and offer veterinary care to the animals and livestock on which many Basotho people depend. We have acquired the rights to land in Semonkong for the new hospital, veterinary centre and supporting residential development for permanent and visiting staff medical staff.

The Pilot Phase Construction

Through veterinary outreaches, the Trust is already treating 9,000 animals per year and is ready to expand with a new veterinary centre, intended to be a hallmark of green architecture. Aiming to break ground in January of 2019, the new veterinary and community centre will provide a veterinary clinic, a training and development facility, and accommodation for visiting medical teams.

The building is the first phase of an upskilling process, honing construction techniques and developing tradecrafts that will be applied to the future hospital building.

Addressing the sources, not just the symptoms, of systemic poverty.

THE STORY OF THE PROJECT

Project beginnings

The Semonkong Hospital Trust was conceived as a result of an impromptu visit to Lesotho by a few third-year medical students in 2005. During the excursion, they discovered an abandoned hospital infrastructure in the mountains near Semonkong, which had been closed since 1995. In the disturbing sight in front of their eyes, they were immediately motivated to resurrect the hospital and the medical care it could offer. Meetings were initiated with the Minister of Health (Lesotho), local chiefs and the Semonkong Town Council, culminating in the allocation of land adjacent to the local airfield, creating a future home for the medical facility. A second site has also been acquired for the development of living quarters for hospital staff and visiting specialists. The various departments of the Government of Lesotho have been actively engaged since 2008 to bring the vision into fruition. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between The Semonkong Hospital Trust and the Ministry of Health (Lesotho) in May, 2014.

The setting

The healthcare system in Lesotho, like many of their sub-Saharan neighbours, faces significant challenges. With a population of roughly two million, the Mountain Kingdom has a devastatingly high HIV prevalence rate of 23%, and a severe shortage of physicians, nurses, allied healthcare professionals, and veterinarians. Within Semonkong, there are currently two primary healthcare clinic, Saint Leonard's clinic operated by the Roman Catholic Church, and a government-run public clinic; the nearby town of Ha Seng also hosts a primary healthcare clinic, but all of these clinics are staffed by nurses with only the most basic equipment and limited medication. The clinics are rarely visited by doctors. When community members require medical attention from a physician or a facility with full diagnostic capabilities, they need to travel up to four hours by bus or taxi to the larger town of Roma, or the capital Maseru.

Impacting the lives of 100,000 people in rural Lesotho.



OVER A DECADE OF IMPACT

Since the birth of the Trust in 2005, the vision to erect a hospital in Semonkong has been the backbone of the Semonkong Hospital Project (SHP). We have committed ourselves to making a positive impact in the broader community of Semonkong, through various community development projects. Although the best is yet to come, we have achieved a lot over the years. Some of our most recent projects include:

Medical outreach and social support

The SHP has always striven to support orphans, widows and the needy. Through our permanent volunteers living in Semonkong and *ad hoc* outreach teams, we give support to local churches the Semonkong Children Centre and whomever and wherever the need arises. We have run medical outreach programmes to bring specialist medical care to those who would otherwise have limited access in Semonkong.

Agricultural development

With majority of people living in Semonkong being subsistence farmers, it is vitally important for the SHP to research agricultural issues, develop solutions, and train farmers in more effective agricultural methods. Through our agricultural initiatives, two hundred day jobs and two permanent agricultural jobs have been created, helping to boost the local economy and passing on improved techniques to interested farmers. Scores of people in the community have been blessed through this initiative.

Animal welfare

The SHP hosts an annual week-long veterinary outreach, during which veterinary surgeons and veterinary students come to Semonkong to treat up to 9,000 animals and educate farmers in better animal husbandry. The SHP has forged valuable partnerships with the veterinary department of the National University of Lesotho and The World Horse Welfare Society.

School construction

The Calvary Primary school in Semonkong had been hosting seven grade levels in a single-room church building. Utilising its resources and expertise, the SHP played a major part in the construction of a new three-classroom primary school building, freeing up space and contributing to the improvement of both morale and educational standards. The SHP continues to assist the school with further development of their facilities, vegetable gardens and teacher training.

Local building material sourcing

Twenty two unskilled labourers are currently employed from 10 villages to collect, transport and shape locally-sourced stones as a primary material for the pilot phase construction.



*Reshaping
Semonkong's
development
through
bottom-up
initiatives
and strong
community
engagement.*

*The pilot
phase
construction
will turn the
community's
planning
into reality as
the first step
towards the
complete
hospital.*

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The foundation of the Semonkong Hospital Project is community input, engagement, and partnership, seeking to maximise indigenous knowledge input into the design, but also to instil a sense of community ownership over the project. For the past three years, the design team has engaged in an extensive community participation process to help strengthen the vision for the project and chart a pathway towards implementation.

Community visioning

Held in January 2016, the community developed a shared vision around the larger impact goals of holistic public health and broad developmental issues by brainstorming linkages between the construction and operation of the hospital with community needs. A vision was created in which the hospital and related construction become means of developing local building tradecrafts, complementing public health outreach, forming agricultural cooperatives, and forming entrepreneurial support programmes.

Phasing strategising

Held in May 2016, this workshop strategised components of the overall project phasing, linking processes related to the goals and priorities to the implementation. The outcome was a project roadmap establishing the in pilot construction phase as a means to build technical capacity amongst the construction team.

Action planning

Held in June 2016, this workshop sought to plan the inclusionary construction process in more detail. Three task teams were formed: one focusing on community development projects, one on construction skill mapping, and one on developing a fair and transparent recruitment policy.

Design commentary

Held in January 2017, the general masterplan for the project was presented to the community in order to validate it with them as a client, and to verify that the objectives of the project roadmap are being met.

Task teams

In early 2017, task teams outlined and ratified a recruitment and material sourcing policy for construction work. These policies help to ensure transparency in the upskilling and procurement processes, and act as contracts within the community to create fair and inclusive opportunities. The task teams remain part of the project structure, and will help guide the project as it progresses.

Impact assessment

As the project progresses, the design and technical teams will continue to monitor the impact against stated goals.



IMPACT-DRIVEN DESIGN

An off-grid, multi-functional, sustainable building designed to leverage indigenous knowledge and local capacity-building



PILOT CONSTRUCTION PHASE: THE SEMONKONG VETERINARY CENTRE

Building appropriately

Construction of the veterinary centre scheduled to start in January, 2019. The multi-functional facility will serve as research and development station for the future hospital construction, testing building techniques which will be invaluable and will need scaling up for design and construction of the future hospital. This beautiful, self-sustaining, eco-friendly 200m² facility is a synthesis of traditional building methods and forms with contemporary, performance-based technology.

Impact strategy

To maximise positive impacts in Semonkong, the pilot phase construction will be the first iteration of a method which intends to:

- **Leverage existing, indigenous knowledge** and skills by sourcing local materials and using local labour as much as possible;
- **Extend knowledge of replicable construction techniques** amongst local builders for better-performing design;
- **Produce renewable energy** provided from photovoltaics, and use passive solar water heating systems;
- **Utilise dry-sanitation (waterless) toilets** to drastically reduce water use and environmental impact;
- **Harvest rainwater and recycle greywater** for agricultural irrigation;
- **Optimise passive systems for thermal comfort**, combining low-tech trombe walls and rock beds with high-tech thermal and energy modeling.

Maximising the return on investment in the local construction industry; sowing the seeds of better building.



A full-page background image showing a man in traditional attire riding a brown horse across a rocky ridge. The landscape below is a vast, green valley under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The man is wearing a white headwrap, a patterned shawl, and blue trousers. The horse is equipped with a saddle and bridle. The overall scene conveys a sense of journey and connection to nature.

SUPPORT A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR SEMONKONG

Investing in an engine of growth

The upfront construction cost of this facility is more than just a building; it is an investment in an engine of growth we intend to drive the full hospital construction. Your contribution will go towards:

- **Renewable, off-grid energy production**, providing an asset for community use;
- **Eco-friendly water systems**, including low-tech dry sanitation, rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling;
- **Basic tools and fabrication equipment** which will service all phases of the Semonkong Hospital Project;
- **Upskilling and capacity-building sessions** for the local construction team;
- **Entrepreneurial support** for local tradecraft development;
- **Testing and monitoring of building technologies** to verify their effectiveness before scaling them up to the larger hospital development.
- **Construction** of this multi-functional, ecologically sensitive community facility.

A self-sustaining model

The Trust has developed a self-sustaining funding model for operational costs of the hospital and veterinary centre. Funding for construction is sought from donors, development institutions and the community.

Project costs & timeline

Estimated cost: **R 4,100,000 South African rand**
 (approx. \$285,000 USD / € 254,000 EUR)

Groundbreaking: Targeted for **January, 2019**.

*Help turn the Semonkong community's vision into reality by donating here:
www.shp.org.za/contact-us.php*

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