



The Rössing Foundation

1978 - 2008

Foreword

When the Rössing Foundation came into existence in 1978, Namibia was a very different country. Prior to independence, the racial segregation policies that characterised the then South West Africa being administered by South Africa as a fifth province in contravention of international law cast a shadow over the future of the majority of Namibia's sons and daughters. Scant resources were devoted to the education and career advancement of black and coloured Namibians, who were destined to live as third- and second-class citizens, respectively, in the ditches of poverty and injustice on all fronts.

The birth of an organisation like the Rössing Foundation on the nation's very soil in those troubled times can be attributed to the far-sighted philanthropy of Rössing Uranium Ltd, which felt duty-bound to benefit the society from whose land it was reaping profit. With this motive and with such strong financial support, the Rössing Foundation lived up to expectations. It began by laying the groundwork for nation-building, from individual scholarships to meritorious students in its humble beginnings to various art and skills development projects at community level as it progressed in stature. More ambitious accomplishments are evidenced by Maths and Science Centres of Excellence that serve larger regional communities, and most recently, the Foundation's acceptance as a national development partner in the Namibian Government's Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme, which aims to overhaul the entire education system.

The Rössing Foundation is more than adequately equipped to assist in this after three decades in the field of training. Indeed, what it identified as strong needs thirty years ago – literacy and English skills – remain crucial aspects of advancement in education and the working world today. Underlying each Rössing Foundation skills-building programme, which always aimed at the socio-economic upliftment of the poor and marginalised in society, was the principle that projects be needs-directed, culturally sensitive, and self-sustaining down the line – no matter how small or large they were, and irrespective of whether they were in the arts, agriculture, education, or even tourism based on community-based natural resource management.

Nonetheless, the time will come when the Rössing Foundation can close its doors in the sure knowledge that it has played a significant role in fostering, nurturing and showcasing the rich diversity of talent and skill that is Namibia.

It is, therefore, with immense pride that I introduce this window into what we have achieved in the past three decades, and assure the reader not only of a rewarding few hours in these pages, but also of confidence in Namibia's future.



Rehabeam Hoveka
Chairman of the Board of Trustees





The Rössing Foundation

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The image features a vertical decorative strip on the right side with a textured, golden-brown background. Overlaid on this strip are white silhouettes of a family group (a man, a woman, and several children) and a separate figure of a man pointing towards the left. The word 'ABBREVIATIONS' is printed in large, bold, black capital letters across the middle of this strip.

ABBREVIATIONS

CBNRM	community-based natural resource management
COSDEC	Community Skills Development Centre
ERSMA	Erongo Regional Small-scale Miners' Association
ETSIP	Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme
EU	European Union
GDP	gross domestic product
IRDNC	Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation
KAYEC	Katutura Youth Enterprise Centre
LIFE	Living in a Finite Environment (Program)
NACOBTA	Namibia Community-based Tourism Association
NACSO	Namibian Association of Community-based Natural Resource Management Support Organisations
NAMFI	Namibian Maritime Fisheries Institute
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
NIMT	Namibian Institute for Mining Technology
NIT	Namibian Institute for Technology
NMI	Namibia Mathematics Institute
RPRP	Rural Poverty Reduction Programme
RTZ	Rio Tinto Zinc
RUL	Rössing Uranium Limited
SAQMEC	Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
TUCSIN	The University Centre for Studies in Namibia
UNAM	University of Namibia
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

How far should an ethical mining company stretch out its hand to help and protect people, planet and mutual profit, and how does one judge the value of such a social intervention?

The old African adage that "If your neighbour goes to bed hungry, you also do not sleep well" comes to mind - or as the late Mr Ronald ("Ronnie") Walker, first Chairman of Rössing Uranium Limited expressed it, in terms perhaps better understood in the context of a modern, 21st century Africa:

We think the common loyalty and purpose, without which no nation can survive, depends on having something worthwhile to defend such as a decent standard of living and the individual freedom to enjoy it.

In the case of the Rössing Uranium Limited, however, there is literally no one beyond the fence - not the first 50 km or so, until one reaches the icy waters of Namibia's desert-bound Atlantic coastline. Historically, the majority of the mineworkers have always been drawn from rural Oshiwambo- and Otjiherero-speaking communal areas in Namibia, hundreds of kilometres away to the north and east, and housed in the purpose-built, modern model town of Arandis that Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ, now Rio Tinto¹) built for its workers near the mine in 1976.

But while the Rössing workers were at least enjoying a higher standard of living - RTZ's non-racial recruitment policies made it the company of choice for Namibians still living under the strictures of apartheid - thousands of their compatriots were eking out a living from subsistence farming in those communal areas.

It was to these Namibians that Mr Walker was referring, and he knew what he wanted to do about it. Prior to his appointment at Rössing Uranium Limited, he had worked in what was then Rhodesia, where he had created a foundation that offered practical educational opportunities for free: opportunities that could be transformed into sellable skills in a country that, like Namibia, was painfully inching its way towards independent nationhood.

The Rössing Foundation, as envisaged by Mr Walker, was formally set up in late 1978 as a legal trust. The Foundation was to provide greater educational opportunities for the vast majority of Namibians in order to could impart practical skills that would create better economic opportunities for them, particularly in rural communities. Since 1978, the Foundation has spent in excess of N\$120 million in various programmes, over and above the enormous contribution Rössing Uranium has made to the state coffers in taxes over the past 33 years.

From 1978 to 2008, the Foundation's activities shifted, adapted to changes in circumstance and fortune and evolved, always moulding itself to the needs of the host nation, Namibia - which, in 1990, became the last country in Africa to throw off the yoke of colonialism. This process in itself determined to a large extent how and where the Foundation was to make its interventions, as the dynamics of a developing young nation shifted from basic needs to more future-directed training.

In the process, the Foundation's activities swung from addressing problems caused by Namibia's apartheid past during the 1980s to the pressing problems of poverty in the 1990s, and have now become associated with the Foundation's role as one of the architects of the country's future as envisaged in the official Vision 2030 blueprint for Namibia's development.

¹ For clarity's sake, Rio Tinto is referred to as RTZ until approximately 1997, when the name change came into effect.

A WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE

So, it is a case of *Experto crede* - "Believe one who has had experience", as Virgil had it? Which projects worked, which failed, and what lesson can be drawn from the experience?

Starting in 1979, the Foundation has gone from teaching basic skills such as reading, to plumbing, auto mechanics and needlework; from basic health care to small-scale agriculture, seamanship and conservation; from arts and crafts and community-based conservation to becoming totally focussed today on higher educational requirements - the teaching of mathematics, science, English, and information and communications technology (ICT) skills.

In some ways, it is easier to determine which programme failed - and why - than to determine how well other programmes have worked. Human expectations constantly shift over time. As an independent Namibia developed over the past 19 years, human needs changed in response to the demands of a constantly modernising world. Like its host country, Namibia, the Foundation evolved by means of trial and error, and its metamorphosis from a basic practical training facility to being at the cutting edge of developing education for Namibia's future has been a process that owed much to its ability to evolve in response to needs and opportunities as they occurred.

When the Foundation opened its doors in 1978 to teach basic adult English literacy classes, the response was enormously positive. Overflowing classrooms meant teaching staff and facilities soon had to be doubled. When more practical courses such as plumbing, basic motor mechanics and needlework were added, the Foundation was compelled to erect a purpose-built education facility - the Rössing Foundation Adult Education Centre in Khomasdal - within four years to accommodate the ever-increasing demand for their courses.

Of the projects started in the early years, the upgrading of teachers' skills stands out: it has evolved to the point where teacher development is a formal part of the current national education system. Like many of its earlier activities, the Foundation's interventions were to provide pointers to future progress; for example, more could have been made of their pilot programmes in career guidance training. One cannot help wondering whether vocational counselling would not have helped in a country where a shortage of skilled human resources continues to hinder development.

The plan to reach as many needy people as possible, especially in parts where the colonial government had no interest in investing, saw basic health education and needlework classes exported in mini-buses to places like Okahandja, Okakarara, Omaruru and Shankara. Some of these plans worked well, while others never really got off the ground or could not become self-sustaining. Out of six community-based food-producing projects launched in the early to late 1980s, only the one at Ogongo in north-central Namibia eventually succeeded.

One valuable principle was established from this experience: for a project to work and become self-sustaining, the intended beneficiaries have to take ownership of it. But if the intended beneficiary community was not fully involved with a given project, there was little any outside agency could do to help. Success depended on people wanting to help themselves, thereby avoiding the hand-out mentality that has so often bedevilled development work.

Early plans to launch agricultural training programmes in 1979 had to be put on the backburner until the Foundation could meaningfully deal with the pent-up demand for these courses. Eventually, the agricultural programme developed from its humble beginnings as the Brakwater Agricultural Training Project outside Windhoek into the jewel that is today the Okashana Agricultural Centre. The latter was taken over by the new government of an independent Namibia after 1990.

THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

This established a few additional guiding principles. Firstly, for any project to truly have real and lasting benefits, training has to be needs-directed. Secondly, training only really works well over the long term if it is offered in close proximity to where the needs occur, and it evolves with the sector with which it engages. This was amply illustrated in the development of the Lüderitz Maritime Training Centre, also originally established by the Rössing Foundation. The fact that this Centre was moved to Walvis Bay as soon as the enclave was returned to Namibia in 1994 led to it becoming a completely autonomous, self-funding institute.

Post-independence Namibia brought its own challenges - including financial ones. While declining contributions from the Rössing Mine forced the Foundation to become self-funding, the experience and stature it had gained during its first 12 years meant it had become the 'go to' development agency of choice for many outside donors. The Foundation's reputation as a safe pair of hands, coupled with strong financial management and minimal bureaucracy, saw it evolve in ways not initially envisaged by the original founding objectives. Mr Walker had perhaps not envisaged that the Foundation would one day be using World Wildlife Fund (WWF) resources to train professional game guides.

But necessity is the mother of invention, and when the international development community started moving towards sustainable development in the form of community-based tourism enterprises as a means of poverty alleviation, the Foundation's past successes and experience in community-based projects saw it become a pioneer and international trendsetter in what became known as community-based natural resource management (CBNRM).

This holistic approach is a formula that the Foundation now hopes to repeat in engaging in the formal education sector. The official invitation to become involved in redesigning Namibia's failing education system is the best possible example of the Foundation's success: it is not merely seen as another non-governmental organisation (NGO), but a formal development partner who helped lay the very cornerstones of a technologically advanced society by 2030.

EVOLVING WITH NAMIBIA'S NEEDS

No longer is the Foundation trying to plug the gaps left by an apartheid-era education system that spent eight times as much on white children as it did on black children. The organisation has instead become a conduit for the entire education discourse between the private sector and State agents, applying its vast experience and specialised knowledge in training to bring about nothing short of a revolution in the formal education system.

The Centres of Excellence - where promising children will be taught maths, science, English and ICT skills not available at State schools - are held as the hope for the future of Namibia's youth. Perhaps more importantly, these Centres will bridge the knowledge gap between children from less advantaged rural areas² and their more fortunate urban contemporaries, and specifically address the declining success rate in the selected subjects, which constitute a survival kit for the 21st century.

In time, it is hoped that this programme will halt current negative trends where nearly half of all Grade 10 students fail and are forced out of the formal education system - with potentially grave consequences for Namibia's peace and socio-economic stability in the future.

In many ways, the Foundation has come full circle over 30 years to return to Mr Walker's original vision, namely that no nation can survive without a common loyalty and purpose by having something worth defending "... such as a decent standard of living and the individual freedom to enjoy it". It has also come full circle in another way that continues to affirm its role as a facilitator of learning. Where once it taught

² That is outside Windhoek, where most education resources are concentrated.

practical economic survival skills, it will now play a role in providing Namibians with the tools required for surviving in the new technology-intensive millennium.

And finally, there has been the Foundation's increasing involvement with Arandis, which became an autonomous local authority in 1992 but subsequently struggled to cope without Rössing's financial and administrative input.

At the suggestion of the Mine's management, the Foundation has become a sort of substitute godmother, with remarkable effect: for the first time since 1992, Arandis has this past year been able to balance its books and attract small but important local investments. Given the Foundation's track-record, it is probably not too far-fetched to expect that this experience could be applied to many other struggling, small towns in Namibia that have similarly deteriorated over the past two decades.

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE?

If there is one criticism that can be levelled at the Foundation, it may involve whether the scaling down of all the other competing projects, as for example in community-based conservation, may not be a mistake. Experience has shown that outside interest in an isolated community often counts as a major driving factor in assuring the success of mutually undertaken projects. Will these projects survive without the Foundation? One thing we know: if they need the Foundation, they will call it back - because it has always been there for them.

This aspect - of not intervening until a clear mandate has been given - can be regarded as one of cornerstones for the Rössing Foundation's success. It is perhaps best summarised by David Godfrey, OBE, first Director of the Foundation, who said that every project had to be community-driven, with the community taking full ownership. Secondly, it had to get full recognition and acceptance from Government for it to take off. Thirdly, it needed financial backing to make the programme work. And fourthly, it needed the kind of committed people who could drive its programmes.

To that one could add that the Foundation's reputation as a safe pair of hands, and the minimal bureaucracy and robust financial management by means of which its projects are administered, not to mention the strong oversight from its main benefactor, the Rio Tinto group of companies. The key to success has been in recognising that any project has to be demand-driven if it aims at helping people to help themselves without creating dependencies. By listening, learning and engaging communities on every level - and responding to their needs in a way that is culturally appropriate - the Foundation recipe will stand it in good stead for the future.

In becoming involved with the formal education system, the Foundation has gone through another paradigm shift. Initially, the Foundation was designed to repair the damage left by seven decades of colonial rule. Once colonial rule ended, the Foundation's focus shifted to poverty alleviation and the sustainable exploitation of natural resources. But these were simply symptoms of a larger problem: a lack of an appropriate, relevant education that would help Namibia overcome the vagaries of poverty, ignorance and disease. For that to happen, Namibia has to lift itself by its bootstraps - and the Foundation has committed itself to assist the country, every step of the way.

Lastly, the Foundation's ability to draw on past experience and transfer the skills and knowledge it has acquired into new fields, thereby continuously redefining its role in the broader Namibian society, has proved to be its single largest strength. Its versatility as a development partner has enhanced its function in this role, earning it enormous respect over the past three decades - a legacy that is likely to remain long after the last uranium is mined in the Namib Desert.³

And with the world returning to the view that nuclear fuel is the source of energy for the future - China and India alone have committed to building 46 new nuclear reactors⁴ - the Foundation seems set to achieve new heights over the next 30 years.

³ Current projections for the life-of-mine at Rössing now run to 2021, with possibly another ten years after that.

⁴ Reuters, 17 September 2007: as published in *The Namibian*, 18 September 2007, "Namibia's booming uranium industry".

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BEGINNING

ENLIGHTENED SELF-INTEREST

But how did it all start?

Given the often politically charged nature of the extractive industries, the RTZ Corporation⁵ in the 1960s had already realised that enlightened self-interest amounted to more than mere tax contributions to the host nation. A mining company that was originally founded in 1873, RTZ's experience across the globe has proved that long-term growth - for both company and host nation - could only be assured by long-term planning and a commitment to people.

RTZ's decision to go ahead with the Rössing Mine in 1973 marked exactly a century after the international mining giant was founded in Spain. The R400 million investment in the early 1970s in what was then South West Africa (SWA) amounted to the single largest commitment of this nature by the RTZ for many years. Moreover, the investment was made in a country involved in a liberation war that was to intensify sharply over the next decade.

As the world went through the oil shocks of the early 1970s, this company that was to produce the fuel of the future clearly also had to plan for that future - and act accordingly. Mr Walker's sense of corporate responsibility in a time long before the term had become a corporate buzzword was, in hindsight, perhaps the strongest driving force in creating a development foundation that would reach out well beyond the fence to address some of the most pressing problems in the struggling Namibian⁶ nation.

RTZ's enlightened employment policies that strictly avoided the apartheid practices of job reservation was often viewed by other mining companies as heresy as it made clear that it intended using the company's economic muscle and social ideals to correct the imbalances created by 100 years of colonial history.

For one, unforeseen technical problems had beset the Rössing project, by then already nine years in the making. RTZ plc in 1966 had negotiated its first six-year lease from Captain Graham Peter Louw to develop the massive but low-grade uranium deposits into a mine, and by 1968 had started signing long-term supply contracts. The final feasibility study was completed in May 1973, and by July 1974, the first on-site workshops were established. Initial production - such as it was - commenced in March 1976.

But the extreme abrasiveness of the uranium-bearing granites, the so-called Alaskite rock, caused unexpected problems that meant a substantial part of the plant had to be re-engineered at a cost of R100 million in 1978. A fire later that year at one of two solvent plants led to further production bottlenecks, and it was not until this plant was completely redesigned and rebuilt that full production was achieved in 1979.

These problems did, however, have engineering solutions. The political challenges of investing in a country under military occupation from the racist South African regime meant that the parent company, RTZ, had to clearly demonstrate that Rössing Uranium Mine was also being developed in the interest of the country and its indigenous peoples.

By 1976, RTZ had constructed an entirely new town - Arandis - in the middle of the Namib Desert, complete with every conceivable amenity including a school, clinic, entertainment facilities, and 1,600 well-appointed homes, where workers were



⁵ Rio Tinto Zinc underwent a name change to *Rio Tinto* in 1997.

⁶ Namibia only became independent from South Africa on 21 March 1990.

encouraged to come and live with their families. This was in stark contrast to apartheid-era contract employment practices at the time, which isolated workers from their families, often for as long as a year – a factor that often contributed to the breakdown of the family structure in rural Namibia.

RTZ, as an explicitly non-racial employer, was intent on breaking this cycle and make every worker and his/her family part of the Rössing family. This approach made Rössing Uranium Limited the most sought-after employer in Namibia, not only because of its generous human resources policies, but also because its pioneering spirit extended to every member of the company.

The company's social responsibility, quite clearly, was to extend beyond its immediate corporate remit. Rössing invested hugely in the coastal economy – especially in respect of Swakopmund, where it built or leased 1,600 houses for its staff, thereby rescuing a community that had landed upon hard times in the wake of the collapse of the pelagic fishing industry.

After 12 years and a R400 million⁷ investment, the single largest commitment of this nature at the time by any private company in Namibia, Rössing's fate had become inextricably linked with that of a country going through the first political phases of what was eventually to become Independence on 21 March 1990. Unlike some others in the mining industry, Rössing was ready for – and indeed, wholeheartedly embraced – the changes that were still to come.

And changes there would be. Negotiations for Namibia's Independence were slow, and the eventual outcome anything but clear because of the vast gulf of mistrust between those backing the liberation movement, the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) and those that sympathised with the South African Government.

But Mr Walker wanted to take advantage of the wealth of experience he had gained in Rhodesia (which was to achieve independence in 1980). Indeed, this experience and his acute assessment of the political situation in Namibia gave the Foundation the security and balance it needed as it tread the tightrope that spanned this political chasm.

By late 1977, Mr Walker had approached Dr Beatrice Sandelowsky, a Namibian-born, Berkeley-educated anthropologist and former fierce critic of the planned Rössing Mine to draw up a feasibility study to set up an education, training and development trust to address the skills shortfall among Namibians.

Perhaps as a sign of the politically turbulent times, Dr Sandelowsky, whose previous research on the Namib Desert climate at the Gobabeb Research Station had led her to demand RTZ construct a desalination plant at the coast rather than use fossil water from the desert aquifer, had joined the company as a consultant earlier that year. Some 30 years later, Dr Sandelowsky put it this way in an interview:

The management said a desalination plant would be too expensive to build, and asked that I make alternative proposals for them to consider. The biggest and most obvious need was in education, in practical skills training, and that is what I then suggested.



⁷ About N\$5-6 billion at the time of writing.

BIRTH OF THE RÖSSING FOUNDATION

THE FIRST STEPS

In mid-1978, the Board of Directors of Rössing Uranium Limited (RUL)⁸ under the Chairmanship of Mr Walker, took a momentous step that was to have a far-reaching impact on the future of Namibia: even though the Mine was two years behind schedule and an estimated R100 million over budget, they would go ahead with the creation of the Rössing Foundation Trust.

The Foundation's mandate was spelled out as follows in Article 17 of the Rössing Foundation Trust:

- To further the practical education of young people in order to achieve greater national productivity and to increase understanding between the different races.
- To encourage the creation of and/or to create opportunities for people to use their education.
- To promote the advancement of the living standards of all the people who live in South West Africa/Namibia.
- Generally, to do any act or thing which, in the opinion of the TRUSTEES, shall benefit the territory of South West Africa/Namibia, or any or all of its inhabitants.

John Berning, the Mine's General Manager who was about to retire, was appointed as the Foundation's Director on a temporary basis, with a secretary to assist him. It was agreed that in order for the Foundation to be as independent as possible, he would also resign from the RUL Board. Furthermore, the Foundation was to have its own offices and bank accounts, and Berning was tasked with looking for suitable premises for the new organisation.

The operating procedures were also laid down: the Foundation would consider any project within the broad ambit of its defined objectives as per Article 17, and would consider proposals from the Trustees, the Director of the Foundation, or from members of the public.

At the next meeting, which was held on 10-11 August 1978, the Trust document was amended to adopt a Deed of Donation. It was also resolved that, in the event of a dispute between Trustees, a single arbitrator appointed by the President of the SWA Bar Council would be appointed. As far as could be established, the appointment of an arbitrator has never been considered necessary in the 30 years of the Foundation's history.

From a financial point of view, Resolution 10 in the minutes of that same meeting was of crucial importance:

That the Foundation gratefully accept from Rössing Uranium Limited a donation of annual amounts equivalent to 2% of all dividends distributed to its shareholders after tax, or such greater amount as the Board of Directors may decide, [and that] such a portion [is] to form a portion of the capital of the Trust fund of the Foundation and to be held and applied in terms of the Deed of Donation and Trust whereby the Foundation was established.

This legacy was to provide the Foundation with more than N\$119 million over the next 30 years, and would shape in Namibia in ways that cannot be measured in financial terms. By investing directly in Namibia's people via the Foundation, it created opportunity where there was often only desperate poverty, giving many thousands of people self-respect that could only come from being able to fend for themselves.



⁸ RTZ's local operation was known as the Rössing Uranium Limited (RUL), which operated the Rössing Mine outside Swakopmund. RUL's headquarters were in Windhoek.

ADULT LITERACY AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

REMMER HOUSE

The first two projects were also officially launched at this second Trustee meeting – despite the Mine having yet to make any profit and other foreign donors declining to become involved in a project that was not overtly sanctioned by the anti-apartheid forces.

Project 1 resolved to create an education institute, provisionally called the *Rössing Foundation University Centre*, with the essential intent of helping people help themselves. A Planning Committee – chaired by Dr Sandelowsky and assisted by Mr CV Aukongo, Ms L van Wyngaarden and Mr John Berning – was set up with a budget of R1,000 to investigate the creation of such a Centre.

Project 2 involved the Rössing Leadership Scholarships. These were to be run by well-known lawyer Mr John Kirkpatrick, Adv. Fanuel Kozonguizi, Bishop Lucas de Vries (who was suggested by SWAPO as a politically neutral person) and John Berning. The first scholarship was to be awarded that year, it was resolved, and RTZ would be asked to consider funding another.

This resolution was amended a few months later to include sending pre-Matriculants to the Atlantic College in Wales to complete their last two years of schooling, and the rules were hammered out for what was to become known as the Rössing Foundation Leadership Scholarship Programme.

John Berning was also tasked with looking for suitable candidates to run two other projects the Trustees had identified, namely the Rössing Farming and Building Centres Scheme, and the Prototype Secondary School Plan. Although these projects changed in name over time, they were to become core components of the Foundation's work in later years.

In the following weeks, Dr Sandelowsky and Martin Shipanga were also appointed as Trustees. Later, Craig Gibson was appointed Vice-chairman of the Board of Trustees. On 6 October 1978, the Rössing Foundation University Centre was formally renamed the *Rössing Foundation Education Centre*.

Broadly speaking, the Trust intended to address Namibia's most pressing developmental problems: creating education, training and employment opportunities, uplift its people, and alleviate poverty. These problems persist in Namibia to this day.

Having had first-hand experience of the huge skills shortage in the country, Rössing opted to concentrate on practical skills that would be immediately marketable, and Dr Sandelowsky and Martin Shipanga set about designing suitable training courses in this regard. These would seek to address, free of charge, the most immediate and pressing education needs: adult literacy courses, practical English for teachers and nurses, office skills and typing, and a variety of vocational skills such as sewing courses, leatherwork and training in auto mechanics.

Two overriding factors emerged from this exercise. The first was that the existing education and training facilities for historically disadvantaged Namibians were woefully inadequate. The technical skills pool as required by a highly technical operation such as the Rössing Mine would have to be expanded urgently if any dent was to be made in the unemployment and general poverty that prevailed in Namibia at the time.

Secondly, the Foundation was not yet in a position to pursue its plans for improving basic formal education, and a lack of suitable project leaders (and funding) led to the Trustees deciding to postpone the agricultural plans until 1981. This would allow the Foundation to concentrate on the task at hand, namely to give access to free education for those who needed it most, and teaching immediately sellable skills that would generate an income for the trainees.

By now, it was also becoming clear that Namibia was heading for Independence and that English would most likely be the new official language. This led to an increasing demand for English literacy training, especially for teachers and nurses. The country would also need a far bigger class of skilled professionals and, as Dr Sandelowsky



put it, "our own scientists and artists". The Foundation was to go much further than that over the next 30 years.

After seeing the Foundation through its first few steps, John Berning went into retirement and in October 1979 was succeeded by David Godfrey, a former British Army Major whose infectious enthusiasm and belief in people was to impart a lasting ethos to the Foundation.

At the behest of Dr Sandelowsky, some outbuildings attached to the old Remmer Clinic – also known as *Rockstroh Haus*, a large old dwelling situated along the western section of John Meinert Street in Windhoek – were leased for the purpose of setting up an education centre. If they could just train a 100 Namibians, Dr Sandelowsky recalled when she argued the case to management, the Rössing Foundation would have proved its viability. But the demand was much bigger than even she anticipated, as word of this new centre spread like wildfire among an education-hungry population.

In her autobiography entitled *Archaeologically Yours*, Dr Sandelowsky described the first few steps of the Education Centre as follows:

- [Jerry Tobias] had also applied for a job at Rössing and I was delighted when Rössing appointed him to assist me in setting up an Education Centre.
- On our first morning at the 'new' office in the outbuilding at the Remmer Clinic (Rockstroh Haus) we found two desks and two chairs with a telephone that was not yet connected. For the sake of deciding our priorities, we went out and bought a kettle and two cups to make tea.
- While we were having our first tea break an ice cream seller (on a bicycle) approached our office. He had heard that lessons were going to be offered in this place. For what could he sign up? Literacy and English. Free of charge. He signed up. We were thrilled and reassured ourselves that this was going to be a great success. Within a few weeks we had signed up enough students to start up classes in Literacy and English.

On another occasion, Dr Sandelowsky recalled the moment when "a great big yellow Mercedes Benz" arrived at the Centre, and an immaculately dressed gentleman got out – a far cry from students who usually arrived on foot. The gentleman – whose name has sadly been lost – wanted to sign up for a literacy course because he owned a large and flourishing taxi business, and needed to learn to read and write.

As it turned out, he suffered from dyslexia – but, with the help of Dr Sandelowsky and the Rössing Foundation Training Centre, he managed to overcome this disability and became literate.

No doubt Rössing's avowedly non-racial employment policies at the Mine were making the authorities a little uncomfortable. Apartheid laws such as the prohibition of mixed marriages and the hated Group Areas Act were still on the statute books. But the tide of progress could not be stopped.

The demand for free, basic training was enormous, and Dr Sandelowsky – who in June 1978 had already set up The University Centre for Studies in Namibia (TUCSIN) next door, in the main building – convinced the Rössing Foundation to take their lease over. This allowed the fledgling Foundation to double the number of people they could help, as well as expand the curriculum.

To mark the occasion, Dr Sandelowsky and Jerry Tobias organised a celebratory party for all the Literacy and English classes. The event earned them a written rebuke from the Windhoek City Council for causing a "... *samedromming van nie-blankes in stedelike gebiede*" ("massing of non-whites in urban areas"). In those days of apartheid and the hated Group Areas Act, this amounted to a criminal offence – but no charges were ever brought.

Undeterred, the Rössing Foundation pressed on. Dr Sandelowsky was appointed formally as the Principal of the Rössing Foundation Education Centre in March 1980, and to avoid a clash of interests, agreed to stand down from the Board of Trustees.



ARANDIS AND THE KOLIN FOUNDATION

CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME

One of the first things that RTZ wanted to see was for their employees' children to be given a proper education. After some negotiations with the Administration for Damaras,⁹ an amount of R788,184 was set aside, and construction firm Murray & Roberts were given the go-ahead in early November 1980 to build a school to serve primary and secondary students at Arandis.

Most of the construction costs were covered by a R1.5 million¹⁰ donation by the by the Swiss-based Kolin Foundation, a charitable organisation that at the time supported growth projects in the developing world. However, although the costs were covered, there were disputes over actual ownership and management. In the fist such instance, the Rössing Foundation showed itself to be a safe pair of hands commandeered by steady heads, and the project was completed on schedule. Late in 1981, the Kolin Foundation's Dr Haraldt Gmür handed over the school, named the Kolin Foundation High School,¹¹ to the local community.

The demand for education was huge, however, and soon the school soon ran out of space. In 1986, the Foundation spent another R100,000 to add another three classrooms to the Kolin School. The school was also the first to receive an English language laboratory after the Foundation committed nearly R500,000 to the improvement of English usage in Namibia that same year.

Not that all of this happened without incident, though. For more than a year, there was a stand-off between the Board and the Damaraland education authorities who wanted full control over the management of the school, including the appointment of its staff and its budget. This was gently but firmly resisted, and eventually a compromise was reached by appointing some officials to the Board while leaving the running of the school in the hands of its capable staff, all recruited via the Foundation.

This development knocked up several significant signposts in the history of the Foundation's development. Firstly, it was the first time the Foundation acted as an implementing partner for another donor,¹² using its understanding to shift a potential political logjam. Secondly, the Foundation's initial involvement in the formal education sector and the experience it accumulated as a result was to stand it in good stead nearly 30 years later. And fourthly, its first headmaster was a young man called Len le Roux, who was to play an enormously important role in the Foundation's later years.

Today, the Foundation is still involved in Arandis's three schools, which now include the Arandis Junior Primary, the UB Dax Senior Primary, and the Kolin Foundation Senior Secondary. These schools in effect became a test bed for many of the new ideas that the Foundation developed over the years, and which were to form part of what in 2008 became the focus of the Foundation's work in Namibia: contributing to the reform of the formal education sector.



⁹ Under apartheid rule, most indigenous groups were given limited self-government, including running their own education departments, based on ethnically demarcated 'homelands'. These third-tier administrative structures were all scrapped at Independence in 1990.

¹⁰ About N\$15 million in today's terms.

¹¹ Renamed *Kolin Foundation Senior Secondary School* after Independence.

¹² An experience that was put to positive use in the mid-1990s under Len le Roux.

THE DAVID GODFREY YEARS

SOLDIER MAN, TEACHER MAN

Meanwhile, after seeing the Foundation through its first few steps, John Berning went into retirement and in October 1979 was succeeded by David Godfrey, a retired British Army Major who was to play a major part in shaping the Foundation in its earliest years.

In 1976, after serving in the British Army for 20 years with the Gloucestershire Regiment and the Ghurkhas, David Godfrey had retired to Cape Town with plans to become involved in some light industrial development projects in South Africa. But the increasing political upheaval had knocked the bottom out of the market and ignited the battle for political control of South Africa's townships.

Instead, he started pursuing his interest in youth development programmes, most notably the UK-based Veld and Vlei Programme. After being involved in the running of this programme in South Africa for a year or so, he was approached by Charles Truebody of the then Department of Water Affairs to set up a similar programme in Namibia.

Curious about the offer, he came for a brief visit - and fell in love with Namibia's vast space. The first Namibian Veld and Vlei Programme was set up soon after at the former construction workers' camp at the Swakoppoort Dam, some 70 km east of Okahandja, and proved to be an enormous success. Among the first instructors and students were Tjikero Tweya, currently Deputy Minister of Finance, and Tom Alweendo, currently the Governor of the Bank of Namibia. Some of the youngsters who participated in those courses - like Olympic athlete Frank Fredericks and Rössing's current General Manager for Corporate Services, Zebra Kasete - trace their personal development back to this programme.

David Godfrey stayed with John Kirkpatrick whilst planning the first course. As he came to know his guest, Kirkpatrick recommended him highly to Ronnie Walker as the man they were looking for to head up the Foundation. At the conclusion of the first Veld and Vlei course, Ronnie Walker met Godfrey and offered him the post of Director, a position he accepted in July 1979 on condition that he be allowed time off to remain involved in the Veld and Vlei Programme.

The early days were very difficult, and official suspicion of the Foundation by the colonial authorities was rife, especially because of the increasingly unsettled political climate at the time. Angola and Mozambique had fallen to communist-inspired regimes, and the mandarins of apartheid-era Pretoria were becoming increasingly cautious of anything that did not reflect their own narrow mindset.

However, the Foundation was very open about what it was they were doing, talking to everyone regardless of their background, and stressing that it was a non-political organisation that treated everyone equally in the pursuit of the greater good of the country. Although many looked askance at the Foundation, eventually "...the message got through that we were what we said we were," David Godfrey recalled in an interview many years later.

To say the least, convincing the sceptics was more easily said than done at the time. There were some disquieting incidents, such a break-in at the Foundation's offices and the unsettling notion that they were constantly being monitored by the apartheid-era security forces. Distrust ran deep on either side of the political divide - the pro-Independence supporters on the one side, and those who opposed the idea on the other. The need for a "better understanding between the races" as set out in the first tenet of the Foundation Trust Deed was obvious: a senior schools inspector told the Foundation in official correspondence that English - in spite of a huge demand for



more English-medium education - would "never ever become the medium of instruction in [Namibia]".

But the enormous economic importance of Rössing Uranium Mine - which at the time accounted for about 30% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and about 50% of its total exports - won the authorities over, and allowed the Foundation to pursue its goals.

As David Godfrey put it, -

[w]e would not have been able to do anything like this, if it was not for the enormous influence and prestige that Rössing wielded in the country - Rössing's name protected us.

THE RÖSSING FOUNDATION ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE

THE FLAGSHIP IN KHOMASDAL

Godfrey's appointment to the Board of Trustees in Dr Sandelowsky's place freed her up to concentrate on developing the Training Centre. Soon it became apparent that the entire building was too small, and not particularly suited to accommodating large numbers of students.

John Berning - who David Godfrey credits with the "gem of an idea to get a proper Centre up" - had started the process of looking for a new place to locate the Foundation's expanded education facility. Berning investigated several possibilities, including what later became the College of the Arts building and the old Kaiserkrone Hotel.

Godfrey, however, wanted to be closer to Katutura and Khomasdal, where the people who most needed the facilities lived. In the end, an offer was made to the Windhoek City Council for an area situated in the buffer area between the two Windhoek suburbs. The area was originally set aside for the development of community activities such as a play park, and the city fathers as a gesture of goodwill offered it to the Foundation at a much-reduced price.

In August 1981, the Trustees resolved to set aside an amount of R836,000 for the development of the new Rössing Foundation Adult Education Centre, which was to become the centrepiece of the Foundation's development.

The buffer area was typical of apartheid planning: the empty stretch served as a 'n-man's land' between the two sprawling, high-density suburbs, and the colonial authorities were a little confused as to why anyone would want to set up anything in an area where they were convinced it would get broken into and vandalised within months.



A competition was held to solicit the best design for the Centre. The concepts by local architects Kerry McNamara and Gavin Pike were selected for their open, modular design. When the plans were submitted to the local planning authorities, they insisted that "...something was missing: a fence around the place", which the Foundation politely declined to add. As David Godfrey said, years later, -

We told them: sorry, but no fence. We wanted to be open and welcoming, and putting a wall around it would just run against every tenet of its design. We wanted to show that the centre belonged to the community and they were welcome to come in, no barriers.¹³

An initial budget was approved by the Board of Trustees, and Barclays Bank (now First National Bank) agreed to help pay for the new building, completed at a cost of R1.2 million in 1982.

It was a state-of-the-art, purpose-built education centre of excellence that attracted students from far and wide. Its greenery and welcoming design made it a recreation centre of choice on Sundays, said David Godfrey, who often joined them.

Apart from students who used it as a quiet corner, wedding parties availed themselves of the grounds for photographs of their special event.

And unlike other education centres in Namibia that were experiencing an increase in political disruption and student drop-out rates, the Centre operated at full capacity in all its 26 courses on offer, as a report to the Rössing Management Committee in 1984 noted.

By 1981, the courses included Advanced Office Procedures, Typing, Basic Mechanics, Mathematics, Needlework, Practical English, Basic Bookkeeping, and Building Construction - the latter with the help of the Master Builders' Association and LTA¹⁴ - would also be added soon after.

The courses all involved practical, skills-based training, aimed at addressing the most pressing educational needs in Namibia in the broadest possible way, in order to open up employment opportunities for largely impoverished communities otherwise facing a life stunted by poverty.

Monthly reports by the Adult Education Centre staff at the time reflected that its activities included basic literacy courses, practical English for teachers and nurses, office procedures, typing, needlework and leatherwork, vehicle maintenance courses, and basic technical skills such as welding, helping underprivileged students prepare for the dreaded Matriculation examination, and running a well-equipped library.

In 1986, David Godfrey reported to the Board that, in the first few years of its existence, the Khomasdal Centre had trained around 4,500 students in these various skills, that is, about 0.5% of the total population at the time. Under the guidance of Dr Sandelowsky as its principal, the Khomasdal Centre became a focal point for much of the country's intellectual activity as thousands flocked to its doors.

Although the Centre's hours officially ran from 08:00 to 20:00, the demand for its facilities was such that the classes and events often carried on until as late as 22:30. It made its facilities available to other non-profit organisations, and became something of an incubator for many other progressive organisations. In David Godfrey's words 30 years later, -

[the Foundation] was a community resource of enormous importance, not only

¹³ It is sad - and instructive - to note that the building has been fenced in by razor wire since its sale in 2005.

¹⁴ One of the largest local construction companies.



because it was imparting skills to a needy people, but also because it imparted a sense of pride, self-worth and purpose to those who made use of the facilities.

A library at the Adult Education Centre, added at a cost of R90,000 late in 1982, was especially popular, leading to further initiatives to support the very run-down Katutura Community Library in 1986 at a cost of R76,000. At the time, the Foundation had already established the Tamariskia Library in Swakopmund, and this service would later be extended to Karibib and Omaruru as well.

By acquiring highly valuable reference works that students would otherwise not have been able to afford or have access to, the library also became a very important resource to those pursuing tertiary education. The library also played host to the first-ever Susan Mitchenson exhibition. The Centre, quite clearly, was more than just a place that taught needlework.

The Centre also started offering another valuable service, namely career guidance for teachers and school-leavers. Judging by official correspondence at the time, the project was given something of a cold shoulder by the authorities, but proved to be hugely popular. In spite of official resistance to the idea, the career guidance programme became one of the most popular events on the Foundation calendar.

As Wulf Weichert, one of the Centre's earlier employees (and still with the Foundation's Ondangwa offices) recalled, -

These were the best of days, it was incredibly hard work but you had lots of freedom as long as you got results.

For the thousands of students who came through the Centre's doors, it was a refuge and an opportunity for a better future: the only one of its kind in a political landscape that still looked pretty bleak at the time.

The demand for English-proficiency courses was huge, and in response, the Foundation started expanding their programmes by means of satellite centres spread out over the country in areas where such instruction would otherwise be hard to get. A language laboratory was opened at the Ongwediva Teachers' Training College, with another at Khorixas in the economically marginalised area then known as Damaraland.

Meanwhile, the scope of activities at the Adult Education Centre in Khomasdal kept on expanding. Indeed, so many people were applying for admission to its programmes that the waiting list kept on growing. The needlework programmes were expanded to include Gibeon, Okahandja and Okakarara, and soon even some of these had waiting lists of up to 100 women who wanted to learn a sellable skill.

In 1987, Dr Sandelowsky opted to pursue her other academic interests in TUCSIN, and was succeeded as Principal of the Adult Education Centre by Len le Roux, who from 1984 until then had been principal of the Kolin Foundation Junior Secondary School in Arandis.



THE RÖSSING LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIPS

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

In a nod to Dr Sandelowsky's philosophy of investing in individuals, between 1979 and 1991 the Rössing Foundation had awarded 24 scholarships to promising students in their final years of school to study for the International Baccalaureate at the United World College in Wales.

From their ranks came people who, in the post-Independence years, were to join the country's elite: businessmen and entrepreneurs, top civil servants, community leaders, and –that most underrated of professions – teachers for a new Namibia.

A further 25 outstanding Namibians received Postgraduate Leadership Scholarships between 1978 and 1991 for studies in education, law and medicine at universities in the United Kingdom and the United States. From 1982 onwards, the Foundation also launched the Sir Mark Turner Memorial Scholarship Programme, which was named after a former Chairman of the parent company, RTZ. The only requirement for the grant was that students return to Namibia and use their knowledge to the benefit of their mother country.

By the time these Programme was discontinued for financial reasons in 1993, the scholarship had produced 37 graduates: 14 medical doctors, one veterinarian, three B Econ graduates, two B Comm graduates, three engineers, a teacher, a dentist, a pharmacist, four B Sc graduates, a psychologist, two BA graduates, three B Soc Sc graduates, and a medical technologist.

Among them were persons who later rose to the top of their respective fields and became leaders of independent Namibia. The first recipient of a scholarship was a promising student named Rick Kukuri, who pursued his studies in Economics in the US. Kukuri, who extended his New York stay for a few more years because of the oppressive political climate in pre-Independence Namibia, was appointed the as new Government's Deputy Minister of Finance in the early 1990s.

In 1981, the first Leadership Scholarship was awarded to a law student named Dave Smuts to do his Master's degree at the Harvard School of Law. The affable but razor-sharp Smuts was to later join John Kirkpatrick's Lorentz & Bone legal practice, where he specialised in human rights law. Today, he is arguably Namibia's top advocate and often gives some of his time to sit as an Acting Justice in Namibia's High Court.

There were others: Ad. George Coleman, who was given a scholarship in 1987, today shares chambers and a similar stellar reputation as Adv. Smuts. The Foundation also granted a fellowship to Dorian Haarhoff to complete his PhD in Linguistics at the University of New York. Years later, Prof. Haarhoff was instrumental in penning the lyrics to Namibia's national anthem.

Dozens of local scholarships to the value of R30,000 per year at the time¹⁵ were also given to any deserving and hard-working student who applied. Years later, Naftali !Goraseb, now headmaster of the St Michael's Mission School outside Khorixas, recalled how the scholarship helped him to overcome the poverty of growing up in Katutura's Dolam area by paying for textbooks he could otherwise not have afforded:

First, I got a small stipend for buying books, and when my grades [got] better, I started getting more help ... They gave me my education in the end.



¹⁵ About N\$400,000 in today's terms.

AGRICULTURE, HEALTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MOBILE TEACHING AND HEALTH UNITS

While the Adult Education Centre in Khomasdal was running at full capacity, it did not reach the rural areas where people were so marginalised that they could not even afford to get to the Centre on a regular basis.

In August 1982, the Foundation's Board resolved¹⁶ to start planning for the establishment of education centres outside of Windhoek as well, starting with needlework and health education -

... with the priorities starting in the Ovamboland [sic] project followed by the Nama and Damara projects¹⁷ in that order.

The Trustees also agreed that the financial implications would have to be carefully balanced against the need to reach as many people as possible. Most Rössing mineworkers came from so-called Ovamboland, nearly 700 km away in north-central Namibia. This was also where a third of Namibia's population was concentrated.

On the other hand, the area designated as Namaland¹⁷ lay 500 km to the south, but was sparsely populated. Damaraland was closer, being only about 250 km north-west of Windhoek. But if the people could not get to the Foundation, the Foundation would get to them! Initially, this was by mobile teams; smaller centres would later be set up while the next big Foundation Centre would be planned for Ondangwa.

First to roll out were the mobile sewing and health clinics. These were set up in trusty Volkswagen "Kombi" camper vans, fitted out as mobile classrooms and basic medicine dispensaries that paid weekly visits to Gibeon, Okahandja, Okakarara, Okombahe, Opuwo and Otjimbingwe. Travelling thousands of kilometres over often rutted and corrugated dirt roads of Namibia - Opuwo especially was hard to get to in those days, its rock-strewn roads destroying countless tyres - these 'Kombi classrooms' brought practical health services to many people who had not even heard of Rössing before.

Over the next two years, the Foundation set up small satellite centres in most of these places. While the need to teach sewing skills slowly became satisfied, the need for basic health care was deemed to have the greatest positive effect. In 1984, the Mobile Teaching Units officially became Health Education Units, under which name they were to operate until Independence in 1990. While unsung in the annals of the Foundation, we can assume with certainty that these interventions saved many lives by simple but practical health counselling, especially in respect of small children.

These rural initiatives by the Foundation may have amounted to a drop in the bucket in the face of the deep poverty prevailing in these areas, the drops eventually added up to a stream: a stream of people coming to the courses on offer, eager for any form of uplifting education. Mostly, the Foundation offered sewing courses, coupled with basic health and literacy. But more than anything else, it offered hope and a way to gain self-respect in a landscape still seared with apartheid practices.

By the end of 1984, the Foundation had reached a milestone of its own. The careful marshalling of resources over the preceding five years saw the organisation become largely financially independent from Rössing. While the Mine would continue carrying David Godfrey's salary as a company employee on secondment, all other administrative overheads would henceforth be paid for by the Foundation itself.



¹⁶ Revolution 160.

¹⁷ In what is known as the Karas Region today.

THE BRAKWATER AGRICULTURAL TRAINING CENTRE

Meanwhile, the experience gained in the field suggested that much more needed to be done to address the plight of women in rural Namibia in particular, by assisting them in improving food security and developing income-generating projects. There was also a dire need to assist rural farmers in enhancing their farming methods in order to improve food security and generate more income from subsistence farming.

The focus was to be on those being by-passed or ignored in the former administration's agricultural assistance schemes, especially with respect to offering basic veterinary services and practical training in more effective farming methods.

Courses were designed for this purpose, and in 1983, the Brakwater Agricultural Training Centre, situated on a 900-ha plot on Windhoek's northern outskirts, was approved in principle. It was primarily intended to reach out to local people, especially women, but would also serve as a test bed for some of the ideas the Foundation wanted to implement on a larger scale in north-central Namibia.

Set amongst the craggy foothills of the Khomas Hochland that surround Windhoek, the Brakwater Centre was headed by Paul Venter with a small team of instructors. They would spend ten days at a time in designated areas to work with local farmers, helping and advising them on farming techniques. Each instructor carried a small supply of veterinary equipment and medicines that were sold to the farmers at cost.

At the same time, women from the nearby Katutura township were targeted with several practical self-help programmes. Finding enough food and firewood occupied the majority of their time,¹⁸ a needs assessment study commissioned by the Foundation had suggested. The Foundation therefore started teaching the women to use fuel-effective stoves, fired with pellets made from waste paper as an alternative to wood. Several innovative methods for small-scale gardening were also introduced to local women in a variety of training courses designed to augment their meagre incomes as well as assist them in becoming more food secure.

With Namibia being largely a semi-arid country, livestock farming is the most common agricultural activity among its subsistence farmers. The Foundation therefore started a cattle-breeding programme, importing two Brahman stud bulls and 30 heifers at the considerable cost of R18,000, in order to improve local bloodlines by means of artificial insemination programmes and teaching local farmers how to improve their cattle's bloodlines. Two small herds of Boerbok goats were also established, and offspring were sold to local farmers at nominal cost.

Brakwater's approach of working closely with those who wanted to help themselves was in fact to provide the model for the eventual Okashana Agricultural Centre by the Foundation's extension officers, who brought groups of farmers for five-day courses on stockbreeding and farm management. The short, intensive format was custom-designed: the farmers did not want to be away from their homes for too long. But the success of this programme - run by Paul Venter - saw the scheme later implemented at Okashana as well.

The Foundation Trustees frequently held their quarterly meetings at Brakwater, partly to get out of Windhoek and see what was happening for themselves, but also "because Paul Venter's wife made the best melktert¹⁹ in Namibia," as David Godfrey recalled years later with a twinkle in his eye.

THE ONDANGWA TRAINING CENTRE

By November 1981, the Foundation had already resolved to start English-proficiency courses in Ondangwa, but for various political reasons this never really materialised into anything more than some training equipment handed to some of the local schools. But from 1983 onwards, the Foundation's decision to give more specific



¹⁸ According to Len le Roux. With increased urban influx post-Independence, this situation continues.

¹⁹ A traditional South African custard tart, usually dusted with cinnamon.

effect to the second part of their mandate, namely the meaningful alleviation of poverty in especially agriculture, started gathering more momentum.

While programmes in other parts of the country, most notably the seamanship training in Lüderitz, were also accelerated over the next three years, the bulk of the Foundation's efforts and capital investment were directed towards north-central Namibia, where the majority of Rössing's workforce, especially those from the lower ranks, hailed from.

Early in 1983, David Godfrey negotiated the purchase of a larger plot of land on the dusty outskirts of Ondangwa, and started in earnest to set up what was to become the Ondangwa Rural Agricultural Development Centre. This, coupled with the more specialised Centre that was yet to be built at Okashana, was to become the focus of all the major capital projects for the next few years.

An initial budget for a capital outlay of R100,000 was approved, as were the plans submitted by Kerry McNamara Architects. To marshal its resources, the Foundation was to build this over several phases as part of a larger agricultural development scheme already in the pipeline for the past year.

Enos Nampala, who had joined the Foundation small outfit in Ondangwa in 1985 as one of the first four English language teachers there, recalled how student numbers grew from just around 50 to up to 400 people availing themselves of the opportunity that the Foundation offered. News of the Centre spread rapidly by word of mouth. English for nurses was also introduced. All of a sudden, the number of students jumped to over 2,000, necessitating the construction of a new, purpose-built Centre on the outskirts of Ondangwa.²⁰ As Nampala put it, -

We were teaching all over: outside of the Centre, wherever we could find an open, available classroom.

Nampala became the Head of the Ondangwa Centre in 1991. He and his colleagues realised that the crippling effects of poverty could not be addressed by formal education alone. In his view, many of the developmental problems experienced among Namibia's previously disadvantaged arose from the domestic conditions under which many of the children grew up.

This perception - that problems related to poverty ran far deeper than could be fixed with a simple training course - was to develop over the next decade into the holistic approach that has become a Foundation trademark. By designing courses that targeted all the social and economic actors in a given society, the Foundation developed a set of courses that helped people as much in overcoming immediate, pressing problems as they did in providing a mental bridge over the chasm between the haves and have-nots in Namibia.

This led to a multi-sectoral approach: from initially teaching basic English and sewing, the Ondangwa Centre started replicating all the successful programmes already being taught at the Adult Education Centre in Khomasdal. While there were some State-funded teachers' training facilities in the north-central areas, they did not meet the huge need for other, practical training. But for each one of these courses to have the desired results - the reduction of rural poverty and lifting of living standards - a much broader approach was called for: one that would not only teach skills, but also create opportunities to use those skills.

Put another way: showing people how to sew dresses for a living or grow vegetables for sale had a limited impact, unless you could teach people how to put those skills to use by giving them the language skills to negotiate sales, guide them in running their micro-businesses, and provide a platform for them to put these skills to use in a way that benefited the community at large.



²⁰ Rapid growth since 1990 has seen Ondangwa expand well beyond these original perimeters.

In late 1986, a further R129,770 was approved for the construction of the principal's house, a classroom complex, and a market stall complex. The Ondangwa Centre, from its small beginnings, began expanding its range of courses to offer training to people who would otherwise have been left outside the economic system. Again, the Foundation reached deeper and further than any other similar institution in Namibia. Post-Independence, the Ondangwa Centre entered into partnership with the Ministry of Basic Education, Youth and Sport (as it was then) in running the Hygiene Education Linkage Programme, HELP.



As always, the stress was on helping people help themselves, with programmes designed to meet local needs by encouraging initiative and self-sufficiency to avoid the hand-out syndrome that has so often plagued similar schemes elsewhere. The Foundation's success in helping develop an entrepreneurial class so much in demand in the Namibian economy today can be seen first-hand: Annelly Luuanda, an aspiring seamstress who gratefully accepted a place on the sewing programme in 1989, had wanted to become involved in manufacturing all her life. The training she received from the Foundation - in styling, fabric design and basic business skills - and the R500 loan she was granted by the First National Developmental Corporation (FNDC) helped her buy her first sewing machine.

Today, she runs a small factory in the Ondangwa Business Park with 12 sewing machines and is paying for the training of two part-time students.

If it was not for Rössing Foundation, I don't know where I would have been.

These were her words in our interview as she surveyed her busy factory.

OKASHANA AND AGRICULTURE

Meanwhile, agricultural education for rural communities was also starting to take off in the form of needs-specific training, rendering basic veterinarian services and providing instruction in rudimentary management skills under the so-called Ovamboland Agricultural Scheme. The experience gained from the pilot projects at the Brakwater Agricultural Training Centre had shown that, while there was a great demand for agricultural training, the venue was too far away from its target audience of rural farmers in the north-central areas.



In late 1986, the Rössing Foundation negotiated the sale of some land at Okashana, situated 7 km east of Omuthiya, to set up the Okashana Agricultural Training Centre. The development was to be constructed at a cost of R630,000. A design was commissioned from architect Kerry McNamara, who again produced a people-centred plan that was widely imitated for similar institutions over the years to come. Although the land was generous in size, it soon became apparent why the local traditional authorities did not mind parting with it: as with much of the land around the Etosha Pan, the groundwater was brackish.

Undeterred, the first Rössing Foundation staff moved into caravans parked under trees in the area, and work began in earnest as far as clearing the land was concerned, and constructing the warehouse to store the agricultural equipment that was starting to arrive.

Timo Nambabi, who joined the Foundation in 1987 as a Trainee Agriculture Extension Officer, recalls how Okashana arose from the dust: first the warehouses came, then the Manager's and staff housing, and finally the training and accommodation facilities.

Training programmes were designed and, not unlike the missionaries of old, the Agriculture Extension Officers like Nambabi then set about identifying, selecting and bringing groups of communal farmers to Okashana. Once there, they were offered training courses, tailor-made to their specific needs, over periods of 7 to 14 days, while staying at the Centre free of charge.

Over the years that followed, Okashana developed into a major training centre, teaching thousands of farmers the basics of crop rotation, livestock breeding, and management, as well as practical courses in the maintenance of water points such as the servicing of windmills and the ubiquitous Lister water pump engines. The Foundation was also instrumental in importing hand-pumps from Zimbabwe, and installing these at key points in local communities where many of them continue to do service today. Some basic veterinarian services, modelled on those first rolled out by the Brakwater Centre, were also provided by the Okashana staff to local farmers for several years, until this programme was taken over by the Government after Independence.

Okashana's most important contribution to agriculture in the north-central parts of the country was undoubtedly the development of two new strains of drought- and disease-resistant pearl millet (mahangu) in conjunction with the International Crop Research Institute for Semi-arid Tropics (ICRISAT) Horticultural Centre in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Unlike its local cousin, the Okashana No. 1 and No. 2 needed much less water and grew several heads per stalk, instead of just one in a much shorter period.

The seed was initially supplied free of charge, but was later sold at a nominal fee because, as Timo Nambabi explained, -

... by making farmers pay for the seed, they would not just eat it.

The new strains allowed communal farmers to treble their previous agricultural output. The national ideal of Namibian self-sufficiency in food production came several steps closer, and earned the Rössing Foundation the highest of praise from Founding President Sam Nujoma, a keen farmer himself.

In time, Okashana No. 1 pearl millet came to make up 50% of all mahangu production in the north-central areas. However, farmers were encouraged to keep on growing the traditional, taller variety, prized for its use in fashioning roofs for traditional homesteads. Okashana No. 1, essentially a hybrid bred from an Indian variety and local plants, was eventually distributed throughout north-central Namibia, what was then Okavango and, to a lesser extent, the so-called Caprivi Strip area (where the local preference was more for maize).

Officially inaugurated on 21 April 1991 by then President Sam Nujoma, Okashana set an example for agricultural development that was widely copied - and eventually taken over completely in 1992 by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development due to the rationalisation programme that had to be implemented to keep the Foundation going.

Okashana's brackish water led to the experimentation of a wide variety of salt-resistant plants, including types that could be utilised as cattle fodder. In order to combat increasing deforestation, several plantations of eucalyptus trees were also cultivated. These can still be seen today along the main road past the Oshivelo Gate that marks the veterinary boundary between the north-central Regions and the rest of Namibia.

THE LÜDERITZ MARITIME TRAINING CENTRE

While on a visit to Lüderitz in 1985, David Godfrey noticed how the fishermen were being handed their wages in brown envelopes as they were getting on the bus to return to Cape Town, South Africa, at the end of the lobster season. He realised that most of the money being spent on wages was leaving the country because there were no skilled Namibians in this field. So he decided to set up a local maritime training centre in addition to the other Foundation courses on offer.

In 1985, the first classes in what was to develop into the Lüderitz Maritime Training Centre were offered in the old German high school. The school had closed down in the late 1970s for lack of pupils. Starting with a programme to train deckhands, the Centre built in the Nautilus township developed over the next ten years to where it could offer courses right up to getting a skipper's ticket.



In 1988, former Rössing Foundation trainee Jonas Titus became the first black Namibian to be appointed as a full skipper, followed by Elie Elias, who was appointed in the same year as the first Namibian mate on a fishing vessel. In the same year, Damtara Williams became the first black Namibian appointed as First Motorman on a local lobster fishing vessel.

The advent of Independence on 21 March 1990 and the establishment of the Ministry of Sea Fisheries and Marine Resources²¹ in 1992 saw the Lüderitz Maritime Training Centre evolve even further. Assisted by the Norwegian and Icelandic Governments, it became actively involved in the training of Fisheries Inspectors for the newly independent Government of the Republic of Namibia.

With the reintegration of Walvis Bay into Namibian territory in 1994, a decision was taken to move the Lüderitz Maritime Training Centre to the heart of Namibia's fishing industry, where the greatest need for its specialised training lay. Taking control of its marine resources meant employing more Namibians in the industry, leading to a huge demand for trained Namibian crew.

Over the next two years, the Maritime Training Centre continued to be managed by the Foundation in conjunction with the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, with the Ministry co-funding the design and implementation of additional courses. In due course, the Centre – as it was until formally taken over in 1996 by the Government – kept expanding its training programme, and eventually adopted and adapted the curriculum of the South African commercial navy arm, SAF Marine, to local needs. These included radio training and port authority procedure. By now, the Namibian Maritime and Fisheries Institute (NAMFI), as it formally became known, could offer training for everything from a deckhand to a bo'sun to a full skipper's licence.

Perhaps more importantly, the courses were expanded to include training for Fisheries Inspectors, a critical component of the Government's fisheries management plan that was to rehabilitate a critical national resource after decades of overfishing. From this followed a new development: the Institute was to become totally autonomous, and run by the Government itself as of 1996, when NAMFI was formally established by an Act of Parliament.

From a small class of trainee deckhands in a borrowed school classroom, the initially small maritime training programme grew into a fully independent institution, funded by a training levy added to fishing quota fees. Today, NAMFI is Namibia's official maritime training academy, serving both the private sector and Namibia's fledgling national navy.

ENGLISH EDUCATION AND ST GEORGE'S

From the onset, the Foundation invested heavily in improving English usage in Namibia. English was never heard in the 1980s, especially in smaller towns and settlements. One of its earliest resolutions by the Foundation in 1980,²² when the Board was still chaired by the venerable Mr Walker, was to establish English language laboratories where they were most needed.

In 1984, an amount of R490,000 was set aside for building language laboratories in Windhoek and Ondangwa, with an additional R92,500 going towards furniture and equipment. An additional annual amount of R221,500 was aside for the operational costs of bringing English to Namibia's future leaders – not an easy or enviable task under a political system where proficiency in English was sometimes seen as a political anomaly.

²¹ Now the *Ministry of Fisheries and Mine Resources*, in order to incorporate inland fisheries as well.

²² Resolution 98, 18 November 1980.



Although the planned language laboratory in north-central Namibia did not materialise, despite some equipment having been handed over to a local school and to the Ondangwa Teachers' Training College, the project did take off at the Kolin Foundation Junior Secondary School in Arandis. But after the 1984 decision bring English to the north-central areas, the course in practical office English became one of the most popular at the Ondangwa College. In due course, all of the satellite centres had offered the course at one stage or another.

English-proficiency courses proved to be enormously popular once these started to be part of the adult education programme offered by the Foundation. Dr Sandelowsky's vision of creating a stratum of people capable of taking on leadership roles found many eager takers among an education-starved people, whose brightest students all needed English in order to be able to study abroad.

In many ways, history has repeated itself over and over in the context of the Foundation's interventions. Today, teaching English proficiency has become one of the focal areas of activity for the Foundation in the new millennium, as we will later see.

The Foundation's helping hand was by no means restricted to the poor, however. In one notable instance, the Board approved the funding of extra English teachers at St George's Primary School in Windhoek, to help raise the generally poor level of English in Namibia. A sizeable part of this funding was also set aside to help the school develop extracurricular activities for gifted children – yet another example of the far-sightedness of the Foundation in developing a pool of specialised, highly trained people who would provide the country with desperately needed expertise in the years to come.

Today, St George's has been transformed from a struggling non-racial school surviving on donations from its small Anglican congregation to one of the most prestigious education establishments in Namibia, whose level of education is on par with the best elsewhere in southern Africa. Moreover, the Foundation's intervention set St George's on the road to self-sufficiency, allowing it to attract more gifted and other students. Today, it boasts some of the best facilities in Namibia for schooling up to Grade 12. Over the past 25 years, many of its students went on to obtain scholarships from the Foundation and became part of the professional elite that help sustain a modern Namibia today.



FOOD SECURITY AND COMMUNITY INCOME GENERATION

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Right from the outset, the Foundation had been interested in augmenting food security – an aspect that affected rural women in particular. These women spent nearly all of their time making sure their families had enough to eat. Dr Sandelowsky recalled that the Foundation, as part of the basic life skills that were taught in the organisation's early days, had taught women to use organic household waste to create small gardens – a topic that was subsequently taken up at Brakwater in all earnest.

From 1988 to 1992, the Foundation expanded the concept of a community garden. A small group at Ogongo, about 100 km north-west of Ondangwa, took to the idea with great enthusiasm. Within a few years, the women who ran the community garden project had made enough to buy their own vehicle to take their goods to the main market at Oshakati, as Len le Roux recalled years later with great satisfaction.

The project was extended to include a community garden in Okombahe, west of Omaruru, as well as at Okahandja. These gardens created income-generating projects and taught related life skills. The Okombahe Project was the first off the ground after Ogongo. The Foundation went as far as to settle the State bursary owed by Michael Goagaseb, a promising final-year student at the Neudamm Agricultural College, and appointed him as the Okombahe Manager after he completed his studies.

Within one-and-a-half years, Okombahe – which used to be little more than a large patch of red sand – was criss-crossed by irrigation pipes, and about 50 people had become involved in what was the first-ever community garden in the area known today as the Erongo Region. The Foundation also established a small local sewing class in nearby Omaruru, where basic English and health care training were offered. A modest library was eventually also added. However, water was a constant problem at Okombahe, and limited the garden's output.

Similarly, a 30-ha smallholding on the bank of the Swakop River, where it exits the Sartorius von Bach Dam²³ outside Okahandja, was bought with the idea of producing market vegetables for the nearby Windhoek market. Considerable expense was incurred in rehabilitating the land, improving the small house and workshops, and drilling two new boreholes. Mother Nature did not always make progress easy: for one, the gardens in Okombahe and Okahandja proved to be an immediate hit in the neighbourhood, attracting seemingly every vegetable-loving creature in the area, from insects and porcupines to kudus.

Expert advice helped to solve these teething problems and, by 1988, most of these projects had started producing and were involving more people in the agricultural training programme. By now, the project covered Brakwater, Okahandja, Okashana, Okombahe and Ondangwa.

Wishing to expand into the area demarcated as the Kavango Region in post-Independence Namibia, in 1992 the Foundation also bought the 64-ha Shankara Project from Ehafo²⁴ for R100,000. Shankara was a vegetable-producing farm situated about 90 km east of Rundu, on the banks of the Okavango River. At least here was no water problem: the Okavango is one of only three perennial – but border-hugging – rivers in Namibia, and the relatively densely populated area meant fewer problems with game, if not pests.

But Shankara was plagued in a different way: it was a divided local community, at odds with the previous owners of Ehafo as much as with itself, and one that was to prove impossible to teach self-sufficiency in the long run. With regret, Len le Roux recalled the following:

²³ The main source of Windhoek's drinking water.

²⁴ Ehafo was a non-profit organisation for the physically challenged.



There were some community projects like Shankara that just never worked because the local community could not make it work.

FROM TORCHING TO THATCHING: A NEW GROWTH INDUSTRY

The adversities of the Shankara Project, however, provided a spark that was to lead both the local community and the Foundation down other productive paths in unexpected and often prolific ways that would also shape CBNRM and arts and crafts projects in later years.

In the case of Shankara, the presence of Mark and Charlie Paxton, originally dispatched by the Foundation management to close Shankara down, ignited a multi-million dollar thatching industry, and sowed the seeds for an award-winning basket-making industry.

Mark, a former national game warden with a passion for birds, had a brainwave that, in hindsight, was nothing short of revolutionary. Mark knew the tall reeds were home to dozens of bird species and other river-based life. So, in an effort to stop the local community from burning down the tall grass on the Okavango River banks to prepare their mahangu fields, he instead convinced them to cut the grass and supply it to the Foundation, who would attempt to market it as commercial thatching to Namibia's booming lodge-building industry.

Up to that point, thatching grass was being imported from South Africa, more than 2,500 km away, at great expense. Post-Independence Namibia had sparked a new growth industry: private game lodges, all built with vast, African-style thatched roofs. With a limited supply available in South Africa, prices were exorbitant - never mind the huge transport costs involved.

The Paxtons guided local communities in standardising the quality and size of their bundles of grass, as well as in terms of choosing suitable collection points along the main road west through Okavango. With the Foundation's support, the Paxtons spread the gospel, and organised collections and transport to a central sorting facility. The breakthrough came when one of Namibia's specialised lodge-building companies - Pro-Thatch of Okahandja - opted to use the local product in the dozens of lodges they were building.

Rundu thatch, readily available locally, also saw a general explosion in the construction of the open-sided airy lapas, those outside entertainment areas so beloved by Namibians for their Sunday braai. Suddenly, what seemed like a lost cause found new direction, and the thatching industry was extended to the Caprivi Region where the Foundation had by then become involved in community-based tourism enterprises. It was soon discovered that the tougher Okavango thatch on the outside and the more dense Caprivi variety on the inside of thatched roofs made the perfect combination, and the thatching business started booming.

But the same old trouble that had bedevilled the original Shankara project rose its head again in the form of local politics and petty jealousies. The Paxtons, who had meanwhile relocated to nearby Shamvura, found themselves in a difficult position, and Mark was eventually forced to close down²⁵ the entire thatching business. The basket-making cooperative continues to this day, however, as part of the Mud Hut Trading initiative.²⁶

The seeds sown by the thatching business have not all been neglected, though. Today, the trade continues and a traveller along the Trans-Caprivi Highway will encounter hundreds of stacks of thatch being sold by local community members as their individual enterprise. From something that people used to burn down to make way for low-yield crops, the thatching industry today sustains hundreds of families in the Kavango and Caprivi Regions, thanks to the Foundation's initiative.



²⁵ The Paxtons started operating a small ecotourism business instead.

²⁶ Please see the Arts and Crafts section herein.

The biggest lesson learnt from the Okavango experience, however, was to help communities identify natural resources in their surroundings that may otherwise have been regarded as waste and convert them into an economic opportunity. This lesson would also open the Foundation's eyes a year or two later to possibilities in another field of development, namely that of community-based conservation.

INDEPENDENCE, FREEDOM AND FALLING URANIUM PRICES

While the dawn of an independent Namibia on 21 March 1990 brought an end to 110 years of colonial rule, it rang in a most challenging era for Rössing Uranium Limited as international prices for uranium oxide (U3O8) began to sliding precipitously to levels below US\$9 a pound.

Rössing Mine, as the Foundation's main contributor to its then R4.5-million annual operational budget, was forced to inform the Foundation that it could no longer rely on it as a principal source of income. However, the Foundation had wisely saved some money for a rainy day over the years, and could continue with most of its programmes, albeit on a reduced scale.

But worse was still to come. The price for yellow cake continued to slip as environmental concerns in especially Western Europe saw more and more nuclear reactors being mothballed. Namibia, still giddy with delirium over its new-found independence, appeared not to notice when Rössing Uranium Chairman John Kirkpatrick announced in April that year that the Mine would cut back on production from 4,100 short tonnes to 3,250 short tonnes, entailing the retrenchment of 200 people.

By October 1991, the price for the commodity had dropped to US\$7.25, and Rössing was forced to cut back production to 2,500 tons - 50% of its peak output. Worse, the Mine announced that it was to send 750 workers on voluntary early retirement or retrenchment in an effort to keep the Mine financially viable.

Despite the vociferous protests of the Mineworkers' Union of Namibia, their negotiations with Rössing Management saw most of the 750 workers retrenched, with pension payouts, at an eventual total cost of R25 million. These workers were allowed to continue living in Rössing accommodation for another 12 months while receiving all company health benefits.

Hopes that the uranium prices would improve soon proved unrealistic. By early 1992, Rössing Uranium management realised it could no longer afford to maintain Arandis. On 1 April 1992, the company handed over control of Arandis and its infrastructure, valued at R100 million, to the Peri-urban Development Board of the Ministry of Local Government and Housing. The Government became the town's landlord, with the company leasing houses, the clinic and the recreational buildings from it on behalf of several hundred remaining Rössing employees, who continued paying only nominal rents.



THE NAMIBIAN INSTITUTE OF MINING AND TECHNOLOGY

SUPPORTING THE MINING INDUSTRY

In spite of the continuing low prices for its commodity, Rössing Uranium remained positive about its future in Namibia. The advent of Independence also stimulated hitherto unprecedented international interest in the country's mineral resources, but several structural deficits emerged, most notably the lack of trained and skilled artisans.

In 1989, Rössing Uranium Managing Director Dr Mike Bates had announced that the Mine would set up a national technological institute to answer this need, and an amount of R7 million was set aside to construct the institute on a site on the outskirts of Arandis. Long-time Rössing Uranium Chairman John Kirkpatrick drew up a Trust Deed along the lines of that of the Foundation, which sought to create a training institute for skilled artisans.

With Namibia on the cusp of nationhood - Independence was to arrive formally on 21 March 1990 - the general lack of human resources with technical skills was a major obstacle to development. But a flat uranium market meant declining income from the Mine, and although a preliminary design was commissioned from local architect Rynand Mudge, it soon became apparent that the money available would not be enough for the first phase of the building.

Nonetheless, Independence brought a host of new opportunities for Namibia. Foreign donor aid started to pour into the country, and after representatives of the European Commission (EC) had visited the site three times, they announced that the EC would double the amount made available for the new institute, provisionally known as the Namibian Institute of Technology (NIT).

The then Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport welcomed the initiative with open arms, and appointed the NIT's first Director, the highly experienced Eckhart DG Müller, a veteran school principal. The biggest challenge, he recalled, was not only to produce skilled artisans that would answer to the industry and the nation's needs, but to produce versatile, multi-skilled graduates.

In 1991, the first two phases of the new institute were inaugurated by Namibia's Founding President, Sam Nujoma. A third phase, namely the establishment of a Mining component, was not realised for want of capital, but the NIT was on its way. Rössing's financial woes continued, however, and by 1999, a decision was taken to hand over the operation and ownership of the NIT to Government, which led to it being renamed as the Namibian Institute of Mining and Technology (NIMT).

The NIMT was subsequently offered Ongopolo's²⁷ former apprentice school in Arandis, and kept on expanding. By 2007, it had opened a Northern Campus, and by March 2008, opened a similar satellite campus in southern Namibia, where a booming base-mineral industry has led to a huge demand for training.

Although the NIMT is currently funded by Government, a large part of its budget still comes from Rössing, which has 120 apprentices undergoing training at the Institute. Rössing also lends a helping hand in a myriad of other ways, which underscores the strong relationship between the NIMT and its original sole benefactor. Moreover, with uranium mining having entered an new era since late 2006, the NIMT has become one of the most important sources of skilled manpower in Namibia, and seems set to continue bearing this honour for the foreseeable future.



²⁷ Ongopolo (the *Oshiwambo* word for copper) took over the Tsumeb copper mine, but was later itself bought out by UK-based Weatherly Mining PLC.

INDEPENDENCE AND ITS CHALLENGES

THE LEAN YEARS: REINVENTING THE FOUNDATION

For the Rössing Foundation, the crisis at the Mine meant it could no longer expect a steady income, and a programme of rationalisation was implemented. Several of the smaller projects – especially the struggling ones – had to be discontinued. By late 1990, the Foundation was running 12 training centres throughout Namibia,²⁸ apart from co-funding several other, smaller projects.

The steady decline in international uranium prices meant that the Rössing Foundation suddenly had to stand on its own two feet and become financially self-sustaining. This was no easy task, given that there were 120 full-time employees on its payroll, as well as dozens more part-time workers. Maintaining over 12 full-time projects all over Namibia meant taking a hard look at what was viable and what was not if the Foundation was to become self-sustaining, David Godfrey warned in his annual report in 1992.

For the first time in its history, the Foundation would not be receiving any income from Rössing Uranium Limited in 1992. While there were some savings from better years, these could not last forever; there was even some talk of closing down the Foundation altogether.

The financial constraints meant that the Head Office, in particular, had to be reduced to a sustainable level, which saw the number of posts at the Foundation cut back from about 120 to less than 50.

Prince Shiimi, who had joined the Foundation as a Trustee shortly after Independence, recalled the challenges. Apart from having to raise its own funds from this point onward, the Foundation also had to learn to become more demand-driven and independent. The annual income from Rössing Uranium Mine was linked to profits, and with no profits projected for the foreseeable future, tough decisions had to be taken.

The new Government of the Republic of Namibia, recognising what the Foundation had achieved by then, was very supportive. Indeed, by offering free training for many high school drop-outs, Mr Shiimi felt the Foundation "was the hope of the people in the North". The great-grandchildren of the people who had built the mighty Rössing Uranium Mine had to continue its legacy, was his argument at Board meetings. When interviewed in his office, a small paint business situated next to the Foundation's centre in Ondangwa, he described it as follows:

My colleagues supported me, and the idea of closing down the Foundation was simply off the table.



²⁸ 1. **The Ondangwa Centre:** Typing, needlework, office practice, commercial English an English for nurses. 2. **The Ogonjo Project:** Community food production. 3. **The Okashana Agriculture Training Centre:** Agricultural training and management, breeding of drought-resistant millet cultivars, basic veterinary services. 4. **The Okombahe project:** Community food project. 5. **The Omaruru Centre:** English, mathematics, English for teachers, computer training and easy learning. 6. **The Tamariskia Centre:** English, a library service and the Erongo Pro School Project funded by the Van Leer Foundation. 7. **The Swakop River project:** Cultivation of asparagus and olive trees. 8. **The Gibeon Project:** Folk art. 9. **Lüderitz:** Maritime training, a children's library. 10. **The Shankara Project:** Community food production. 11. **Katutura Library:** Communal library, a children's library and a reference library. 12. **The Khomasdal Centre:** Basic literacy in commercial English, English for teachers and nurses, basic technical skills, office skills and procedures, motor vehicle maintenance, teacher training support, needlework, fabric design, typing, computer training, craft development, a library service. Includes management of the Namibia Youth Award, the annual Young Scientist Expo and the Rössing Environmental Education Centre.

Nonetheless, a rationalisation programme was introduced. This, together with savings left from earlier years, helped the Foundation find the breathing space to work out a new plan of action. Negotiations were opened with the Government with a view to possible collaboration on the Okashana Agriculture Training Centre in particular.

However, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development preferred to take over the entire project, including the Extension Officer system, which it then implemented throughout Namibia.

The same drastic measures applied to the NMTI: while the Foundation still initially ran the training courses, the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources preferred to take over the Institute rather than fund it. This suited both the Foundation and its trainees, as this set the NMTI on its first steps towards eventual independence.

Where possible, control of the smaller agriculture projects was handed to local communities. Some managed to continue the projects and turned them into commercial successes, like the cultivation of asparagus in the Swakop River, while others eventually ceased to function without outside support.

The rationalisation programme also saw the Brakwater Training Centre sold to a Christian youth organisation, while the land at Shankara in the Kavango Region and the 30-ha smallholding outside Okahandja were sold by private treaty. The Okakarara, Okombahe and Omaruru projects all had to be closed down to reduce overheads. Of all the community garden projects, only Ogongo survived – basically because it had become self-sustaining at a very early stage. It continues to be in business today.



THE ROYAL VISIT

A RARE PRIVILEGE

The news was not all bad in 1992, although Rössing's agonies were largely overshadowed in the public euphoria that was the country's first two years of independence. Namibia's high international profile also attracted all sorts of famous visitors. Among them were Their Royal Highnesses Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh. The royal couple, accompanied by then Prime Minister Hage Geingob, paid a visit to the Khomasdal Adult Education Centre that year, where David Godfrey proudly showed them around. The Foundation presented them with a beautiful commemorative quilt, designed and handmade by the Centre's sewing students. Their visit still ranks as exceptional for every Foundation employee who was there to meet them.

The occasion was also used to award Junior Leadership Medals to a group of young people from Namibia and elsewhere. Set up as an affiliate programme to the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, its local offshoot – the Namibia Youth Award – was designed to nurture young people by putting them through a series of set tasks that strengthened their character and stressed service to the community.²⁹ The Duke himself presented the awards, and pronounced himself "very impressed" with what he had seen at the Foundation.

In spite of the financial constraints, the Foundation continued to support other initiatives such as the Environmental Education Programme and the Namibian Mathematics Institute (NMI), set up with the help of Pieter Erwee of the University of Namibia (UNAM). Both of these initiatives eventually provided important pointers for the Foundation's future: the Environmental Education Programme was the seedbed for the CBNRM Programme, while the NMI's input was to lead to the Foundation's involvement in the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) – the blueprint for reforming Namibia's education sector.

In spite of a reduction in the Foundation's activities, which, in 1994, had involved some 48 different projects, the crisis had a healthy effect on the Foundation's finances. By 1996, there was just enough money left over from savings to continue for another year. Some 12 years later, savings set aside amounted to between N\$25 and N\$30 million, as the Foundation found new ways of generating funding.



²⁹ Something that was emulated by the Veld and Vlei Programme.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Despite setbacks, there were other opportunities on the horizon. Brave, newly independent Namibia was attracting much international interest: here was a stable, democratic and peaceful country with a well-developed infrastructure with all the right political credentials, but an underdeveloped people. This made the country an ideal destination for donor aid.

However, a lack of local capacity often made it difficult to implement projects. Without a credible local partner, donors feared that development funds would end up not reaching their intended beneficiaries. The Rössing Foundation, as one of the best-established NGOs in existence, with a proven track record in administering large programmes, was ideally set to become a development partner to many other organisations.

The Foundation's service as a conduit for donor aid took two principal forms. The first involved the Foundation taking up and implementing projects on behalf of other international donors, whereas the second entailed acting as the manager for larger projects with a junior NGO partner that otherwise lacked the capacity to administer a multi-million dollar programmes itself.

The strategy paid off. By the end of 1994, apart from its own existing initiatives, the Foundation was involved in 48 aid and development programmes funded by external donors. The value of the latter amounted to more than N\$25 million, of which N\$16 million in non-donor aid was administered from the Adult Education Centre in Khomasdal.

This role as an implementing partner also extended into the public sector. In the wake of a crippling drought between 1994 and 1996, the Foundation managed a national programme for distributing drought aid on behalf of the national Emergency Management Unit in 1996. Acting as a go-between on the Government's behalf, the Foundation delivered much-needed food aid to more than 250,000 vulnerable people in the four north-central Regions, the single largest target population in Namibia.

In a sign of future developments at the Foundation, it also invested heavily in the Young Scientists Programme, run for years by the indomitable June Horwitz, who has since retired in Cape Town, South Africa. Similarly, the Foundation set up the NMI with Pieter Erwee, now a Senior Lecturer at UNAM.

The Foundation's involvement in a coordinating capacity had other spin-offs too. Due to the retrenchments at the Mine, Duncan Paton, who had many years of experience as Rössing's Chief Accountant, opted to move over to the Foundation where he and Len le Roux were, in David Godfrey's words, to become the central pillars of strength of the organisation during those difficult years.

Paton's experience and proven track record of handling large amounts of money made the Foundation a very attractive vehicle for donor agencies and international funding organisations. The Achilles' heel for many NGOs is their financial skills. Having Paton at the financial helm, however, proved one of the Foundation's greatest strengths.

Perhaps more importantly, many of the programmes the Foundation had been running up to that point provided a platform from which new initiatives could be developed. For example, the Environmental Education Programme provided the basis from which the community-based nature conservation programmes later developed, and the needlework projects – such as the Gibeon Folk Art Project – created the platform from which many subsequent sustainable development programmes grew. At the same time, the Foundation's reputation as a pair of safe hands saw it attract outside funding to support these new programmes – a sure sign that Mr Walker's³⁰ baby was growing up.



³⁰ Mr Ronald Walker stepped down as Chairman of the Foundation in 1980, and retired from the Board of Trustees in 1982.

"GOODBYE" TO DAVID GODFREY

THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD

One such outside donor cultivated by David Godfrey as Director of the Foundation was the UK Government, whose Pretoria-based High Commissioner, Robin Renwick, had often visited the Adult Education Centre in Khomasdal. In October 1989, Godfrey received a call from the High Commissioner: his name had been put forward as a candidate for the Order of the British Empire (OBE) and would he accept it?

Godfrey was bowled over, but accepted gratefully because of the reason advanced: "For welfare services to the people of Namibia". In June 1990, he received the award at Buckingham Palace from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. True to his nature, he insisted that the honour was not really his. "It had my name on it, but it belongs to the Foundation," he insisted many years later.

After serving the Foundation for 18 years, in late 1997 David Godfrey moved to London to the Rio Tinto Head Office to guide and assist the company's global strategy. He was there for two years before retiring to Cape Town, South Africa. On 10 November 1997, the Board of Trustees approved the appointment of Len le Roux, his understudy and Deputy Director of the Foundation since 1994.

Asked about the high point of his career as Director of the Foundation, Godfrey immediately stated, "It was the small things we did that mattered the most."

As an example, he recalled Judith Rukoro, a former teacher at the small sewing centre the Foundation had originally set up in a rented Herero Administration house in Okakarara. She had asked for help in setting up a small factory herself to manufacture school clothing for the local schools after the sewing project was moved to Tsumeb.

Although short of funds, the Foundation agreed to pay her rent for the following year, and Godfrey said he had more or less forgotten about it until 18 months later, when he received a neatly printed complimentary calendar from the Okakarara Clothing Factory CC. The calendar was accompanied by a small, handwritten note with the following text:

Dear Mister David, we can now pay our own rent!

The highlights, according to Godfrey, were the continuous marvel of finding enormous human potential in the most unlikely of places. In Gibeon, for example, a simple needlework programme for local women blossomed into a form of folk art that depicted everyday life. When these works were exhibited in Windhoek for the first time, they all sold out immediately – and so gave an enormous sense of self-respect to people previously almost totally bypassed by development.

Today, Godfrey lives in active retirement, spending his time between his homes in Cape Town and rural England, and visits Namibia whenever he can. Confiding to the interviewer that he would like to have his remains cremated and buried in the courtyard of the Khomasdal Adult Education Centre courtyard, he confessed that –

I get withdrawal symptoms if I do not get to see Namibia at least once a year.



LEN AND LIVELIHOOD ISSUES: COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION

TACKLING POVERTY AT THE GRASS ROOTS

While the Foundation's activities have always been programme-driven, it cannot be denied that the individual Director's personality in each case shaped the institution and contributed to its specific successes. Like David Godfrey's interest in young people shaped many of the earlier training programmes, Len le Roux – as a sociologist – and his interest in how humans interact with their surroundings lent its own very specific impetus to the new direction that the Foundation was taking.

Having originally joined one of the Foundation's programmes, namely the Kolin Foundation-funded school in Arandis in 1984, in 1987 he took over from Dr Sandelowsky as Principal of the Khomasdal Adult Education Centre where he became, in David Godfrey's words, "a pillar of strength" – especially during the difficult days of the mid-1990s.

By the time he took over from Godfrey in 1996, he was already well-versed in the challenges facing the Foundation and its need to become financially self-sustaining.

It was perhaps just natural, therefore, that under his leadership the Foundation's focus started shifting more towards addressing livelihood issues and, in particular, the pressing problems of enduring poverty in Namibia. It was realised that just imparting skills would not be enough, but that somehow the environment had to be created in which individuals could put those skills to good use in order to improve their lives in an environmentally sustainable way.

This was especially true in the rural communal areas, where a general scarcity of resources, coupled with a total lack of opportunities, was creating unsustainable pressures on the ecologically marginal environment in areas like Erongo, Kunene and the Caprivi.

In collaboration with the Wêreldsend-based NGO, the Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) Programme, the Rössing Foundation approached the US arm of the WWF and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to develop a CBNRM project based on the WWF's Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE) Program.

With funding made available by the US Government, the Rössing Foundation and the IRDNC evolved into one of the most successful conservation and economic development model ever: the CBNRM model for communal conservancies. This was a major opportunity for both the Foundation and the communities concerned – who, until then, had had no access to the Foundation's training programmes.

One of the biggest problems in Africa is that when it comes conserving game, local communities have no ownership and, therefore, no incentive to manage this resource in any sustainable fashion. Animals like elephants – which can destroy crops, watering points and generally threaten the livelihood of rural communities – are seen as an enemy competing for the same scarce resources. This very often leads to confrontation and conflict, with fatal results for both sides.

By assessing what resources are available and how best to utilise them in an economically and environmentally sustainable way, the IRDNC and the Rössing Foundation assisted rural communities in developing income-generating projects. This gives community members a sense of ownership of the resources on communal land, and fosters a culture of careful resource management. This policy has helped transform several previously poverty-stricken rural communities into thriving tourism attractions.

Drawing on its past experience in imparting practicable, immediately applicable skills, the Rössing Foundation has managed a large part of the skills training – a prime example of addressing poverty issues in a holistic fashion by providing skills as well



as the opportunity to put those skills to use. This holistic approach included everything from basic office management and literacy to the practical ins and outs of resource management - including the maintenance of water points - and eventually extended into the teaching of crafts and their marketing.

In 1993, the Foundation and the IRDNC started implementing the LIFE Program, steadily winning over local rural communities and Government to the point where, in 1996, comprehensive legislation for establishing conservancies was passed by Namibia's Parliament.

The Foundation established its own CBNRM Unit in 1998 with the support of the WWF and the UK Government's Department for International Development, and from then on, there was no turning back.

By June 1998, the first four rural communal conservancies - Nyae Nyae in the Otjozondjupa Region, Salambala in the Caprivi Region, and the Torra and #Khoadi-IIHôas Conservancies in the Kunene Region, covering an area of 16,821 km² in total them and involving some 14,500 people, were formally proclaimed. The Foundation's success in implementing CBNRM was to be phenomenal: by late 2007,³¹ the initial four conservancies had grown to 50, covering more than 118,704 km² and involving 220,600 people benefiting from managing their own natural resources.

COMMUNAL CONSERVATION TODAY

Even though Rössing Mine continued to experience challenging times, in 2003 it committed itself to funding the CBNRM Programme by way of the King Nehale, Sheya Shuushona, Uukolonkadhi and Uukwaluudhi Conservancies in the north-central Regions. The others have by and large become financially independent and part of the mainstream Namibian economy.

The Foundation's CBNRM Unit continues to provide training and facilitation support to conservancies, working closely with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and other facilitating NGOs, support agencies such as the Namibia Community-based Tourism Association (NACOBTA) and Government Departments involved in rural development.

The National CBNRM Programme broadly aims to link sustainable social and economic development to the conservation and management of natural resources in Namibia. This approach requires the development of information, knowledge and skills in the areas of community organisation and empowerment; natural resource monitoring; appropriate natural resource management systems and skills; natural resource management infrastructure; applied ecological research; socio-economic research; market research; and enterprise management skills.

Under the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO), a broad range of such organisations collaborate in such a way that, collectively, they are able to respond to the institutional and technical needs of community-based organisations or any other similar structures. The Foundation continues to render assistance in tourism and related skills training, the development of crafts, the exchange of information, and creating awareness of and sharing the CBNRM success stories in Namibia.

Apart from the conservancies in the north-central Regions, the Foundation's CBNRM Unit continues to be involved in the following conservancies:

- Erongo Region
 - Arandis Urban Conservancy: Currently emerging in and around Arandis and its 5,000 inhabitants
 - Ohungu Conservancy: Registered October 2006, approximately 1,000 members, demarcated area 1,211 km²



³¹ Some more conservancies were in the process of registration at the time of writing, but no accurate figures could be obtained.

‡Gaingu Conservancy: Registered March 2004, approximately 2,800 members, demarcated area 7,677 km²

Tsiseb Conservancy: Registered January 2001, approximately 2,000 members, demarcated area 8,083 km²

- Kunene Region

‡Khoadi- Hoas Conservancy: Registered 1998, approximately 3,200 members, demarcated area 3,366 km²

o Doro !Nawas Conservancy: Registered December 1999, approximately 1,500 members, demarcated area 4,073 km², and

o Uibasen/Twyfelfontein Conservancy: Registered December 1999, approximately 230 members, demarcated area 286 km².

In September 1998, Founding President Sam Nujoma received the WWF-sponsored "Gift of the Earth" international award for the pioneering work done in the field of CBNRM. But the real reward was for the rural people of Namibia, whose embrace of this conservation model brought an end to life-crippling poverty for them and their descendants.

The LIFE Program was extended by another seven years in 1999, and in 2005, the Government's Permanent Technical Team on Land Reform officially recognised the CBNRM model as the blueprint for the development of Namibia's communal land.

But the Foundation's most significant contribution, in proving the success of the communal conservancy model, was in bringing about a paradigm shift that transformed the face of conservation in Namibia. Previously, poverty-stricken communities were more likely to poach valuable species for a quick source of cash. But by claiming ownership and responsibility for managing their natural resources, rural communities have been empowered in more ways than can be measured in monetary terms: they have gained self-respect and independence - and this is especially true for women. In these efforts, the Foundation yet again set a trend that has become an international standard in terms of involving grass-roots communities in taking control of their lives.

By December 2007, Namibia's communal conservancies had generated more than N\$39.1 million in CBNRM-related programmes - a massive step forward in the effort to alleviate poverty in Namibia. But the real impact is far bigger, as Le Roux pointed out:

By giving people the opportunity to take ownership of their own environment, in a way that sustains both the community and their surroundings, the communities have regained their self-respect and hope for the future for themselves and their children. That's something that Namibia can be enormously proud of.



ARTS AND CRAFTS DEVELOPMENT

MUD HUT TRADING AND THE OMBA ARTS TRUST

A large part of the success of the CBNRM Programme has been an integrated approach that has seen a synergistic application of past practical experience to solve current challenges in a way that has seen the Foundation continuously evolve over the years. In other words, the Foundation used what it had learnt from its agricultural projects, combined that with experiences from the community-based conservation programmes, and moulded these into a development model that adapts itself continuously to changing circumstances on the ground.

This model is perhaps best illustrated by the example of the arts and crafts development programme that forms a significant part of the success of the communal conservancies. The holistic approach that evolved into CBNRM not only gave people sellable skills, but also created an environment in which they were able to market those skills.



No person was more closely associated with this aspect of the Foundation's work than Karen le Roux. The holder of a Master's degree in Fine Arts (and Len le Roux's wife of two years at the time), she had joined the Foundation shortly before Independence as a part-time teacher of office skills. She quickly became involved in the more creative side of the Khomasdal Centre. Her knowledge of the arts proved invaluable, and she soon took over management of the needlework and textile printing projects there.

This led to her being invited by noted artist Sarie Maritz to become involved in the Duineveld People Project, an employment-creation scheme for the San. With some donor funds, they organised an exhibition at the Alte Feste that became, in hindsight, the first tentative change in the direction of the Foundation's activities.

With some of the smaller projects such as the Gibeon needlework project facing the axe due to financial constraints, Karen's first encounter with them was to prove prophetic. After teaching the women at Gibeon the basics of appliqué techniques, she was astounded at the artistry and skills she found when she returned two months later:

I realised there were real skills in the rural area, and that what we had to do was to use those skills and turn them into money-generating products.

This idea was to lead to the establishment of the Gibeon Folk Arts Project. With funding from the Danish NGO Ibis, Karin le Roux took the Nama art to the African Arts Exhibition in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. As she later recalled, -

Our travel agent said, "Ouaga-what?" She had never heard of it before, much less ever booked a ticket to Ouagadougou.



More funding was made available, and Karen, anthropologist Dr Beth Terry, and Tony Cunningham undertook a five-month comparative study of basket-making in Botswana and Namibia. This involved the northern regions, from Kunene in the West to Caprivi in the East, and the study work constituted a definitive baseline study of rural arts and crafts in Namibia.

Elsewhere, other synergies were developing. At Shankara, where the struggling agricultural project was busy facing closure, Mark and Charlie Paxton had become involved in implementing the CBNRM Programme. The local hompa (traditional leader) wanted a project that would help women, and basket-making was one skill most of them had mastered. Just how well the Okavango women had mastered this craft only became clear when the Paxtons dropped off a bakkie³²-load of baskets at the Foundation's Windhoek offices with a simple instruction, as Karin le Roux recalled:

Here they are; now sell them.

³² The local word for pick-up.

It was not something that had been given a great deal of thought until then, but with tourism starting to boom nationally, it presented an obvious opportunity. Marketing, however, was a dire need. It was decided that a specialised marketing body needed to be developed to link producers to potential markets. Some basket-weaving workshops were organised, and culminated in the first-ever National Basket Competition held in the National Arts Gallery. The Kavango baskets won the competition, and continue to provide some of the best examples of local crafts in Namibia.

The Foundation had by then obtained a small stall in the Old Breweries Complex in central Windhoek, run by New Veld Ventures. However, the Centre had been swamped by imported crafts and was falling apart financially. When the owners of the complex, Ohlthaver & List, approached the Foundation with the idea of taking over the Centre, Le Roux accepted the challenge.

With the help of architect Nina Maritz (Sarie Maritz's daughter), the Foundation renovated the two-storied Crafts Centre, opened the Omba Gallery, and started implementing a programme to promote Namibian arts and crafts. Under Karin le Roux's guidance, a true Namibian haute design tradition began to emerge, and styles that displayed an authentic Namibian vernacular steadily evolved as more and more local artists found an outlet for their creative talents.

The marketing side of matters was reorganised as Mud Hut Trading, which operated according to Fair Trade principles. Mud Hut Trading also served to formalise relations between the Foundation and the suppliers of the crafts programme. The concurrent CBNRM Programme implemented elsewhere saw natural synergies develop, and provided otherwise economically isolated communities with the opportunity of benefiting from Namibia's by now booming tourism industry.

Apart from the Namibia Craft Centre at the Old Breweries Complex, Shankara and Gibeon,³³ the Arts and Crafts Programme was then extended to Aus; Bethanie; Ekoka in north-central Namibia; the Daroub³⁴ Craft Centre in Uis; and to a recycled paper project at Duineveld in the Omaheke Region and in Tsumkwe in the north-western Otjozondjupa Region.

About five years after Mud Hut Trading was established, a decision was taken to hive it off as an entirely independent entity under the Omba Arts Trust. It would then need to be self-sustaining, working closely with all the CBNRM-oriented conservancies to expand the crafts sector in the Namibian economy.

From a basket-making project, the Crafts Programme - as constituted under Mud Hut Trading - steadily developed to what it is today: an organisation with a respectable turnover of N\$250,000 to N\$300,000 per annum, making it self-sufficient albeit not wildly profitable.

Besides this, the Foundation's success in managing the Namibia Craft Centre saw the entire Old Breweries Complex - which had initially been slated for demolition - get a lease on life. Between 1998 and 2008, more than 50,000 people are estimated to have visited the Craft Centre.

Today it ranks as a must-see destination for any visitor passing through Windhoek, and has been a decisive factor in reviving an area of downtown Windhoek that had been slipping into neglect for years. Today, the old Breweries Complex, which used to be a light industrial zone, is a busy maze of courtyards, shops, cafés and several art and crafts galleries.



³³ At the Gibeon Folk Art Centre.

³⁴ *Khoikhoigowab* term for the Brandberg.

2000-2004: CRISIS YEARS

HARD TIMES AHEAD

While the Foundation could adopt new strategies to see it through the lean years, making it more independent and resilient, there was very little that Rössing Uranium Limited could do about the international spot prices for uranium but watch, wait – and hope. Rising international oil prices held out some positive prospects for an improvement in the price for uranium oxide, but even when the cost of oil rose to over \$50 a barrel in 2002, uranium prices only fluttered. Worse yet, the high oil prices in fact drove up the cost of operations, necessitating ever more belt-tightening at the Mine.

Elsewhere in the uranium mining industry, mines were being closed down one after the other, but Rössing Uranium persevered, hoping that the market would eventually improve and save their by then 25-year-old operation. Cost-saving programmes throughout the tough 1990s meant that the Mine was able to overcome most of the economic challenges of the 1990s. But in 2001, the international commodity price for uranium hit rock-bottom, at \$7 per pound. This was lower than even the 1992 levels and, combined with ever-rising costs due to fuel price increases, meant major trouble for the Mine's future.



Being the fourth-largest of its kind in the world, the Rössing Mine constitutes a low-grade deposit. It could, therefore, remain an economically marginal operation by maintaining relatively high volumes of production. Once prices started declining in the early 1990s, the Mine had cut so far back on production that, by 1997, it was only running at two-thirds of its capacity.

The Mine implemented a cost-cutting exercise, but in spite of these measures, rising operational costs meant that losses kept mounting. Faced with another decade of depressed mining conditions, RTZ took a hard decision in 2004: the Rössing Uranium Mine would close down by 2009, bringing 33 years of continuous mining operations to an end.

The decision rattled through the local business community like a seismic shock. Although the Mine had been disposing of all the non-core assets it could over for the ten years up that point, and had cut back the working force to a bare minimum, it had always hoped that there would somehow be a recovery to its glory days, when Rössing had been a byword for progress.

But as Nietzsche³⁵ said, what does not kill you makes you strong – and the Foundation responded in kind to the new challenges.



One outflow of this was to encourage some of the Rössing Foundation projects to become independent where possible. This led to the establishment of the Omba Arts Trust in 2004, and the development of the Namibia Crafts Centre in Windhoek as an independent, non-profit organisation.

Another sign of the times for the Foundation was a decision to reduce the overall staff complement and downsize the Foundation Head Office at the Khomasdal Adult Education Centre in particular. With the Foundation's work now concentrated in the Erongo and north-central Regions, the Centre was felt to have outlived its purpose. Following negotiations with the Department of Adult Education, a decision was taken in early 2005 to sell the Foundation's former flagship premises to the State for N\$12 million.

The Foundation's Head Office staff – now reduced to a mere handful – were relocated to smaller offices at 360 Sam Nujoma Drive in Klein Windhoek, opposite the St Paul's High School. Nonetheless, the Khomasdal Adult Education Centre continued to play a key role in training marginalised Namibians. Today it is the home of the Namibia Training Authority (NTA), an institution – seen from this perspective – that has taken over the Foundation's pioneering work in this regard over the past 25 years.

³⁵ Nietzsche, F. 1888. *Twilight of the Idols*.

THE FOUNDATION IN ARANDIS

TAKING CARE OF ITS OWN

In consultation with the Mine, two broad strategies for coping with the economic challenges emerged. Firstly, because of Rössing's economic importance in the Erongo Region and because most of its workers hailed from the north-central Regions, the Foundation's efforts were to be concentrated in Arandis and Ondangwa. Secondly, based on a worst-case scenario, steps were taken to set up an Endowment Fund to assure the continuance of the Foundation's work, even if the Mine were to be shut down.

Charity always begins at home, and David Salisbury, the then Managing Director of Rössing, suggested that the Foundation become more involved in helping Arandis deal with its uncertain future.

A decision was taken to open a Foundation office in Arandis, and Job Tjiho was dispatched to oversee its establishment. The local office assumed duty in the former clubhouse complex - since taken over by the Arandis Town Council. Rössing also went ahead with setting up an Endowment Fund as intended by Salisbury, and strategies were implemented to assure the sustainability of existing programmes.

Arandis, which had been struggling to find its feet ever since it was granted town status and elected an independent local authority, the news of Rössing Mine's impending closure hit especially hard. Of the approximately 4,500 residents, about a third were still employed by the Mine and their income sustained what little local economic activity existed.

The uncertainty about their future manifested itself in a myriad of social problems: vandalism suddenly raised its head, and domestic violence became a major problem among the local community, recalled the Arandis Town Council's Chief Executive Officer, Florida Husselmann.

The biggest problem to overcome, however, has been a prevailing sense of helplessness. In the past, Rössing had provided everything - from child care to health and education services, meaning that little in terms of a local economy needed to develop. The cradle-to-grave system that people had enjoyed also discouraged any real culture of entrepreneurship - a skill that the Foundation was, ironically, teaching elsewhere.

For the Foundation to set up offices in Arandis in 2005 - for the first time ever, in spite of the decades of shared history - changed the town's course of development, Husselmann acknowledged. Working with Job Tjiho and Amanda Horn of Rössing Uranium, work has begun on identifying the most pressing problem areas and formulating a strategic turn-around plan to establish a functional and self-sufficient local authority. The plan came to be known as the *Arandis Sustainable Development Project*.

A ten-year programme, called Vision 2016 in reference to the national Vision 2030 development programme, was formulated to find economic alternatives for the town's 4,500 inhabitants, while at the same time addressing some of the most urgent issues relating to infrastructure and capacity-building. These include close liaison on aspects relating to financial management, technical assistance in maintaining the infrastructure (including sewage removal and the replacement of the water supply system at a cost of N\$1.6 million), community development (training in agriculture and the provision of sports facilities), economic development, health services and, above all, education.

In bringing the Foundation home to Arandis, the twin legacies of the Rössing Foundation and Rössing Uranium have been instrumental in bringing the Mine and the people of Arandis (of whom only a small percentage still work at Rössing) closer again. As always, the guiding principle is one of helping people who want to help themselves, restoring some of the civic pride that had been lost over the intervening years.



For example, the old Rössing Hospital in Arandis, which was handed over to the Government in 1994, had since been downgraded to a clinic. This will now be developed into a private hospital that will form part of an Occupational Health Centre planned for Swakopmund. Rössing's own occupational health programme at the Mine is considered a benchmark in this field, and their expertise will now be offered to other mining companies that have started operating in the Region.

This Centre will, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and Social Services, offer training in Environmental Management, drawing on Rössing's own 30 years of experience in operating in an arid area like the Namib Desert. Plans have also been drawn up and tenders issued to construct a Mining Museum, and a hydroponic oyster mushroom cottage industry - based on a zero-emissions model developed at UNAM - has sprung up.

One of the greatest breakthroughs for the Arandis Town Council has been to convince Bank Windhoek to install an automatic teller machine (ATM) in the town. Today, Bank Windhoek's Arandis branch competes with one from Standard Bank, right next door, and the days when people had to drive 70 km to Swakopmund to do their banking are over.

Listening to Lysias Uusiku, Foundation Officer for the Community and Sustainable Development Programme, one is struck by a sense of déjà vu. Almost all of these programmes - life and vocational skills, peer mentoring - bear more than a passing resemblance to those first exported from the Foundation's Rockstroh Haus offices by way of a couple of VW Kombis in the 1970s.

For one, the experiences of the former community gardens provided a model for income-generating projects in Arandis by the development of hydroponic farming, most notably an oyster mushroom project based on a simple design that has now seen it start delivering this delicacy to Arandis restaurants. This method of farming - essential in an area where the annual precipitation is less than 17 mm per year - also provided a platform for developing similar techniques to assist the Topnaar community along the Kuiseb River, about 30 km to the north.

At the same time, the Foundation is also expending considerable effort and funds in assisting small- and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) in Arandis by mentoring aspiring entrepreneurs to develop their business ideas. This concept can also be traced back, i.e. to the earlier developments at the Ondangwa Education Centre. As Uusiku remarked, the main challenge was to get people to 'change gears' mentally from viewing life negatively to one where they took their future in their own hands in order to enter the mainstream economy.

In many ways, the Foundation has come full circle: even a one-time Foundation beneficiary is now a development partner. Former Olympic athlete Frank Fredericks, who attended David Godfrey's Veld and Vlei Programme, established his own charitable foundation in his name. His organisation is one of the partners (the other being the Community Skills Development Centre, COSDEC) in the Youth Development Programme being run at the Katutura Youth Enterprise Centre (KAYEC). Fredericks' MBA studies were also sponsored by Rössing Uranium Limited in 1992.

Job Tjiho stressed that, while the Foundation sees Arandis as a special responsibility, it steers clear of taking decisions for the Town Council - a philosophy first espoused by David Godfrey, in that people need to take ownership of their own development.

The Foundation's current activities also reflect its past experience with adopting a holistic approach in the course of running the CBNRM Programmes. Giving people skills with an opportunity to use those skills to improve their own lives is key to conferring ownership, self-respect and self-belief. This is perhaps best exemplified in the special attention currently being paid to the marginalised Topnaar community, where the Foundation has implemented similar stock-breeding and vegetable-growing schemes as those first developed at Brakwater and Okashana.



The Foundation is also about to go one step further. In collaboration with Bank Windhoek and the Erongo Regional Council's Development Fund, they are about to roll out a micro-credit scheme for small businesses in the Region. This will be combined with training and mentoring programmes, while another development partner - SME Compete - will help train aspiring business owners in bookkeeping and other management skills.

It has been a long haul, but like the Veld and Vlei candidates, Arandis first had to learn its own strength before it could pull itself up and shake off the dust of despair. Self-reliance is a lesson that applies anywhere in life, and was the first step towards achieving real goals, as the Arandis CEO noted:

We need Rössing, but we don't want to get into a situation where we as a town become utterly dependent on the Mine. The Mine has a social corporate responsibility here, but we need to get [on] our own feet, not just wait for Rössing to pay for everything.

A NEW MANDATE: EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE

ARANDIS AND BEYOND

In terms of Arandis's long-term strategic development plan, its most important step has been a commitment to turn the desert town into a centre of higher learning. In a public-private partnership - a model again pioneered by the Foundation in its earliest days - the Town Council is working in close conjunction with the Foundation, the NIMT, and other education partners to develop the town into a centre of education excellence.

Lloyd Ulrich, the Assistant Director of Education at the Foundation's Arandis office, points out that Arandis presents the best possible clustered concentration of education facilities for training more young Namibians. However, he said, the years of uncertainty over the Mine's future had had a very corrosive effect, with especially the younger generation becoming very negative about their future.

Also according to Ulrich, over 18 years of Independence, the initial emphasis on access to education rather than the quality of tuition had had several unforeseen side-effects. For one, the quality of the teaching corps deteriorated sharply as professionalism - and especially self-discipline - meant that even the bare minimum standards began to drop. Arandis, beset by doubts over its future, was similarly hard hit, with a knock-on effect that threatened to unravel the social fabric of the previously proud town, Ulrich explained.

What was needed was for the community to recognise the positives. With Rössing Uranium's help over the years, Arandis had developed an education system in the form of the local high school - the former Kolin Foundation School, and the NIMT was on par with the best technical training institutions elsewhere in Namibia.

For example, at the 2008 National Science Fair, entries from the Kolin Foundation School and the local primary school UB Dax scooped nearly half the gold medal awards. They won five categories outright, and brought home 17 medals in total, Ulrich pointed out. He went on to explain that -

Arandis's location in the heart of the Erongo Region's mining industry, and the history of Rössing's involvement here, makes the town pretty unique and, in fact, very privileged.





In his opinion, it was perfectly positioned to become a centre for education excellence, a critical ingredient in the alchemist process of turning making Arandis a town of choice, as the Arandis Annual Report of 2007 proclaims.

Moreover, the Foundation's central message – that education is the key to a better future and self-respect – was something that, for historical reasons, never really got to Arandis. But the Foundation's arrival there now was instrumental in bringing about a change in mindset at all levels of the local society, Ulrich said.

It was Ulrich's view that everyone needed to be on the same page when it came to developing programmes that catered for the needs of the surrounding industries, starting with the basic education requirements of numeracy, literacy and ICT skills. Also vital were role models: success stories from the local community that could inspire others to emulate them.

But to understand where the impetus for this sudden focus on and expansion in the Foundation's activities in the education sector came from, one needs to appreciate the broader context of international commodity prices and the crisis in Namibian education.

A NEW LEASE OF LIFE FOR RÖSSING URANIUM

Starting in late 2005, a number of international factors started pushing up the price of oil to levels last seen during the energy crisis of the 1970s: continued political instability in the Middle East and in other major oil-producing countries, and a rapid increase in demand from the booming economies of China and India. Suddenly, the world was running out of electricity, and with the high price of fossil fuel, nuclear energy – much like in the 1970s – suddenly became a more attractive alternative once again.

The world also discovered with alarm that it was about to run out of uranium because of a large number of nuclear reactors being planned by China and India, among others, that would exceed the existing supply of the commodity. For most of the 1990s, the price had remained depressed at levels below US\$10 a pound, but by the beginning of October 2006, the price went up to an unheard-of \$54 a pound – and continued to rise to the giddy height of over US\$140 per pound before levelling out at around of US\$75 by mid-2008.

Suddenly, Uranus, the Greek god of the heavens after whom the planet and uranium were named, smiled on Rössing again. The uranium boom meant a massive turnaround in fortunes at the Mine, and the scheduled closing down was postponed as a frantic period of new prospecting started. Soon, Mike Leech, the current MD, announced expansion plans. Production was to be upped to 4,500 tons, and a previously known but unmined deposit known as SK was to be added to operations in order to double current output. As a result, the life-of-mine was extended to 2016, possibly even 2021.

But the new boom brought its own problems. The critical shortage in skilled young people meant mining companies began falling over each other to attract suitable employees. In spite of the opportunities, not enough Namibians were able to meet the required standards; and those who could, commanded huge salaries that distorted the local labour market.

The earlier crisis at Rössing Mine and news that it was to close down had led to much soul-searching at the Foundation as well. For some years, there had been debate over the need to establish an Endowment Fund that would allow Rössing's legacy to survive long after the Mine's seemingly unavoidable eventual closure. But the change in fortunes at the Mine meant that the Foundation suddenly found itself in a better financial position than ever before.

In April 2006, the Foundation's Board of Trustees convened a mini-conference with its most important development partners, including the Government, to review the

original objectives set out in the Trust Deed. As the current Director, Job Tjiho put it, -

[w]e had to decide whether the original objectives were still relevant in the environment we were working in, where Government needed help most ..., and where we were heading.

The original idea of the Foundation had been to create a body that could help people help themselves by imparting practical, sellable skills to improve their standards of living as well as address the gulf of misunderstanding between white and black Namibians. What, if anything, had changed since then?

THE EDUCATION CRISIS

Up that point, the Foundation's work had concentrated effectively on four broad sectors: vocational training and education, community development, craft development, and agriculture. The pioneering work done at Brakwater and Okashana had been taken over by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development; and the community-based conservation and crafts programmes were also well on their way to becoming self-sufficient.

Skills shortages were now being dealt with by specialised institutions. For example, upgrading teachers' skills was being tackled by the Okahandja-based National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), while the NIMT now bore the onus of mining and other technical training.

But the country's education and vocational system was in a profound crisis, especially with regard to secondary education. The problem had been obvious for quite some time as, at the start of every school year, parents would try to enrol their children at better schools in Windhoek rather than be satisfied with their lack of progress at rural schools.

The result was predictable: more frustration and even less education, as stop-gap measures implemented failed to address the core problems. The origins of these problems are complicated, and interwoven with the legacy of apartheid.

Following Independence, Namibia's official education system had gone into a slow decline for a variety of reasons. Apart from the myriad of problems that the new Government faced in 1990, the colonial education system was of special concern. The apartheid model of education was to have separate authorities for every major ethnic group in Namibia, with widely differing standards from one group to the next.

Faced with huge expectations from its citizenship, the Government was forced to stress access to education - often at the cost of quality - in order to bring some cohesion to the system. It abandoned the former Cape Matriculation Board system, and instead brought in the International General Secondary Education (IGSE) system under the auspices of the University of Cambridge in the UK.

Nonetheless, little was done to improve the level of education in rural schools in particular, as the demand for education overwhelmed what resources the Government could make available. Simply throwing money at the problem also did not work: despite 25% of every year's national budget going to education since Independence, the system failed to deliver in the end.

A general lack of experience and capacity, if not funds, meant that a slow-burning crisis was developing in the form of thousands of functionally illiterate school leavers dropping out of the formal education system every year, as they failed outright or did too poorly to compete for the few jobs that there were.



A SAQMEC report on a survey³⁶ conducted in 1999 showed that English proficiency at all levels of the formal education system was deficient, and especially so at rural schools, where most of Namibia's children receive their education.

By around 2002, it was clear that something urgent had to be done. An estimated 15,000 to 17,000 Grade 10 students were dropping out of the formal system every year, making it clear that the education system was no longer providing for the country's needs.



In response, the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture commissioned a study in 2003³⁷ to identify the weaknesses of the education system. The study revealed that one of the key reasons for low productivity in Namibia was its largely undereducated workforce.

At issue is the quality of education. Under the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SAQMEC) Programme run by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), skills levels in terms of numeracy and literacy in Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries are measured. In terms of this measurement, Namibia has been ranked last ever since 2000. As Justin Ellis, who today oversees the education reform programme in the Ministry of Education, put it:

It was a real eye-opener.

He also stressed that, in order to meet the challenges of tomorrow, Namibians would have to become managers of knowledge, technology and innovation, especially with regard to applied technology that was more geared towards economic development.

The education system, he argued, would have to shift towards adapting to the relevant skills needed. This, in turn, had to form the basis for life-long learning as individuals kept up to date with the knowledge needed to adapt to the changes brought about by the digital era.

In what sounds remarkably like the Foundation's approach to development problems, Ellis pointed out that, in order to get all these things right, "a holistic solution would have to be applied". And if Namibia was to achieve the goals of Vision 2030 - by which time the country and its people are expected to enjoy the same standard of living as in the developed world - something urgent had to be done.

³⁶ Cited by Ellis.

³⁷ Interview with Ellis.

THE FOUNDATION AND ETSIP

BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

The result was a 15-year education blueprint known as the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP), an ambitious plan announced in 2005 to overhaul the entire sector.

ETSIP has a built-in pro-poor bias, as the Vision 2030 assumption of a stable and prosperous democracy in 21 years' time was not going to be possible in a country where gross inequalities persisted. As Justin Ellis put it, -

Those at the bottom of the pile must be our first priority ... before they become too alienated.

The current social environment also made the ambitious overhaul programme more of a challenge than it would have been at any other time, historically speaking. Over the past decade, Namibia has seen its population's life expectancy decline in the face of HIV and AIDS, and the skyrocketing cost of fuel and food prices have made it a very difficult environment in which to operate.

To fully implement the massive reform programme over the next 15 years will cost in the order of N\$2-N\$3 billion - N\$1 billion of which being contributed by the United States Millennium Challenge Fund, with the European Union (EU) chipping in.

A quarter of the budget would still have to come from Namibia itself, and in this respect, the public-private partnership pioneered by the Rössing Foundation was enormously important, said Ellis. This was particularly relevant to the vocational training sector: with the demand for skilled manpower far exceeding the supply available from Namibia's relatively small pool of tech-savvy people, much closer cooperation would be required to address this gap, Justin stressed.

The private sector is the ultimate beneficiary: they are the ones who need people with specific skills so their input into ETSIP is going to be critical.

This was how Ellis put it. He added that the private sector in fact needed to tell Government and its other ETSIP partners what was needed in terms of skills usable in the future - especially since the programme was to be funded by a training levy charged to local businesses.

RIO TINTO TO THE RESCUE

Although the Foundation's role over the past three decades has been largely educational, its role was an ancillary one; up to this point, it had also not been directly involved in the formal education system.

A meeting between the current President, Hifikepunye Pohamba - who succeeded President Sam Nujoma in 2005 - and the Rio Tinto PLC executive in London in late 2006 changed all this.

RioTinto Namibia Chairman, Dr Charles Kauraisa, who had accompanied the President on his trip to London, was acutely aware of the slow-burning education crisis. As a former Industrial Relations Officer at Rössing who had risen through its ranks to where he now also sat on the Rössing Mine Board of Directors, he had first-hand experience of this problem.

Even though Rössing Uranium had granted several scholarships to local students over the years, the national education system's weaknesses meant that there were simply not enough graduates with the necessary maths and science skills to take up these scholarships, as Dr Kauraisa explained.



There was also another pressing reason for intervening in Namibia's education system: one of the biggest problems in attracting the best employees at Rössing Uranium was a lack of decent schools in the Region. The Rössing Chairman put it as follows:

It's always one of the first questions a prospective employee will ask: Where can I send my kids to school, and what are those schools like: are they of an acceptable standard? It is a difficult one to answer.

President Pohamba, Dr Kauraisa explained, was (and remains) deeply concerned about the impact the decaying education system was having on Namibia's development prospects. In discussions with Rio Tinto PLC Chairman Charles Skinner and President Pohamba, the request was made for Rössing to train between 200 and 300 graduates - but where were these to come from, if the formal education system could not meet the required standards in maths and science?

When President Pohamba enquired from Mr Skinner why Rössing was not employing more Namibians (even though the workforce is 90% Namibian), he was informed that, due to declining levels of numeracy and literacy, too many young Namibians were simply unemployable.

Rio Tinto, for its part, expressed its willingness to provide funds to set up postgraduate training in the field of mining studies, and sketched a broad plan to bring in graduates from all over the world to the United Kingdom where they would receive top-quality training.

But the main problem remained: there were simply not enough Namibian students who could meet the basic standards for entering this field of study. What was needed was a massive intervention at secondary school level, with Government support, in order to bring standards up to a level where students would be able to progress via Namibian and South African tertiary institutions and make them eligible for specialised postgraduate studies.

In the Foundation's early days, the focus had been on those excluded from the system or who had missed out on opportunities to improve themselves. But, confronted with the scale of the education crisis, the Foundation's Trustees realised that it would have to intervene massively in the national education system.

The opportunity for the Foundation could not be presented more clearly: here was a mandate to wield the Foundation's capacities in a way that at once elevated it to an entirely different level.

ACADEMIC INCUBATORS: MATHS AND SCIENCE CENTRES

HOTHOUSE FOR THE FUTURE

After several months of consultations with its partners, a plan started taking shape. During the initial phase, the Foundation was to invest heavily in English, maths and science education via the Foundation's Centres, and to do it in such a way that aligned itself with the ETSIP blueprint.

Dr Charles Kauraisa, who had visited China in 2008, explained how the Middle Kingdom had literally pulled itself up by the bootstraps to create specialised education centres that recruited the best students from rural schools. Giving students from the remote corners of that vast country these opportunities has been instrumental in China's success in creating an emergent middle class of some 300 million people, and suggested that a similar approach in Namibia could have similar results. Dr Kauraisa put it as follows:

We are only about two million people, and China has 1.3 billion. If an approach like this can work in China, with all its problems, then it will work here, too.

The biggest problem was in the areas of maths and science. Current Foundation Director Job Tjiho travelled to Phalaborwa, South Africa - where Rio Tinto has run a Foundation since 1990 - to see if their solutions to similar problems could be applied to Arandis.

For some years now, the Phalaborwa Foundation has been running MasterMaths, a computer-based maths programme that has had an enormously positive impact on the participating students' grades. Moreover, the similarities between Phalaborwa and Arandis are more than superficial: apart from being a Rio Tinto sister mine, Phalaborwa has also experienced a shrinking pool of skills.

The MasterMaths system, coupled with other remedial teaching programmes, has reversed the high annual high-school drop-out rate, with participating schools now starting to turn out some of the top maths students in South Africa when it comes to national examinations.

As result, these students have also had the pick of the prime bursaries available nationally. This was exactly how Dr Kauraisa and his co-Trustees wanted to see young people in Namibia progress, especially in Arandis, he explained in his view of the Foundation's future.

The surest way of addressing the matter head-on was to make the basic essentials of modern higher education - being fully literate, numerate and in possession of ICT skills - as widely available as possible, Kauraisa stressed.

The scale of the problem, as well as the enormous hurdles of increasing poverty, required something more radical. A chain reaction was needed - and the Foundation's past experience has taught it that creating positive role models could be catalytic.

In many ways, the Foundation was already ahead of itself. Arandis's Vision 2016 is largely built on the closer cooperation between the NIMT and the people of Arandis to turn their town into a centre of academic excellence - exactly the kind of academic nursery that the Foundation had envisaged. As Dr Kauraisa put it, -

What we need in our country is a centre of excellence in every Region, where we can send our best and our brightest students.

The result is unprecedented in the Foundation's history: for the first time in its 30 years, it is to put almost all of its financial eggs - some N\$17 million - in one basket by committing all available resources to addressing the crisis in education.

However, while this is the single largest private sector commitment to education, it remains a drop in the ocean when seen against the total ETSIP cost estimate of N\$3 billion. But what was important now was to focus all possible resources on intervening in a crisis which, if solved, could transform Namibia.

Or as Job Tjiho put it, it is going to be the quality of the intervention that will be the deciding factor. As an organisation that has proved itself over and over, the Foundation believes the qualities it brings to the table will spark off an evolution in the education sector.

NURTURING THE SEEDS OF PROGRESS

As any decent gardener will tell you, no exotic flower will grow without a decent hothouse in which the conditions are created for its seeds to germinate. The Foundation, realising this, committed itself to building the equivalent of an academic hothouse in its three focal areas - Arandis, Ondangwa and Tamariskia - in the form of Maths and Science Centres.

One of the issues that emerged from the months of consultation with the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Education was that while science was being taught in theory at school, most schools no longer had functional laboratories in which practical experiments could be conducted.



In order to address this need, the design and construction of the first three envisaged centres would bring the most qualified teachers available in these disciplines to assist Grade 10 to 12 students to master these subjects. Designed specifically for Namibia's often stiflingly hot climate, the airy, well-lit centres will offer specialised training for English, maths, science and computer skills, as well as act as a general resource centre for any of the schools in its host Region for practical laboratory work.



All three centres were designed by acclaimed eco-architect Nina Maritz. The first of these has now been completed in Arandis on land donated to the Foundation for the purpose by the local Town Council. Land was also acquired in Ondangwa and Tamariskia, right next to the Foundation offices in each instance, and the centres there were scheduled for completion by the end of 2008.

The ideal would be to have a Maths and Science Centre in every Region, Dr Kauraisa explained, which could act as a feeder system into the kind of schools that have done so much to lift 300 million Chinese citizens out of rural poverty.

With Arandis already exploring ways to turn itself into a centre of academic excellence, it was the perfect site for running a pilot project of the MasterMaths programme. Lloyd Ulrich, as he guides a visitor through the new Maths and Science Centre, explains how each student's progress was being tracked individually as they worked their way through various sets of computer-based problem-solving games.

The programme allowed teachers assisting the students to identify each one's strengths and weaknesses, and formulate ways of helping both those doing very well and those struggling to master basic problems. Each student effectively learns at his or her own pace, progressing much like one does in a computer game through various levels. Each building block of understanding forms the basis of another level of learning, to a point where each student could meet the demands of external examinations – and pass, Ulrich explained.

The Foundation's intervention is not restricted to the Maths and Science Centres, however. Working closely with UNAM (whose Pieter Erwee had been involved in creating the NMI since the Foundation's early days), the Polytechnic of Namibia and Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa, the Foundation has also become closely involved in rewriting entire syllabi, with special emphasis on the disciplines of English literacy, maths, science and computer skills.

According to Job Tjiho, this mammoth task – which amounts to revising the entire Namibian education system – is now nearing completion and will be implemented in 2009. The Foundation has already taken the initiative by recruiting retired teachers to assist in classrooms at various schools to address deficiencies in teaching methods and assist children in lifting their own standards.

Kauraisa is of the opinion that this needs to go further than just helping children in Grades 10 to 12. He sees this approach as being implanted at pre-school level. The decision taken in 1992 due to limited official financial means to close down pre-primary education centres in order to make space for the thousands of primary school students at their gates was a grave mistake, he said.

This suggests the way forward for the Foundation. While rural practices of having children perform household chores like fetching water and firewood over great distances or working in the fields as part of their upbringing, this did very little to prepare them for the demands of formal schooling, especially in the English language which, for most people in Namibia, remains a second, third or fourth language. Ways will have to be found to address this need and, given the Foundation's wealth of experience in interventions at grass-roots level, it seems set to increase its importance as Namibia's premier partner in education.

WHOLE SCHOOL PROGRAMMES AND THE PUPKEWITZ FOUNDATION

In order for this reform programme to be effective, it cannot be implemented in a vacuum. The problems in the education sector are multifaceted, ranging from



dilapidated or run-down facilities and under-qualified teachers to a lack of proper management.

Clearly, if Namibia is ever to achieve the lofty ideals of Vision 2030, the quality of its schooling will have to be adjusted accordingly. Under ETSIP, the Ministry of Education hopes to improve the level of education in the labour pool with medium and high-end skills. If Namibia is to play any role in the global economy, its people are going to need skills of a higher level; this was how Justin Ellis put it.

Over the next few years, all teachers' skills will need to be brought to an acceptable level, which means their grasp of maths and English would have to be tested, and where necessary, remedial steps taken to address problems.

As Lloyd Ulrich explained, teachers generally failed for four reasons: a lack specialised subject knowledge, a lack of language skills to teach, a lack of teaching skills, and a lack of ICT skills. These four pitfalls have hampered much of the progress made in Namibia since 1990.

Lloyd Ulrich had this to say about the challenges Namibia faces:

The poor English skills we are seeing are not the real problem: they are just a symptom of the much bigger problem of people not being able to read – illiteracy, in other words. So far, attempts to address these problems generally amounted to little more than dealing with the symptoms, rather than the root causes.

The same applied to the utter lack of basic maths skills. Most teachers do not have the minimum maths proficiency required to teach the subject properly, meaning that about 40% of secondary school students cannot pass their grades.

In response to this problem, the Foundation initiated the Whole School Programme in consultation with various development partners. The initiative seeks to address every aspect of schooling as part of the plan to ensure efforts to reform the education sector remain sustainable for the foreseeable future.

Progress in respect of improved academic performance cannot happen in badly managed schools, however. What was needed was school-based institutional leadership, comprising self-critical teachers who would be trained before they were assigned a class.

In this regard, the Ministry has launched a major national and regional initiative that will involve everyone from local inspector level upwards, with special attention paid to the role of headmasters at schools.

ETSIP, it was realised, would not achieve any real, lasting success in reforming the education sector if problems in the education environment – the management and maintenance of schools – were not also addressed.

Or as business doyen Harold Pupkewitz put it:

You cannot teach a child in a place where the windows are all broken, the doors missing, the toilets are blocked and the teacher missing since the previous weekend.

His Pupkewitz Foundation has been one of the first to extend a helping hand to this often-neglected side of the education sector by sponsoring training for school janitors in basic building maintenance.

Help was also forthcoming from other quarters. The Foundation has been managing a pioneering programme, run in collaboration with the Windhoek College of Education, to put school principals through a two-year school management course designed by the University of Johannesburg, South Africa.



Here, an old friend from the Khomasdal Adult Education Centre days have come back to help again: First National Bank, which helped pay for the Centre in the early 1980s, is footing the bill for the tuition fees and travelling costs for school principals in this programme.

Again, the Foundation's approach of helping the most marginalised in many small ways - from ensuring there is chalk in the classroom to there being enough chairs and desks for the students to use - has proved to be the most effective way of helping people help themselves.

The success of this intervention can already be seen. One of the schools in the Khorixas area that is receiving this assistance has, judging from its 2007 Grade 12 final examination results, improved its performance from being the worst in the country two years before to being one of the top ten school in Namibia.

SMALL - SCALE MINERS

BEDROCK OF RURAL INDUSTRIALISATION

Its commitment to ETSIP meant that the Foundation had also to re-evaluate its priorities. Many of the programmes established over the years have, like the arts and crafts and CBNRM programmes, have become self-sustainable. Older vocational training programmes have been taken over by partner organisations like KAYEC, and on the whole, support to most of these has been scaled back since the decision to back ETSIP.

This did not mean that the Foundation was about to disappear from the development scene, however, especially in Erongo. It has combined its wealth of expertise with outside resources to run the Small-scale Miners' Project under the EU-funded Rural Poverty Reduction Programme (RPRP).

The Project's aim is to improve the lot of about 1,600 small-scale miners spread out among nine communities in the Erongo and Kunene Regions, improving their production, but in an environmentally sustainable way. Again, the Foundation draws upon its past experience in the CBNRM, craft development, education and health programmes, as well as on Rössing Mine's practical experience in occupational safety.

Petra Ondigo, who coordinates the Project, said she started out with 14 people at a small mining site on the Uis-Henties Bay road. Within two years, the number of participants grew to the present figure of 1,600. Members of the Project are being trained in better mining methods, adding value to their produce, coordinating the marketing of their gemstones, and generally improving their businesses in an environmentally sustainable way.

The N\$8.3-million Project, funded to the tune of N\$7.4 million by the EU with the remainder of the support coming from the Erongo Regional Council and the Foundation, hopes to develop small-scale mining activities to a level where they will become independent by the time the Project ends in 2009.

So far, the miners have already organised themselves into a cooperative known as the Erongo Regional Small-scale Miners' Association (ERSMA) and, with the Foundation's help, is procuring the equipment they have so far lacked: hammer drills, compressors, generator sets, and industrial explosives, not to mention organising a supply of water for these often isolated mining communities.



As Petra Ondigo explained:

The idea is that when this programme comes to an end it does not mean the end of assistance to the small miners. Currently, we are working on various strategies to incorporate the group into a commercial entity, and are working out plans to transfer ownership of the equipment to ERSMA.

She also pointed out that the RPRP would not have been implemented if it had not been for the Foundation's timely intervention. By helping draft the original ERSMA proposal back in 2004, the Project attracted the critical seed funding that led to the grant from the EU.

The Foundation was also crucial in bringing Rössing Mine on board. According to Ondigo, the Mine's presence in turn helped convince other companies in the sector such as the Navachab Gold Mine and geophysics consultancy firm BGN lend a critical helping hand.

The Project also draws on the other areas of the Foundation's expertise in respect of environmental management, business skills, health, geology, water and environmental management, safety, and legal aspects of the small miners' activities.

If it was not for the Foundation's assistance at the right time, most of the beneficiaries "would still be delivering water by donkey cart and living off 20 litres of water per week," Petra said.

“SO LONG” TO LEN LE ROUX

END OF AN ERA

As the saying goes, all good things come to an end, and so it was with Len le Roux, who in March 2008 decided to call it a day after 24 years of service at the Foundation, the last ten years of which were as its Director. After seeing the Foundation through its crisis years of 2001-2004 and beyond, he felt it was time to give someone else the opportunity to head up Namibia's most prestigious private-sector development agency.

During those 24 years, he had steered the Foundation through its toughest years, first as David Godfrey's Deputy from 1994 onwards, and as Director from November 1997, bearing the full load of keeping the Foundation's flame burning under often very adverse economic conditions. His contribution to poverty alleviation, especially in respect of the pioneering work done with the IRDNC, has created local economies where there were none before in remote and socially marginalised communities, and continues to do so.

Today, Namibia's progressive, holistic conservation programmes make the country one of the most popular tourism destinations in the southern African region. Tourism has benefited enormously from Len's input, and is the second largest contributor to the country's GDP after mining. More importantly, tourism is the leading creator of jobs in otherwise economically marginal rural areas, achieving a developmental objective that has always seemed elusive.

Due to Le Roux's deep empathy with Namibia's poor, he had perceived their needs, developed a sustainable solution and had the satisfaction of seeing the poverty alleviation programmes under his care grow like a flower in the desert. His commitment to sustainable development, especially in the CBNRM programme, was an inspired one - and, the most satisfying to him, he admitted.



Asked what his fondest memories of these days were, he related a tale of how some time during 2001 his wife Karen had taken a group of rather sceptical Scandinavian donors' representatives to see a potential rural arts programme in the Gam area, deep in the Kalahari Desert in the Omaheke Region. Travelling through the sparsely-populated area, they came across a neat settlement all by itself: a well-constructed house, neatly fenced off and with a flourishing vegetable garden on the one side. Nearby, there were some tidily fenced kraals, and the cattle and goats were all in very good condition, in spite of the dry season.



The owner, whose name has sadly been forgotten, rushed over to their vehicle. He knew the Rössing Foundation well, even though he had never worked at the Mine, and proudly proclaimed:

See that house? The Rössing Foundation taught me how to build, and how to farm. And that garden? That's my wife's, who also learnt to do very good needlework at one of the Foundation's training courses.

Needless to say, whatever reservations the visiting donor party may have had about a multi-national mining corporation like Rössing running development programmes evaporated like rain in the Omaheke sand, Le Roux related.

Stories like these are typical of his understated style. His empathy with the poor is his greatest contribution to the work of the Foundation, as well as to Namibia. To this day, the name *Rössing Foundation* opens doors - from the lowliest of shacks to the highest Government and corporate offices.

As a parting word, he admits -

It was not always easy, but it was enormously satisfying - and I would do it again, anytime.

His relationship with the Rössing Foundation has not totally ended, however, he took on a similar position with Synergos, a New York-based NGO that supports public health sector management. Synergos has contracted the Rössing Foundation to be its local managing partner.

...AND NOW THE MAN FOR THE JOB

David Godfrey, when asked for his personal postscript to the Foundation's history, without hesitation replied:

I think I am one of the luckiest men in Africa to have built up something which has had such a tremendous impact on so many people's lives.

As the adventurer, his vision shaped the Foundation during its pioneering days and nearly 20 years beyond, imparting a lasting ethos of reaching out to those most in need.

The level of commitment set by him set a very high standard, but his successor was not found wanting, and reached deeper into Namibia's pressing poverty than anyone else ever had. It was also a case of the right man for the right moment: his efforts to meet the financial challenges of the day saw the Foundation evolve into an organisation that adopted a holistic approach to all of its development programmes. With CBNRM, for example, the Foundation set the international benchmark.

And as the saying goes, cometh the hour, cometh the man: Job Tjiho, who had been Len le Roux's understudy since 1995, took over the reins on 1 March 2008. Tjiho is an educationist in the truest sense of the word. Having grown up as a cattle herder outside Okakarara, he is a rare breed these days: someone for whom teaching is a calling and a profession to which he has dedicated his entire professional career thus far.

As a son of Namibia's soil, few people are better equipped to understand the huge challenges facing the country's education system.





EPILOGUE

Towards the close of 2008, the uranium mining industry that Rössing Uranium Mine had pioneered in 1976 underwent a complete metamorphosis. Several new mines are being developed by other companies. Some, like Paladin Resource's Langer Heinrich Mine south-east of the Rössing Mine, has already shipped its first half million tonnes of yellow cake, as uranium oxide is more commonly known. Two more uranium mines - Areva's Klein Trekkopje and Forsys's Valencia Mine - have now been commissioned as well, and three more mines are expected to come into production by 2011.

As for Rössing, the development of the SK pit - which will double the size of the mining operation - will see the grande dame of the desert raise output to 4,700 tonnes and beyond, and possibly extend its life-of-mine until 2021. China and India's nuclear programmes are expected to keep demand healthy, even though prices have dropped back from their giddy heights.

But the world is also currently undergoing a financial and economic crisis - a once-in-a-century global recession tsunami - the effects of which could take many years to play themselves out. The economic melt-down is already making itself felt in the extractive industries in Namibia, with many mines having to lay off hundreds of workers already. But at the same time, the local financial systems have been relatively isolated from the ongoing credit crisis, and with careful guidance, Namibia may still weather the storm relatively well.

With its enormous natural resources, the African continent - and especially Namibia - is well-placed to take a leap into the future. But to do so, it will need its people to be equipped to take advantage of the opportunities. In its commitment to helping reform Namibia's education system, the pioneering spirit of the Rössing Foundation seems set to burn brighter than ever before.

Whatever the future brings, the Foundation will be there to give a strategic helping hand. The current good fortunes have meant that the establishment of the envisaged Endowment Fund will become a reality. Even if Rössing does close down one day, the Foundation will remain forever - in the hearts of the thousands of people it has helped to help themselves.

RÖSSING FOUNDATION TRUSTEES

Mr RS Walker (Chairman)	29 July 1978-23 October 1979
Mr RS Walker (Trustee)	24 October 1979-25 February 1992
Mr CA Gibson - RUL MD	29 July 1978-23 October 1979
RF Trustee again from	26 February 1992-17 Nov 1982
Mr CA Gibson (RF Chairman)	24 October 1979-25 February 1992
Mr GL Stobart (RF Trustee)	24 November 1981-25 February 1992
	1 September 1984-27 August 1990
Mr GL Stobart (RF Chairman)	26 February 1992-31 August 1984
Dr Z Ngavirue (RF Trustee)	25 August 1983-30 August 1984
RF Trustee again from	15 November 1990-13 March 1995
Dr Z Ngavirue (RF Chairman)	1 September 1984-14 November 1990
Mr JS Kirkpatrick	29 July 1978-14 November 1990
Mr JS Kirkpatrick (RF Chairman)	15 November 1990-31 March 1995
Mr S James	22 August 1994-31 March 1995
Mr S James (RF Chairman)	1 April 1995-1 April 1996
Dr CV Kauraisa	1 Apr 1995-31 March 1996
Dr CV Kauraisa (RF Chairman)	1 April 1996-21 June 2007
Mr R Hoveka	13 September 2004-21 September 2006
Mr R Hoveka (RF Chairman)	Acting Chairperson from 27 September 2007 officially appointed as RF Chairman from 8 Apr 2008-
Adv. FJ Kozonguizi	29 July 1978-23 August 1989
Dr BH Sandelowsky	29 July 1978-14 February 1980
Mr J Garoeb	29 July 1978-17 November 1983
Bishop Dr DL de Vries (Observer)	29 July 1978-23 October 1979
Mr ML Shipanga	17 January 1979-23 August 1989
Bishop Dr DL de Vries (RF Trustee)	24 October 1979-23 August 1989
Mr J Berning (RF Trustee)	24 October 1979-31 March 1995
Mr JM Hariseb	24 July 1980-19 August 1982
Mr CA Macauley	18 November 1982-20 June 1988
Mr A Anguuo	27 August 1987-23 August 1989
Mr C Gibson	31 August 1988-23 August 1989
Dr MP Bates	22 February 1989-20 February 1991
Mr RW Letten	23 May 1990-31 May 1995
Mr M Tjitendero	23 May 1990-April 1994
Mr MJ Mukendwa	23 May 1990 (+ March 1995)
Mr C Algar	29 August 1991-29 August 1994
Mr J Lesley	20 February 1991-22 August 1994
Dr N Shivute	16 May 1991-30 April 1994
Ms G Sekandi	29 August 1994-30 July 1998
Dr Leake Hangala	14 August 1995-10 March 1998
Mr A De'Ath	1 June 1995-11 August 1997
Mr A Hope	1 April 1996-10 April 2000
Mr D Smith	14 August 2000-31 March 2001
Mr D Salisbury	9 April 2001-13 Sept 2004
Ms JM Carvill	5 August 2002-30 April 2006
Ms A Gebhardt	13 March 1995-
Mr EP Shiimi	14 August 1995-
Mr M Leech	1 October 1997-
Mr T Alweendo	22 April 1999-
Mr A Kapere	10 September 2003-
Mr JK Tjiho	21 September 2006-
Mr W van Rooyen	8 April 2008-
Mr S Nuuyoma	8 April 2008-
Ms T Khadikwa	10 July 2008-

Rössing Foundation Directors, 1978-2008

Mr J Berning	29 July 1978-30 September 1979
Mr DA Godfrey, OBE	8 October 1979-31 December 1997
Mr SL le Roux	1 January 1998-28 February 2008
Mr JK Tjiho	1 March 2008-

Rössing Foundation Secretaries, 1978-2008

Mr EBR Hone (Acting)	22 November 1984-30 April 1986
Mr A von Gerlach	6 May 1986-7 August 1986
Mr EBR Hone (Acting)	13 November 1986-31 January 1987
Mr CJ Smith	1 February 1987-22 Nov 1988
Mr N Louis	23 November 1988-28 February 1992
Mr DB Paton	1 March 1992-15 August 1999
Mr J Labuschagne	16 August 1999-20 April 2006
Ms R Cloete	15 May 2006-

APPENDIX 1

