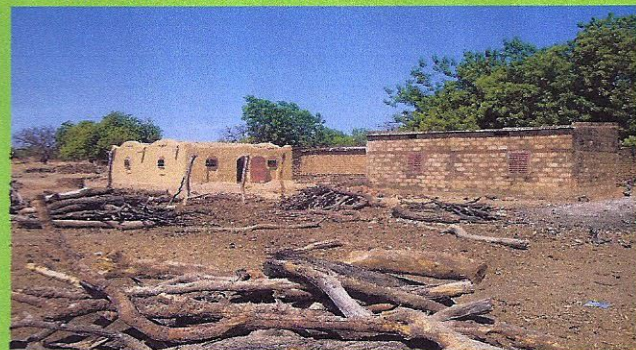


## Construction of Timberless Vaulted Roofs comes to Zambia

*An ancient architectural technique, used, among others, in southern Egypt since over 3500 years ago is to be introduced in Zambia. This is being made possible by AVN-Belgium, with the support of the Embassy of Zambia in Brussels.*

The Nubian vault is an African technique for the construction of timberless vaulted roofs. Bush timber traditionally used for roof construction is now scarce, pushing families to purchase expensive, often imported, iron sheets and sawn timber.

The AVN (Association la Voûte Nubienne), a non-governmental organisation (NGO) registered in France, Burkina Faso and recently in Belgium (AVN-Belgium), through its Program 'Earth roofs in the Sahel', helps provide families in sub-Saharan Africa with comfortable, sustainable and affordable homes. The AVN trains local people to build affordable houses with timberless earth brick vaulted roofs, using only locally available raw materials and in the process, generating a self-sustaining market in such buildings.



The objective is to offer a sustainable, comfortable, healthy, 100% ecological, durable (over 100 years) and economic alternative to the ubiquitous and expensive tin-roof shacks in which many families in such countries are obligated to live. Key advantages of the VN technique include:

- No expensive cement - the principal materials used being rock (for foundation), and earth and water for making mortar and brick dried in the sun;
- Wood is not required to support the vault during and after construction. Thus has no expensive corrugated iron sheets, and reduces deforestation - therefore environmentally friendly;
- Major cost is labour, which is readily available locally - therefore about 40% less expensive, but has a positive impact on local families incomes.

AVN-Belgium has recently embarked (with Tufawane Cooperative Society and Abantu Zambia, a Belgian NGO operating in the Chibombo District and covering 16 villages north of Lusaka)

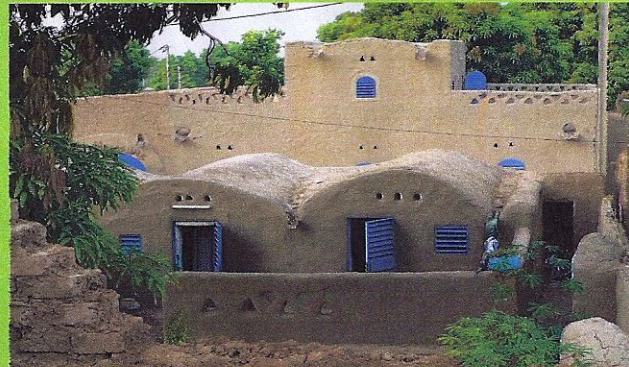
Over the last ten years (in Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal), AVN has trained over 150 masons in the VN technique, who, often operating as independent entrepreneurs, have built over 800 vaults - mainly for rural housing, but also including community-use buildings such as schools, dispensaries, churches, and literacy centres.

During 2009, AVN-Belgium embarked (with Tufawane Cooperative Society and Abantu Zambia, a Belgian NGO operating in the Chibombo District and covering 16 villages north of Lusaka) on a three-year programme of apprentice training, to be followed by construction, in Zambia. This programme has received tremendous support from the Embassy of the Republic of Zambia in Brussels.

H.E. Mrs Sheila Siwela, Zambia's Ambassador of the Republic of Zambia to Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg and the EU, has taken personal interest in the project since she sees it as a fantastic opportunity to

improve the habitat of the rural poor in her country, a solution to the heavy deforestation, and a boost to the local economy. Working with her Economic Counsellor, Mr. Elesani Njobvu, the Mission has, over the past few months, hosted Mr. Jean Stasse (President AVN Belgium) several times to discuss the project.

In December 2009, AVN-Belgium sponsored two Zambians for apprentice training in Burkina Faso. Jaspas Moobela and Christopher Phiri, identified by the local community for this training, arrived in

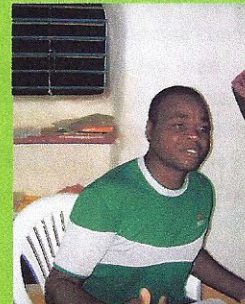


Burkina Faso on 14th December 2009 and are based in Boromo, 150 kilometres from Ouagadougou, the headquarters of AVN-BF (Association la Voûte Nubienne - Burkina Faso). They will be in Burkina Faso for six months for this training programme.

Two Zambians for training in Boromo, Burkina Faso

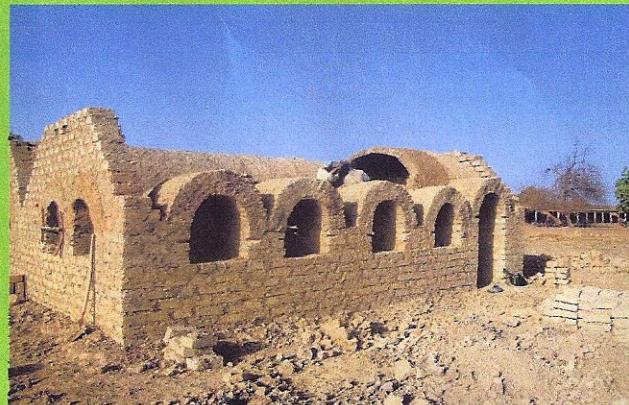


Jaspas Moobela



Christopher Phiri

Jaspas and Christopher are receiving hands-on training in the «Nubian Vault» construction technique. Starting with the making of small bricks (for the vault) they quickly moved into actual construction of a house (for the vault) they quickly moved into actual construction of a house of 8 x 3.25 meters (the equivalent of 20 iron sheets for the roof). Having completed this, they are currently working on a school library of two vaults. They are participating in the construction from the start, so as to help them to understand the whole process. Reports from their senior mason, Tiebo Saibou, indicate that the apprenticeship programme is going on very well.



(continue page 4)