

# REACHING OUT TO A DREAM

**T**he purpose of us publicising a project of constructing a cultural centre is not to glorify the organisation or any individual within it. The only entity worth glorifying is Allah (SWT).

As an organisation and as individuals within it we are thoroughly dispensable if Allah (SWT) so wills. We are aware that showing off (riya') and pride (kibr) are detestable qualities in our Creator's sight.

However, it has to be remembered that there is nothing wrong with being proud of being a Muslim (especially a woman), as long as one is aware of what it means to be a Muslim.

This entails absorbing and reflecting certain qualities such as humility, fear of Allah (taqwa), patience (sabr), prayer (salaah) and gratitude (shukr) to Allah.

Humility allows the Muslim to become receptive, fear touches the heart with hope and love, sabr enables the person to endure Allah's tests, prayer acts as a communion and gratitude encourages charity.

The above are ideals mentioned by the Qur'an in Surah 21, verse 35.

Bearing the above in mind, and various sayings of the prophet Muhammad (SAW), it is only fitting that we try our best, personally and socially, in the presence of Allah (SWT).

We have been told by our beloved Nabi (SAW), after all, that man is judged by Allah (SWT) according to his intentions.

The purpose of our publicising what we are doing, therefore, is not to boast or to please potential sponsors. If we make progress, insha-Allah, it can perhaps in a humble way show that not only can we reach out to our dreams, but make them a reality.

Behind this is the fact that we are all taught that the social essence of Islam is brotherhood, the essence of brotherhood being communication between all people - desiring in your heart for others what you desire for yourself.

This, then, is the driving force behind constructing a social and cultural centre on the Cape Flats where communities are crying out for places where they can meet, study, obtain advice, contemplate and learn self-sufficiency.

Since the proposal of such a centre

Dreams for the future are always reflected in the younger generation.



at the national conference two years ago, much has happened. Land has been purchased (and paid for), a magazine, AL-WARDAH, has been launched and plans have been drawn up for the second phase of creating the centre.

The plans, which were drawn up by a team of UCT students as part of their studies on community projects, offer many exciting new ideas and a holistic approach embracing the cultural, physical and spiritual needs of those who will be using the centre.

The students, who say that they "developed around" the MWF project, took environmental awareness as their brief. This was prompted by the nature of the project situated in a rural setting and the belief that the development had to be sustainable.

As the group was not a Muslim one, considerable research into traditional Islamic architecture had to be done. What it was looking at was a synthesis of not only traditional and modern architecture, but also of building materials.

This was regarded as very challenging by the group as their ecological approach demanded going the extra mile as the building had to be explored and conceived extremely thoroughly.

After many sleepless nights and much brainstorming, the group - aptly called the Eco Design Team - came up with a building that not only blended in with the environment, but used it as well.

The basic structure, which features vaults and domes, has made full allowance for the Islamic lifestyle right down to the location (and direction) of the toilets!

The ecological friendliness is not

confined to the aesthetics of the building. The Eco Design Team went to great pains to create a natural internal environment, something completely lacking in many modern buildings.

An interesting idea was grass planted on the roof to provide insulation. Courtyards, open internal spaces and doorways integrated with the grounds and garden that had to have features reflecting the sustainability of the project in its rural setting.

Instead of garages or awnings for parking, pergolas with vines were suggested. Also as part of the "green" scheme, vegetable gardens were laid out to dovetail with the self-sufficiency programme.

The high water table on the Cape Flats had been taken into account with all water being kept and utilised on site, a small reservoir - called an "education pond" by the group - being a feature. *retention*

Other noteworthy ideas were the solar heaters and the introduction of recycling waste, typified by the sewage - "digested" through septic tanks, processed and circulated back into the gardens.

When it came to building materials, much thought had been given to using on site or local material. Here, a special type of brick-making machine - currently used by a Christian community organisation - offered exciting prospects.

The machine, which made bricks from available soil mixed with cement, could offer employment on the building site, teach job skills and produce cheaper bricks.

It was pointed out that the Cape



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Flats had good quality sand (as well as plenty of building rubble dumped there) and the potential for such a machine was excellent. In Durban, where the soil quality was superb (resulting in less cement being used) bricks had cost 32c each compared to R1,65.

Further benefits of such a machine would be that once the project had been built, it could be utilised by the community, particularly in the informal sector.


While the MWF project has reached an exciting stage, it has to be remembered that much work still lies ahead. The plans of the scheme, donated by the UCT Architecture Faculty, are by no means a final blueprint.

Local communities have to be consulted, experts in various fields have to be called in and last (but not least!) funds have to be raised. It is, however, extremely exciting reaching out and touching a dream... 🌱

In the next issue of AL-WARDAH, insha-Allah, we will keep you, the reader, informed of progress.



The Eco Design Team with plans and model of the social and cultural centre (left to right): Shamil Gamildien, Fudly Isaacs and Deanne Pruss together with MWF director Fatiḥah Khan. Absent, Glynnis Coetzee.



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