

# Youths to benefit from NGO timber project

Post Reporter

A UNITED-STATES-BASED Non-Governmental Organisation has unveiled plans to train local unemployed youths in building timber frame houses to prepare them for self-employment or for jobs in the building industry.

The African-Self-Help Assistance Program, with offices in Mutare, will from next month begin offering intensive training in building timber houses. The course will include small businesses management to encourage students to consider self-employment.

In an interview, the NGO's regional director, Mr Tom Arsenault, said the training programme will also enable students to acquire hands-on experience by building actual structures.

The training programme will start by enrolling 12 people. There is no tuition required and females have been urged to participate.

He said the programme's goal would be to provide vocational training in marketable skills as well as to address the critical housing shortage in Zimbabwe.

Mr Arsenault added that Zimbabwe had been chosen for this pilot project because of its vast timber resources.

He said the NGO had also been working with both the ministries of Public Construction and National Housing and Higher Education to develop a curriculum for the training.

Timber houses if properly constructed, he said, were just as durable and long lasting as the brick-built structures.

He said the Ministry of Public Construction and National Housing had also approved in principle the construction of the timber houses.

Next month's workshop would be open to O-level students with a bias towards carpentry while the regular courses thereafter would cater for those with ZJC.

Successful students would also receive a set of tools on graduation. Besides training students in building timber frame houses, Mr Arsenault said ASAP has plans to introduce a rural outreach programme where it would train students the techniques of making low cost school furniture.

He said once the Zimbabwe pilot project was firmly placed, ASAP would move to Mozambique since its aim was to cater for self-reliance in Sub-Saharan Africa.

"We want the projects to be sustainable so as to move away from donor dependency," he said.