



Report prepared by: **Chief Executive Officer**  
Prieur du Plessis

Reporting period: November 2003

Report prepared for: **Board of Directors Meeting**  
17 November 2003

## 1. Website and Manual

### Manual

I want to read you the letter we received from Theosis Education Trust on 24<sup>th</sup> April this year. This is a letter that was read at a MC meeting in May this year.

24 April 2003

**CC by email:** Prieur du Plessis, Roger Greenshields, and Chantell Rankin

**Re:** Request for co-operation with project to write a Manual of The House's History, Operations and Best Practices.

### DECISION REQUIRED

Dear Management Committee

A group of religious organisations, government and non-government organisations in the Netherlands recently embarked on a project that will capture and share the experiences and best practices of ten of the most successful and exemplary community organisations in the world. The selection process, to determine which organisations qualify for this project, takes a close look at the level of difficulty, the mission, target market and historical development of the organisations. The selection process has not yet been completed and will continue over the next twenty four months or more. Nevertheless, The House was selected as the first organisation to be featured in this manner.

In order to successfully meet the requirements of the sponsors the following criteria must be met:

- a) The House must be in a good condition and its management must believe it will exist for at least long enough after publication of the book/manual to benefit the donors and their public.
- b) Jean and Adèle must co-author the book/manual.
- c) The book/manual must be at least two hundred pages of text, must include photographs, must have an index and glossary, and must be sensitive to international standards of care in the field (making comparisons). The book/manual must cover at least the history, constitution, operation manuals, operations and mechanisms of management and staff training and volunteer utilisation, fundraising, best practices in media relations and public awareness, best practices in lobbying and advocacy, detailed manuals of programmes and financial budgets and audits.

- d) The book/manual must be published and made available in print and e-book format downloadable from the Internet. The book/manual must be set up as a web site where organisations can download manuals, training material, etc.
- e) The contract must be signed before end of April 2003.
- f) The task must be completed by December 2003.

We have known that The House was being considered for this project but, given the developments over the past couple of years, did not believe it had a clear shot at the title. We were clearly wrong in our assumption and the selection committee has spoken in its own wisdom. We have given the matter much thought and realise that, if The House agrees to co-operate, we should make the changes to our lives to accommodate this project. We believe that this is a gigantic honour bestowed upon The House and it celebrates not only the cause we have all been working for over the past thirteen years, but it celebrates also the effort and dedication of everyone who worked to make The House an exemplary beacon in the eyes of the international community. It is clearly so that, from the outside looking in, The House is still something very special to the community—occupying a special place an organisation earns over many years. Being inside of the organisation, though, we may all feel that things are not all in order—but those things can change overnight, at the moment the will to change it comes to play.

The budget allowed for the book/manual is adequate. It covers the cost of editors, publishing, and a fair portion of the time-cost of writing and research (if it can be done in the allotted time).

We will have to set aside our immediate plans (in progress) to set up Theosis in the USA and Canada as a fundraising arm for the cause, but we are convinced to play our part in this would be the right thing for us to do. However, we are not the only players. We cannot publish a lie that will disappoint thousands of people across the world and embarrass all people ever involved with The House. We cannot, and would not, do this task without the Management of The House's blessing, co-operation and resolve to continue the work of this beacon of hope, even if only for the sake of those who believe in it.

Besides the matters of history and daily operations we will have to rewrite some training manuals and policy to suit your changed needs and will therefore need very close co-operation from the Management Committee to fulfil our part of the bargain.

We will be in receipt of the contract within the next few days and must deliver it signed back to the sponsoring partner by month end. May I make an urgent appeal to the MC and senior members to take this matter under serious consideration and come to your soonest decision to either commit to it or reject it before the due time.

Thank you for your time in this  
Yours in love and respect.  
Jean & Adèle  
[jdp@theosis.org](mailto:jdp@theosis.org)

This was great news and the MC accepted this proposal with gratitude. A letter of agreement was drafted and signed by the Chairperson and the Secretary. Since then, nothing has been forthcoming from our side. We did nothing to honour our part of the agreement and we are about to lose one of the most valuable opportunities that ever came the way of The House. What is more important, we are not fulfilling our pledge to help destitute girl-children to the best of our ability if we fail in our responsibility towards them.

Look again at the contract TH has entered in to. In this contract TH promised to give all necessary backing to the development of this project. Members should have an intimate knowledge of the contents of this agreement.

The way I see it is that we are letting a very important tool slip through our fingers. I do not think that we realise how important and what a great feather in our cap it is to be considered as one of the outstanding community organisations in the world. Once this manual has been published, and once we have a creditable website, we should have no problem finding funding for our projects and we will refer any would be sponsor to look at our site and so be convinced of our good standing.

### **Website**

It may not be too late to provide Jean with the input he requires from us. If we each do his or her bit during the next two days. I feel that the job may still be done.

My suggestion is that we write a letter of apology and ask for an extension of delivery of two weeks. Even one week, if two is not feasible. That will allow us four weeks to help Jean with this project. That will mean that we all will have to co-operate with Jean from this moment on.

I contacted Jean and asked him if more time could be allowed. He answered by e-mail and I quote some of what he says:

1. The website contract is for a period of 12 months. During this time the following should happen: Services made available and maintained. Site designed with co-operation from The House. Pages designed. Design and build of technical elements.
2. More or less 6 months of this contract has expired. The House did not fulfil their part of the bargain but the service exists and the name is registered.
3. I believe that The House has squandered 6 months worth of services but 6 more months remain. This is a big and complicated sight to build but if The House will co-operate, it can still be done.
4. The process can be speeded up if TH request that the sight designer shall proceed and build a webpage according to his/her insight. This will entail that a sight of 10 to 20 pages will be available in a relatively short time. A problem with this arrangement is that, should the BofD not like the designs, it will be costly to change. Small changes will be easy to make but major changes will be difficult. In other words, TH will have to live with the consequences.
5. This can be done if TH can provide photos and other detail within two weeks from date. Eventually the site will comprise of between 300 and 500 pages. Volunteer training, staff training, member orientation, the constitution, the home pages for all the projects, newsletter and much more.
6. The BofD should know that the sponsors of this project is aware of the fact that months has gone by without input from The House and if we do not pull this of, the reputation of The House will be severely damaged as far as the international sponsorships is concerned.

7. The entity that will suffer the most is the one that acquired the financing for the project by telling sponsors about the TH being chosen as one of the most successful organizations in its field.

8. I suggest that the short cut should be taken. Give Prodeo instructions to proceed according to what they consider to be the correct way. If we go this way TH will have a basic site within two weeks while more data from TH will be forwarded. Contents can for further pages can be discussed and planned.

9. The House can communicate with the representatives of the project on the discussion facility on [www.thehouse.org/setup](http://www.thehouse.org/setup) The sponsors look at these pages.

I propose that a committee should be elected to set this project in motion. It will be my task to provide Prodeo with photos of all our activities as well as of the members of the BofD with all their relevant information. The constitution provides for a Standing Projects Committee, headed by the Vice President. It seems to me as if this committee should do the job.

## **2. Duties of Directors**

In order to perform my responsibilities as Chief Executive Officer it is necessary that I am sure that the Directors of the BofD understand their responsibilities. I will then be able to refer to the constitution which is at the same time a manual of operation, if I need to know what should be done by whom.

We should understand that some of the Directors of this board does not know what they really let themselves in for. I want to propose that each member studies the description of his or her portfolio to ensure that he or she feel that he or she are able to dedicate the time that the project requires.

This constitution is compiled in such a way as to ensure that if every Director and Standing Committee fulfil their functions, all aspects of The House will link like a chain and we will really be the model organisation that the sponsors believe we are.