

Who are the people driving Namibia's plans to open commercial abattoirs for donkey meat and skins for Asia?

Oscar Nkala tracks them down

'Friends in high places': Stina Wu (left) donates a 'no-strings-attached' cheque of N\$610,000 to One Economy Foundation, a philanthropic project of First Lady Monica Geingos, to be distributed as collateral-free loans to low-income earners. Photo: Monica Geingob: New Era newspaper

Any reference to Namibia's Chinese business community would be incomplete without the name Stina Wu, an influential real estate mogul who boasts friends in high places and owns vast tracts of land in Windhoek, Okahandja and Rundu.

Stina owns two companies, Chan Close Corporation Construction Company and First Wall Property, mainly engaged in the construction of residential estates and shopping malls on the land she owns.

She is also the owner of Everlasting Iron Sheet Investments, the company which plans to open a controversial donkey abattoir in Okahandja, about 60km north of Windhoek. The abattoir is one of two planning to open in Namibia, in the face of stiff opposition from locals. (See [Furore over Namibia's donkey slaughter plans](#))

The Okahandja abattoir, which plans to export donkey meat and hides to China, will be built on Erf 780 in Okahandja Townlands. *Oxpeckers* unearthed evidence that shows the government has long known about allegations that the land on which Stina plans to build the abattoir was acquired by her in violation of town council procedures, and for much less than its real value.

Forensic investigation

In July 2014 the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development commissioned audit firm PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) to carry

out a forensic investigation into the conduct of land deals in Okahandja. The probe followed a public outcry over alleged corruption and influence-peddling in land sales among council officials, politicians, government officials and Chinese businesspeople.

In 2015 PWC released a report that exposed several transactional and procedural irregularities in 200 land deals involving government figures, ruling South West African People's Liberation Party (Swapo) politicians, Chinese individuals and state-owned companies.

The government decided not to publicise the findings of the report because it implicated several ministers, and exposed several business deals between local elites and Chinese citizens.

According to PWC, Stina personally represented First Wall Property when it applied to buy three plots (defined as erven) 2351, 2532 and 2353 in Okahandja sometime in 2012.

The council approved her application and sold her erf 2353, a 5,100m² property, for a concessionary price of N\$356,000. The council also offered her erven 778 and 780, although she had never applied for them.

The PWC auditors said she acquired erf 780 at a discounted price of N\$200,000 and then mortgaged it for N\$6-million, indicating that the council could have undervalued the property at the time of the sale.

The audit found no evidence that Wu ever paid in full for the three plots – each measuring an average of 5,100m². “There is no explanation in the council resolution [of land sale] why the additional two plots were given [to First Wall Property]. We could also not find any proof of payment for the three erven. The company still owes the council N\$1,6-million,” states the PWC report.

PWC concluded that erven 778 and 780 should be returned to the

PWC concluded that erven 776 and 788 should be returned to the municipality because the act of selling them without formal applications was a violation of municipal procedures. Further, PWC said First Wall Property should pay the outstanding N\$1,6-million within a period of six months from May 2015.

The report indicated that corruption was generally standard practice at Okahandja Town Council, stating: “People who applied [for land] a long time ago are side-lined, and erven are given to friends, companies and some council employees are buying erven for money-making.”

Valerie Aron: the former Okahandja Town Council chairperson was ousted over issues that included her alleged corrupt relationship with Stina Wu

Valerie Aron link

To better understand how Stina became a real estate mogul in Okahandja, one has to revert to August 2013 when Okahandja Town Council ousted chairperson Valerie Aron over issues that included a possibly corrupt relationship with Stina. The friendship allegedly blossomed between 2011 and 2012, when Stina’s applications for land were pending before the council.

In ousting Aron, the town council said she was unconvincing in her denials of allegations that she was a board member of Stina’s company, First Wall Property, and that she could have influenced council approval of what appeared to be dubious land sales in the company’s favour.

Aron was asked to explain the fact that she drove various vehicles belonging to Stina, amid concerns that such behaviour represented a possible conflict of interest since Stina’s applications for land in Okahandja were still pending adjudication by her council.

In another case, Aron was found guilty of selling river sand from a council quarry to First Wall Property at a give-away price of N\$4 50

council qualified to first value property at a give-away price of N\$4,50 per cubic metre, nearly N\$10 lower than the prescribed council rate of N\$14,80 per cubic metre at the time. A full council resolution is required to approve price discounts on council merchandise, but Aron admitted she never sought any and acted alone.

She was also found guilty of failing to disclose to the council that the plot of land on which she built her own house was a reserved open public space. Further, she could not say where she obtained a deed of ownership showing that she bought the 1,800m² plot for N\$92,000 – N\$55 000 lower than its actual value of N\$147,000, calculated at council rates in 2013.

Aron failed to produce her offer letter for the land or a copy of the council resolution which may have approved her acquisition of the plot at a discounted price. She also had a hard time denying allegations that Stina paid for water and power connections to her home.

The council resolved to ask the Anti-Corruption Commission to probe Aron for corrupt land dealing during her tenure as Okahandja Town Council chairperson. Four years after her ousting and two years after receiving the PWC report, the Namibian government has not acted on the allegations of corruption and influence-peddling in the sale of prime land in Okahandja.

Rundu Rainbow City: Stina Wu sponsored an all-expenses-paid trip to China for all councillors of the Rundu Town Council before they approved her application for the land. Photo: The Namibian

‘Rainbow City’ of Rundu

About 715km north-west of the capital Windhoek and right on the border with Angola lies the town of Rundu, capital city of the Kavango East Region. A fast-growing but still under-developed urban centre, Rundu is primarily made up of three old suburbs called Katutura, Tutungeni and East Safari.

Katutura, Katungema and East Karan.

The sprawling shanty towns of Kaisosi, Ndawu, Sauyemwa SA and Kehemu help complete the “traditional” shack-city face of Rundu, standing out in contrast to the town’s newer and leafier middle- and upper-class and suburbs, such as Millennium Park.

In 2011 the winds of change started blowing through Rundu when Stina’s Chan Close Corporation Construction Company applied for the construction of a mixed middle- to -upper class suburb of 250 houses, complete with a self-contained shopping mall and sports centre.

In July that year Stina sponsored an all-expenses-paid trip to China for all councillors of the Rundu Town Council. In 2012 the same councillors sold her a 3,157m² plot of prime land at a discounted price of N\$5.00 per square metre.

The council justified the undervaluing of the land where the Rainbow Rundu Village now stands by saying it was undeveloped and un-serviced at the time of the sale. The council admitted she had sponsored its members’ vacation to China, but denied that the trip influenced its final decision to approve her application for land.

The first phase of 53 houses was handed over to the first tenants in November 2013. The project includes two-, three- and four-bedroom houses priced between N\$380,000 and N\$ 610,000.

‘Friends in high places’

Asked how Stina had managed to evade further scrutiny despite her history of allegedly corrupt land deals, one prominent Chinese businessman in Rundu responded: “Stina is not our chairperson by mistake. She has friends in high places and does not shy away from using her money to win power and influence. Namibia’s political elites have a high appetite for money, property and all-expenses-paid vacations.

“Dish out those if you want to put them in your pocket. But don’t forget to never mention my name or that of my shop. If you do, I will be lucky to go back to Shanghai in a casket,” he said.

It took *Oxpeckers* two days to convince him that he could safely reveal the names of Stina’s alleged “friends in high places”.

“To stay immune from arrest, make best friends with the top cop in the land,” he said. “Stina has such a friend. To avoid prosecution, even in the event of arrest, make friends with those with real power. Stina has so many like that here and back home in China.”

He said Stina had links to people at the political and economic affairs sections of the Chinese embassy in Windhoek, and used these to set up inter-governmental business exchange visits between Windhoek and Beijing.

Further investigations showed that Stina has a close relationship with the family of President Hage Geingob through First Lady Monica Geingos. She is also a close friend and business associate of Jack Huang, a real estate mogul who is a business partner of the president.

Huang is currently on trial in connection with a N\$3,5-billion money laundering, fraud and tax evasion case. Since his arrest in February, Geingob has been at pains to assure that he will not block Huang’s prosecution.

Cheques for charity

On April 3 2017, Stina donated a “no-strings-attached” cheque of N\$610,000 to One Economy Foundation, a philanthropic project of First Lady Monica Geingos, to be distributed as collateral-free loans to low-income earners. Speaking at the handover, Stina said she had sourced the money from the Chinese business community because she was touched by the plight of Namibians living in poverty.

As managing director of First Wall Commercial Development Investment, Stina and three other Chinese business people donated US\$16,000 to community projects and a kindergarten in the Okatana area of northern Namibia in August 2013.

Efforts to obtain comment from Urban and Rural Development Minister Dr Sophia Shaningwa on the findings and recommendation of the PWC land sales audit in Okahandja were unsuccessful. Communications sent to the public relations office of the ministry were ignored.

Efforts to track down Stina and First Lady Monica Geingos through their respective offices also proved fruitless.

Responding earlier this year to the allegations of irregularities and corruption in her acquisition of land in Okahandja, Stina said she needed to see the PWC report before commenting on its contents.

“I have no idea of the report you are referring to. Kindly provide me with that so-called report so that I acquaint myself with its content,” Stina told *The Namibian* newspaper.

Entrepreneur Shane Hangula describes himself on his social media profile as a real estate consultant/broker

Fu Hai Trading in Outjo

The second planned Namibian donkey abattoir is based in Outjo, about 250km north of Okahandja, where a company called Fu Hai Trading Enterprises CC envisages employing 170 people in an operation that would export meat to Vietnam for distribution to military veterans in 13 regions of South-East Asia.

While the name of the Chinese founder of Fu Hai Trading has been known publicly, though only as “Mr Chengdabiek”, his Namibian

partner was a mystery until October 20, when he signed a solicitation notice seeking secondary partners to handle the processing and disposal of blood and organic waste from the abattoir.

In the notice Shane Hangula said the company had received an environmental clearance certificate, which he described as the “go-ahead from the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, the Department of Veterinary Services and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism”.

However, environmental commissioner Theofilus Nghitila of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism refuted Hangula’s claim that an environmental clearance certificate had been issued for the Outjo abattoir, saying the environmental impact assessment procedures had not yet been completed.

Hangula describes himself on social media as a real estate consultant/broker at Dappa Estates and Properties, which operates in various municipalities across the country from its headquarters in the coastal town of Swakopmund.

His Chinese business partner, Chengdabiek, is an enigma in Outjo. “The life he lives is not reflective of the status of a foreign investor in a high-end business in Namibia. He does not have a car, and walks everywhere he wants to go.

“We see him walking the streets often. He even walks to and from the abattoir site, which is about 6km out of town. We don’t know if he has a [Namibian] work permit or not. To date, he has not presented a passport or [work] permit to the council,” said Lindie Prinsloo, chairperson of the Outjo Community Committee.

Hangula said he was not prepared to discuss his business plans with a journalist, and Chengdabiek could not be traced for comment.

The community committee has joined a growing number of Namibian farmers and cultural groups that fear the opening of donkey

farmers and cultural groups that fear the opening of donkey abattoirs could drive local donkey populations to extinction and deprive some locals of their only reliable source of draught power.

In China and Hong Kong, donkey hides are stewed to produce gelatin, a key ingredient in the brewing of a traditional Chinese medicine called *ejiao*. Many African countries have banned donkey abattoirs citing the extinction threat.

Following a banning of the trade across West and Sahelian Africa between 2015 and 2016, donkey abattoirs have been banned in Tanzania, Ethiopia, Botswana, Uganda and Zimbabwe since the beginning of 2017. South Africa and Kenya operate licensed donkey abattoirs, and the illegal trade continues with bush slaughters in several countries that include Namibia. – oxpeckers.org

Under the Skin: This series of investigations into Southern Africa's donkey trade is produced by Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism in collaboration with [The Donkey Sanctuary](#)



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