



**MINISTRY
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, MMAMOLOKO KUBAYI, 2024 WORLD HABITAT DAY CELEBRATION AND LAUNCH OF THE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS RESEARCH STRATEGY, 07 OCTOBER 2024

Programme director,

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Director general of the department of human settlements

Panelists

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

Let me start by welcoming everyone who has been able to join us this morning on this very important occasion as we celebrate World Habitat Day and launching the human settlements research agenda.

This year we celebrate World Habitat Day under the theme “Engaging youth to create a better urban future”. As a country that has a youth bulge, this year’s theme recognises that cities are becoming home to a new generation of leaders and change makers and that young people are at the heart of this transformation finds resonance.

The participation of the young people in all spheres of society can no longer be postponed. The sooner we find ways of making the youth integral to all our programmes the better.

As a sector we already have a set-aside for the youth in terms of our procurement which is a deliberate action on our part to increase youth participation in the sector. However, the theme for this year's world habitat day is a reminder that we need to do more and research can help to find innovative ways to engage the young people.

Some who are following this launch today might be asking themselves a question: why does human settlements need research and a research agenda?

Some of you might be saying they should stop making the sector too academic and abstract and just get on with building houses.

However, those who make an effort to look closely at the human settlement sector they would realise that the sector has multiple dimensions, which include social, economic and psychological aspects of human existence.

Each of this aspect evolves on its own and also co-evolve with other aspects in ways that makes human settlements planning, design and development a complex exercise.

As you are aware we are in the final stages of finalising the new Human Settlements White Paper.

The new White Paper will provide an enabling overarching policy framework for the delivery of sustainable human settlements that are spatially integrated, inclusive, and equitable through a holistic approach involving robust stakeholder engagement.

Flowing from the policy proposals in the White Paper, the Housing Code will be reviewed and rewritten to encompass new approaches to give effect to the delivery of integrated and sustainable human settlements.

The reviewed Housing Code will inform the development of the strategic plans that will detail the focus areas for implementation.

Such implementation will involve continuous consultation with all implementation partners across government, business, academia and civil society so that there is policy coherence and certainty.

There has been criticism that human settlements policy has experienced considerable inertia and a dearth of fresh thinking, particularly in the way it has been institutionalised and implemented.

Our critics further says that there has been little systematic reflection on past practice or deliberate experimentation with new ideas, agendas, policy instruments and initiatives, such as inclusionary housing, new building technologies, urban densification, the release of well-located land, and small-scale rental housing.

The decision we took to review our policies was an admission that we need to shift the sector to evidence based policy making and programme implementation. Thus, the launch of the research agenda, is a demonstration of our intentional and deliberate change of approach to resolving human settlements challenges to a more evidence-based approach.

Though there may be areas that require basic research which must be pursued, we believe that central to our research agenda should be applied research. This means our agenda will place some emphasis on the notion that I know to be very unpopular with academics and that is return on investment.

Considering the fiscal constraints and the budget cuts recently issued by the National Treasury, it is imperative that government learn to do more with less. The research that we fund needs to give us tangible outcomes that positively impact our work in developing human settlements.

The sector, as you are well aware, is faced with a myriad of challenges, which include climate change, population growth, low economic growth, urbanisation, slow spatial transformation and governance instability at local government level.

In the world that is undergoing rapid urbanization, many villages are facing a series of problems such as depopulation, population ageing, insufficient infrastructure, and public service facilities. While most of our work has been focused on responding to the challenges of accessing urban land for human settlement, the sprouting of informal settlements and the rise of inner-city slums, the challenges of unsustainable human settlements in rural areas have received little or no attention.

Improving the rural human settlements both in terms of rural ecological environment and the creation of a healthy rural human settlement environment are areas that require intensive research. Not only will this help us to reinvigorate rural development, but it will also assist us with mitigating against climate change and its effects.

Well-researched solutions are required as an antidote to these challenges so that we can be able to create a peaceful, economically sustainable and stable country. It therefore stands to reason that we would like to place more emphasis on applied research, which will help us to provide solutions to an existing problem.

The Research Agenda that we are launching today has been developed to do the following amongst others:

- (a) To inform planning, policy development and review as well as implementation processes within the human settlement sector. The Research Agenda will assist to uniformly identify problematic areas that need to be resolved within the policy and implementation space;
- (b) To signal to funders and development partners what research areas require investment;
- (c) To assist the Department to guide resource allocation for research;
- (d) To encourage research collaboration in dealing with common problematic areas;
- (e) To drive capacity building by encouraging students to participate in the human settlements sector research.

As it is generally acknowledged, the nexus between policy, research and practice is not linear but it is highly complex. The Department is of the view that research cannot be expected to serve only current policies but it is also expected to influence policy and practice in the long-term.

The scope of the human settlements Research Agenda is therefore broad, so that the selection of certain areas and topics for priority will not be exhaustive. However, it marks the focus in the next three financial years.

There is extensive research in Human settlements that has already been conducted across many institutions. We plan to leverage on this existing research and also invest in further research in the sector.

Therefore, research collaboration where different organisations will work together to fund specific research of common interest will be encouraged. The department will pursue various collaborative approaches.

The department intends to establish research chairs where institutions of higher learning will support research based on their expertise. Post graduate students will

be encouraged to select their academic topics from the research agenda or have a topic within the thematic areas established in the research agenda.

The departmental research committee will approve the topical issue that the student selected for funding.

Part of the research will be funded directly by the department through the commissioning of research, call for papers as well as providing part of the funding to students' academic programme.

I was made aware that Collaborative framework agreement with stakeholders has been developed and it will be signed today.

I think this a major step in the right direction for the research work in our sector and I firmly believe that it will change our sector of the better.

As we mark another year of World Habitat Day let us join hands and work hard to ensure that all our people enjoy the right to adequate shelter.

I thank you