



Human Settlements

The Department of Human Settlements' (DHS) service-delivery priorities include upgrading well-located informal settlements, and providing proper services and land tenure to 500 000 households by 2014.

The department also plans to increase the rate of affordable rental housing delivery to at least 20 000 units per year. It also aims to set aside 6 250 ha of well-located public land for low-income and affordable housing, accommodating approximately 400 000 units by 2014.

The mixed housing model, which includes different housing typologies for different income groups, is yielding fruits. Examples include Cosmo City, Fleurhof and Olievenhoutbosch in Gauteng.

By May 2013, government had, for the first time since 1994, passed the three million mark in providing houses and housing opportunities in South Africa.

Most beneficiaries were from the poorest groups in South Africa. The main focus of housing delivery efforts remains the provision of quality housing to the poorest of the poor, many of whom are in and around informal settlements.

Human Settlements Vision 2030

Housing the poor was an ingredient of the department's three-part response to the State's Vision 2030 Strategy. "Gap housing" is a term that describes the shortfall, or gap in the market between residential units supplied by the State and houses delivered by the private sector. The gap housing market comprises people who typically earn between R3 500 and R15 000 per month, which is too little to enable them to participate in the private property market, yet too much to qualify for state assistance.

Gap housing is a policy that addresses the housing aspirations of people such as nurses, fire fighters, teachers and members of the armed forces, who earned between R3 000 and R15 000 per month and, therefore, did not qualify for RDP houses and did not earn enough to obtain home loans.

Nationally the houses were financially assisted by the National Housing Finance Corporation (NHFC) through an intervention called Finance Linked Individual Subsidy Programme, which gives all qualifying beneficiaries the certainty of being granted loans, bonds or mortgages by banks and other financial institutions. Those in the middle- to high-income groups could apply for housing bonds.

The challenges ahead include removing racial connotations from living spaces, which more than anything else reflects the real evil of apartheid social engineering. Undoing this policy will require time and major resources.

As part of its strategy in this regard, the department is obliging banks to give loans to blacks who want to buy properties in previously exclusively white areas. It has also been buying up high-rise buildings in inner cities, and refurbishing and transforming them from office space to rented family units. This form of social housing has become popular with young couples, students and single mothers.

Areas close to townships, known as “No-Man’s Land” and were used as buffer zones to separate black townships from white areas, are being eradicated. The land is being used for housing with occupants being moved closer to cities.

New non-racial towns and cities are being developed to fulfil the principle of a united people in non-racial residential areas. Lephalale in Limpopo, which will be known as Joe Slovo City, is an example of this policy.

Integrated Residential Development Programme (IRDP)

In 2013, South Africa had almost 2 700 informal settlements compared to 300 in 1994.

Despite the steady increase in subsidies, factors such as escalating building costs, inflation and rising land prices have slowed down the delivery of houses.

The National Upgrading Summit took place in Khayelitsha in July 2013. Since then government has changed its approach to providing communities with housing to allow for more flexibility, more creativity and more humanity. Government became more creative in its response to upgrading informal settlements and more flexible regarding the efforts of the poor to plan, build and maintain the communities in which they live.

The IRDP provides for the acquisition of land; servicing of stands for a variety of land uses, including commercial and recreational purposes, schools and clinics; as well as residential stands for low-, middle- and high-income groups. The land-use and income group mix is based on local planning and needs assessment.

Housing institutions

The department’s support institutions play an important role in enhancing the norms and standards of housing, as well as making housing more accessible to all South Africans.

The institutions are: the National Home-Builders Registration Council, NHFC, National Urban Reconstruction and Housing Agency, Rural Housing Loan Fund, the Housing Development Agency and the Social Housing Regulatory Authority.

Subsidies

A housing subsidy is a grant by government to qualifying beneficiaries for housing purposes. One of the DHS areas of responsibility in the delivery of human settlements relates to the bottom-most end of the market, where it provides housing subsidies to the poor. This is where the bulk of the housing backlog exists, affecting mainly those who earn below R3 500 a month.

International relations

The South African Government is party to the United Nations (UN) milleninum development goals, which provide for the significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. In addition to these conventions, South Africa adheres to the following declarations under the UN Habitat programme: the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements (1976), the Istanbul Declaration on Cities and other Human Settlements (1996) and the Habitat Agenda (1996), the focus of which is to address the plight of persons without adequate housing.