

The formidable Ministers who led the way

The delivery on the Departments of Human Settlements' mandate is largely driven by the Minister in charge. Over the past 20 years South Africa has been lucky to have outstanding Ministers – Joe Slovo, Sankie Mthembi-Mahanyele, Brigitte Mabandla, Lindiwe Sisulu, Tokyo Sexwale, Connie September and, again, Sisulu. Their inspiring leadership, charisma and understanding of the housing policy – what Government sought to achieve and how – were critical to their success in the job. They ensured that the provision of houses eliminates apartheid-style planning of housing, and that new houses gave citizens access to basic services such as water and electricity, and access to amenities such as hospitals, schools and parks. These human settlements, particularly the rental stock, are unique in that they seek to draw South Africans of all races to live side-by-side. Only when we are close to each other, when we can sit down to tea with neighbours of a different culture and race without any qualms, can we truly create a nation with no hang-ups about differences, the true rainbow nation that the democratic Government has been championing since 1994.

On the following pages you will read about the odds these past Ministers faced in fulfilling their tasks. Each of these Ministers brought their inimitable leadership style to the portfolio. They all managed to galvanise the industry and their staff into action. All of them excelled in this challenging position.

From early on it was clear that solving the housing backlog would require more than Government's tight fiscus. Banks had to be enticed to lend to the poor. That is what inspired the gathering of the first National Housing Summit in Botshabelo, Free State. This meeting took place under the leadership of the indefatigable first Minister Joe Slovo. The historic Botshabelo Accord gave impetus to what followed in the next 20 years of democracy.

When Slovo died in early 1995, Minister Sankie Mthembi-Mahanyele took over the reins. She passed housing legislation that cemented the gains already made. Stress was put on improving the quality of low-cost homes. Emerging contractors were given necessary financial and logistical support to break into the industry. Women contractors were also groomed.

The same vigour to deliver houses and transform the sector happened when Minister Brigitte Mabandla took over from Mthembi-Mahanyele. Mabandla stressed the importance of building effective relationships but was not shy to spearhead legislation that would compel private institutions to lend to the lower end of the market.

Minister Lindiwe Sisulu left her legacy in the human settlements sector with her now-famous Breaking New Ground programme which, for the first time in the history of South Africa, saw the affluent living next to the poor in harmony and mutual dependence. These human settlements transcended racial designations, and were open to all. They brought beneficiaries close to economic opportunities.

Then came Minister Tokyo Sexwale. First came the change of name from the Department of Housing to Department of Human Settlements. Greater emphasis was placed on quality rental units close to the city and other amenities. Also, under his leadership, the Department worked hard to realise Government's Outcome 8 outputs, part of the 12 Outcomes in Government's development agenda. Sexwale also revised the subsidy programme to help first-time homebuyers who didn't qualify for low-cost homes and who battled to find bonds from the banks. This scheme is called FLISP. Sexwale also brought the Estate Agency Affairs Board under the Department.

Minister Connie September was committed in the eradication of bucket toilet system in various human settlements. Her other milestone was launching a transformation initiative in the estate agency sector.

It has not been an easy journey for all these past Ministers. During apartheid, as Slovo observed, the provision of housing was an intrinsic part of the State's control; of keeping people apart. Under the democratic Government, the tables have been turned. Human settlements foster unity. They allow everyone a right to enjoy life to the fullest, to see their children grow up in safe and decent communities. Provincial Governments and municipalities are playing their role. Which is why 3,7-million homes and serviced sites have been delivered to date. The housing backlog is being vigorously tackled. The great work of the past Ministers is paying off. They laid a solid foundation for the current Minister of Human Settlements Lindiwe Sisulu and those who will follow her. Housing has moved to integrated, quality human settlements. In the process, the DHS has built dreams. Long-suppressed human potential has been unleashed. There is no looking back. These integrated human settlements point to one incontrovertible truth – life in South Africa today is vastly different to what it was before 1994.

From Charter To Life

Joe Slovo: A pioneer of housing policy



Joe Slovo, South Africa's first Minister of Housing, stayed in office for less than a year, but left an indelible mark. He passed away in early 1995, succumbing to bone marrow cancer. But it was the former struggle veteran and South African Communist Party leader who laid the foundations for South Africa's democratic housing policies for the years to come. At the late Minister's funeral at Avalon Cemetery in Soweto in January 1995, President Nelson Mandela recognised Slovo's invaluable contribution to the sector: 'I wish on behalf of Government to reiterate that the course Joe Slovo had charted will continue to guide us in fulfilling the housing programme. His firmness in dealing with obstacles to this programme will remain one of the central features of our work.'¹

Slovo's legacy continues to the present day. The Joe Slovo Foundation was established in 2011 to raise funds in the housing and education sectors, continuing Slovo's commitment to adequate housing for all South Africans.

After the first democratic elections in April 1994, South Africans were taken by surprise when Mandela appointed Slovo as Minister of Housing in his Cabinet. Some people, who had expected him to be Minister of Justice,

suspected he was being sidelined. But housing expert and Director-General in Slovo's housing ministry William Cobbett said: 'It was either the smartest thing Mandela ever did, or some less-than-generous piece of sidelining. The popular read was that it was a stroke of genius to put the most popular guy after Mandela more or less into what, it was agreed, was a difficult challenge. The message I took from it was that they were taking housing seriously after all.'²

Slovo knew that he was facing a huge task. He admitted as much in a 1992 interview with renowned Irish journalist Padraig O'Malley: 'I don't think that we'll be able to solve the housing problem of South Africa within five years, but I think people are very patient and very understanding in general. This is something I've been convinced of since coming back to the country,' Slovo said. 'I think it's a question of honesty, honest politics and really getting down to trying to do something using the resources that are available in the best possible way. I think people will understand that, and accept that we're not going to have a Utopia in 1995.'³

Despite his deteriorating health, Slovo managed to bring together various stakeholders and set about transforming

Milestones

May 1994

Slovo becomes the first Minister of Housing.

27 October 1994

Botshabelo Housing Accord signed

What Slovo has achieved in the few months he has headed up the Housing Ministry is no mean feat.

apartheid's demeaning and exclusionary housing politics. As fellow struggle stalwart Ronnie Kasrils remembered: 'Slovo would roll up his sleeves, consult all the role-players, be prepared to knock heads together and get on with the business of rectifying things.'⁴

In the weeks following the historic democratic elections on 27 April 1994, the Department consulted with numerous interest groups in order to devise an effective housing strategy. Slovo signed an agreement with the Association of Mortgage Lenders to bring the banks back into the low-income market. He also moved to finalise the establishment of the National Housing Finance Corporation (NHFC), a housing Development Finance Institution that sought to attract private investment into the low-income sector.

History was made on 27 October 1994 when about 1 000 delegates, policymakers and representatives of housing interests such as financial and construction firms, Non-Governmental Organisations and trade unions

gathered at the National Housing Summit in Botshabelo township in the Free State. The delegates sought to devise strategies of solving South Africa's housing crisis.

The location had been chosen with great care to bring the country's housing challenge to everyone's attention. In his obituary on Slovo, Cobbett wrote: 'This was Joe's very personal brainchild'.⁵ Slovo believed that the housing agreement should not be signed in one of the 'many fine conference centres with a golf course attached; not in Sun City.' He said: 'We were determined that the most significant gathering of people involved in the South African housing process should take place in an area which makes clear the size and importance of the task we face. Botshabelo allows us to see and experience the disastrous legacy of apartheid's botched attempt to manipulate housing and the people. Botshabelo tells us about shortages — not only of housing, but of work and many of the social amenities that form the basis of community life.'⁶

Housing during apartheid, Slovo said, 'was about control. It was about excluding people from urban areas. It was about regimentation. It was about the administration of deprivation.'⁷ But the Minister did not shy away from also addressing key challenges with roots in the post-apartheid era. He harshly attacked rent boycotts and all forms of boycotts in his address to the Housing Summit. 'Who are the boycotters knocking today? Apartheid is history ... I'll tell you who the boycotters are knocking: Nelson Mandela; our first democratically elected President! So it's time to break with the practices of the past ... it's time to start paying, so that the resources can be made available to those who are still in the queue waiting for land, housing subsidies and loans.'⁸

Delegates adopted the National Housing Accord that stipulated Government's goal of delivering a million houses in the first five years of democracy. The Accord signed at Botshabelo paved the way for future policy formulation in South Africa, and was the basis for

October 1994

Slovo signs an agreement with the Association of Mortgage Lenders

1994

Slovo works on finalising the structure of the NHFC that was to be established in 1996

December 1994

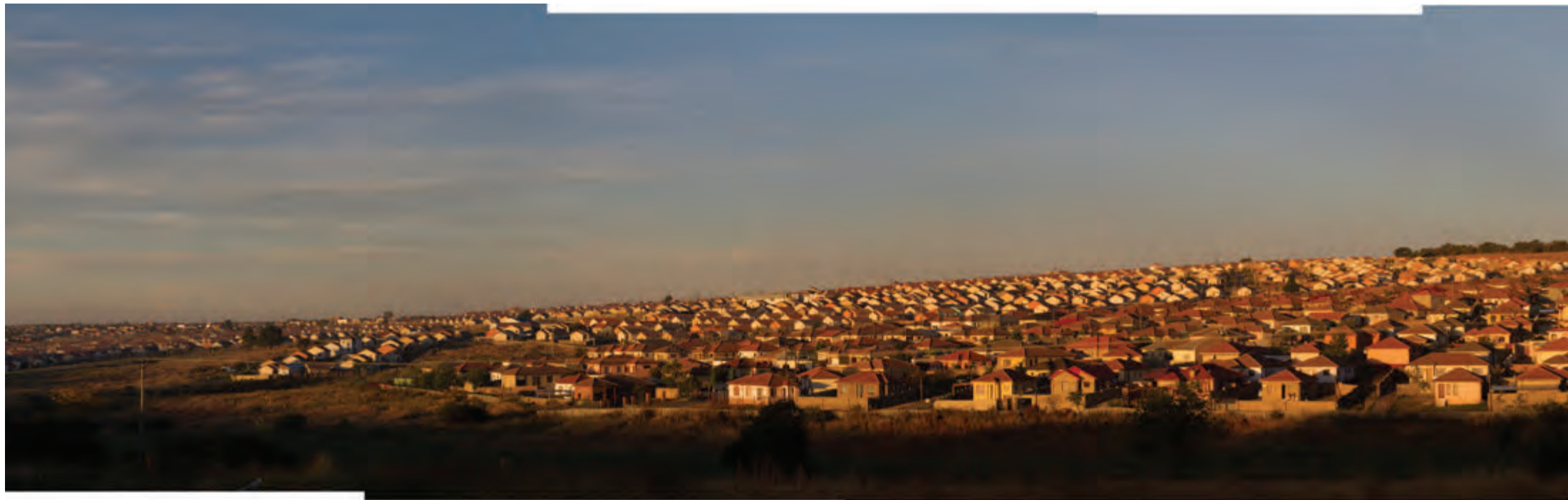
Slovo presents Housing White Paper

the White Paper on housing that came before Parliament in December 1994. As the *Cape Times* wrote on the summit: 'What Slovo has achieved in the few months he has headed up the Housing Ministry is no mean feat, and has much to do with his own commitment, perseverance and leadership skills and his ability to defuse potentially divisive and explosive situations and get the process back on the road ... the standing ovation awarded him at the summit could not have been more deserved.'⁹

The 1994 White Paper *A New Housing Policy and Strategy for South Africa* was a landmark document. Never before in the country's history had there been a housing strategy addressing the needs of the entire population. The paper's main objective was the increase of housing delivery to the poorest of the poor, leading to the provision of a permanent house with sanitation and necessary infrastructure for all citizens.

Certainly there was still a lot at stake in those early years of our democracy,

with millions of South Africans hoping to get an RDP house. But Slovo remained optimistic, despite his illness and the enormous challenge posed by the housing backlog. In an interview in December 1994 with the *Mail & Guardian* Slovo said: 'The last year or two have been the happiest in my life. There have been miraculous achievements in this period. It's working. We're going to have major and minor hiccups, but I'm optimistic. I think that in general we are going to achieve our targets. I could happily lie



down and die now, because what more does a person want out of life than the life I have had?'¹⁰

Slovo and his wife Ruth First were listed as communists under the Suppression of Communism Act and could not be quoted or attend public gatherings in South Africa during apartheid. Slovo became active in the South African Congress of Democrats, an ally of the ANC as part of the Congress Alliance and he was a delegate to the June 1955 Congress of the People organised by the ANC and Indian,

Coloured and white organisations at Kliptown near Johannesburg, that drew up the Freedom Charter.

He was arrested and detained for two months during the Treason Trial of 1956. Charges against him were dropped in 1958. He was later arrested for six months during the State of Emergency declared after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960.

In 1961, Slovo and Abongz Mbede emerged as two of the leaders of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the military

wing of the ANC, formed in alliance between the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP). In 1963 he went into exile and lived in Britain, Angola, Mozambique and

Zambia. In his capacity as Chief of Staff of MK he codetermined its activities, like the 1983 Church Street bombing. Slovo was elected Secretary-General of the SACP in 1984. ✎

**Housing during apartheid was about control.
It was about excluding people from urban areas.**



Sankie Mthembi-Mahanyele: Cementing the foundations of housing delivery



When Mthembi-Mahanyele took over office as Minister of Housing after the death of Joe Slovo in January 1995, she committed to continue working towards fulfilling Slovo's dream of delivering one million houses to the poor within five years. Taking over from prominent struggle hero Slovo was a tough task, though. Mthembi-Mahanyele stayed in office for seven years, the longest term of a housing Minister in democratic South Africa. Before her appointment, Mthembi-Mahanyele had been Deputy Minister of Social Welfare and Population Development from 1994.

In the early years of her tenure, three important pieces of legislation were enacted. The National Housing Act was promulgated in 1997, outlining the framework for future housing development in the country. The Act stressed the need for housing provision to be accompanied by a sustainable infrastructure. For Mthembi-Mahanyele, it was a crime to view housing as independent from its surrounding infrastructure. In a 1997 interview she said: 'Housing is, as I have found out during the past two years, about everything but houses! It is about the availability of land, about access to credit, about affordability, about

basic services, about economic growth, about social development, about the environment. Some elements of all these issues have to be in place before the first brick of a house is even laid.'¹ A year later, the Prevention of Illegal Eviction from and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act ruled it illegal to evict unlawful land occupants without a court order. While the legislation led to complaints from land owners, Minister Mthembi-Mahanyele said: 'In the past, our people were treated like animals, but now we are looking at them as people with rights. Property owners should begin to care for human beings, not for cement and buildings.'² Only a few years later, against mounting pressure from landlords and the banks, she amended the Act.

The third piece of legislation introduced by Mthembi-Mahanyele was the Rental Hosing Bill of 1999, demonstrating the Department's new drive to diversify the housing sector. 'The Bill promotes access to rental housing for historically disadvantaged people by regulating housing rental matters only in areas where a severe breakdown in landlord-tenant relations has occurred',³ the Minister said in an interview with *The Star* newspaper. Three years later, Mthembi-Mahanyele would argue for

Milestones

1997

National Housing Act is promulgated

1998

Prevention of Illegal Eviction from and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act

the integration of former hostels in the new rental housing schemes, pressing further ahead in removing apartheid's detrimental housing legacy.

In 2000, Mthembu-Mahanyele launched the Housing Code that had been part of the 1997 Housing Act, but which had taken some time to finalise. The Minister proudly announced that: 'For the first time in the history of housing development in South Africa, we have a single comprehensive housing policy that provides for the equitable delivery of homes to the poor.'⁴

In the early 2000s, news of community members selling their free RDP houses did the rounds with increasing frequency. To prevent the selling of RDP houses within a period of eight years after acquisition, the Housing Amendment Act No 4 was promulgated in 2001. 'Our primary mandate is to house the nation. The sale of RDP houses prevents us from fulfilling this mandate, because it increases the incidence of homelessness and encourages criminals to hold our people

to ransom,'⁵ the Minister said. Mthembu-Mahanyele made history when she was the first woman to act as President-for-a-day in 2001. On the morning of 19 April, she was sworn in as President in the absence of President Thabo Mbeki and Deputy President Jacob Zuma, who were both on state visits abroad.⁶

But 2001 also seems to have been one of the most turbulent years for Mthembu-Mahanyele as Minister of Housing. Early July that year, the so-called Bredell land invasion made international headlines. Squatters had built shacks on unoccupied land in Kempton Park, Johannesburg, and some of them had lived on the Government-owned part of the land for more than six months. While the media havoc around the Bredell case must have caused her sleepless nights, the Minister appeared calm: 'Bredell is no reason to make me panic, because I am convinced that Government housing policies are delivering as expected ... Our pace of delivery is a first in the world and this has been acknowledged by the United

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Nations.'⁷ But to appease international investors, landlords and banks, Mthembu-Mahanyele promised to amend the Prevention of Illegal Eviction from and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act. The Bredell invasion once again brought to the fore the urgent need to address the land question in South Africa.

During her time in office, Mthembu-Mahanyele frequently voiced criticism of the unwillingness of local banks to provide home-loans to the low-income sector. At a news briefing in Cape Town in 2002, the Minister said: 'We're not dictating to the banks how to do their business. All we're asking is that you address this need. When you lend to the low-income bracket, you're contributing to the stability of the nation.'⁸ A year earlier, she had told *The Star* newspaper: 'Part of the problem is that financial institutions do not generally provide finance to low-income households and communities who have no collateral or regular employment, and whose lack of familiarity with financial requirements makes them very risky.' She added: 'the

approach of banks to lending is brazenly biased against the poor, and particularly women, who are generally employed in the informal sector.' Her Community Reinvestment Bill intended to make banking services more accessible to all South Africans. A draft of the Bill was released in May 2002, but two months down the line, the Bill was no longer on the table.⁹ It would take her successor, Brigitte Mabandla, to finish what Mthembu-Mahanyele had started.

Despite the reluctance of the banking sector, Mthembu-Mahanyele remained optimistic. In January 2002 she announced: 'With a million houses completed and giving shelter to five million people, housing has taken off, and the sky is the limit.'

The Minister observed with pride the involvement of citizens in building their own houses, highlighting the need to move away from seeing Government as the sole provider of houses. 'With the right support, people don't have to sit and wait for the Government to build their houses. This is where we tap

1999

Rental Housing Bill introduced

2000

Minister Mthembu-Mahanyele launches Housing Code

2001

Mthembu-Mahanyele becomes the first woman to act as country's President

into the traditional community spirit of *tsima*, a word appearing in a slightly different form in each African language — an umbrella term for collective labour and people working together as a community. It is humbling to witness this incredible community spirit among people, and it's the single most important factor in our success. This "sweat equity" is empowering in a way that Government funds on their own can never be.¹⁰

Mthembi-Mahanyele, who during her youth shared a back room with a group

of strangers in Alexandra township, Johannesburg and experienced the lack of privacy that comes with the cramped conditions of township life, found great fulfillment in her job as Minister. 'There is nothing so satisfying as seeing an old couple receiving the keys to their house. The house they can finally call their own,' she said in an interview in 1999. Throughout her tenure she continued her fight for women's rights, an issue that had been on the top of her agenda since her years in exile. In the same interview she said: 'It's refreshing to see that more and more women are getting

involved in the construction sector. Some are leading figures in the housing sector, owning their own businesses.'¹¹

In December 2002, Minister Mthembi-Mahanyele was elected Deputy Secretary-General of the ANC. Vacating Cabinet for her new job at Luthuli House, she said that her experience as Housing Minister was a good preparation for her new task: 'In Government, you know when to link up with Luthuli House – and my task is to further enhance that interaction. As a Minister you also get insights into

the lives of the communities you are supposed to develop. That knowledge is also going to come in handy.'¹² In October 2003, Mahanyele was rewarded for her commitment to building houses for all South Africans when she received an award from the United Nations for improving the housing conditions of six million people during her tenure.

Mthembi-Mahanyele held various positions in the ANC during her time in exile. From 1989 to 1993 she was Chief Representative of the ANC in Germany and Austria. She also worked as an



administrative secretary of the ANC in Nigeria, West Africa and Sweden, and was a Deputy Head of International Affairs of the ANC in 1993 and 1994. Under the pseudonym Rebecca Matlou, Mthembu-Mahanyele published numerous feminist poems and edited *Voice of Women*, the ANC's women's journal. 🏃

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Brigitte Mabandla: An efficient and focused leader



Brigitte Mabandla became Minister of Housing in March 2003, replacing Sankie Mthembi-Mahanyele, who quit Parliament to go to Luthuli House as Deputy Secretary-General. Mabandla had previously been Deputy Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology for eight years, during which she was part of Government's economic and social clusters.

Mabandla took over a Housing Ministry that continued to face pressure to deliver houses to millions of South Africans. While Mthembi-Mahanyele had succeeded in overseeing the delivery of 1,4-million low-cost homes, the job was far from finished when Mabandla assumed office. To deliver even more houses, banks had to be persuaded to lend money to poor South Africans who badly needed access to finance to build homes. Worried about client ability to service loans in times of high unemployment, most banks showed little appetite to enter the low-cost market. Their fingers had been burned in the turbulent 1980s, when many were unable to pay back their loans. Undaunted, Government tried another tactic to woo the banks. The National Housing Finance Corporation was established, and capitalised to the tune of R1-billion in 1996. Other sister

organisations, with varying strategic mandates emerged to boost housing delivery (see section 8, Working together: Our partners). While there were exceptions, these measures mostly met with limited success. Lack of capital to fund housing projects remained a headache, prompting these housing agencies to secure capital from international partners. So, getting banks on her side was Mabandla's chief mission. Banks had the expertise, networks and financial muscle to be effective partners. Mthembi-Mahanyele, when handing over the baton, had stressed the important role banks could play in the low-income end of the market. 'Creating access to finance for the low-cost housing market has been the Department's priority. I'm pleased to be able to leave my successor matured policies in this regard,' she had said.

On assuming office, Mabandla quickly made her presence felt. She implemented the Community Reinvestment Act, which was first mooted during her predecessor's tenure. The legislation sought to force financial institutions to serve the lower end of the housing market by clamping down on the banks' practice of red-lining, the shunning of areas deemed 'too risky'. Under the Act, and after consultations

Milestones

2003

Mabandla implements
Community Reinvestment Act

2003

South Africa wins a
World Habitat award

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with Government, banks had targets to meet in complying with re-investment obligations. This Act complemented the Home Loan and Mortgage Disclosure Act (Act 63 of 2000), which enabled Government to monitor lending trends in order to fight a perceived prejudice among banks against low-income earners, who are mostly black. Clearly the era of dangling a carrot was over. It was now time for a bit of stick.

But Mabandla was astute enough to realise that coercive legislation alone was not going to solve the problem. Cooperation with banks remained key to unleashing required resources for the delivery of houses. The Minister forged partnerships with private institutions and civil society in the provision of meaningful housing developments. 'Housing delivery mechanisms at a local level should stimulate communities, local authorities and the private sector to define development imperatives socially and politically, in ways that allow local needs to be met,'² Mabandla once said.

In search of working partnerships and fast-tracked housing delivery, Mabandla presided over the country's second National Housing Summit at Gallagher Estate, Midrand, between November 19 and 20, 2003. The gathering discussed the issue of finance for homes, then the Government's chief handicap. In attendance were more than 400 stakeholders in the housing sector, including banking industry leaders, Ministers of Housing from abroad, United Nations representatives and delegates from various interest groups. The first National Housing Summit had taken place almost a decade before in Botshabelo, Free State, under the leadership of Joe Slovo, the first Minister of Housing in a democratic South Africa.

Interestingly, the Gallagher summit took place hot on the heels of South Africa winning – on 6 October 2003 – a World Habitat award for 'phenomenal housing delivery'. By 2004, 1,6-million housing units had been built since democracy in 1994.³ Clearly, housing

policies laid out from the beginning were paying off, despite obstacles. Better housing units, integrated with cities, were being provided. The lives of millions of people were being steadily improved as their new homes enabled them to access, for the first time in their lives, basic services such as water and electricity. The recipe for this success lay in the massive investment in social housing as well as the launch in 1998 of the People's Housing Process, which saw Government giving subsidies to citizens so that they could be involved in the building of their own homes.

But the biggest catalyst in housing delivery was the housing subsidies that were first implemented in April 1995. 'The housing subsidy scheme has been the primary reason for the outstanding success in delivery. More than 1,5-million housing opportunities have been created and another 800 000 have been approved; most of them financed exclusively by subsidies for beneficiaries with monthly incomes below R1 500,'⁴ Mabandla said.

Mabandla's other notable achievement was overseeing the increase of the housing subsidy for low-income earners by up to 11,68% in April 2004. First-time homeowners who earned below R1 500 a month saw their subsidy rise from R23 100 to R25 800. Other segments of this low-income market also gained proportionately from the subsidy increase. 'This is to ensure subsidy amounts counter the eroding effect of inflation,'⁵ the Minister said.

Starting in late 2002, the Ministry of Housing spearheaded a broad-based review process of human settlements with stakeholders at national, provincial and local levels of Government. Coming out of the consultations was the need to affirm the role of women in the building of human settlements; an industry that had traditionally been the preserve of males. To accelerate the empowerment of women, Government proposed allocating a set percentage of project budgets to women contractors, and forming a women's policy forum. 'It was also agreed that there should be

2003

Second National Housing Summit at Gallagher Estate, Midrand

2004

Mabandla increases housing subsidy for low-income earners by 11,68%

protection of women's rights to property, and financial assistance for building the capacity of women contractors and other participants in projects and programmes,'⁶ Mabandla said at the time.

Mabandla unveiled many housing projects, such as Haven Hills Housing Project in East London. In her travels around the country it pained her when she learnt that some beneficiaries had sold their low-cost RDP homes at prices less than the subsidy value of their units. She believed strongly that the quality of the units and their surroundings

affected their value, which was why she felt communities had to be involved in the building of their homes and surroundings; it instilled pride. She urged housing beneficiaries to look after their assets, and the environment they lived in. 'It is very important – for those who have benefitted, and those who are still to benefit – to take the issue of improving their living environment seriously. All of you can do something to effectively utilise the space in your back yards, irrespective of size. In so doing, you will be participating in the creation of vibrant and viable communities with healthy environments ... so stand

up and do something to add value to your homes,' Mabandla said during the celebrations of housing delivery in the North West on 26 September 2003.

Overall, Mabandla proved an efficient and focused leader. She resolutely continued the programme of promoting integrated human settlements against all odds. She believed that housing was a catalyst for integrated service provision. She fought to redress the issue of apartheid-era spatial geography, which saw poor people living far from cities. She saw to it that the focus shifted from the mere provision of houses to the

creation of quality human settlements. On her watch, subsidies for the disabled increased. The elderly received priority in the allocation of housing subsidies. She continued the practice of having low-cost homes enrolled under the NHBRC programme for warranty purposes. Partnerships were built with related Departments.

In the end, Mabandla was pleased about the impact housing policies had on beneficiaries. 'Even though they cite a range of problems surrounding their new homes, including poor location and increased costs, most beneficiaries say



they are better off than before. There is a strong sense of attachment in the new settlements, and an overwhelming sense that home ownership has empowered and given dignity to many people,' said Mabandla.⁷

Mabandla studied Law and obtained an LLB degree from the University of Zambia in 1979. Between 1981 and 1983, she lectured in English and Law at the Botswana Polytechnic, and Commercial Law at the Botswana Institute of Administration and Commerce from 1983 and 1986. She was Legal Advisor to the ANC

Lusaka Legal and Constitutional Affairs Department from 1986 until 1990. Mabandla coordinated gender projects on the promotion of women's rights and research on women's constitutional rights, and worked closely with Non-Governmental Organisations and experts in human rights, minority rights, children's rights, disabled people's rights and in particular women's rights. ✨

It is very important – for those who have benefitted and those who are still to benefit – to take the issue of improving their living environment seriously.



Lindiwe Sisulu: Breaking new ground in housing delivery



When President Thabo Mbeki announced his Cabinet after South Africa's third democratic elections in April 2004, many were pleased to see former Intelligence Minister Lindiwe Sisulu take over the Ministry of Housing from Brigitte Mabandla, who moved to the Justice and Constitutional Development portfolio.

As the *Business Day* wrote: 'Many will see Mbeki's decision to appoint struggle stalwart Walter Sisulu's daughter as Housing Minister as proof that the President is serious about his pledge to step up the battle against poverty at home.'¹ Despite enormous challenges and a mounting housing backlog heightened by population growth, Sisulu's ministry significantly boosted housing delivery. On the occasion of the Budget Vote for 2008/2009 on 30 May 2008, Minister Sisulu succinctly summarised the Department's noteworthy achievements: 'When I took over as Minister of Housing in 2004, Government had produced 1,6-million houses. An achievement we were all rightly proud of, despite negative comments. Today, four years later, we have produced 2,6-million houses. This means that in four years we have provided a million houses. We have finally achieved the target that had seemed so elusive — not in five years, but in four. Today we have provided

2,6-million houses, translating to providing shelter for 13-million people, free of charge. No country anywhere else has done this. Our commitment extends to covering another 2,1-million houses.'² [As of 2014, 3,7-million houses and serviced sites have been delivered].

Sisulu's first Budget Vote Speech as Minister of Housing already laid out the shift in policy development from mere delivery to sustainable human settlements: 'The central tenet of our new strategy is underpinned by the need to substantially improve the quality of life of our people. Indeed, there can be no more visible intervention than at the lowest levels, among the poorest of the poor.' Minister Sisulu ended her speech with the words: 'Together, therefore, let us break new ground in housing delivery!'³ A few months later, these words would become the name of South Africa's innovative housing strategy.

In September 2004, Sisulu announced the most important policy intervention since the Housing White Paper⁴ of 1997 — the Comprehensive Plan for the Development of Sustainable Human Settlements: Breaking New Ground (BNG). The plan was devised to address a number of shortcomings in Government's approach to housing, especially the mounting criticism that RDP housing delivery recreated

Milestones

2004

Sisulu introduces the Comprehensive Plan for the Development of Sustainable Human Settlements: Breaking New Ground

2004

Sisulu receives the highest honour from the Institute for Housing of South Africa

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apartheid's spatial divisions. In an interview with the *Sowetan*, Sisulu admitted: 'In our haste to cover the ground, we overlooked some very important issues that eventually undermined what we were trying to achieve. For example, we left the contractors to run with the entire project. Our monitoring systems were weak. This eventually led to shoddy work, with contractors building low-quality houses. We also didn't give people the option to either rent or buy the houses. It was assumed that everyone wanted a house, a yard and a dog. We overlooked the fact that some people would be interested in renting rather than buying property, depending on their personal circumstances.'⁵

At the launch of the BNG policy, Sisulu said: 'Housing represents the single biggest investment that most families make, and, as a result, housing is inextricably linked to the national economy. However, what we have seen is that demand for well-located, well-serviced properties has come at the expense of those that, for historical

reasons, are less well-positioned and have few or no services. This has created an economic duality in the property market, where one segment is booming and the other is in a slump.'⁶ To address this malaise, the BNG plan took a more holistic view on housing. As the Minister emphasised: 'Government wants to move away from providing basic shelter ... no one deserves to live in an informal settlement, which is why we're committed to upgrading them or phasing them out in consultation with residents.'

BNG sought to ensure that housing was delivered in well-located areas, close to amenities, infrastructure services and economic facilities. Aiming at dismantling segregation of income groups, the plan intended to launch a number of integrated, mixed-income housing projects. The Minister explained: 'The aim is to develop integrated communities, where people of all races and various income groups have access to all the public amenities such as schools, clinics, recreation facilities, and live within hubs of

economic activity.'⁷ Pilot mega-projects around the country included Cosmo City and Olievenhoutbosch in Gauteng, and N2 Gateway in Cape Town.

For her innovative housing strategy, Sisulu received the highest honour from the Institute for Housing of South Africa in October 2004. A year later, she was recognised for her contribution towards improving and solving the world's housing problems with an award from the International Association for Housing Science.

In her Budget Vote Speech in 2005, Sisulu summarised the Department's achievements since the start of BNG: 'We have graduated ourselves from being Minister of low-cost housing to taking on the responsibility for the entire residential property.'⁸ In 2005, the Department took the decision to release families earning less than R1 500 a month from having to pay the usual R2 479 deposit for an RDP house. Realising the ideal of the Freedom Charter of providing houses to all was a cornerstone of her tenure. The Ministry

commissioned PriceWaterhouseCoopers to consolidate the national housing waiting list so that delivery would be a lot smoother as well as in order to curb corruption.

Sisulu also persuaded banks to sign a Memorandum of Understanding, reviving the Financial Services Charter. 'There is always a joke about women, and they had to be dumb and blonde in relation to banks. The joke says that a young woman goes to a teller in a bank and says that she wants to open a joint account with someone with lots of money. I have done just that. I have opened a joint account with people with lots of money. The banks have pledged R42-billion to be released into the affordable housing market by 2008,'⁹ Sisulu said.

In September 2005, the Minister signed a landmark deal with 47 stakeholders in the housing delivery and development sector, including banks, developers, contractors and NGOs, called the Social Contract for Rapid Housing Delivery. 'Simply put, the Government and other

2005

Sisulu receives an award from the International Association for Housing Science

2009

Minister Sisulu establishes the Housing Development Agency (HDA)

players in the housing business have agreed that developers of big-ticket property projects will include low-cost homes for poorer people as part of their development,'¹⁰ wrote the *Daily Dispatch*.

Throughout her tenure, Sisulu championed women's participation in the housing sector. In her 2005/2006 Budget Vote Speech, the Minister said that 288 housing development projects, valued at R1,9-billion, had been given to emerging female contractors. She praised the section 21 company Women for Housing (WFH) for its

commitment to the empowerment of women. 'In August 2005 the group was involved in an initiative with Habitat for Humanity, ourselves and the Gauteng Department of Housing in constructing 13 houses in Protea South, Soweto, with 350 volunteers. The project was one of the most significant components of WFH's programme for women in housing construction. It offered participating members an opportunity to gain practical experience ranging from technical construction skills to leadership and teamwork skills. A similar event is being planned for 2006,' the Minister said.

In 2006, Sisulu proudly announced the introduction of larger, upgraded subsidised houses that were due to start the following year. 'BNG housing is all about instilling a new energy and pride in owning a home, and about better-quality Government housing. We are working on a new code for housing. BNG properties will be bigger: 40 to 45 square metres will be the norm,'¹¹ the Minister said.

Under Sisulu, the Housing Ministry established the Housing Development Agency (HDA) in 2009 to secure habitable land from Government and

Government-owned entities for the development of human settlements. The Minister said: 'So urgent was the priority to establish the HDA that it took extraordinary effort. In contrast to the three years it normally takes to establish a new Government entity, the HDA was established in a record 11 months.'¹²

Sisulu also registered the country's first Bachelor's degree in Housing with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). Her successor Tokyo Sexwale would later launch the degree at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.



The responsibility for establishing a viable housing sector for Sisulu lay not only in the hands of the State, but each South African had to contribute and take responsibility. At the launch of Aliwal Gardens, a mixed rental and ownership housing project in Ruyterwacht, Cape Town, in 2007, Sisulu stressed that rental housing could help address the backlog of housing delivery in the country. But she noted that a 'culture of responsibility is crucial for a country with such huge challenges as ours. The basis of development is each citizen's responsibility to do their bit to build because it is on this basis that the further roll-out [of rental

houses] can be undertaken to benefit more people.'

Sisulu has been a Member of Parliament since 1994, and Chairperson of the Inaugural African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development since 2005; a member of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the African National Congress (ANC); a member of the National Working Committee of the ANC; Trustee of the South African Democracy Education Trust; trustee of the Albertina and Walter Sisulu Trust; and a board member of the Nelson Mandela Foundation. 🏃

The central tenet of our new strategy is underpinned by the need to substantially improve the quality of life of our people.



Tokyo Sexwale: From housing to human settlements



Former Gauteng Premier-turned-businessman Tokyo Sexwale became Minister of Human Settlements in President Jacob Zuma's Cabinet in 2009. In his State of the Nation Address the same year, President Zuma announced the name change of the Department of Housing to Human Settlements. This move foregrounded the shift to a more holistic approach to housing that was already at the heart of Lindiwe Sisulu's BNG initiative. As Sexwale emphasised: 'What we are busy with is not just a change of name from housing to human settlements; it is about a change of mindset, taking us from a new concept to concrete reality. In doing so, there can be no doubt that we will be taking forward the struggle for social justice and economic democracy.'¹

Sexwale saw his primary mandate as Minister to plan and build human settlements all over the country in an integrated manner: 'These human settlements must be places where people can play, stay and pray. They should be green, landscaped communities, pleasant places where people live, learn and spend leisure time.'² In the first months of Sexwale's tenure, the Department updated the National Housing Code of 2000 to bring it in line with the BNG plan as well as with the Public Finance Management Act and the

Municipal Finance Management Act. The Code aims to advise and support provinces with the implementation of BNG policy. It requires municipalities to include housing in their development plans and advocates mixed-income housing projects.³

Sexwale launched a listening campaign in 2009, visiting various informal settlements across the country to get to know people's concerns and experience their living conditions. In August 2009, Sexwale, who as a child had lived in a shack in Orlando, Soweto, made media headlines when he spent the night in Joyce Mashamaite's shack in Diepsloot Extension 1, north of Johannesburg. 'It was very difficult getting to sleep (because) it was quite cold. I slept for less than three hours.'⁴ While his visit was criticised as a public relations stunt, Sexwale said: 'What is at issue here is that people are living in inhuman conditions. This is an honest attempt to hear the views. A genuine attempt to hear the problems of the people.'⁵

His campaign was part of the National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP) that no longer focused on the eradication of informal settlements, but aimed at first bringing services to people on-site and gradually improving their housing conditions.

Milestones

2009

First Minister in the renamed Department of Human Settlements

2009

Sexwale spends a night in a shack in Diepsloot as part of his 'listening campaign'

What we are busy with is not just a change of name from housing to human settlements; it is about a change of mindset.

The ministry realised that funding needed to be consolidated at the metropolitan urban scale. In May 2010, Sexwale addressed a Special Presidential Coordinating Committee to call for the establishment of an appropriate funding model for human settlements in agreement with the National Treasury. In 2011, the Minister announced that municipalities would receive more responsibility in housing matters. Cities with increased powers in housing development included Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, Tshwane, Nelson Mandela Metro, Cape Town, Frances Baard and Pixley ka Seme district municipalities.

These cities received level-two accreditation status, allowing them to undertake tasks formerly in the hands of provincial Governments. As the Minister said, this 'gives municipalities the responsibility to approve and manage housing construction programmes and to ensure technical quality'.⁶ Sexwale also introduced the Urban Settlement Development Grant. This direct funding from the Department of Human Settlements was

given to metropolitan municipalities to address infrastructure needs.

Coming from the private sector, Sexwale was particularly aware of the downsides of Government's approach of providing individual housing units, leading to the endless sprawl of urban areas. Densification became Sexwale's mission. 'If cities around the world are going up as a result of urbanisation, then densification becomes the answer,' the Minister said. 'We do not densify because we want to but because we want suitable land and need to maximise its use, otherwise one is forced to send people far away from the cities.'⁷ Urban rental units, rather than free subsidy housing, seemed to be the preferred model for the future.

During Sexwale's tenure Government's *12 Outcomes for development*, accepted by Cabinet in January 2010, were at the top of the political agenda. Outcome 8 refers to human settlements and intends to create 'sustainable human settlements and improved quality of household life'. In January 2011, the Minister signed

an Outcome 8 delivery agreement with all nine MECs, saying: 'These agreements are a contract amongst us to demonstrate that we are together in our pursuit of providing our people with proper settlements. We are in a team. If I fall, I fall with them. If I rise, I rise with them as well.'⁸

Outcome 8 required the Minister to deliver four outputs. Firstly, the upgrading of 400 000 households in well-located informal settlements with access to basic services and secure tenure. Secondly, improving people's access to basic services, thirdly, mobilising 6 250 hectares of well-located public land for low-income and affordable housing with increased densities and, lastly, improving the property market.⁹

To make housing more affordable for the gap market, the Department revised the Finance Linked Individual Subsidy Programme (FLISP) to be implemented by the National Housing Finance Corporation (NHFC). FLISP provided those in the gap market with a once-off

deposit to enable them to get a bond. In his Budget Vote Speech in May 2013, the Minister assured citizens: 'To all those people lost in the gap market, earning too much to qualify for an RDP house and too little to access bank finance, we say "rest assured." This Government cares; we back you to get your bond!'¹⁰ In this way the subsidy programme will empower people to become property owners and players in the country's property market.

Sexwale soon realised that the Department's budget was too small to tackle the housing backlog. 'We can't sustain what we are doing. There has to be a cut-off date. We are discussing that. But you can't cut off the poor right now, particularly not in the current national economic environment.'¹¹

In September 2011, the Minister sought the help of the private sector and donor agencies to support Government with housing delivery. He launched a new campaign called 'Each One Settle One' at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. The campaign encouraged South

2010

Sexwale commits to working towards the Outcome 8 targets of improving human settlements in South Africa

2013

The number of housing units for the low-income bracket reaches 3-million

Africa's top companies to support the Department in delivering houses to more than 2-million households living in squatter camps and settlements.

Despite Government efforts to provide housing for all, informal settlements in the country increased from 800 during Sexwale's time as Gauteng premier to 2 500 in 2011. Moreover, the housing backlog had grown from 2,1-million to 2,3-million houses since he became Minister of Human Settlements due to a decrease in household size and an increase in household numbers. Sexwale was very concerned about the situation

after the global economic recession, saying that the 'protests of our people are beginning to get more violent every day. It's worrying. The police are shooting every day. Let's work together and stem the tide.'¹² Despite these challenges, it was during Sexwale's time that the number of housing units for the low-income bracket first reached 3-million in 2013. By 2014, the number was 3,7-million houses and serviced sites.

The greatest joy of every housing Minister is visiting housing projects and their new inhabitants to see the implementation of new policies on

the ground. In 2012, Sexwale visited the R25-billion Cornubia housing project just outside Umhlanga, north of Durban in KwaZulu-Natal. Satisfied with the progress of the project and the working partnership between national Government, KwaZulu-Natal and the municipality, the Minister said: 'The project is not just located far away; it is located where people themselves can say "we have excellent and splendid views."¹³

The housing programme champions the BNG mixed settlement approach, and also provides social and economic amenities to its inhabitants.



It was under his leadership that the first Bachelor's Degree in Human Settlements was launched at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in 2013. Sexwale also oversaw the transfer of the Estate Agency Affairs Board from the Department of Trade and Industry to Human Settlements.

Another of Sexwale's chief concerns was the de-racialisation of residential areas. 'The vast differences that existed in this country between Soweto and Sandhurst is one difference too big. That was apartheid, and let's not blame it; let's just talk about it. It's my job to sort out the

mess; that's why I'm here,'¹⁴ said Sexwale in a 2012 interview with the *Mail & Guardian*.

The Minister sought to achieve the de-racialisation of previously exclusively white suburbs by obliging banks, through the Home Loans and Mortgage Disclosure Act, to give mortgages to black South Africans who wished to live in those areas. The second step was establishing non-racial towns such as Lephalale in Limpopo, which is driven by the economies of the Medupi Power Station, as Sexwale described in his Budget Vote Speech in May 2013.

Human settlements must be places where people can play, stay and pray.

Minister Sexwale showed an interest in politics from an early age and first encountered the ANC while at high school. He went for military training in the Soviet Union and later returned to South Africa, where he joined the ANC underground. In 1977, he was arrested together with a group of comrades in what became known as

the Pretoria Twelve Trial. He was sentenced to 18 years imprisonment and sent to Robben Island. He spent 13 years in prison before being released in 1990. ✎



Connie September: A life of serving the people



Connie September became South Africa's sixth Minister of Human Settlements (previously known as Department of Housing) in July 2013 following a Cabinet reshuffle. The former lawmaker and trade unionist came into the portfolio more than prepared for the task ahead of her.

She immediately set about mastering all the intricacies of her new role. She ensured continuity in the delivery of integrated human settlements. Such housing projects followed a holistic approach of planning and developing human settlements that incorporated the needs of citizens in different income categories: affordable bonded homes and subsidised low-cost houses would be provided in one area in a mix appropriate to the project's location. Typically, construction takes place in phases. Residents of such integrated human settlements need access to facilities such as clinics, schools and other socio-economic opportunities that improve their lives.

Soon after becoming Minister, September prioritised the provision of sanitation to poor communities. Measures included a three-year plan – from 2013 to 2016 – to eradicate the inhumane bucket toilet system, fix infrastructure, install proper toilets in houses and upgrade dilapidated

wastewater treatment plants.¹ She chaired the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on Sanitation consisting of the Ministers of Water Affairs and Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. The IMC was set up by Cabinet to fast track the provision of basic sanitation in all of the country's formal and informal areas, with emphasis on established townships. The IMC committed to eradicate 88 000 bucket toilets still being used across South Africa's formal areas over the medium term. The second phase of implementation would be in informal areas where the backlog is currently estimated at 183 000.

During her tenure, she also ensured that Government continued to support the sustainability of the social rental market to make city living possible for ordinary people. To this end, she worked closely with the Social Housing Regulatory Authority, a Government agency that invests in and regulates the social housing sector. The Minister also ensured that the Finance Linked Individual Subsidy Programme (FLISP) to help those in the gap market – citizens earning too much to qualify for low-cost houses and too little to qualify for a bond with the bank – was accelerated so they could finally own their homes. Growth in this affordable home ownership was stimulated

Milestones

2013

September becomes Minister in the renamed Department of Human Settlements

2013

The Minister chairs the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Sanitation

The Minister oversaw the prioritisation of sanitation and plans to eradicate the bucket system in all the country's formal areas.

through the provision of 600 000 loans.² Indications point to the FLISP working well in various integrated human settlements projects around the country, bringing immeasurable relief to many families seeking to own their homes for the first time.

Minister September was also hands-on in bringing about transformation in the human settlements sector. In April 2014, she launched the One Learner - One Estate Agency Programme spearheaded by the Estate Agency Affairs Board (EAAB), which falls under the Department of Human Settlements and regulates the operations of estate agents. The programme seeks to expedite greater participation of blacks, women, younger people as well as people with disabilities. 'The transformation we are seeking out of this will ensure the growth and survival of this industry,' she said at the programme's launch in Rosebank, Johannesburg.

As with her predecessors, Minister September got out of the office and observed with satisfaction as ordinary people received homes for the first time in their lives, as families finally found places to put down roots to raise their children in peace, comfort and security. Under her reign, the Department of Human Settlements

launched many integrated rural housing projects. The idea was to improve the housing needs of rural citizens to stem the tide of urban migration. One such project was the Klapmuts Integrated Rural Development housing project in Stellenbosch. Klapmuts is a small village in the Stellenbosch Municipality in the Western Cape, which had been severely disadvantaged during apartheid years. Due to little development, residents lived in shacks, with a badly polluted borehole as the only water supply and a bucket sanitation system. Following the introduction of democratic local Government in 1995, a community development forum was formed to work with the Stellenbosch Municipality.

But the provision of houses does not happen in a vacuum and is not merely about providing bricks and mortar structures. Rather, human settlements also help to mend a torn social fabric and encourage safety for all inhabitants. That was demonstrated in April 2014 when Minister September handed over 40 houses – out of the planned 111 units – as part of the R12,7-million Struisbaai Oukamp Informal Settlements Upgrading Programme in the Cape Agulhas Municipality. The handover ceremony was preceded by the launch of a 'Green Door Safe House' for vulnerable people, particularly

women and children in honour of Anene Booysen who was raped and brutally murdered in Bredasdorp in February 2013. Minister September and the municipal leadership laid a wreath on her grave and promised that Government would not to allow her death to be in vain. Government, in partnership with civil society and business, initiated 'Green Door Houses' throughout the country, with direct links to clinics and police stations to help vulnerable people. 'The process of building houses is not done in isolation. That is why it is called human settlements. Through our function of building houses, building this safe home confirms our commitment to the safety of vulnerable people and the campaign against violence on women and children,'³ said Minister September.

While happy to see how human settlements had changed people's lives during her visits to various communities throughout the country, Minister September was appalled to hear that some beneficiaries of Government houses rented them out rather than live in them or sold them before the mandatory eight-year waiting period had expired. She found such practices at odds with the objective of Government providing housing help in the first place. She warned that such beneficiaries

risked not getting help again in the future. 'When you see something illegal is happening in your community or neighbourhood, please report that to the police or to the street committee,'⁴ she urged communities.

The quality of houses Government built for citizens was another central concern for Minister September. Even if meant for the poorest of the poor, for her houses had to be built to the highest possible standards. Nothing, therefore, prepared her for the shoddy construction she witnessed at Wallacedene, Western Cape, when she visited the area. The project comprised 400 houses and residents complained to the Minister about the sloppy work. Dismayed, the Minister said it was unacceptable that companies were short-changing people by building poor-quality structures. 'As the national Department of Human Settlements we allocate money to provinces and municipalities to build houses for needy families. It's for this reason that we are required to follow our money through monitoring and oversight over provinces and municipalities,'⁵ said September.

To address issues of quality building, the Ministry of Human Settlements ropes in the National Home Builders

2014

September launches the One Learner - One Estate Agency Programme, a transformation initiative of the Estate Agency Affairs Board

2014

Minister hands over houses as part of the Struisbaai Oukamp Informal Settlement Upgrading Programme

Registration Council (NHBRC) to investigate. NHBRC registers and regulates all contractors. Errant contractors are banned from working with Government and poorly built houses are demolished. 'We must never think twice about blacklisting such contractors if they are found guilty,'⁶ said the Minister. To help shore up quality construction, Minister September also reached out to the Master Builders Association. She urged this society of builders to assist Government in improving the quality of houses given to ordinary South African citizens.

Overall, she urged the construction industry to help Government delivery proper sanitation, a challenge in most communities. 'This industry is ideally placed to help Government, especially my Department to deal with housing and sanitation issues besieging our society. With you, we can transform this country,'⁷ said the Minister.

In addressing the housing backlog, Minister September sought alliances. Like her predecessors, she continued working with the banking sector, as represented by the Banking Association

of South Africa (Basa), in getting private money into the human settlements sector. 'We engage with financial institutions, banks and Basa. Going forward, what trajectory do we put forward, particularly in the next five years? The banks help by providing home loans. We will continue to have a relationship with other stakeholders, apart from banks,'⁸ said September. In addition to the financial services sector, the Minister also liaised with trade unions and religious organisations to reach out to millions of their followers with information about the existing

housing opportunities. September also worked closely with provincial Governments and municipalities.

Crucially, Minister September grasped that a key constituency in the provision of human settlements were ordinary South Africans themselves. They had to embrace the process of providing human settlements. For her, working closely with communities was vital in bringing about change in the human settlements sector. She encouraged ordinary citizens to participate in the People's Housing Process (PHP) in which communities



came together to build their own houses through Government financial help and support. In her view, this participatory manner of building homes not only fostered community pride, but was one of the ways of taking South Africa forward.

Becoming Minister was certainly a culmination of a long journey of service for September. In her younger days, she was a factory worker in Cape Town where she joined the Southern African Clothing & Textile Workers' Union and rose through the ranks

to become Treasurer. A dedicated worker, September was the first woman to be elected a Congress of South African Trade Unions national office bearer – the position of vice-president. September holds a Master's degree in Economics from Warwick University in England. Since 1999, she has been an ANC Member of Parliament. 🏃

Community participation in the planning and delivery of houses was her passion.



The DGs who got the work done

Every Minister of housing needs a competent Director-General (DG). In the past 20 years, the Department of Human Settlements has had four of them – William Cobbett (under Minister Joe Slovo), Mpumi Mpofu (under Ministers Sankie Mthembu-Mahanyele, Brigitte Mabandla and Lindiwe Sisulu), Itumeleng Kotsoane (under Minister Sisulu) and current DG Thabane Zulu (under Ministers Tokyo Sexwale, Connie September and Sisulu). Their diligence in pursuing housing programmes has enabled the Department of Human Settlements to deliver 3,7-million houses and serviced sites.



William (Billy) Cobbett (1994 – 1997)

The hard-working bureaucrat

William (Billy) Cobbett served as South Africa's first Director-General of Housing under the late Minister Joe Slovo. His work in the Housing Ministry was to lay the foundation for an exceptional career in the international housing and human settlements sector. Cobbett grew up in South Africa and left the country in 1977 to escape national service. While in exile, he began working on his doctorate, focussing on Botshabelo township. In the early 1990s he briefly served as a site manager for Codesa 1 at Kempton Park. Shortly afterwards he

joined the ANC headquarters and was appointed its National Housing Forum representative.

Being an academic and expert in housing matters, Cobbett seemed an excellent choice for Slovo after he had been announced Minister of Housing by President Nelson Mandela in May 1994. Cobbett not only brought invaluable expertise and experience to the housing ministry, but he was also an exceptionally committed and diligent worker. During his early days as DG, the focus was on Slovo's ambitious target of delivering 1-million houses to the poor in the first five years of the democratic dispensation. Cobbett surely must have influenced Slovo's decision to hold the first Housing Summit in October 1994 in Botshabelo township in the Free State. Botshabelo was not only the primary focus of Cobbett's PhD thesis, but he had written numerous articles about the township, taking it as an exemplary case of apartheid's exclusionary spatial politics.

After leaving his position as DG, Cobbett, who was deeply committed to improving people's housing conditions locally and around the world, took up a position in the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in Nairobi. Today, Cobbett is Manager of Cities Alliance, a global partnership that was launched by UN-Habitat and the World Bank in 1999.



Mpumi Mpofu (1997 – 2005)

Architect of bold policies

Mpumi Mpofu served as Director-General of Housing under three Housing Ministers – Sankie Mthembu-Mahanyele, Brigitte Mabandla and Lindiwe Sisulu. She was appointed DG of Housing in 1997, two years after she had started working as Chief Director and Head of Housing in Gauteng.

With her work experience in the sector and background in town planning – she holds a postgraduate degree in Town Planning from Coventry University, UK – she was the perfect candidate to match Mthembu-Mahanyele's ambitious goals

of housing delivery.

Mpofu worked as DG of Housing for eight years until 2005 when she transferred to the Department of Transport, where she also served as DG. It is under her directorship that some of South Africa's most important housing policies were introduced. She supported Mahanyele with the National Housing Act, the Rental Housing Act and the Housing Amendment Act No 4 that was promulgated to prevent people from selling their RDP homes within the first eight years of purchase. Mpofu admitted that 'we had to reach a balance to say how many years can we have restrictions before people could use their house as an asset, and how much is sufficient for us to say we have met out constitutional responsibility to house those people'.

She also championed the Breaking New Ground initiative with Minister Sisulu. Mpofu played her role in ensuring that millions of South Africans can live in sustainable and integrated human settlements today.

Early on, the DG saw the pressing need to shift the Department's focus from mere delivery to a more holistic developmental approach. 'Now that delivery is taking off, we need to focus more on urban and rural development, environmental impact assessments, densities – the whole development framework,' she said.



Itumeleng Kotsoane (2006 – 2009)

A hands-on manager

Itumeleng Kotsoane was Director-General between 2006 and 2009. Having previously been a top politician in the Free State Provincial Legislature – where he worked, first, as the MEC for the Department of Safety and Security and, later, as MEC for Local Government and Housing – he brought extensive managerial experience and a deep understanding of government's delivery programme to his new job at the then Department of Housing.

Working alongside Minister Lindiwe Sisulu, he quickly got down to work

to get the Department to solve shelter issues facing the country. Kotsoane worked under the framework of Breaking New Ground that government introduced in 2004 to fundamentally change the way houses were provided to needy citizens. Provision of services was more integrated and areas chosen to build new homes were close to areas of economic opportunity. These were settlements that tackled various housing needs – rental accommodation, giveaway low-cost homes and affordable bonded houses. Kotsoane passionately championed BNG. A strong team player with well developed organisational skills acquired through his participation in the mass democratic movement, Kotsoane succeeded in reviewing the mandates of the housing institutions such Thubelisha Homes, the National Housing Finance Corporation, and the National Home Builders Registration Council that had been created to help the Department facilitate housing delivery. Some of his other key achievements included:

- implementing government's housing programmes that helped to increase housing delivery from the previous average of 130 000 units a year to 180 000 and 240 000 for three consecutive years.
- developing excellent relationships with other sister Departments at national, provincial and municipal level as well as with other stakeholders in the housing sector

(higher learning sector and foreign donors).

- ensuring sound financial management, culminating in unqualified audit reports throughout his tenure as DG.
- developing and implementing the BNG communication programme for the Department that sought to educate housing consumers on their rights and obligations with regard to housing.
- heading the secretariat for the African Ministers Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD) and overseeing the preparations and hosting of the successful second AMCHUD conference in Nigeria in July 2008.

By 2009, the Department of Housing had delivered 2,8-million houses since 1994, meaning that a quarter of South Africa's population had benefitted from government's housing subsidy programme. 'We have been able to build homes for more than 13-million people so far,' Kotsoane said at the time. 'The number of people who have benefitted is equivalent to the populations of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland combined.'

But population growth and urbanisation continued to put pressure on government to provide houses. It forced government to put together various measures to solve the problem. One

of them was ensuring that national, provincial and municipal levers of government worked together and that they collaborated with sister Departments so that amenities such as schools and clinics could be provided in a co-ordinated manner, with housing being the conduit. This was the heart of BNG and still is the preferred method of providing human settlements. Kotsoane, known for his hands-on approach, threw himself admirably to the task. Relationships with the private sector and civil sector were strengthened. He enjoyed a good working relationship with Minister Sisulu. He left behind a solid legacy of a hands-on management and commitment to delivery. ✎