



human settlements

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### ENHANCED POLICY ON INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS UPGRADING ON THE CARDS

Stakeholders within the human settlements sector are pondering ideas on how to create quality living environments for the country's residents. The National Department of Human Settlements in collaboration with the provincial department has brought under one roof various role players in the built value chain to discuss a policy trajectory with which is envisaged to improve the lives of many slum and informal settlements dwellers in the country at a two-day Housing Code Policy Review session at Secunda, Govan Mbeki Local Municipality. The major focus is around the improvement on informal settlements dwellers.

The new developments are being discussed to incorporate informally settled communities and integrate them onto the social and economic mainstream through a holistic development approach. It further seek to recognize their Constitutional Rights, security of tenure by formalizing tenure rights within their settlements and providing adequate housing through the department's normal housing programmes. The policy will however be guided by the actual National norms and standards for beneficiary arrangements and processes which includes households headed by minors, persons without dependants, immigrants, households with income exceeding R3500, to mention but a few.

"The National Housing Code Policy for the upgrading of informal settlements is in line with the UN Millennium Development Goals of improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020," said National Department's Mr Themba Masimini, who further emphasized that one time of the key success factors for the Housing Code is to facilitate proper planning and coordination through a multi-year strategic plan compilation whereby provinces would agree with municipalities in its areas on the financing of specific settlements upgrading.

Amongst other pertinent activities to be funded by the programme is the community resident's survey, registrations, participation, facilities, dispute resolutions and so forth. Masimini added that the policy must allow for the de-densification of settlements to ensure compliance with by-laws and environmental concerns. "It should be linked to the National Development Plan and that there must be linkages to the broader development objectives as set out in the NDP," he clarified while stating that tenure security confirmation is also required in case where informal settlements are upgraded on communal land rights areas and that this must also provide more detailed prescripts on the norms and for basic services to ensure health and safety concerns are addressed.

The session proposed that a multi-agency workshop be established to deal with issues of integration and social cohesion and solidarity amongst foreign nationals and local citizens to prevent scapegoating and xenophobic violence. The gathering which will be rolled out to other parts the country aims at soliciting views and inputs from stakeholders with a view to improve the existing policy.

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