Welcome to the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development’s quarterly newsletter for November—December 2015. Holiday fever and Christmas spirit is about to cripple our level of productivity... Let me remind you once again as public servants, our main responsibility is to serve the public at large. This edition is mainly to confirm our perseverance and endurance to deliver and of course to take stock of our milestones of 2015. Also, we are proud to introduce you to our team members that has been promoted and retired this couple of months. If you have just joined us, please feel at home. We took some time to celebrate World Aids Day, no matter how tired we might be of hearing about it, AIDS is real. The thing about this pandemic is, it does not have boundaries and it affects/effect us in one way or the other. And last week we danced our socks off...under the leadership of Mr. Anolyto. The Year-end Function committee really did a great job. Even the retired General Charles Namholo and Hon Boois took some time to join in the fun. Penseus the pictures at the back. For those of you traveling over the festive season please don’t drink and drive and continue living a responsible life.

On another note, gauge yourself on your performance for the past year, identify areas that you can improve for 2016. Thank you to all colleagues who, together with the office of Public Relations, stepped up another milestone in making this publication possible. For your inputs, comment, information and queries please do not hesitate to email them to mlnhuse@murd.gov.na and rnhlongo@murd.gov.na. Please look forward to our improved edition that will contain more information, and that issue will appear during January-February 2016. Merry Christmas and a Glorious Happy 2016.

Newly Promoted

Mr. Erickson Hallahu is a Deputy Director Human Resources and Development, effective from 1 December 2015. Mr. Hallahu is responsible for the formulation of Human Resources policies and the coordination of HR functions. He started at the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development as a Chief Human Resources Practitioner in August 2011.

Mrs. Naomi T Simon is a Deputy Director: Habitat Coordination effective as from 1 December 2015. Before her appointment she served the Ministry as a Control Officer at Housing.

Mr. Thomas Naholo is an Administrative Officer effective from 1 December 2015. Mr. Naholo joined the Ministry on 02 May 2014 as a Messenger and through his hard-work and dedication he got promoted. Among other duties, he will be responsible for filing and receiving external or internal mail.

Mrs. Theresia Jonah-Hangula is a Senior Human Resources Practitioner effective as from 01 December 2015.

Consultative meeting with financial institutions on the Mass Housing Development Programme

Namibia faces a serious housing backlog which is estimated over 100,000 housing units and which is growing at an annual rate of about 3,700 units. This backlog is primarily attributed to the following factors:
- unemployment which reduces potential buyers’ purchasing power
- the high cost of labour and building materials
- the absence of alternative local building technologies;
- the unavailability and/or high cost of raw materials
- the inability of the low and lower middle income earners to provide collateral
- the absence of salaried home loans for low income earners are some of the contributing factors
- as well as the manner in which available serviced land is to be sold, which often favours the rich including speculators and developers, at the expense of the low and middle income earners.

It is the position of the SWAPO Party Government that any of these phenomena and trends negatively impact on the social, economic and political fabric of our society and need to be arrested through deliberate and focused efforts.

In light of the above, the Namibian Government has, since independence declared housing as one of the top priorities for development. The policy stance in this regard is to scale up the provision of housing, promote access to finance for the majority of Namibians and overhaul the current housing delivery system.

The Ministry of Urban and Rural Development’s commitment is to expand the coverage and supply of quality and affordable housing products to reach as many of our homelovers as possible. The Ministry adopted a framework on the implementation of the Mass Housing Development Programme (MHP) by Cabinet in June 2013 and the launch of the commencement of the implementation of the first phase of the Programme by His Excellency, Dr. Hifikepunye Pohamba in November 2013: Development Programme.

The Mass Housing Development Programme was designed with the aim of building on and expanding the gains made through the earlier housing development interventions and in keeping with the Government's desire and policy aim at accelerating and scaling-up the delivery of housing and decent shelter in the country and especially to meet the housing needs of the ultra-low and low-income groups.

The Ministry's housing development strategy is premised on the following principles:
- Economic and financial sustainability
- Affordability
- Cost recovery
- Integrated development approach
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Social and economic inclusion
- Efficiency and cost-effectiveness (value for money)
- Skills and capacity enhancement, and
- Strategic economic empowerment.

The implementation of the first phase of the Mass Housing Development Programme has been characterized by a number of challenges that prompted the Government to temporarily halt the implementation of the programme with a view to put the programme back on its intended course.

Despite the challenges, it is pleasing to note that the Programme has resulted in the construction and availability of a range of housing products that will no doubt impact positively on the lives of our people, and will also contribute towards reducing the housing backlog. To date, a total of 45,598 houses of different configurations have been constructed, but at different levels, at different sites various parts and regions of the country.

Of these, a total of 1,648 houses have been completed. Two hundred and twenty-one (221) of the fully completed houses were handed over to beneficiaries in 2014.

The Ministry wants the houses that have been constructed under the Programme should and will be sold to owners at cost.

The Ministry, therefore urges all interested parties to present their offers in writing to the Ministry for consideration. The Ministry of Urban and Rural Development is in the process of finalising modalities for the sale of the troubled houses to new owners, with preference being given to first time owners. Obviously, the prospective owners will have to present their written offers to the authorities as a result of the financial situation in the country.

In this connection, The Ministry of Urban and Rural Development has alerted financial institutions, to a mortgage financing opportunity, and to prepare the financial institutions to gear up their systems in order to be able to adequately and timely respond to applications for mortgage financing when homeowners Namibians find their offers being the housing loan or mortgage financing. It is expected that this will happen once the Ministry publishes a call for expressions of interest from members of the public who will be required to among others provide pre-approval letters from financial institutions as a key qualification requirement. This exercise will be carried out in due course.

In the spirit of Namibianism and the declaration of an all out war on poverty by our President, the Ministry urges your partnership and for you to join hands with National Housing Fund Authority to realise their dream of owning a home.
Klazen urges local authorities to turn around bad publicity

The Deputy Minister of Urban and Rural Development, Derek Klazen, has called on municipal professionals to look at ways to turn around negative public perceptions about local authorities. Klazen made the call while officiating at the Namibian Association of Local Authority Officers (Nalao) 55th annual general meeting held under the theme "Inspiring Poverty Eradication through Inclusive Governance" at Arandis. "For the local authorities to turn bad publicity into positive publicity well thought out programmes to eradicate poverty are needed as well as a shared commitment between both councillors and municipal professionals to drastically improve governance and decision making in the best interest of the community," said Klazen. The unfortunate situation is that many local authorities find themselves to be in the news for the wrong reasons. Which usually involves governance issues around things like the sale of land, staff appointments, issuing of tenders and the use of council finances for the wrong purpose," Klazen further remarked. Nalao president Aghater Mweti pledge the association’s commitment to abolish and apply principles of good and inclusive governance, calling on local authorities to do the same. Mweti also requested the line ministry to support local authorities to develop an internal audit division to strengthen internal review of processes and systems on an ongoing basis, assist in the development of a template governance framework and to urgently assess and consider alternative building materials for inclusion in low-cost housing programmes. Furthermore, Mweti called on civil society and the private sector to continue engaging local authorities in the fight against poverty by actively participating in the strategic planning process undertaken in different local authorities as well as supporting development efforts.

"Refrain from election hangover and face responsibility"

The Minister of Urban and Rural Development Sophia Shaningwa, warned newly elected councillors against discrimination and that they rather observe the status of one Namibia, one nation by serving communities prudently without looking at color and class.