



higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Address by the Director-General, Mr GF Qonde, at the Launch of
Phase Two of the Alice Student Village, University of Fort Hare
on 3 October 2019**

Vice-Chancellor of the University of Fort Hare, Professor Sakhela Buhlungu
Mayor of the Raymond Mhlaba Local Municipality, Councillor Bandile Ketelo
Members from the European Union
Representatives of the Infrastructure Investment Programme for South Africa
Representatives from the Development Bank of Southern Africa
Staff and Students of the University of Fort Hare
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to address you on behalf of the Department of Higher Education and Training. It is a pleasure to be here on this occasion to mark the launch of Phase Two of the Alice Student Village. We are proud of the university's achievements in undertaking this project, which it will have 2 047 new beds, the biggest student housing project in the history of all 26 public universities in South Africa.

The Department has travelled a long road with the University of Fort Hare to reach this point. The University had to fight a costly legal battle with the losing bidder in the tender process. Fort Hare won the case in court, but the victory delayed the project by two years. That background makes today's event even more gratifying for us. We commend the university and its stakeholders for the tenacity that brings us together today.

The Alice project is one of the first in our national Student Housing Infrastructure Programme. This ambitious programme aims to develop 300 000 new beds at the 26 public universities and 50 public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges throughout the country. Each of the projects with 2 000 or more beds costs more than R500 million, money that government alone cannot provide. To make the programme work, the Department has partnered with the National Treasury, the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) they are here today to see how their

investment is progressing, and the private sector to find innovative ways of funding large student housing projects on a sustainable basis.

One of our partners is the Infrastructure Investment Programme for South Africa (IIPSA), a partnership between the South African government and the European Union that supports investment in infrastructure projects. IIPSA has provided R330 million to the Department's Student Housing Infrastructure Programme, and we are most grateful for this commitment. The Alice Student Village is the first project to receive IIPSA funding and we are pleased today to acknowledge this generous contribution.

The IIPSA grant will also benefit the next projects at universities and TVET colleges in other parts of the Eastern Cape, as well as in Limpopo, North West, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and other provinces. It is this type of collaboration across continents and across governments that helps to make large infrastructure projects possible. The Department, our universities, colleges and most importantly, our students, appreciate this support.

Our primary goal is to provide decent, affordable accommodation and to keep students safe until they graduate. Student safety has to be a top priority – safety on all our campuses, both urban and rural. We have had horrific instances recently of students being assaulted, injured and murdered in violent attacks, both on and off campus, from Cape Town in the West to Durban and Northern KwaZulu-Natal in the East, from Limpopo in the North to Mthatha in the South. We need to take urgent and decisive steps to stop the scourge of gender-based violence, and violence against students.

The development of student villages with thousands of beds like the one we are launching today will help to keep students safe. We need hundreds of projects like this, each with the recreational and other facilities that are in the Alice Student Village.

The Department is encouraged to see that student housing projects not only provides new accommodation, but also promotes local economic development, create jobs and keep skills in the community. A rural university like Fort Hare can play a catalytic role in integrated development at the local and regional levels.

Alice is part of the Raymond Mhlaba Local Municipality, named after a stalwart of our struggle for liberation, Comrade Raymond Mhlaba. I knew him well, and discussed with him the development of the Eastern Cape, which is also my home province. I am sure that Oom Ray as we called him would smile today to see the new residences on this campus, bringing the university into the modern era, preparing students for the future.

Like many times before in its 103-year history, one of our oldest universities, Fort Hare, is leading the way. If we can solve the shortage of student housing on this historic, rural campus, we can find similar solutions to the shortage of student housing all over the country. Thank you for shining a light to show us the way to a better future for our towns like Alice, our universities, our students.