

Press release: UK and Kenya Host Research Symposium on Affordable Housing

By 2030, nearly half of Kenyans will be living in cities. With half of Kenya's population aged under 18, many young people are moving to urban areas in search of jobs, opportunities and more choices. Kenya's growing urban population need sustainable, resilient, affordable housing; getting this right is key to Kenya's development.

In recognition of this, the UK and Kenya co-hosted a two-day symposium on affordable housing and sustainable infrastructure on 21 and 22 May at Strathmore University, supported by the Global Challenges Research Fund and the UK Collaborative on Development Research.

The symposium brought together more than 200 policymakers, leading researchers, business and civil society delegates to explore the potential for new innovative collaboration on affordable housing and sustainable infrastructure.

Hosted at the request of the UK-Kenya High-Level Oversight Board on Science, Technology and Innovation, the symposium showcased how strong partnerships between UK and Kenyan stakeholders are delivering innovations in housing and urban development – from changing how people apply for mortgages, to using technology to turn plastic waste into pavements.

Among those in attendance were the British High Commissioner to Kenya Nic Hailey, Chief Administrative Secretary Ministry of Transport Hon Chris Obure, Housing Secretary State Department of Housing and Urban Development Patrick Bucha and Katherine Muoki Director of Infrastructure, Science, Technology and Innovation, State Department of Planning.

Speaking at the event, British High Commissioner Nic Hailey reiterated the UK Government's commitment to progress on affordable housing and sustainable infrastructure.

He said:

The UK is proud to support the Big 4 agenda in Kenya, and to work with the Kenyan Government to address the challenge of delivering affordable housing for all. To deliver on this policy priority, we need to leverage research, technology and innovation, and this joint symposium is doing just that.

Minister for Africa, Harriett Baldwin said:

Affordable Housing and Sustainable Infrastructure are challenges everywhere, so it is good news that the UK and Kenya are working together to turn world-leading research and innovation into practical solutions to benefit us all.

Mr. Peter Okwanyo, Secretary Administration, State Department for University Education and Research, Ministry of Education said:

Research, Science, Technology and Innovation presents a unique platform for the generation of new knowledge to overcome barriers to affordable housing, healthy cities, resilience and affordable urban infrastructure. Affordable housing is recognized as an enabler to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UK-Kenya Partnership is a powerful tool for application in the enhancement of their attainment.

Dr Jaideep Gupte, GCRF Challenge leader for cities and sustainable infrastructure said:

Ensuring urban residents have access to affordable and adequate housing is one of the big issues in Kenya. Building new houses is only part of the solution which also involves providing access to health and education services, safe public spaces and to the jobs and opportunities that are replete in cities. Recent GCRF investments support Kenya-UK collaborations doing cutting edge and policy relevant research on issues ranging accessing healthcare to embedding disaster risk management into urban development.

The symposium was organized by the Governments of the UK and Kenya with support from the UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR), UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) through the Global Challenges Research Fund and Strathmore University. The symposium showcased innovative housing technologies and research from around the world.

A joint statement from the UK and Kenyan Government [UK-Kenya Housing Symposium Joint Statement](#) (ODT, 500KB) following the symposium announced a commitment to continue working together on affordable housing and sustainable infrastructure research, policy and practice in Kenya.

The Joint UK-Kenya Oversight Board in Research, Science and Innovation was established in 2018 to provide strategic guidance on UK-Kenya partnerships on science and innovation and is co-chaired by the British High Commissioner in Kenya and the Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education, Kenya.

The UK's contribution to affordable housing research in Kenya is worth an estimated £13.0m (initiated between FY 2013/2014 –2017/18 and active during 2017/18) with 15 research projects relating to housing in Kenya focused on:

- Public land use
 - Upgrading slums and informal settlements
 - Zoning and urban planning
 - Social housing
 - Supportive ecosystems and infrastructure
 - Competitive construction costs
 - Green building codes for sustainability
 - Social housing
 - Access to affordable financing for housing

Through the five-year £60 million [Sustainable Urban Economic Development \(SUED\) programme](#) the UK is also supporting 10 municipalities across Kenya develop sustainable urban economic plans and attract investment for critical infrastructure and value chain projects.

The [Global Challenges Research Fund \(GCRF\)](#) supports cutting-edge research and innovation that addresses the global issues faced by developing countries. It is a £1.5 billion fund which forms part of the UK Government's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment and is overseen by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), and delivered through nine delivery partners including UK Research and Innovation (comprising the research councils, Research England and Innovate UK), the UK Academies, the UK Space Agency and other funding bodies.

The [UK Collaborative for Development Research \(UKCDR\)](#) is a collaborative of government and research funders working in international development. UKCDR exists to amplify the value and impact of research for global development by promoting coherence, collaboration and joint action. The core contributing members include BEIS, Department for International development (DfID), Department for Health & Social Care (DHSC), UKRI, and Wellcome Trust.