

UK-Kenya to collaborate on affordable housing, sustainable infrastructure

Almost half of Kenya's population is predicted to be living in cities by 2030, requiring sustainable, resilient, affordable housing. Getting this right is key to Kenya's development as many young people are moving to urban areas in search of jobs, opportunities and more choices.



Image source: www.pexels.com

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, 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 in the Ministry of Transport Chris Obure; housing secretary for the 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, 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."

Finding practical solutions

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."

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 recognised 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."

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