



Dr Olive Shisana

Contributing meaningfully to national and global knowledge creation

Message from the CEO

During the past budget year, the HSRC achieved its best performance to date as measured by the objective indicators agreed to in the Shareholder's Compact with the Minister of Science and Technology.

The accomplishments are detailed in this report. In this foreword, however, I would like to touch on a few selected highlights.

The HSRC publication rate in internationally accredited journals has increased dramatically to 1,51 per senior researcher, exceeding the already high target of 1,3 set at the beginning of the period under review. Even more pleasing is

the publication rate among junior researchers, which, at 0,81, also exceeds expectations. This suggests that the fundraising strategy of focusing on multi-year projects has had the intended effect of reducing the distraction and burden of seeking multiple short term grants, thus allowing researchers more time to conduct consistent research and write journal articles. Raising the bar on the target for journal publications has had the result of challenging and stimulating the scientists to perform at their best level.

The past year has seen an increase in income made up largely of multi-year commitments, and this has to a large extent contributed to the

HSRC qualifying as a going concern. Our ability to raise internationally sourced funds is evidence of the confidence that donors globally have in the organisation. It has helped bring foreign exchange into the country while also contributing to growing the research and development resources for the country. This is critical to ensure that South Africa contributes meaningfully to national and global knowledge creation. In the coming years, the government contribution to the HSRC funds will also increase, and this will ensure sustainability of our humanities research.

The HSRC's ability to retain staff has improved significantly. Notwithstanding the challenges that still remain. I am pleased with the extent to which we have managed to reduce our attrition rate, keeping some of our best researchers in the organisation. We will nevertheless need to keep a watchful eye on this indicator as the present retention rate may in part be a reflection of the slowing down of the economy, resulting in some people holding on to their jobs for lack of opportunities to move elsewhere.

We have far exceeded our target for gender sensitivity training to arm our staff with the skills to eliminate prejudice in the manner in which men and women relate to one another within the organisation. We are now also beginning to train staff in the use of a gender tool in research data analysis and the writing of reports and journal articles. We are moving towards a position where HSRC publications will be vetted on whether or not the gender lens was used in the research and research write-up.

We are still struggling to appoint more black Africans in senior positions. We regularly advertise posts, but few apply, perhaps because the pool of qualified black African scientists has shrunk, in part because of improved remuneration at universities. However, we continue to prioritise 'growing our own timber' by creating increased opportunities for doctoral trainees and post-doctoral fellows, and promoting some of them to senior level positions as they become available.

Overall, the HSRC has achieved 11 out of 14 of the organisation's performance indicators, the highest achievement since these indicators were adopted. The activities of the research programmes are now well aligned with the objectives of the organisation as a whole. A staff of 450 conducted research activities, all of which were predominantly aligned with the vision and mission of the organisation. Beyond meeting the indicators for performance, much ground has been covered to further improve the functioning of the organisation and extend the role of the HSRC internationally.

In the past year, five-yearly external reviews were conducted in respect of some of the larger and older research programmes. To date, these have included the programmes concerned with Child, Youth, Family and Social Development; Democracy and Governance; Education, Science and Skills Development; and the Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS and Health. Findings and recommendations from these various reviews were useful in identifying areas of excellence and areas needing to be strengthened. We have been

able to take stock of what we have achieved as an organisation, what tangible impact we have made, and to identify new areas of focus for our programmes.

During the period under review, the HSRC ensured that it met its public purpose mandate, not just by conducting research for public benefit, but also by interacting with various government ministries to ensure alignment of our work with the priorities of this country. These interactions, in turn, led to relevant research work at national, provincial and local level. Furthermore, much of the work done had directly relevance to improving the quality of lives of South Africans.

On the global front, the HSRC has had substantial engagement with international scholars. The HSRC hosted the International Social Science Council (ISSC) and the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (ICPHS), which had their annual general meetings here in South Africa. The ISSC addressed key issues such as the World Social Science Report and the World Social Science Forum.

The HSRC and CODESRIA hosted a number of working sessions on topics such as poverty and evidenced-based policy. We followed this up with a symposium on knowledge and transformation, which was attended by eminent scholars and served to elevate the humanities in the social sciences in South Africa and the continent as a whole.

At national level, the HSRC has continued to engage in community outreach. On World AIDS Day the HSRC, together with its international and global partners, hosted a series of events with the theme, *Take the lead, get tested, know your status*, that reached some 30 000 people in Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria, Mthatha, Port Elizabeth and Sweetwaters (KZN). Through media interviews, the HSRC was able to reach the nation and contribute to World AIDS Day activities in the country in a meaningful way.

The work and achievements of the HSRC briefly sketched in this foreword and described in greater detail in this annual report could not have been realised without the guidance and support of the HSRC Board - particularly the crucial role of our Chair, Professor Jakes Gerwel; the Minister of Science and Technology (DST), Mr Mosibudi Mangena; the DST Director-General, Dr Phil Mjwara, and his staff; various other government departments; and our donor and client community.

Much credit must go to the research and corporate support staff and their executive leadership, who are the true architects of the success of the HSRC. To them, I am deeply grateful. We look forward to working with Minister Naledi Pandor who was recently appointed Minister of Science and Technology.