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## Consolidating gains and blazing new trails

This year, the HSRC has focused on aligning the activities and indicators of performance outlined in the approved business plan and strategic plan, with the reporting requirements set out in the Shareholder's Compact between the HSRC and the Minister of Science and Technology. The compact represents a formal agreement between the HSRC and the Minister, and describes the responsibilities and undertakings with regard to the mutual expectations of each party. When this Shareholder's Compact was signed for the first time in May 2006, the HSRC undertook to achieve specified outputs and outcomes during 2006/07.

In this section, we highlight HSRC achievements in the context of the Shareholder's Compact. The HSRC measures its performance in terms of indicators grouped under the acronym of **PAITECS**, which stands for **P**ublic-purpose mandate of the HSRC; **I**nternational collaboration with particular emphasis on collaborative research in **A**frica; **E**xplicit attention to the **I**mplementation and impact of research; **O**ngoing and deepened **T**ransformation of the HSRC workforce; **E**xcellence and **C**apacity building in research, and **S**ustainability through securing of grants to support longer-term, large-scale research projects and programmes. This being the first year of implementation of this new performance evaluation system for the HSRC, the organisation has done well by attaining or exceeding nine out of fourteen (64,3%) of a set of quantified targets. The level of achievement per PAITECS category is summarised on pages 129 to 142 of this report. However, the numbers often do not tell the whole story, and for this reason it is necessary to provide some qualitative information.

### Public purpose

Over the last year, we sought to consolidate and strengthen our public-purpose research activities, and substantially exceeded our numerical target for this indicator. In the following paragraphs, we present some examples of what was achieved.

The HSRC positioned itself to contribute to knowledge-based creation and implementation of policy on matters of national priority through the establishment of a Policy Analysis Unit (PAU). The PAU coordinates research, undertakes analytical work and convenes policy dialogues between and among policymakers, policy users, social science researchers, national and international subject experts and other stakeholders.

On the research front, the PAU served as coordinating point for a number of impact assessment studies on initiatives towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) being conducted for the Department of Science and Technology (DST) by various HSRC research units. The MDG-related topics in question were:

- eradicating extreme poverty and hunger
- achieving improvements of conditions for people living in slums and informal settlements
- promoting universal access to primary education and eliminating gender disparity
- assessing the impact of gender policies and interventions on gender equality and women's empowerment In South Africa
- assessing the impact of HIV/AIDS prevention and care programmes.

Progress on these projects is reported elsewhere in this Annual Report.

With regard to policy analysis, extensive work was conducted on the financing of the health care system. The HSRC played a critical role in the development of policy options related to national health insurance, given the research evidence showing major disparities in access to medical aid and health services in South Africa. Another major activity in the policy arena has been the work done on employment and economic growth. The Employment

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Scenarios project, housed in the Employment, Growth and Development Initiative, has begun to provide critical insights on how best to address unemployment, ensure growth and reduce poverty. Some of these insights include the role of the public service in the labour market, the required scale of public works to meet AsgiSA (the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa) employment targets, the constraints on manufacturing employment growth, and the need to be more forceful in expanding different types of service industries. This work also showed how the structure of production is important to poverty reduction, since some sectors inherently contribute to wage growth more than others.

The HSRC's Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation (CeSTII), housed in Knowledge Systems (KS), conducts national research and experimental development surveys for DST, which measure inputs into R&D activities in the country by government, state-owned companies and private business and other enterprises. CeSTII has developed indicators of South Africa's system of innovation that provide the basis for forward planning of financial and human resource inputs by the DST. In particular the four research and development surveys conducted by CeSTII over 2001/02 to 2005/06 have provided the time series data needed to scope the Ten Year Plan for Science and Technology currently under development by DST. The science and technology indicators also contribute to the international benchmarks of South Africa's competitiveness as calculated by the World Bank, World Economic Forum and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

One of the HSRC's premier public purpose initiatives is the HSRC Press, unarguably the largest non-profit academic press in sub-Saharan Africa, which publishes and disseminates high-quality social science research-based publications, in print and electronic form. The Press publishes the research output of the Human Sciences Research Council and externally authored works. A formal peer-review process guarantees the highest academic quality and the Press has a very active local and international marketing programme, in addition to collaborating with foreign publishers on specific titles.

All HSRC publications are 'open access' on the web, and can be accessed full-text and free of charge on line. A flagship publication of the Press is the annual *State of the Nation*, which carries a collection of essays on aspects of contemporary politics, economics, society and international relations in South Africa. The publication is widely consulted and respected nationally and internationally. The *Cape Times* has observed: 'As long as the HSRC publishes an independent annual review of this quality, there is good reason for optimism about the survival of free speech and vigorous climate of debate [in South Africa]'.

### Africa focus

The HSRC has achieved significant success in promoting research collaboration and implementation networks with institutions within the country and in other parts of Africa. Four initiatives are worth highlighting: the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability (ANSA), Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS Research Alliance (SAHARA), African Youth Charter and the CODESRIA-HSRC partnership.

ANSA, a collaborative effort of the HSRC and the World Bank, is a newly formed pan-African network for capacity building, knowledge sharing, technical assistance and research. It makes grants to civil society organisations that focus on social accountability and transparency in governance in Africa, and draws on the expertise of partners from across Africa – Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone – to further develop existing African capacity on social accountability.

The Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS Research Alliance (SAHARA) is a flexible network of partners which brings together policymakers, scholars, researchers, scientists, advocacy groups, non-governmental organisations and community groups from East and Central, Southern and West Africa to engage in discussions on the latest innovations for accessing prevention, treatment and care for HIV/AIDS. SAHARA continued to expand its activities during the past year. In West Africa and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), SAHARA was tasked with leading the social science research agenda on the implications of the scaling up of circumcision as an HIV prevention strategy following the research evidence from three randomised control trials on circumcision in Kenya, South Africa and Uganda showing that this was an effective intervention.

In 2005, the HSRC was commissioned by the African Union (AU) to report on the status of youth in Africa and to develop an African Youth Charter to serve as a guide and a framework to fast-track implementation of policies and strategies to empower the youth to take advantage of increasing opportunities. In 2006, the Charter underwent an extensive process of validation. Following national consultations with youth at country level, the AU convened a youth forum, a youth experts meeting and a meeting of ministers of youth in member states, together with key



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stakeholders including the youth in *diaspora*. Following on these deliberations, the Charter was adopted by the heads of state at the AU Summit held in Banjul, the Gambia in July 2006. The role of the HSRC in this initiative was acknowledged with approbation by the African Union.

The HSRC has now established a formal partnership with the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). In terms of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the HSRC and CODESRIA in September 2006, areas of collaboration will focus on issues that face the continent as a whole, development of all-Africa networks, collaborative research projects, building capacity through exchange programmes and active collaboration between the publishing houses of the respective organisations, notably with the publication, translation and dissemination of materials. One of the first collaborative research projects envisaged will be a study on the role of South Africa in Africa and the role of Africa in South Africa, whereas the frontiers of SAHARA are expected to be expanded with the support of CODESRIA. In this mutually beneficial relationship, the two institutions complement each other in extending their respective research reach.

#### Impact on policies and programmes

The organisation continues to strive to conduct research that impacts tangibly on public policy and interventions. Assessing the relevance and impact of research on policy is not yet an exact science at the HSRC, and efforts are underway to begin to devise robust methodology in this regard. However, it is possible to gain a sense of the impact through indirect inferences. The following are selected examples, drawn from HSRC research undertaken in the previous financial year in areas such as education, HIV/AIDS, human rights and child, youth and family development.

In the education sector, projects span a wide range of topics, from scarce and critical skills relevant to the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA), to new and innovative assessment instruments for possible use in secondary schools. The results of the Monitoring Education Quality (MONITEQ) initiative in English, mathematics and science have been integrated as part of the national Common Tasks of Assessments currently administered at the end of grade 9.

In the area of HIV/AIDS, the work conducted on population-based surveys and HIV-positive prevention studies have contributed to the development of the national HIV/AIDS and STI (sexually-transmitted infections) strategic plan for South Africa and other African countries.

Deputy Minister of S&T, Derek Hanekom, in discussion with the SAHA programme during his visit to the HSRC

The work on rural women's rights looking at the impact of the application of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act of 2003, as well as the Communal Land Rights Bill on the rights of rural women, has highlighted the challenges confronting women in the countryside, such as access to land and other resources, and grassroots participation in political processes. These are critical issues that must be fully understood in order to address the lot of rural women, who often carry the burden of responsibility for family livelihood and family survival, and therefore bear the brunt of rural poverty and deprivation.

#### Research excellence

During the past year, the HSRC continued to excel in terms of peer-reviewed journal publications of scholarly articles by senior as well as emerging researchers. The organisation decided to modify the performance indicator on excellence and raise the bar by recognising only those journal articles published in internationally accredited journals as measures of excellence. Senior researchers have risen to the challenge and are exceeding the set targets. Discussions are underway with the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) with regard to the criteria for recognition of books and book chapters for purposes of this performance indicator. ASSAf has been mandated by the Departments of Education and of Science and Technology to promote scientific publication in South Africa, and to devise a system of indicators for quality in scientific publishing, which makes this engagement mutually beneficial. This is an important development, as many books are published by HSRC researchers, and the organisation would

## Facts 'n Figures

In the first year of implementation of the new performance evaluation, the HSRC exceeded targets by attaining 64,3% on average



## Consolidating gains and blazing new trails *continued*

want eventually to include books and book chapters for purposes of the excellence performance indicator that contribute to knowledge generation and meet the criteria for scholarship.

Senior researchers in the HSRC will be required to focus their efforts more consistently on building research capacity, and co-publishing journal articles with junior level researchers. An effort will be made to ensure that junior researchers participate in all aspects of the study and are significant co-authors of the published work. Mentoring emerging researchers is an element of the commitment that the HSRC makes as part of capacity development, and this includes training in writing and publishing skills.

The HSRC's total publication output during the past year reached a record 1,11 articles per senior researcher in international, peer-reviewed journals as against a target of 0,85, with the majority of the articles coming from the top 10 authors. Of these, three were women and six black, shattering the myth that representativeness in the staff profile undermines quality and standards, and bucking the documented South African trend whereby the most productive researchers are white and male. The researchers publishing the most peer-reviewed articles (as sole authors or co-authors) this year were Professor Leickness Simbayi (17 articles), followed by Professor Karl Peltzer (11), Professor Vasu Reddy (8), Mr Sean Jooste (7), Professor Nancy Phaswana-Mafuya (5), Professor Linda Richter (5), Dr Olive Shisana (5), Professor Thomas Rehle (4), Professor Adam Habib (4) and Dr Khangelani Zuma (4). One of the sole-authored articles produced by Professor Richter was published in the esteemed journal *Science*, showing that quality and impact was by no means compromised in a highly productive environment. As at other academic institutions, the phenomenon known as the Lotka effect is in operation at the HSRC, whereby a small number of researchers contribute the bulk of an institution's total publications output.

### Capacity development

The HSRC continued to contribute to human capital development through the consolidation and expansion of research internship and fellowship programmes. At the end of the financial year, the HSRC had enrolled 10 research interns with a primary degree, 29 candidates into the Master's degree internship programme, 20 candidates for a PhD programme and four post-doctoral fellows. While the targets for Master's interns and post-doctoral researchers were not reached, the target for doctoral interns was attained. With the increase in the funding from DST on capacity development, the HSRC has set higher targets this year and has the resources to structure the capacity development programme so as to ensure that it is uniform across the HSRC.

### Transformation

One target that continues to be elusive is accelerating representativeness within the HSRC with particular reference to the proportion of Africans and coloureds in senior research and management positions. Although the HSRC is 71% black (51% African, 13% coloured and 7% Indian), it is still not sufficiently representative at senior levels. This is a function of at least three factors: non-competitive salaries, scarce skills and insufficient posts for staff to be appointed to permanent posts.

In order to address the salary challenges, the HSRC conducted a salary benchmarking exercise, comparing salaries for comparable responsibilities and qualification of staff at universities, government, statutory councils and the private sector. The survey revealed that the HSRC salaries for researchers at levels below director were indeed below market benchmarks. These findings formed the basis of the organisation's input during salary negotiations with the unions, and resulted in the increase of salaries for these staff over a three-year period.

We are addressing the challenge of scarce skills by appointing deputy executive directors to work closely with, and be mentored by the current executive directors to increase the pool of senior executive level scientists, and by strengthening capacity building in other ways as well. Creating permanent positions remains difficult because about 50% of the HSRC income is generated from external sources, which are not guaranteed. Therefore, it would be risky to have the entire staff (permanent plus those on short-term, often project-based, contracts) appointed to permanent posts. However, in order to create a career in research, thus making South Africa competitive, it will be necessary for government to consider increasing the Parliamentary envelope for research, also in the social sciences and humanities. As part of the transformation programme, the HSRC initiated a gender mainstreaming training programme, and encouraged all staff – research, administrative and technical support staff members, including staff on contract for one year or more – to be trained. During 2006/07, some 134 staff members attended gender sensitivity training courses selected by the Gender and Development (G&D) unit of the HSRC. These courses were facilitated by highly experienced experts associated with university gender units, and adapted to meet the differentiated training needs of research and support staff in the HSRC. A further 14 staff members were able to demonstrate sufficient levels of prior knowledge and recognised work in this field to a review panel established by G&D, to be granted exemption from attending these specific courses.

Another major indicator of transformation is the extent of the HSRC's work with colleagues in the rest of Africa. Increasingly, scientists at the HSRC are partnering with



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colleagues in other parts of the continent to conduct comparative studies on common challenges facing Africa. The appointment of research fellows from elsewhere in Africa has facilitated this new development because they are able to identify critical challenges which are common to their country and South Africa.

### Financial sustainability

The HSRC has committed itself to ensure access to sustainable income from the Parliamentary grant as well as from grants and contracts funded as a response to proposal development. On the basis of the annual financial statements for 2006/07 and information regarding the forthcoming financial year, the HSRC will remain a going concern. Even though the HSRC fell short of the external income target for 2006/07 by approximately R27 million, it managed to raise a total turnover amount of R247,8 million, the highest amount ever. The allocation from government has reached parity with revenue from external sources of funding.

The HSRC has continued to manage its cash flow better by accelerating collection from trade and other receivables since the 2005/06 financial year. In addition, the volume of trade and other receivables has grown from 2005/06 to 2006/07, indicating an increase in external income.

Looking back over the last financial year, the HSRC has attained the majority of the performance targets – often very ambitious – it has set for itself. It continues to grow most of its research programmes. Although it did face challenges, these proved not to be insurmountable. The programmes on Society, Culture and Identity and on Capacity Development did not meet their financial targets, whereas other programmes did not meet their targets in areas such as publications, capacity development or transformation. However, the HSRC overall has been able to make progress because other programmes were able to perform extremely well in the required areas, to cover shortfalls in sister programmes.

### Good governance

For the seventh consecutive year the HSRC has had unqualified audits and for two consecutive years it has not had a matter of emphasis in its audits. The organisation has matured in its handling of finances and is pleased that the Auditor-General will in the future introduce a new approach of performance auditing for the HSRC. This will be a learning experience for all, and we look forward to being participants in that process.

The organisation has developed policies, procedures and systems to monitor performance. The work of the internal audit committee of Council and the internal auditors, as

well as the participation of the office of the Auditor-General in the Audit Committee meetings, continue to be a positive force in ensuring good governance.

### Conclusion

We face the future with determination and resolve to contribute to finding science-based solutions to significant social challenges facing South Africa. We face the future with confidence because we have a very supportive Minister, Deputy Minister, Director-General and staff of the Department of Science and Technology. Without them, targets would have remained a mirage. The strategic direction of the Council, under the leadership of Professor Jakes Gerwel, continues to guide our work with wisdom and good counsel. For this we are truly grateful. Having an effective and supportive council is a prerequisite for good governance and good performance.

The support of many government departments, which continue to commission work to the HSRC and to participate in the implementation network in nearly all major programmes of the HSRC, is a source of inspiration for staff and myself. The willingness of these departments to use the evidence generated from our research sends the right signal to scientists, that they have a role to play in solving the enormous challenges facing this country.

Finally, the staff of the HSRC deserve the major credit for the HSRC's attainment of its targets. They worked beyond the call of duty, often at the cost of being away from their loved ones; they have shown their commitment to the HSRC as their employer and to the people of this country. We also wish to commend the union at the HSRC who continues to engage with management in a constructive manner.

