

Securing Land Tenure in South Africa with Three Words



In October 2015, Gugile Nkwinti, the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) South Africa, launched the 'One Household, One Hectare' programme. The plan is to allocate a one-hectare allotment to every needy household to enable people to cultivate and grow enough fruit and vegetables to feed their families. Each beneficiary will receive a certificate describing the location of the parcel of land. A three-word address will identify the centre point of each of the land parcels.

But how to describe a parcel of land where there are no street addresses? Landmark-based descriptions are not accurate enough and latitude/longitude, GPS and coordinates are unwieldy to use and prone to significant errors in transcription and communication.

To solve this DRDLR is piloting the use of three-word addresses to identify the centre point of each of the land parcels.

Squares

what3words is an addressing and location reference system based on a global grid of 57 trillion squares of 3m x 3m; each square has a unique pre-assigned three-word address. The system is available via what3words and third party apps and sites and is built into a number of global GIS platforms. Three words are easier to remember and communicate and the system is quick and cost effective to implement. The system works offline, with no data connection, and has error detection built in.

The three-word addresses will be added onto the certificates, which will allow individuals and communities to talk about the location of their particular plot. It will also allow government workers to identify and navigate to these plots when they are in the field administering the programme.

Dignity

DRDLR strives to bring dignity to people living in rural areas. The ministry is rekindling the class of black small farmers and fighting the scourge of poverty, according to Gugile Nkwinti, Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform.