

## **Minister's Official Address**

***The Address by Hon. Andrew Mald, Minister for Community Development, Religion, and Family Affairs delivered at the launch of NRI Discussion Paper No. 120, "Community Empowerment Policy Research Framework" on 27 October 2011***

### **Salutation**

Dr. Musawe Sinebare, Deputy Director, Research, and staff of the National Research Institution, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. I was invited by Dr. Thomas Webster the Director of NRI, to officially launch Discussion Paper No. 120, authored by Dr. Michael Unage. It is a great pleasure to accept the invitation and to be part of this important event, which is another milestone in NRI's achievements and contribution to public policy. This publication on *Community Empowerment Policy Research Framework* is an important contribution to the policy area for which I am the Minister directly responsible. I acknowledge and thank NRI for this effort.

### **Acknowledging NRI's Contributions to Public Policy**

It is beyond doubt that NRI has been prolific over the years in publishing its reports and contributions to government policy dialogue and development. The O'Neil-Namah government, of which I am part, acknowledges these important contributions and will rely on NRI for further assistance in policy discussion. As you are well aware, the current government is committed to developing the rural communities in order to improve people's livelihoods, and to resolve issues that lead to community fragmentation, vulnerability, and poverty.

I am quite satisfied that, having perused this discussion paper, those many issues have been identified for research and for policy debate. The broad challenges that are faced by our people — powerlessness, ignorance, and poverty — must be tackled immediately. Specific issues that have been identified in the framework must be attended to through rigorous research and some concrete policy options recommendation made to government. I am pleased that NRI's Community and People Project has been able to assist the Government in this direction. I am also grateful for the three other publications concerning community

development that have been presented to me. These gifts are exceptionally good “food for thought” and will be accommodated into policy decision and planning when required.

### **Work in Collaboration and Partnership**

I am convinced that policy should be based on, and informed by, evidence-based research. It must address the real needs of the people, and not be just ideas mooted in the streets or from specific groups that have vested interests. The need for collaboration and exchange of data are crucial in understanding the issues at hand, and to solicit collective efforts in addressing challenges faced by people in communities. The Research and Policy Divisions in government departments must work hand-in-hand with the relevant and appropriate research programs here at NRI, and other similar research centres and institutions of higher learning. I would like to see effective collaboration of the policy division in my department with the Community and People Research Project here at NRI. Only through such collaboration can we all be of service to our people.

### **The Importance of the PNG Vision 2050**

The *PNG Vision 2050* has provided us with a direction and a hope that, by the year 2050, Papua New Guinea will be ranked among the top 50 countries in the world. It took countries such as Malaysia, Vietnam, Korea, Singapore less than 40 years to be where they are now, free from conflict and destitution. Those countries may not be well endowed with natural resources, like PNG, but they have been guided by good leaders, and comprised people who shared a common vision. They were convinced and driven by their own inherent strength, and made the necessary sacrifices to be what they are now. The intricate and yet crucial question is, “What is stopping us from reaching the top 50 in less than 40 years?”

The *PNG Vision 2050* has seven pillars. Pillar Six is concerned with “Spiritual, Cultural, and Community Development” and the Department for Community Development is regarded as the key driver of this pillar. The document states that:

“the Department for Community Development is pivotal and strategically placed to coordinate with relevant state and non-state agencies the effective implementation of spiritual, cultural, and community development”.

Furthermore, the strategic Pillar Six document of the *PNG Vision 2050* endorses the Integrated Community Development Policy and will facilitate the implementation of the

policy. Before touching on the Integrated Community Development Policy, the *PNG Vision 2050* gives attention to the necessity for social capital development, which is part and parcel of spiritual, cultural, and community development.

### **The Importance of Developing Social Capital**

Social capital is one of the significant resources in achieving community empowerment and development. The *PNG Vision 2050* states that:

“there is a need for social capital development within communities. Social capital refers to the shared norms or values that promote cooperation and cohesion within, and among, social relationships within a community or setting.”

Social capital, is considered to be the strongest bonding factor in the different types of communities in Papua New Guinea.

Unfortunately, during the years of our development planning, we have overlooked this important capital resource. Planning has been extensive in the areas of human, natural, and economic capital, but less in the area of social capital. Nonetheless, social capital development is about building trust and mutual respect, fostering solidarity within social units, evoking the hidden and idle capacities of people, raising awareness, mobilising people’s energies, coordinating and organising collective efforts, and reaching out for effective partnerships and networking. Therefore, social capital is an indispensable resource in community-driven development and bottom-up planning.

### **Integrated Community Development Policy**

The Department for Community Development has recently undergone a major shift of focus, from being a ‘welfare department’ to becoming an active development agent for improving the lives of people in communities. Although the department still maintains its welfare functions, it has now begun accommodating development concerns. In this shift of focus, the Integrated Community Development Policy has been of great assistance in charting this new course.

I am grateful, that, through this new thinking and in trying to conceptualise the Integrated Community Development Policy, the three publications produced by the National Research Institute have played a pivotal role in realising this. These documents are:

- *Community Transformation; Unlocking the Development Potential of the People;*
- *Community-Driven Development: A Case Study of the Domil Community;* and
- *Community Empowerment Policy Research Framework.*

I am looking forward to the forthcoming publication on *Community Development: A Conceptual, Procedural, and Structural Analysis*, which is due early next year. These publications should be read and ideas extracted and utilised for the effective implementation of the Integrated Community Development Policy.

### **Strengthening the National Integrated Community Development Advisory Committee**

At this juncture, I wish to inform you that NRI is a now member of the National Integrated Community Development Advisory Committee (NICDAC). This advisory committee, which is still in its early stages of operation, comprises relevant government agencies and key stakeholders, and has been set up to advise and oversee the implementation of the Integrated Community Development Policy. It is also my desire to see NICDAC as a partnership dialogue forum for inter-governmental agencies, the private sector, and civil society organisations regarding community development policies and processes. NICDAC can also advise line agencies about mainstream service delivery in order to ensure maximum output and benefits for the people.

### **Institutionalisation of Local Forms of Governance**

The Department for Community Development, as part of its implementation of the Integrated Community Development Policy, has set up Community Learning and Development Centres in some communities, as well as establishing District Focal Points. Those programs are working well. However, more needs to be done, especially in the area of community governance, where an effective and strategic partnership between the Department of Provincial and Local Government Affairs, and the Department for Community Development is envisaged as necessary. Indeed, organising communities, institutionalising community government, and making funding provisions for the ward development process are necessary, if we desire any improvement in our Human Development Index, as envisaged by the *PNG Vision 2050*.

## **Conclusion**

Finally, all stakeholders play a key role in assisting the Department for Community Development in realising the dreams of Pillar Six of the *PNG Vision 2050*, and all are strategic partners in the implementation of the Integrated Community Development Policy. Together, we can make a difference for our people and our communities.

Once again thank you NRI for inviting me to officially launch this publication.

**Hon. Andrew Mald**

Minister for Community Development, Religion, and Family Affairs, and

Member for Moresby North-East