



Without a better understanding of urban poverty, our growing cities will be “unliveable and ungovernable”, says NRI report

Media Release: 12 August 2010

Urban poverty is complex. It is not just about low incomes. It encompasses inadequate access to services, vulnerable livelihoods, a lack of capabilities and exclusion from social, economic and political life. Policy makers, researchers, donors and other partners urgently need a research strategy that understands this complexity in order to successfully guide urban planning.

Whilst PNG has a national target to reduce extreme poverty from 30% to 20% by 2015, it cannot develop successful policies to achieve this if it doesn't understand the nature of poverty, how it is experienced, and how people have successfully escaped poverty.

“To address the issue of urban poverty, PNG needs to have an evidence-based policy which is strongly backed by data that understands, defines, and measures urban poverty accurately and fairly”, says Dr. Donovan Storey.

Unfortunately, existing quantitative data and case study research has failed to affect change at the urban planning and policy level. Statistics on income or numbers of urban poor, in particular, fail to capture the lived experience of marginalised groups and are of limited value in determining policy solutions.

The focus should be on well designed quantitative, but especially qualitative research that better engages the community and learns from the experiences of men, women and youth in different urban contexts.

“Urban poverty does exist in PNG but to date there has been a reluctance to recognise it as such. Instead it is regarded as passing hardship. We must acknowledge its existence and work with those who experience it. Greater community action and partnerships are needed to identify and confront the drivers of exclusion and marginalisation,” says Storey.

A *participatory* urban poverty research strategy for PNG should be a major priority. Failure to prioritise this research will ultimately threaten the very fabric of PNG's urban future.

Dr. Donavon Storey is a Lecturer in Development Planning at the University of Queensland. He has carried out studies in the Asia-Pacific region for 15 years into housing, livelihoods, community development, environment, urban poverty, and more recently on urban safety and violence.

The report “Urban Poverty in Papua New Guinea” is available at www.nri.org.pg.

For any other information call Esther Haro on 326 0061 ext.311 or email eharo@nri.org.pg.