



Thursday October 27, 2011

## **Media Release**

### **Honorable Mald: Social Capital Essential in Developing Communities**

A new NRI publication titled *Community Empowerment: Policy Research Framework*, launched today by Minister for Community Development, Honorable Andrew Mald states that not enough attention is given to social capital as declared in the PNG Vision 2050.

The publication intends to inform policy makers on how to effectively mitigate community vulnerability, social disintegration, and low social indicators. Social capital is identified as central to community empowerment initiatives. It refers to the “the shared norms or values that promote cooperation and cohesion within, and among, social relationships within a community or setting”. If this is not urgently addressed it will hinder the foundations that form communities in PNG and affect the successfulness of community empowerment projects.

It is NRI’s mandate to contribute to research based evidence for policy makers. And this publication provides the initial framework in facilitating the Department of Community Development’s realization of its PNG Vision 2050 commitments. The publication addresses social capital issues by identifying three core challenges faced by communities:

- The experience of powerlessness faced by communities;
- The ignorance portrayed as an array of problems in people’s attitude; and
- Poverty incidences

Policy strategies highlighted in the publication to address these challenges called for the need for policy makers to become more responsive in empowering communities and to engage in effective collaboration involving key stakeholder participation. Policy strategies recommended in the publication include:

- Community governance to deal with people’s powerlessness;
- Community learning to deal with ignorance; and
- Social economy to alleviate poverty

The author of the publication Dr. Michael Unage, a Senior Research Fellow and leader of the Improving Basic Services Program was commended for his efforts in providing such a framework that could be used by the Government to implement effective policies.

Dr. Unage stated that this publication was only a framework of issues identified that affected the effectiveness of multiple projects for Community Empowerment. He reiterated that the next publication by NRI would include more detailed accounts of how to effectively integrate Government, stakeholder and non-government organizations community empowerment projects, to the target groups – communities, so they can empower themselves through enhanced social capital mechanisms.

Honorable Mald, thanked the NRI for their initiative in publishing this timely publication which was a key development measure of Papua New Guinea’s continued growth. Honorable Mald said that the “O’Neil-Namah Government...acknowledged these important contributions and will rely on NRI for further assistance in policy discussion.”

Honorable Mald, also said that the current government is committed to developing the rural communities in order to improve people’s livelihood, and will continue to work in an effective and coordinated partnership effort with its relevant stakeholders to resolve the issues that lead to community fragmentation, vulnerability, and poverty.

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***The National Research Institute - hosting the policy discussions that will shape Papua New Guinea’s future development.***

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