



# Media Brief

16th June 2009

This Media Brief is intended to provide background information on this event to members of the media, in order to assist their coverage of this event.

Our media liaison for the conference is Esther Haro and she can be contacted at any time on 326 0300 or 326 0061 or email [eharo@nri.org.pg](mailto:eharo@nri.org.pg) to clarify details, answer questions and help arrange interviews with conference participants.

## Contents

Media Release	1
Background to the Conference	2
Conference Objectives	2
Overview of Conference Sessions	2
NRI's Community Empowerment Research Program	3
About the Conference Presenters	4

## Media Release: NRI Community Transformation Conference Begins Today

The NRI Community Transformation Conference begins today at the new NRI Conference Centre.

The conference will capture the success stories of community development programs around PNG, with invited speakers from community groups, academia, and the public and private sectors gathering to share their knowledge and experiences.

“Many community development initiatives have survived and flourished in PNG where government service delivery has been weak,” says NRI Director Dr Thomas Webster, “This conference will facilitate the sharing of the lessons learned around the country which will help all those involved in community development to share in a vital pool of information.”

Dr Thomas Webster will also emphasize in his opening speech the significance of community development in the context of the National Strategic Planning Process, in particular, the importance of learning from unique success stories of community development around the country as a way to generate creative policy solutions in the future.

The conference will be opened by special guest, the Member for Anglimp –South Waghi, the Hon. Jamie Maxtone Graham.

The conference begins today with a session on

- Community Governance

Sessions over the following two days include

- Community Conflict Resolution
- Rural Economy Prospects, and
- Women in Community Development.

## Background to the Conference

In PNG, government services have struggled to meet the needs of the majority population, especially in rural and remote areas. Without these essential government services, communities have taken the initiative to access basic services and create sustainable livelihoods themselves.

In PNG some community development initiatives have flourished while other communities have struggled to develop, manage, and sustain localized initiatives.

NRI has recognized the need to identify the factors which have:

- enabled certain communities in PNG to become more productive and self-sufficient,
- ensured communities are resilient in the face of changing economic, cultural and social pressures; and
- enabled communities to take ownership of their own development processes and become empowered development actors rather than passive recipients of development.

Community development initiatives often occur at the grassroots level and their success stories and experiences may not be captured in national policy debates and discussions. However, these experiences can be useful in helping other communities experiencing similar challenges.

The National Research Institute's Community Transformation Conference will bring together speakers from community development groups, academia, donor agencies, government policy analysts, and the private sector. This forum will create and share a vital body of knowledge that can be used by policy makers, community development groups, and all levels of government in the future.

The importance of community based research is being increasingly recognized in the new National Strategic Plan development process. There is a growing awareness of the need for government to learn from successful community development initiatives to

improve service delivery in PNG. Government agencies are able to foster and encourage community-driven development, and at the same time do more to meet the health, education and infrastructure needs of the population.

## Objectives of the Conference

The objectives of the conference are to

- facilitate linkages, networking and partnerships among community development practitioners, researchers and policy makers;
- create and share knowledge among stakeholders
- find new ways of involving people in formulating policies and making decisions that affect them and their local communities; and
- assist in identifying and promoting the best processes and practices for community development.

## Overview of Conference Sessions

Key conference sessions will include:

- **Community Governance;**
- **Community Conflict Resolution;**
- **Rural Economy Prospects;** and
- **Women in Community Development.**

### 1. Community Governance— Tuesday, 16 June

This session will look at how community governance interrelates with formal governance structures at the national and local levels. Often, village and traditional governance structures sit in a difficult relationship with state institutions, particularly where there are governance failures at the national level. It is also clear that forms of governance which are appropriate to, and originate from, the community level can lead to greater community stability, which, in turn, creates greater prospects for long-term prosperity. This session will also broadly look at the place of 'governance' in community development.

Presenters in this session include: Dr. Nai-

huwo Ahai, Mr. Alponse Aime, Dr. Solomon Yowait, Sir Barry Holloway, Mr. James Ogia, Mr. Bernard Gunn, and Mr. Gaikovina Kula (see biographies over page).

## **2. Community Conflict Resolution—Tuesday 16, and Wednesday 17, June**

Communities and community development initiatives are damaged when conflict cannot be effectively resolved. When legal systems at the national level do not effectively serve people at the grassroots level, community conflict resolution and community justice become important. They can be more responsive and appropriate to the unique experiences of different communities.

This session looks at the important lessons that can be learned about how to successfully resolve conflict at the community level. Presenters include Archbishop Douglas Young, Ms. Michelle Kopi, Mr. Benjamin Sipa, Mr. James Laki, Ms. Rosie Aize and Mr. Joseph Sukwianomb (see biographies over page).

## **3. Rural Economy Prospects—Wednesday, 17 June**

A PNG that has fulfilled its development potential will be one that has successfully fostered the potential of the rural economy. There are considerable economic benefits in encouraging subsistence forms of agricultural activities to transform into semi-commercial or commercial forms of production. However the benefits to communities are also significant when they are self reliant.

Presenters include Mr. Brown Bai, Mr. John Mangos, Mr. Diego Miranda, Mr. Israel Bewang, Mr. Sil Poi and Mr. Gabrieal Gaba (see biographies over page).

## **4. Women in Community Development—Thursday, 18 June**

Women are essential to achieve successful community development. They may be leaders, workers as well as land-owners. When

women participate in community decision making they can increase the equitable and effective distribution of resources. Women are also often working behind the scenes in successful community development.

This session will look at the role of women in community development, as well as discuss the successful initiatives around the country. Presenters in this session include: Dr. Anastasia Sai, Ms. Naomi Faik-Simet, and Ms. Mathilda Parau (see biographies over page).

## **NRI's Community Empowerment Research Program**

This conference is a major event for our newly established Community Empowerment Program, currently headed by Dr Michael Unage.

Many people talk of a hand-out mentality in PNG, describing how communities consider themselves passive recipients of development. However, there are examples across the country where communities have transformed themselves into resilient, self-sufficient and productive social units, meeting the enormous challenges presented by rapid social change.

The National Research Institute believes that research can help us learn from such positive examples. This will assist policy makers to understand and appreciate the relevance of community-driven development and to foster initiatives across the country.

The NRI Community Empowerment Program includes a case study on the Domil community in Western Highlands Province, which, in many ways, is a model for self-help and community empowerment in PNG.

The Community-Based Health and Development Program in Domil includes a community government, a resource centre, a community banking facility, agricultural activities, a small coffee growers' association, health facilities, and carpentry training. A major factor in the success of the program has been to revive clan solidarity and build social capital as a pillar of the community. This has encouraged participation in and ownership over

development programs.

This program has attracted attention over the past 13 years as it represents a model that may be used by other communities to develop community responsibility, local governance, and economic development.

## List of Conference Participants:

**Dr. Naihuwo Ahai**, is currently the Team Leader for the Democratic Governance Program, Transition Phase (an AusAID project). He holds a Ph.D. in Community Development from the University of New England.

**Mr Alphonse Aime** lectures at Divine Word University, Madang, in the Faculty of Arts, with the Communication Arts Department.

**Mr. Brown Bai** is the chairperson of the Public Sector Reform Advisory Group (PSRAG), and the chairperson of the Rural Industries Council.

**Mr. Israel Bewang**, is from the Foundation for People and Community Development in Mandag, which is a PNG Partner of the CSIRO.

**Ms. Naomi Faik-Simet** is a Dance Researcher, Music Department, Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies.

**Mr. Bernard Gunn** is the director of the Integrated Health and Development Program. A trained nurse, he was integral to the evolution of the Domil integrated community development program.

**Sir Barry Holloway** has had a distinguished career in PNG and is currently acting as an adviser to government and the NEC with the Taskforce for Government and Administrative Reform and the Public Sector Reform Management Unit.

**Rosie Johnson** is serving as a magistrate in various courts in Port Moresby.

**Ms. Michelle Kopi** is a Researcher with the Oxfam Highlands Program.

**Mr. Gaikovina Kula** established Conservation International, and is currently working with the Department of Environment and Conservation.

**Mr James Laki** is currently the Executive Director for Peace Foundation Melanesia Inc., which is involved in community empowerment, through

restorative justice, conflict resolution, and win-win mediation training.

**Mr. John Mangos** is the Chief Executive Officer of Digicel PNG and will be speaking on the innovative work of the Digicel Foundation. Digicel is a major sponsor of the conference.

**Mr. Diego Miranda** is a Development Expenditure Research Adviser at the National Economic and Fiscal Commission.

**Mr. James Ogio** is with Coffey International Development as a Corporate Plan Implementation Advisor to Sandaun Provincial Administration under Sub National Strategy (SNS - Ausaid) and Provincial Performance Improvement Initiative (PPII – GoPNG).

**Ms. Mathilda Parau** is a Project Officer for the Young Women's Christian Association. The YWCA is a global network of women advancing social justice and creating opportunities and services for the development of women and their families.

**Mr. Sil Poi**, is an adviser to the Salt Nomane Livestock Farmers Cooperative Society Ltd District, which covers the lower Wahgi Valley and the Karimui Plateau.

**Dr. Anastasia Sai** is a lecturer in the PNG Studies Department at the Divine Word University. Dr. Sai has a Ph.D. from the University of Victoria, Australia.

**Mr. Benjamin Sipa** is with the Oxfam Highlands Program.

**Mr. Joseph Sukwianomb** is the Program Manager of External Stakeholders in the Public Sector Reform and Management Unit

**Gabriel Gaba Vana** is the team Leader in the Village Agricultural Extension Project. The Extension Service Provider networks with government agriculture agencies and church development activities in farming in kwikila district.

**Archbishop Douglas Young** is the Archbishop of the Mt. Hagen Diocese. Archbishop Young also holds a Doctorate in Conflict Resolution from Macquarie University, Australia.

**Dr. Solomon Yowait**, Dr Yowait is a consultant to the office of the Alotau Open Electorate and member for Alotau and Minister for Culture and Tourism, Hon. Charles Abel.