



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 25 October 2022

Impact of informal release of customary land at Taurama Valley to settlers

Increasing migration combined with natural population growth have seen rapid growth of urban settlements spilling over into peri-urban customary land in Port Moresby. This process has been fueled by the shortage of affordable residential housing. Though unplanned settlements on State, private or customary land is illegal in Papua New Guinea (PNG), there is growing evidence of informal arrangements between landowners and settlers where migrants employ creative strategies to obtain and maintain access to the land.

The ‘Taurama urbanisation pilot project 2012’ was intended to develop customary land at Taurama Valley as a suburb under a partnership arrangement between the government, landowners and developers. However, that project was abandoned when landowners disposed land informally to settlers before the project could be implemented.

The National Research Institute (NRI) Spotlight Volume 15, Issue 16: “**Customary land release to settlers and its impact on landowners at Taurama Valley, Port Moresby**” by Dr Elizabeth Kopel, Senior Research Fellow and Program Leader, Informal Economy Research, points out several factors why landowners released their land to settlers.

Landowners informally released their land as a result of the following:

- Lack of understanding of the purpose of the project due to lack of consultation and engagement with landowners;
- Landowners wanted to save customary land from what they interpreted as alienation; and
- Offered an opportunity to earn cash for meeting livelihood needs.

The informal customary land transactions resulted in the following impacts:

- Ambiguities around terms and conditions of settlement;
- Diverging understanding of the nature of transactions between landowners and settlers;
- Conflicts between landowners and settlers for selling the same plot of land to different people;
- Security of tenure is not guaranteed for future generation of settlers; and
- Conflicts between landowner families over decision on land disposal and how the cash is distributed.

Any intervention whether it is going down the route of undertaking voluntary customary land registration and incorporated land group registration or adopting another model of permanent land registration would need to consider and balance the interests of both landowners and migrants. The State needs to facilitate a process for landowners to work with settlers so that they (landowners) can maintain ownership of their land and collect ongoing rental dues from settlers.

The Publication and Media Release can be accessed on the PNG NRI website <https://www.pngnri.org>.

Also, follow discussions and updates on our social media platforms:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pngnri>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/pngnri>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/national-research-institute-of-papua-new-guinea-nri/>

For enquiries, please contact Samuel Kehatsin on Tel: 326 0061 or Email: Samuel.Kehatsin@pngnri.org

Authorised for release by:

Dr. Osborne O. Sanida
Director, PNG NRI