

Highlands Regional Development Forum

Southern Highlands Provincial Assembly Hall,
MENDI

24-25 March, 2015



Summary and Recommendations

Outline

- ❑ Participation
- ❑ Discussions
- ❑ Commendations
- ❑ Issues
- ❑ Recommendations



Highlands Provinces

- ❑ More than 210 participants from seven (7) highlands provinces attended the two days forum
- ❑ Opportunity to learn and be heard

Quote from participant

“There are no avenues to express our issues for a long time so we have been bottling up the issues to ourselves. Who do we talk to and where do we go and express them? The CIMC provides this unique opportunity for us to talk on the same level”.



Commendation for Government

- Participants strongly commended the current government for all the good policy initiatives especially, those led by the Minister for National Planning, starting with the Responsible Sustainable Development Strategy, the National Lands & Housing Initiative, National Population Policy, Water & Sanitation Policy, and others.



Region specific Issues

- ❑ Participants noted that Government Policies are geared towards addressing many key issues that are at the heart of every Papua New Guinean
- ❑ However the Government was cautioned to support policies with adequate resource through a clear delivery process
- ❑ Government must recognise an independent entity to monitor and report on performance for sub-national funding for improved service delivery



Responsible Sustainable Development

Issue - Human Resource Development through TFF

- The Tuition Fee Free policy although has the right vision to ensure the country has a educated population that can contribute to progress and development the policy was rushed resulting in the rapid drop of the quality of education spurred by overcrowding from lack of infrastructure and related resources

Recommendations

- Implementation of the Tuition Fee Free (TFF) Education Policy must be properly monitored with audit teams visiting schools. Encourage regular monitoring & critical evaluation on expenditure/spending by schools
- Establish TVET training centres, technical high schools & technical colleges (TAFE) to cater for the anticipated high number of grade 12 drop outs resulting from the drop of the quality in the learning process.
- Establish apprenticeship programs in conjunction with companies and make funding available for families to attend school to minimise other factors created by lack of education

Issue - Agriculture development

The main stay of more than 85% of the population in the country is agriculture. But over the years government has given very little attention to this very important sector with very little investment and support to ensure the sector was vibrant.

Recommendations

- Government must revive the Agriculture Bank to support small growers in the country
- Create local and inter-regional markets and opportunities for farmers to export products (internally & externally)
- Empower youth and women in business
- Build & maintain roads, jetties & airstrips and provide transport subsidy to all in the country extend the highlands highway to the Strickland in Hela.
- Government must discourage agricultural imports through tariffs and assist local farmers with subsidies & technical assistance.

Issue – Land & Housing

Based on the presentations done on affordable land and housing the questions asked were; is the government's target of 40, 000 houses achievable in 2017 and how can customary landowners benefit or participate?

Recommendations

- The policy needs to be adequately supported and sustained beyond 2017
- Government must ensure to support policy implementation by releasing funds on time to ensure appropriate outcomes as targeted
- Provide opportunities for customary landowners to register ILGs and lease their land to government and to encourage participation in spin-off benefits at the local level.
- Review the current public service terms and conditions including the outdated housing allowance for public service throughout the country
- The public service must be streamlined to decrease number of staff and initiate a structure that is lean, mean and competent based on contractual arrangements. This would also attract competent technical people to work in the districts

Issue - SMEs

Discussions around the current SME Risk Sharing Facility provided by government and the World bank showed that there was a need for the facility to cater for micro and small SMEs. Currently it is biased towards well-established SMEs only. It was also pointed out that the SME Policy, Masterplan should be simple, practical and realistic and should capture the informal sector as a vehicle for micro enterprises.

Recommendations

- NDB must not increase its interest rates and associated costs other associated costs imposed on the customers, eg, application processes and criteria
- Remove NDB management fees, the 30% Equity to be subsidised by provincial governments and local MPs rates
- NDB must review its operational processes and procedures to make it more suitable for PNGeans. Eg. The application form must be simple for SMEs to understand and fill it out
- Provincial governments must be responsive to citizens needs and provide support to access grants to conduct businesses
- Banks must provide opportunities for youth to access finance so they are empowered to contribute to development in the country
- Create a policy that will support youth to be productive and generate income

Issue – DSIP PSIP & LLGSIP

Monitoring and reporting of development expenditure at the sub-national level was discussed at length considering that government funding is now channelled directly to the districts in provinces. Questions were raised to who is responsible to monitor and report on this expenditure that amounts to millions of kina

Recommendations

- Monitoring and reporting must come from an independent body mandated to monitor the flow and use of funds from the national government at the district and local level government.
- This independent body must be included in the budgeting process so they are informed and know what funds to track and monitor
- District Development Authority (DDA) must involve Churches, Youth and Women groups so that they represent local communities and channel information to the independent body
- The monitoring body must have provincial or district offices so that the public can report on any misuse of funds in the provinces and districts
- All budget information at provincial or district levels must be publicised to ensure transparency and accountability

End



Thank You Very Much