Informal settlements and social Inequality in Fiji: Evidence of serious policy gaps

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of informal or squatter settlements in Fiji reveals several issues that relate to social inequality. Issues such as economic, social and environmental conditions are inextricably linked to one another and they manifest inequalities that exist within, and between residents of the 200 informal settlements and other socio-economic groups in Fiji. Market oriented policies have increased the difficulties faced by low income earners. This paper seeks to highlight a number of social inequalities which have given rise to such settlements and their prevalence. Most prominent among the social inequalities that exist is the lack of access by residents of informal settlements to security of land tenure and adequate housing. Using a Rights based approach, the paper will examine income inequalities between households; land tenure inequality; spiraling property prices; and inequality in access to infrastructure, utilities and services (roads, electricity, and water supply, and health and education). The post-2006 government’s policies relating to squatter upgrade and relocation will be considered.

Key words: urbanisation, social inequality, informal settlements, poverty