



# Ministry of Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment

FFA House  
4 Gladstone Road  
Box 2131, Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji

Telephone : (679) 3304364  
Facsimile : (679) 3310026

---

## **GRATITUDE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I am honoured by the invitation to launch the FIJI – RAPID URBAN PROFILING. I am encouraged and humbled by your presence here today to be part of this launching.

## **FIJI – URBAN CONTEXT**

The Ministry of Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment is embarking on an exercise to better understand the state of the environment under the jurisdictions of the local government, the municipal councils. It is imperative and prudent that we undertake this exercise, for only then can we better management our urban centres, we can identify our strengths and pursue the opportunities.

Fiji's population is approximately over 850,000 with 51% in urban areas. These are the areas which the government of the day has tasked municipal councils to serve, to provide the needed service given that the urban economy is the engine driving the national economy. Whilst local governments strive for an improvement in their service, there is also an evident increase in urban ills and issues. One can imagine the levels of these urban issues when taking into account population projections by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics whereby over 60% would reside in the urban areas by 2030.

A research undertaken in 2003 stated that 57% of the squatter population resides in the Greater Suva Area. That is from Lami, Suva, Suva-Nausori Corridor and Nausori. These projections portray an image of urban poverty to higher levels considering the figures of 2003 squatter population. Our capital city is experiencing tremendous urban pressure in trying to handle itself, to control and manages this unprecedented growth that is trickling to its neighbouring towns.

Where do we start, which program, project or services should the government, both at national and local government pursue or prioritize? What are the directions or path do we take in order to tackle urban poverty? Where does urban poverty exists? Where is urban poverty most prevalent, or in which part of the areas within settlements? What are the current scenarios in terms of urban

health, infrastructure and amenities, governance, urban disaster etc? What are the target areas? How much local economic development is there within the municipal areas? Are there enough opportunities for economic developments? Do these centres create opportunities for rural-urban linkages?

### **FIJI – RAPID URBAN PROFILING**

The FIJI – RAPID URBAN PROFILING is an accelerated-action oriented exercise that the ministry will be carrying out to identify the most pressing needs to improve living conditions of the poorest and reinforce sustainable urban developments. **Goal 7 Target 7 (d) of the Millennium Development Goals** talks about significantly improving the lives of at least 100million slum dwellers by 2020. Though we do not have slums, in the Fiji context, we have informal settlements, ‘vakavanua’ settlements or squatters. The government through our ministry is making every effort to improve these living conditions; in improving it, sustaining it such that we do not reach stages regarded as ‘slums’ come 2020.

I understand that the urban profiling exercise is the First Phase of the Participatory Slum Upgrading Program (PSUPs), with UN-Habitat as the leading global agency to the upgrading programs. Before we pursue upgrading works, we must first have full knowledge of the settlements and this information is facilitated by profiling of selected informal settlements within our main cities and towns. The ministry has engaged research and surveying assistants who have been trained to carry out this challenging task. In engaging them, the ministry is also capitalizing on the intelligence of the profilers, most of whom are graduates in search of employment. This is an experience, both for the ministry and the profilers in its joint-effort to produce that needed information that will portray our cities and towns within a short period of time.

Urban management is all about tackling urban issues through a participatory approach. Thus, it is not only by the Ministry of Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment. As a participatory exercise, the ministry acknowledges your organizations not only as stakeholders but more as our partners, to join us in our efforts for a properly managed urban environment. Your support is sought from the initial or first phase i.e. the Urban Profiling of Urban Centres of Fiji, to collectively provide needed information to the ministry in order to provide a better understanding of our urban centres. The priorities will only be made clearer, implementation programs on improvements to our urban environments will be more focused driven and coordinated by our joint-efforts.

**It is my pleasure to officially launch the FIJI – RAPID URBAN PROFILING**

**Col. Samuela Saumatua**

**Minister for Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment.**