

# MS302: Research Project

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**Topic:** Issues in coastal areas relating to housing and  
Squatters:

*Case study- Honiara Solomon Islands*

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## **MS302 Research proposal**

### *Topic*

#### **Issues relating to coastal housing and squatters in Urban Centre – Case study: in Honiara Solomon Islands**

##### **1. Introduction**

Issues in relation to housing and Squatters along the coast in most Pacific Island countries including Solomon Island are among some of the issues which have contributed much to the destruction of the Coastal Environment and its resources. In the case of Solomon Islands in particular, the urban Centre in Honiara, most of the developments are more concentrated in the coastal areas. In the urban Centre in Honiara it is obvious that most of the housing and squatters developments are concentrated at the coast. Most of these houses are informal residents meaning they are illegal residents and settlements. It is strongly argued that illegal or unplanned residents and settlements within and along the coast of Honiara town are the main contributing agents of changes leading to many issues facing coastal areas.

Development of housing and squatter settlement along the coast of Honiara Urban Centre has put more pressure on the coastal Environment, the resources that people used to enjoy, and the ecosystems there in. Many scholars and experts nowadays have ascertained and provided a hypothesis based on their findings stating that the issues relating to housing and squatters along the coast have dramatically and rapidly increased over the years. They stated that the development of houses and squatters on coastal areas is apparently and nevertheless associated with some factors such as the continued increase of human population and the Urbanization processes. These may include the migration of people from rural to urban areas, and most importantly is urban development. It is the pressure of human population and the need for urbanization that result in too many residents and settlements along the coast of Honiara. It is perceptible that most people living in the Coastal Squatter settlement are those with little or no education background and low income earners. Thus, the issue may be worsened if responsible authorities do not take any action.

However, the Honiara City Council together with other prominent parties in collaboration with the National Government of Solomon Islands and the people in Honiara to ensure development of illegal housing and squatters must be properly managed and mitigated and thus to some extent should not be entertained. That is to ensure housing developments do not bring a problem to the coastal resources, natural environment and societal wellbeing.

Assessment has been done to address the level of impacts caused by the rapid increase of housing development to coastal areas in Honiara. However, due to the continued increase of human population from rural areas, more people migrate to town and settle along the coast of Honiara. Thus, lack of urban planning and housing policy can be another factor that leads to increased development of housing and squatters on the coast. Therefore, in this report the following important elements will be considered in the course of the discussion. Firstly, the

research paper will highlight the Negative implication of housing and squatters to coastal areas. Secondly, the research paper will examine in detail the relevant propose strategies to further address the issue of housing and squatters. Finally, the research will conclude with some very crucial recommendations for future improvement.

## **2. Aim**

The aim of this research Project is to find out the main issues related to the development of coastal housing and squatters in Honiara town, Solomon Islands.

## **3. Objectives**

After the successfully completion of this research project, the following objectives should have been achieved

- To identify the main issues related to coastal housing and squatters in Honiara Urban Centre
- To learn about the implication of those issues on the Coastal environment, resources and societal wellbeing
- To find out how these issues can be minimized and mitigated using relevant propose strategies.

## **4. Background information about the study area**

Honiara is the capital of Solomon Islands and is situated on Guadalcanal Island the largest Island with an area of approximately 22 square Kilometres with a population of about 64,409 which is 12.5 percent of the country total population in 2009 (Rodil, 2009). However recent study have stated that due to the increase migration of people from rural to urban area the population of Honiara urban Centre started to increase from 64,600 and above with an average density of 2,953 people per square kilometer. It serve as the main administrative, educational, and economic hub or Centre for the country. Furthermore, Honiara city was developed from the rubble of an American war base established during the Second World War, and has grown at a rate of 2.7 percent per annum over the years to become the primary city in the country. The city is made up of diverse ethnic groups and indigenous people. The main economic activities in Honiara are in the services sector. Rising unemployment, poverty and high cost of living are common features in Honiara. Some residents, particularly those of informal settlements, are engaged in a range of informal economic activities. Basic urban services (water and power provision and garbage collection) vary between the formal and informal settlements. While formal residential areas are often serviced, the informal settlements are not. Honiara city is faced with poor service delivery, lack of public sanitation, poor planning, shortage of housing, high cost of living, environmental degradation, and a rise in informal settlements and housing on coastal areas (Hou & Kudu, 2012). Various scholars and experts have argued that migration of rural dwellers from rural to Urban Centre in

Honiara is frequent and evident as most of the informal housing and squatters within the city are residents of the rural people who coming to reside in the urban Centre for various reasons. Consequently, more issues relate to housing and squatters occurs and can be seen on the coast of Honiara leading to number of challenges that affects that coastal environment, the marine ecosystem and the people as a whole.

Fig 1. Shows map of Honiara Urban Centre, Guadalcanal Island (Solomon Islands)



Source: [www.googlemap.com](http://www.googlemap.com)

## 5. Methodology

In carrying out this research project, qualitative method is used to understand the underlying reasons, implication and outcome of issues related to coastal housing and squatters in Honiara. There are number of information sources being consulted and used to compile this research project. These includes, both primary and secondary information. The primary sources of information are obtain through interviews with people who are part of the informal settlements in Honiara. In terms of secondary sources, information are obtain and gathered from various online journal articles, Government reports, newspaper article and books which contain information regarding the issues related to coastal housing and squatters in Honiara. Furthermore, through my own personal experience and observation as a Solomon Islander, it is obvious and proven that issues on coastal housing and squatters in Honiara have enormous impacts on both the coastal environment and the marine resources there in. Although, most information presented are quite broad and complicated to understood, this research project managed to analyze and narrow down the points of consideration which really helpful to the completion of the project on a timely manner.

## 6. Literature Review

Issues in the coastal areas relating to housing and squatters are classified as some of the most widely known issues affecting the coastal environment in most Island countries in the Pacific including Solomon Islands as documented by most scholars and researchers. Obviously, many writers and researchers argue that people have different perspective on understanding the issues related to housing and squatters on coastal areas based on their own perception. Furthermore, most written literature reveal and argue that the impacts of urbanization process and its development; and thus the continue increase of human population have contribute to the migration of people from rural to urban areas for many different reasons and interests. As a result, more and more informal housing and squatter settlements have been developed which leads to many challenges on the coastal environment. This is obvious in the case of Solomon Islands, particularly in Honiara, where most issues and challenges along the coast of Honiara are linked or rooted from the development and erection of most informal housing and squatter settlement. The diverse perception of writers on the issue of housing and squatters on coastal environment and the people have been closely examined by this report. Although the issues of housing and squatters in coastal areas might be different from other places apart from Honiara but there are similar issues can be seen still exist as stated by many writers or scholars.

According to Hou & Kudu (2012) they stated that population growth and increase rural-urban migration are considered as the key to the prolific growth of informal settlements in Honiara, the lack of affordable housing and developable land for low and middle income earners also drives the trend. Donnelly and Jiwanji (2010) further argued that due to population pressure and process of urbanization, development of housing and squatters in the coastal areas in particular the urban Centre in Honiara was come into reality. In most pacific islands states including Solomon Islands, particularly in Honiara the development of coastal housing and squatters have number of implication on the coastal areas which leads to some form of environmental problem such as the pollution of land, air and fresh water along the coast and rivers, destruction of natural habitats, and even leads to some form health related diseases which affects the people well-being. This was further supported by the work carried out by Pende (2009) on the impacts of urban growth on water supply and sanitation in Honiara. He stated that poor water supply and sanitation such as lack of proper toilet in most housing and squatters contribute to poor and unhygienic standard of living for people and their coastal environment. He then stated that in order to minimize and mitigate the issues of sanitation and water on the coastal environment people needs a good collaboration with the government and other civil societies, responsible authorities and even stakeholders to look beyond the error of informal housing and squatters on the coast of Honiara urban Centre and do something about it. According to Hou & Kudu (2012) they stated that in order to managed the development of informal housing and squatter settlement it is very crucial to improve and strengthen the capacity of current Ward Development Communities to coordinate settlement activities such as ward planning, policing, garbage collection, drainage

clearance purposely to minimized and mitigate the undermined implication of Informal housing and Squatters on the Environment, coastal habitats and its ecosystem and also the health of people. They also highlighted that there should a Device division plans for the upgrading of the informal housing and squatter settlements through inclusive and participatory dialogue. In addition, Powell (2014) also highlighted that proper policy and regulatory mechanism is one good strategy to deal with the the impacts of housing and squatters to avoid environment and health implication and issues. It also stated that proper urban planning and design must be emphasized to avoid continuous entertainment of building illegal housing and settlements along the coast. Taking into consideration these crucial strategies and practices will reduce the output or the implication of housing and squatters on the coastal environment, natural resources and for the people as a whole.

## **7. Discussion**

### **7.1. Negative implication of housing and Squatters to coastal areas**

However, the migration of people from rural to Honiara urban Centre has resulted to a lot of informal housing and squatters being built on the coast. Obviously, the research have indicated several important issues in relation to housing and squatters and its implication to coastal areas and marine resources. As being stated by many writers that due to the influence of urbanization process and increase of rural-urban migration of people, Honiara have experienced lots of issues rooted out from the development of informal housing and squatters done by people which really affects the coastal resources and the environmental as a whole. To be able to minimize and mitigate the negative implication of the continue development of informal housing and squatters it is very crucial to firstly identify and be knowledgeable about the main issues affecting the coastal areas. Outline and discussed below are the main issues linked to informal housing and squatters that affecting the coastal areas.

#### ***7.1.1. Habitats destruction and degradation on coastal area***

Development of housing and squatters in the coastal areas leads to the destruction and degradation of coastal habitats. Destruction and degradation of coastal habitats is an on-going issue along the coast of Honiara Urban Centre. This issue come about due to the continue development of housing and squatters settlement along the coast by rural-urban dwellers. Generally, Natural habitats are homes of almost hundreds, thousands and millions of coastal ecosystems and marine resources. Its importance is well understood by both peoples who lived inland and those that live on the coastal in the Honiara Urban Centre. However, due to the rapid increase of human population in the Honiara Urban Centre followed by the influence and impacts of urbanization process and development, most natural habitats that supports the life forms for all coastal species both terrestrial and marine along the coast of Honiara Urban Centre has been destroyed and put into extinction by peoples disrespectful activities through the

development of housing and squatters settlement and other uses. Today this particular issue is a growing concern and becoming a debatable issue for most conservationist, people and the government in the Solomon Islands, because the extinction of these coastal habitats not only affects the life forms of both terrestrial and marine species, rather it also affects the human population and their dependency on the natural habitats in terms of foods and other important uses as part of their daily livelihood (Roughan & Wara, 2010). For instance, the removal of trees on the mouth of Mataniko River in Honiara to build housing and squatter settlement not only affects the life of terrestrial organisms but also those organism that lived and depend on near the river side have also been affected. Moreover, it also affect the coastal and marine environment. Furthermore, the increase of human activities on the coast have put pressure on coral reefs. Most people extract coral reefs for decoration and also making lime for chewing betel nuts. In addition, it is well understood that mangrove trees are breeding places for fish and also a home for different bird species, as the development of housing and squatter increased, the cutting down of mangrove and other trees on the coastal area for housing and squatters development has outnumbered the mangroves trees and thus affects the life of marine resources and coastal biodiversity's. It is therefore very crucial to preserve the coastal habitats for the good of the environment, ecosystems and people well-being as a whole.

#### ***7.1.2. Pollution on coastal Environment***

Another main issue that can be identified is coastal pollution. Pollution is one of the common issue that is linked to the development of housing and squatter settlements on the coast and within the urban Centre in Honiara. In Honiara, one can observed that most housing and squatter settlements are concentrated on the coastal areas and the probability for pollution to occur is high, this is because the more people living on the squatters and higher the risk of pollution will occur. According to Hou & kudu (2012), they have argued the pollution on the coast of Honiara is one of the devastating issue that had affects the life almost a thousand and millions of marine life. Basically it is caused by human activities such as littering, dispose rubbish on coastal areas and so on. Most people who reside on informal housing and squatter zones have lack the ideas of how pollution become occur and will impacts the coastal environment, therefore they continue to dispose and throw rubbish everywhere where ever they want. For instance, the dispose of rubbish by Malaitan and Lord Howe people at the mouth of Mataniko River-central Honiara and Lunga River in -East Honiara. These group of people usually thrown and dispose their rubbish and waste directly to the river without realizing that most of these rubbish and waste sometimes contain some toxic substance. Consequently, fresh water have been contaminated with toxic substance, marine species such as fish and other marine life have also been affected. Many scholars have argued that that not only the marine life is affected instead, people who depend on this resources has also been affected as well (Hou & Kudu, 2012).



### ***7.1.3. Destruction and loss of historical and traditional sites***

Loss of historical and traditional sites is another debatable issue in relation to housing and squatter settlements along the coast of Honiara. This issue is become a controversial issue for most people especially land owners, people and the government in Honiara. As the population of rural-urban dwellers increased in Honiara, most sites particularly historical and traditional sites have been turn into housing and squatter zone. This issue bring about conflicts among people especially landowners and residents of the squatter settlement. In Solomon Islands in general, majority of land are customary own land meaning, primarily these land are owned by locals. The ownership of land was passed down from one generation to the next by their ancestors. According to Roughan & Wara (2010), he has highlighted that in the case of Guadalcanal Island where Honiara is located, 87% of land are customarily owned by people by both individually and tribes. According to Hou & Kudu (2012), he further highlighted that in Guadalcanal particularly in Honiara, even thou most of the land are under the control or jurisdiction of the state, majority of land are still owned by locals this shows how powerful cultures is. However, when looking at the development of housing and squatter settlement, this particular development have interrupted and destroy many historical and traditional sites own by people. Today, most of these sites on the coastal area have been occupied and replaced by large number of informal housing and squatter's zone. Interestingly, most houses and squatters which have been seen on these sites (historical and traditional sites) have been built without the consideration and consent of landowners. As a result, conflict started to arise because the preservation of this sites is linked to the traditional and historical perspective of people thus, using this land for different purposes will impacts to the life of people today and in the future. Therefore, is good to avoid building of informal housing and squatters along the coast to reduced conflict between people (Roughan & Wara, 2010).

### ***7.1.4. Degradation and exploitation of nearby coastal marine resources***

Exploitation of nearby coastal marine resources is another main issue that is obvious in Honiara Coastal area. This issue come about as a result of the continue building of both unplanned and plan houses and squatter settlements on the coast of Honiara urban Centre. In Honiara, one can observed that most people who settled along the coast are mostly rural-urban dwellers. Most of them are low income earner while others are unemployed. These groups of people depend heavily on their coastal areas for their human survival through activities particularly fishing. For instance, those people who are unemployed depend heavily on fishing as their daily activities for own consumption and also for market purposes this enable them to get as much income to support and meet their daily necessities particularly food, water, cloths and so on. Similarly, those with lower income earner in most times after work they used to go out and fishing and sale at the markets to earn income to meet basic needs and wants of their families since income from work they do may not enough (Hou & Kudu, 2012). The dependency of these people on their coastal environment and marine resources is high, as a result most marine commodities are now being over exploited and now disappeared along the coast of Honiara coastal areas this is the

issue people don't understand of having large number of people residing and settle along the coast. Some scholars and researchers argue that the exploitation of marine species like coral reefs, fish, beach-de-mar, giant clamshell, crayfish and so on today will be a threat for the future generation living in the coastal areas in Honiara. It is obvious that the continue dependency of human population for income and daily consumption on the coastal marine resources along the coast of Honiara have put more pressure biological diversity and the health of the ecosystems. Therefore, preservation and sustainability of these coastal marine resources should be taken into account to help maintain the ecological process essential for all marine life (Roughan & Wara, 2010).

## **8. Propose mitigation strategies to address the issues identified**

To address the main issues that have been discussed above, it is important to consider the following propose mitigation strategies or measures.

### ***8.1. Proper Urban design and planning***

Firstly, proper urban planning and designed is one good strategy to address the issues related to the impacts of housing and squatters in the coastal areas. In the case of Honiara, proper planning and designed was enforced by the Honiara City Council in collaboration with the Government and the Ministry of lands, housing and survey to deal with the informal and illegal set up of housing and squatter settlements along the coast of Honiara urban Centre. The Honiara city council and the Government under the ministry of land is working very hard to ensure that houses are properly built in each plot land to avoid an future urban related conflicts and impacts on the coastal areas and environment. Proper planning and design is very crucial in the sense that one can easily identified areas that proper housing to be established and vice versa whilst on other hand, Honiara city council used this to track hidden illegal housing and squatters built by rural-urban dwellers within the and along the coast of Honiara Urban Centre. Moreover, space competition is a rising issues rooted from the informal housing and squatters nowadays in Honiara,, by using the proper planning and urban design it will address the issue. Moreover, there will be less impacts on the coastal environment and marine life (Ministry of land, housings and survey, 2014).

### ***8.2. Proper waste disposal sites and waste Management plans***

Secondly, providing proper waste disposal sites to dispose rubbish together with waste management plan should be carried out and implemented to address issues related to informal housing and squatters within and on the coast of Honiara urban Centre. Obviously, waste management is one of the big issues nowadays that people fail to cope up. In the case of Honiara, Ranadi disposal site is the only sites that people in the Honiara used to dispose rubbish and other toxic substance, however people don't managed to reached that sites most times because of the distance, therefore; using proper waste disposal strategies such as the used of rubbish bin is one

good way to address the issue. In addition, waste management plans are also very helpful in the sense that it addresses issues relating to coastal housing. Implementation of proper management plan for example, those who didn't properly dispose their rubbish on the proper place should be penalized. Also Rubbish such as the Non-biodegradable items need to be recycle and reuse while the biodegradable one can be used for manure when it comes to agricultural reasons. This management plan is crucial because it help reduce the level of impacts of informal housing and squatters within and along the coast (Hou & Kudu, 2012).

### ***8.3.Decentralization policy***

Decentralization of policy is another measure or strategy that needs to be implemented to reduce the issues and impact of informal housing and squatters in the Honiara Urban Centre. In Solomon Islands particularly in Honiara, most of the government services, functions and developments are concentrated mostly in the urban Centre of Honiara. This is the main reason the pull people from rural areas to migrate to Honiara to get access to those services, function and developments. Although Solomon Island have nine sub-Centre or provinces most of these government services didn't reached these sub-Centre. It is obvious that majority of informal housing and squatters in the coastal areas in Honiara are said to be rural dwellers who migrate from rural to the main urban Centre. In the case of this, to address such issue it is good the decentralizing the government services and development to rural areas and provinces to minimize the issue. For examples, decentralization of services such as educational institutions, medical centers and industries to reduce the movement of rural-urban migration this will help reduced the issue of informal housing and squatters on the Honiara Urban Centre (Hou & kudu, 2012).

### ***8.4.Proper registration of land and housing***

Proper registering of land and housing is one also a good strategy can be used to reduce the issue of informal housing and squatters in Honiara. Many people stated that informal housing and squatter have caused many issues in the Honiara urban Centre therefore; they urge the Government through the ministry of land, housings and survey to ensure that all houses are properly registered to avoid issues to happen at any time now and in the future (Hou & Kudu, 2012).

## **9. Recommendation**

In order the improved the issue of informal housing and squatter settlement in the future, the following recommendation should have been put forward. These includes,

- It is important that the Honiara city council should formulate and implement orders to reduce conflicts and risks of unplanned housing and squatters to the coastal environment and marine ecosystem.

- Awareness program should be carried out to give people the ideas of the issues related to informal housing and squatters and their impacts on the coastal environment and marine resources
- Proper water supply and sanitation should be provided by the Government to help reduce health related diseases and pollution faced by informal housing and squatters
- Again proper urban planning and designed should be implemented to help improve future development of housing
- Again decentralization of government services should be put in place and implemented so that all people, community and provinces should get access to those services. This will in turn reduce the migration of people to urban areas thus also reduce the development of informal housing and squatters
- Waste management plans must be put in place and implemented

## **10. Conclusion**

In summary, this research comes to conclude by arguing that informal housing and squatters in Honiara Urban Centre have many implications on the coastal environment, marine ecosystem and the people. It has been strongly argued by most writers that the continued increase of housing and squatters near coastal areas has put pressure on the natural habitats and all the ecosystem there in, not only that but also it has an adverse impact on the marine species. It also stated that apart from housing and squatters, there are some factors that also contribute as well these include the pressure of population growth and urbanization process which reinforces people to migrate to the urban Centre in Honiara and build houses.

The report then highlights that the influence of informal housing and squatters has some negative implications which really affect the coastal environment, natural habitats, marine species and the health of people living in this settlement. Therefore, in order to address the issue it is very crucial to assess the impacts of the issue on the environment, marine life and people today for the good of the future. Moreover, the research also examines some of the strategies useful to address the implications of informal housing and squatter's development. This is minimized and mitigates the likely impacts of the issue of housing and squatters. Thus, there have been some recommendations that have been put in place for future improvements.

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