

# Lack of papers perpetuates Indonesia's poverty cycle

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The government must provide poor people with affordable and easy access to the official identity papers that give them rights as citizens, asset holders and workers, a global working group has said.

Proper enforcement of regulations could help poor people break out of the poverty cycle by providing them with greater protection and opportunities, the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor (CLEP) and the United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP) said Thursday.

And, the group said, such papers could do more to help poor people than cash assistance. "In many cases, poor people are unable to take part in social activities, even to help them get out of poverty itself, due to, for example, the absence of a valid national ID card or birth certificate," CLEP executive director Naresh Singh said at the launch of the commission's report.

The lack of papers means poor people's voices go unheard, making them unrecognized in society and therefore trapped in poverty, he said.

To give poor people proper-

ty rights, the group has recommended the state enable community-based ownership that will enhance people's asset base and protect them from arbitrary seizures.

With eviction still widespread in Indonesia, the group has demanded the government develop legal guidelines for forced relocations, including fair compensation.

"The government must simplify procedures to register and transfer land and property," Naresh said.

Legal recognition of property rights, he said, would open opportunities for the poor to use their assets as col-

lateral to seek business loans or mortgages.

The group also called on the government to scrap the difficult and expensive procedures required to obtain business licenses.

UNDP senior advisor Mas Achmad Santosa said his office and the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) would help implement the group's recommendations by incorporating them into the state's five-year plan for 2010-2015.

"The recommended actions for legal empowerment for the poor would be made mainstream through the state's

five-year plan," he said.

In a bid to make the recommendations workable, the group provided some examples for the government to follow.

One of the successful case studies is a successful effort carried out by Central Java's Surakarta Mayor Joko Widodo, who used a friendly approach to relocate some 900 illegal street vendors and provided them with better opportunities to continue their businesses.

"The street vendors had occupied the Banjarsari area for 15 years and no one had managed to relocate them," Joko said.

Using a personal approach and friendly dialogues, Joko managed to reach a compromise with them. He allocated some of the regional budget to provide the vendors with free-of-charge business permits, property use rights certificates and identity cards.

Each vendor also received Rp 5 million (US\$537.6) and a new free kiosk worth up to Rp 90 million. They are required to pay Rp 2,600 a day in fees.

So how did he convince the street vendors to move?

"I asked the Solo Palace to lend their soldiers to guard the vendors on their way to the new location," Joko said.