

INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT FOR URBAN POOR & BOTTOM 40% COMMUNITIES IN MALAYSIA

Edited by
Denison Jayasooria

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction ... 1

PART ONE: Building an inclusive Malaysia for all by 2020 ... 4

Panelists' Presentations ... 6

Dato' Acryl Sani (PDRM) ... 6

Dato' Dr. Amir Khan (Pemandu-NKRA Crime) ... 7

Dr. P. Sundramoorthy (USM) ... 8

Mrs. Jasmine Adaickalam (C Codes) ... 8

Mr. Fabian Bigar (Pemandu-NKRA Low Income Households) ... 10

Dr. Muhammed Abdul Khalid (Khazanah Research) ... 10

Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria (KITA-UKM) ... 12

Mr. Ho Khok Hua (IKLIN-JPNIN) ... 13

Dr. Wan Puspa Melati (SEGi University) ... 14

Ms. Cynthia Gabriel (MBPJ & C4) ... 15

Mr. Jeffrey Phang (UTAR & Residents Association) ... 16

Dr. Wong Chin Huat (Penang Institute) ... 16

Emerging Issues ... 17

Programme of the National Dialogue ... 21

PART TWO: Urban poverty, public policy & community based development

Executive Summary ... 27

Panel Presentations ... 30

Prof. Datuk Yusof Kasim (President, COMMACT Malaysia) ... 30

Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria (Principal Research Fellow, KITA-UKM)... 34
Ms. Jose Fernandez (Community Researcher) ... 37
Mrs. Jasmine Adaickalam (Community C Codes) ... 41
Mr. Mohd Asri Abdullah (COMMACT Malaysia & Abim Youth Cooperative) ... 43
Datuk Abdullah Malim Baginda (COMMACT Adviser) ... 45
Dr. Adnan Hezri (ISIS) ... 46
YB Rajiv Rishyakaran (ADUN Bukit Gasing) ... 47

Emerging Issues ... 49

Conclusion & Recommendations ... 50

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Programme Details ... 53

Appendix 2: Urban Poor Communities Living in High Rise Flats: Challenges & Possibilities for People-Centred Development ... 56

Appendix 3: Working with the Urban Poor: D.Y.N.A.M.I.S.M©: (A Case Study by Community Codes) ... 70

Appendix 4: Cooperatives and People-Centred Development: A Case Study of Muslim Youth Cooperative Malaysia Berhad ... 94

Appendix 5: Connecting People-Centred Development and Sustainability to Public Policy ... 105

Appendix 6: Media Article 'Poverty: Hope beyond Handouts' ... 119

References ... 127

About the Editor ... 130

About KITA ... 131

Introduction

While Malaysia has achieved much in reducing hard core poverty by lifting the quality of life for a majority of Malaysians, we are now faced with the reality of increasing inequality especially experienced by the urban poor and low income families living in urban squatters and high rise low cost flats. Public policy since the Tenth Malaysia Plan and now in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan has started to address this target group based on an inclusive development agenda for all. It has also begun to develop a class-based approach recognising the bottom 40% of the people categorised by their income, educational achievements, employment in low skilled and low paying jobs including the informal sector and in the location of their living situation.

In order to review critically these concerns and issues, a series of discussions and dialogues had been organised in 2013 and 2015 among key stakeholders from civil society, public sector and academic institutions. This KITA-UKM publication entitled "Inclusive development for urban poor & bottom 40% communities in Malaysia" attempts to document the findings for further policy discussions and serve as an advocacy tool. The booklet is divided into two parts based on two different discussions on the similar theme.

Part 1 documents the findings from the National Dialogue entitled **Confronting Urban Poverty: Towards Building an Inclusive Malaysia for All by 2020**. This series of dialogues was hosted by the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA-UKM); Yayasan Pemulihan Sosial (YPS), ASLI Centre for Public Policy Studies and Global Movement of Moderates (GMM). It

was held on August 4 & 5, 2015. Four sub-themes discussed were:

- i. Crime, violence & dysfunctional families: Are these the root causes or manifestations of urban poverty?
- ii. Public policies: Is there a neglect on urban poverty in development planning?
- iii. Urban poverty and social cohesion: Is there an impact on ethnic relations and harmony at the neighbourhood level?
- iv. Local government & delivery of services: Is the absence of local democracy a reason for weak delivery, accountability & efficiency?

Part 2 documents the discussions held at a workshop on **Urban poverty, public policy & community based development** on December 19, 2013 (Thursday) from 9am to 5pm at the UKM Puri Pujangga Hotel at UKM Bangi. Three institutions, namely, COMMACT Malaysia, Faculty of Economics and Management, UKM and the Institute of Ethnic Studies, UKM, jointly hosted this workshop. About 40 participants attended the workshop, including representatives from NGOs, academics from UKM, and about 10 officials from the Department of National Unity & Integration and the Welfare Department. The participants discussed matters pertaining to urban regeneration and strengthening survival strategies for the urban poor, using bottom-up strategies. The concerns for urban poor communities were analysed from a people-centred perspective, which places people at the heart of development in the light of contemporary public policies and existing socio-economic programmes for development.

This KITA-UKM publication comprises a summary of the presentations and discussions including individual presentations from the speakers as in the case of Part Two, together with reflections on the emerging ideas and the way forward in recommendations. The reflections that have been documented in the book is based on the real ground level challenges and conflicts plaguing the urban poor in Malaysian society, who are practically struggling to ensure that they have a better quality of life.

On behalf of KITA, UKM, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the speakers, moderators, participants and volunteers for their contribution and support in the various dialogues and discussions. Special thanks to Ms. Susan Tam for taking notes and preparing part one of this publication. Thanks also to Ms. Rajanita Das Purkayastha for the work in preparing Part Two. I also thank the KITA-UKM team for the editorial work and publishing these findings.

Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria,
Principal Research Fellow, UKM-KITA
March 28, 2016

PART ONE: BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE MALAYSIA FOR ALL BY 2020

The Eleventh Malaysia Plan has rightly identified key strategies in addressing the needs, concerns and issues of the Bottom 40% (B40) in Malaysian society. There are about 2.7 million households in the B40, of whom 44% are in the rural areas and 56% are in the urban areas. These families have a collective household income of about RM2,537.00 a month and below. Within this category of the B40 are the vulnerable poor who are identified as families with incomes between the Poverty Line Income (PLI) and 2.5 times PLI. In addition, there are the aspirational poor who are families with income between 2.5 times the PLI and the national mean income. We are also told that 68% of this category are bumiputras and the remaining 32% are non bumis. There is therefore an urgent need for a national strategy and national taskforce to address the needs, concerns and issues of the urban poor with the B40 effectively.

National Dialogue Session

Four organisations, namely the Institute of Ethnic Studies, UKM, Yayasan Pemulihan Sosial (YPS), ASLI Centre for Public Policy Studies and Global Movement of Moderates jointly organised the national dialogue discussions between August 4 and 6, 2015 at Global Movement of Moderates Conference Room in Kuala Lumpur.

Five major questions for the national dialogue were discussed to seek answers and ensure effective targeting, delivery and people empowerment at the grassroots:

- i. Public policies: Is there a neglect on urban poverty?
- ii. Crime, violence & dysfunctional families: Are these the root causes?
- iii. National unity and social cohesion: Is there an impact on ethnic relations and harmony at the neighbourhood level?
- iv. Local government & delivery of services: Is the absence of local democracy a reason for weak delivery?
- v. 11th Malaysia Plan strategies: How to ensure the urban poor can experience social inclusion?

Some critical questions for the review: "What are some real causes of Poverty? Is it low education, poor education, unemployment illness, incapacity, poor productivity, etc.? Are there structural issues as well? Is this not due to Government neglect to extend its services to the real poor? Is it the lack of adequate focus and coordination of Government services that are now so dispersed and weak? Is it not the way the poor have to be classified into categories of capacity to rescue from poverty and low incomes? Would the use of the old Tun Razak Red Book and Operation Room technique to win the war against poverty be effective?"

The output of these national dialogues is presented in this publication as a public advocacy initiative in ensuring the urban poor who are part of the B40 have equal opportunities in accessing public sector services including programmes and provisions for their social mobility. Our call is for a special blueprint on addressing the needs, issues and concerns of the urban poor B40 and the establishment of a special unity/taskforce in the Prime Minister's Office or

Department to ensure effective coordination, delivery, monitoring and impact assessment.

PANELISTS' PRESENTATIONS

Twelve people shared their reflections during the national dialogue session. A brief summary of their presentation is documented here.

Dato' Acryl Sani (PDRM – Crime Prevention & Community Safety):

Dato' Acryl shared the experiences of his stint as deputy director for CID during a series of lorry hijackings. Interviews with the suspects revealed that most of them ranged between the ages 18-29 and earned between RM800-RM1,200 in 2007. Most of the suspects worked for hypermarkets like Giant and Mydin or as lorry attendants. When asked why they hijacked lorries, the suspects said that with the salaries they earned, they could barely afford to maintain a bike, a cell phone and some leisurely get-togethers with friends. One of the suspects said that while his father, a Klang Municipal manager, lived a law-abiding life, they were poor. He asked Dato' Acryl if he could guarantee him a better life than his father in 20 years if he did not do crime.

In the second experience, Dato' Acryl said he also interviewed Mat Rempits on why they chose to stay up late and roam the streets in their motorcycles. One youngster replied that he lived in a 2-bedroom flat with his parents and seven siblings and that he went out because it was too crowded. One common factor uncovered during the series of interviews Dato' Acryl conducted with the suspects were that most of these

youths were mainly SRP graduates and did not even pass SPM. Dato' Acryl said that during a recent survey of 50 Jinjang lockup mates, the police found that 78% of the detained aged between 20 and 40, healthy and able-bodied. 92% only have secondary education. 60% studied till Form 3 and have no skills training. Those who have regular jobs averaged RM800 a month with the highest earner peaking at RM1,500. Dato' Acryl said this was almost the same salary level when he first interviewed the suspects in 2007.

Dato' Acryl said the police want to expand this study to understand the backgrounds of detainees. He said that the academic world has sidelined the urban poor and the issue needs to be looked at from their perspective. He added that awareness for government sponsored skill training programmes were also poor among these groups.

Dato' Dr. Amir Khan (Pemandu – NKRA Crime):

When Pemandu started their programmes, they realised that funding problems would emerge after 2014 with the percentage of urban poor rapidly rising. Among the factors looked into were health, education and crime. At the beginning, Pemandu focused on downstream and how many cases could be closed. Five years later, Pemandu realised that the problem was upstream.

During a visit to Mentari 10 flats, Dato' Amir said they noticed 11 blocks, 17 floors, 40 units, each housing some 35,000 people. This, he said, was also the case in Lembah Subang, Kota Damansara and other low cost housing areas. Of the four families interviewed, one was a Malay single mother who moved from Lembah Subang to Mentari 10. She said her son started by

working for his uncle but soon began stealing and then was sent into a juvenile facility in Malacca. Dato' Amir said he then realised that the problem was upstream and concentrated in poorer areas. Pemandu statistics show that 80% of the crime in Malaysia was property related crime and 20% violent crime.

Dr. P. Sundramoorthy (USM – Research Team on Crime & Policing):

Dr. Sundramoorthy said that recent studies showed crime was connected to social norms of what is right and wrong, impulsive responses and over emotional responses. While traditional thought focuses on sociological factors, peer pressure, parental and media influence, there is no single factor that causes one person to turn to a life of crime. To address the problem of urban poverty, public policies need to address changes to social norms and values in cultures and sub-cultures that condone acts of deviance and criminality among the young. Policies also need to address ways to combat substance abuse among the urban poor.

Mrs. Jasmine Adaickalam (C Codes):

Mrs. Jasmine said that root causes of crime and substance abuse are the following, and some factors affect the ethnic relations in a community:

Urban sector – exodus of rural to urban with the dismantling of estates. Not adequately prepared for life in a new setting. Fragmentation of the community due to urban living where life was more cohesive. "I don't like my neighbours but I'm forced to live here" resulting in anger. The downside of affirmative policies are more evident after moving into urban areas. In the rural areas, such affirmative actions were class-based

compared to urban settings, resulting in more anger. Class-based policies need to replace race-based affirmative policies. Coming from a single race environment, the newly relocated urban poor lack cultural understanding of other races' sensitivities. Unfair wage patterns in urban areas compared to rural areas, where RM800 was sufficient in rural areas due to possibility of other opportunities. However, there was a lack of chances in the urban areas. Ethnic groups can be homogenous or plural. For homogenous community, the problem may not be so severe, as they have something common to bind them, but in the case of multi-ethnic communities, they are forced to live in a situation.

Other factors include: definitions of poverty need to move away from traditional methodology. Specification of needs not adequately stated in the 11th Malaysia Plan. More definitions are needed to be included in Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI). Reactive ways to treat criminals – lack of compassionate approach to deter crime. Traditional crime and punishment method perpetuates a life of crime. Lack of importance placed on strengthening family values. Families used to be the shock absorbers but today families are the cause of the shock. Call for the need to develop: equitable and fair representation of participation in neighbourhood safety committees called Rukun Tetangga (RT), residence associations (RA) and local development committees (JKKK), neighbourhood leaders and to be aware of human rights. Better equipped government staff at the delivery points. Amenities and facilities to allow for integration in community.

Mr Fabian Bigar (Pemandu – NKRA Low Income Households):

Pemandu noticed that the rural people in Sarawak may be cash poor but can find other ways to survive. However, in the city there are fewer legitimate opportunities to survive. Also noticed that the bulk of money is directed at the rural poor while there is very little for the urban poor. When Pemandu began its poverty eradication programme in 2009, the focus was on elevating the hardcore poor by giving cash assistance to get them to the next level. In 2012, there was a more inclusive and targeted approach to economic empowerment for different groups of people such as Azam Bandar (upskilling and financial training), Azam Niaga (small business assistance), Azam Tani (agro-based training) and Azam Kerja (job placement). As the current Government Transformation Program (GTP) is coming to an end in 2015, the next GTP will revamp the Low Income Household programme to be wider and cover the B40.

Dr. Muhammed Abdul Khalid (Khazanah Research):

There is no direct neglect of the urban poor if you were to look at the six strategic thrusts in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan. The first two, Enhancing Inclusiveness and Improving Well Being, capture the urban poor. Among the six game changers in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan, No. 2 – Uplifting B40 to Middle Class – also targets the urban poor. In short, there is no direct neglect of urban poor in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan.

There are different definitions for urban and rural poor. In Peninsular Malaysia, you are considered poor if you earn RM940 per household in the urban areas while the

rural mark is RM10 less. In Sabah, it's RM1,100 and Sarawak RM1,000. The difference between urban and rural in Peninsular is RM10 and Sabah and Sarawak is RM15. The urban poor is estimated to be 0.3% while the national poor is 0.6%, with the rural poverty rate is 1.6%. So the rural number is actually higher. Certain groups such as the Orang Asli deserve more attention as poverty rate among them is 34%. That should be the focus and not just the urban poor. Other figures are Bumiputra Sabah 20% and Bumiputra Sarawak at 16%.

GINI INDEX: The income has been growing at about 10% for the urban poor since 2012 while the national average is about 12%. Gini among urban is also less than the national average and interestingly inequality by ethnicity in 2014 showed that Chinese remained the most unequal group followed by Indians and then Bumiputera.

Where are poor? There are 6.7 million households in Malaysia with 75% in urban areas. Among the poverty groups, it is about equal at 50:50 spread throughout Malaysia.

Amenities: if you are poor in urban, you are better than being poor in rural. Piped water in the house in the urban areas is 98% while for the poor it is 89%. If you are poor in KL, you have water and electricity like everybody else. Only 38% of the poor in the rural areas have water and 88% have electricity. Access to public secondary schools for the urban poor is 90% while in the rural area, it is only 52%. 55% own a house in urban areas while 90% of urban poor have their own houses. One-third, 34% of the poor own a car, mobile phones 94%, television 92% and access to Astro is 24%.

Income: In the urban to qualify for B40 you have to earn less than RM3,000 per month. Characteristics of their monthly wage is about RM1,800 with household income at RM3,100; household expenditure at RM2,000. But this household income does not capture debts. I assume if you captured debts, there will be no savings. 65% of this grouping are single earners.

Education: Number of SPM graduates in the B40 is 36% and number without any education is 36%. 90% of lower secondary dropouts are from urban areas. They are also highly leveraged at about 7 times annual income while 34% have no assets.

Challenges for Eleventh Malaysia Plan: Among the B40, only 1% have a degree. As higher education is costly, so to double income, it will be a challenge to double income in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan. As there are signs of declining level of productivity – 2% in 2013 and 1% in 2014 – it will be hard to raise incomes when productivity has dropped. Certain key targets are vague. How is income going to grow by 20% per annum (to double income) if annual wage growth for the past two years is 5%. The plan does not address labour market imperfections (influx of foreign labour, gender inequality for wages etc. Targets are too ambitious, for example, the aim to build 150,000 houses per year when the Tenth Malaysia Plan only achieved 100,000 per annum. The plan seems to aim at making house financing easier instead of making houses cheaper.

Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria (KITA-UKM):

There is a need to understand the nature of urban poverty on its own. The old approach of looking at rural agencies was to set up agencies to address their

problems (and this has worked) but there are no agencies to look at urban poverty specifically. This is very evident in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan. There is also a need to move away from general poverty to relative poverty. Among the B40 grouping, 54% are in the urban areas. Urban poverty manifests in different ways and is not restricted to income issues. Urban poverty includes extreme deprivation resulting in anti-establishment sentiments as their problems are unaddressed.

There is an urgent need to use a multi-dimensional poverty index opposed to the current one of four dimensions and 11 indicators (Eleventh Malaysia Plan). The indicators listed are not very relevant to urban poverty as they are based on rural poverty indicators such as access to water and electricity, flush toilets, access to schools etc. There is no point having access to water and electricity in an urban flat but to have it disconnected as the family cannot pay for it. As such, there should be separate multi-dimensional indicators for rural and urban poverty. For the urban poor, they also lack a human voice approach to the problem as they have no right to elect local councillors who are closer to the problem. While there are federal-based services, often these services do not reach the urban poor due to poor coordination or disconnect with the local authorities.

Mr. Ho Khok Hua (IKLIN-JPNIN)

Urban poverty has links to violence, as such there is a need to understand risk management of this problem. Examples are the 1969 racial riots and 2001 Kampung Medan incident, both involving poverty and housing issues. Under the 11th Malaysia Plan, JPNIN has two responsibilities. The aim is to retain the grey areas, not

red areas. The Low Yat Plaza incident is classified as yellow area. The World Bank terms problematic sites in city as fragile cities. Malaysia needs to manage the difficult areas, clustered as fragile cities. Remedies need to include concept of urban resilience, where action results in a more purposeful environment to be more inclusive and responsive, by using social dialogue.

JPNIN is looking at Rukun Tetangga (RT) as community service centres. More than 7,000 RTs have been set up in Malaysia and the demand is high, with more than 500 applications a year. This needs to slow down. RT is made up of grassroots leaders and based on volunteerism and are empowered to carry out their own programmes. Programmes need to be generating income, for example, women's social enterprise group. Healthy living and green living are other aspects to empower the community to improve the health of the residents and clean up the environment. Safety is promoted, working with police and the Military Police to identify problem areas, as well as in East Malaysia a bomba community is being considered due to the high risk of fires. Need to address the young, from setting up kindergartens to programmes for the youth. Also need to look into conflict resolution by training community leaders in mediation schemes and disaster assistance.

Dr. Wan Puspa Melati (School of Communication Studies, SEGi University)

Urban poverty involves communities living in a disadvantaged area where communities are competing for resources. Scholars argue there is a lack of policing in these areas, but at times are not effective. Much distrust in communities, even within homogenous

community, accusations of locality and territory are raised. Research on urban poverty is at macro level, missing micro details as diverse communities have diverse causes to problems in the neighbourhood. Call for a need to go down to the ground, to find out the needs of each community to tailor a solution for these communities. Question the psychological preparedness when relocation from squatters to flats happen. Much negative stereotyping of poor people who are accused of high crime rates.

Ms. Cynthia Gabriel (MBPJ Councillor & C4 - Centre To Combat Corruption and Cronyism)

Poverty is not something that is clearly encompassed in the Local Government Act. The act defines the power of a local authority (LA) and does not clearly explain poverty. The issue of maintenance of low cost flats or public housing are under LA purview, but not crime related issues. In Petaling Jaya and Kuala Lumpur, the poor are pushed into small boxes, as developers want to draw value from the land parcels in these areas - development that brings profit to the government who looks for revenue to run administration. The poor are neglected. The concept of ratepayers - the more rate you pay, the more services you get. Rich people in Bandar Utama will see roads fixed, but no maintenance in Desa Mentari. Confusion and much tussle between agencies over who has what responsibilities over which areas, with some PPR flats owned by Federal Government and some by State.

As for the issue of allocation, RM20,000 is given to councillors to run programmes. But it depends on the councillor and priorities change, sometimes influenced by party. Corruption is a major problem, resulting in no money being channelled to the poor. MBPJ does

piecemeal programmes for the urban poor, painting buildings and cake sales but doesn't deal with social or structural problems. Bribery happens when permits are given for stalls in illegal areas. Confusion of whose responsibility to prevent crime or cohesion, whether police or council. It is easy to blame migrants. Houses in urban poor are being sublet to migrants, so much so that migrant workers may be the third or fourth tenant. Many raids are carried out against migrant workers, termed as illegal dwellers. There is no point to discuss local democracy, since the urban poor do not have basic amenities in the first place.

Mr. Jeffry Phang (UTAR & Residents Association)

Weak democracy results in weak accountability. Lack of NGO-based councillors. Look at pilot projects of state elections but now discussions are slowing down. Quality of councillors too, as too much politicking goes on in councils. Councillors have their own personal agenda, or are territorial. Need to have systems approach that is integrated or holistic, to ask for participatory budgeting or monitoring process as well. There is lack of compassion, as Council is transactional in nature to collect rate: no rates, no services. Need to have employment opportunities, sustainable development and improved building management.

Wong Chin Huat (Penang Institute)

Question of political make-up of local council, what do people get for doing certain things, and what is the right incentive. Suggestion of decentralisation, introducing inter-government competition and get them to fight among themselves, extracting best results for the problem. Elections (not just local), discussing the chances for Pro-poor parties and independent

candidates. First step, need concentrated support to get votes, the system is so rigged, there is no poor dominated constituency. We need some sort of class conflict for poor to be helped. Class conflicts are structured fights where people are united across class rather than ethnicity.

EMERGING ISSUES

In the course of the dialogue and discussion, eight issues were reflected upon which are inter-related to urban poverty and effective delivery. These are:

Re-examining the needs of urban poor

Due to the rapid rise of urban poverty and the link between poverty and crime, there is a great need to look at rural-urban migration and the kind of density and living conditions they are put in. The government also needs to look at social preparation for the rural migrants to urban centres. The government should emulate Singapore in the way they organise HDB flats by helping the community deal with living in flats i.e. neighbourliness, community living etc. The government should also control urban transportation costs to ensure cheaper costs for the urban poor. Studies should focus on micro-level problems to customise solutions for communities, as most research is done on a macro level.

Improving inter-agency cooperation

Generally the commenters agreed that many government officers are unprepared for inter-agency cooperation. Many of the officers are not trained in social work and operate in silos. It was suggested that there should be a platform beyond the Majlis Tindakan

Daerah like a Majlis Perundangan. In many of the meetings, enforcement departments only report on the number of cases and numbers closed. There are no analyses of the cases beyond just presentation of statistics. Such meetings don't address the issues that cause crime. There are emotional gaps between various agencies resulting in very little commitment between the parties on how to tackle the problems at root instead of surface levels.

There is suggestion for Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah's Majlis Perundangan method to be replicated across other districts. It is also suggested that the Pemandu NKRA's for education, poverty, crime and costs of living in the urban areas are rationalised to set the tone for further cooperation between government agencies. There is also the absence of agencies as they are not intervening in high density locations. More needs to be done. The Welfare Department may be doing work, but hindered by the work of other government agencies who may have single-ethnicity driven programmes.

Distinguishing urban from rural poverty

It was also suggested that the links between poverty and crime is not yet conclusive as a poorer city such as Calcutta had lower crime rates than Tokyo. It was also cited that while poverty rates declined in Atlanta, crime rates still went up. Although there are correlations between poverty and crime, the causation is not definite as there are other factors such as urban density, moral decline, substance abuse etc. But Malaysian statistics do point that the majority of those arrested come from lower income groups due to the type of crimes (property theft) committed.

It was observed that rural poverty has a lower chance of manifesting in crime compared to urban poverty as there is insufficient support system for lower income groups in the city. Much of the government efforts are focused on improving incomes but not enough attention is given to establishing social support to manage urban communities. Many of the regeneration of neighbourhood efforts in areas such as Sentul, Subang, Kepong etc., have only succeeded in creating new breeding grounds for crime as public policy does not recognise urban poverty.

One of the reasons given for this was removing the term urban poverty from the Eleventh Malaysia Plan as it is a stigmatised term. There is a mindset among the civil service that the term "urban poverty" was inappropriate for a country moving towards developed nation in 2020. There needs to be discussion and awareness on national unity in the urban setting. Past communities from estates, kampungs and new villages are now being forced into blocks that are highly concentrated. There isn't adequate social protection, no community workers and only bill collectors. Living standards are underestimated by local authorities.

A shift towards a holistic approach is a must

It was suggested that the government needs to move away from addressing the problem from a basic needs and raising income perspective to a more holistic solution. A holistic answer lies in looking at design, security and maintenance of the urban poor living quarters (flats), child care systems, better transportation systems and family planning education and health education for young mothers. Another solution lies in better inter-agency cooperation where the government can include NGOs to identify issues

and solutions, addressing substance abuse and improving social cohesiveness.

Changing the poverty indicators

Malaysia should not use the same indicators used by the poorest nations to determine poverty – poverty line indicator system which is based on income. The United Nations have introduced other indicators to determine quality of life instead of income-based systems. Programmes such as Azam Tani, Azam Niaga etc., need to be improved with better coordination with the local authorities to ensure that the poor are able to tap into them effectively.

Improve public amenities to improve access to basic rights

Most problems stem from lack of proper sporting halls, community spaces or parks for the use of communities living in these neighbourhoods. Much more need to be done to improve the management of shared facilities, while clearing up confusion of responsibilities of agencies in running these amenities. Calls to start a small scale project to help the urban poor, working with residents' association and JERIT – Jaringan Rakyat Tertindas, among other NGOs, who are looking after urban poor issues. Focus is on improving the physical services, as most urban poor are not considering human rights because that is not a priority.

Improving job or employment opportunities

There is an urgent need to look at opportunities for the urban poor, to create employment or jobs for them and improve their income levels. Employers often turn to migrant workers due to cost or lack of social-economic

concern as migrant workers are able to work longer hours. There must be a protection of jobs for locals.

General comments

Current policies are creating intentional urban poverty. For example, YTL's regeneration of urban areas is largely benefitting the rich. In another location namely the Desa Mentari projects were of poor quality in the first place when it was handed over. After forming the Joint Management Committees, local authorities leave it to the developer and the residents. As many of the flats are sub-standard with no green spaces, purposely created tight spaces that are not built for social functionality exacerbated the problems. Without any federal agencies and local authorities to help maintain these residences, many fall into neglect.

PROGRAMME OF THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE

National Dialogue on Confronting Urban Poverty within the B40: Towards Building an Inclusive Malaysia for All by 2020

Partners in co-organising the National Dialogue, namely the Institute of Ethnic Studies, UKM, Yayasan Pemulihan Sosial (YPS), ASLI Centre for Public Policy Studies and Global Movement of Moderates

Date: August 4 & 5, 2015
Time: 2pm to 6pm
(on both days just the afternoons)

Venue: Global Movement of Moderates (GMM),
15th Floor, Menara Manulife, No. 6, Jalan
Gelenggang, Damansara Heights, KL

The Eleventh Malaysia Plan has rightly identified key strategies in addressing the needs, concerns and issues of the Bottom 40% (B40) in Malaysian society. There are about 2.7 million households in the B40 of whom 44% are in the rural areas, whereas 56% are in the urban areas.

These families have a collective household income of about RM2,537.00 a month and below. Within this category of the B40 are the vulnerable poor who are identified as families with incomes between the Poverty Line Income and 2.5 times the PLI. In addition, there are the aspirational poor who are families with income between 2.5 times the PLI and the national mean income.

We are also told that 68% are bumiputras and the remaining 32% are non-bumis. There is therefore an urgent need for a national strategy and national taskforce in effectively addressing the needs, concerns and issues of the urban poor with the B40.

Five major questions for the national dialogue to seek answers and ensure effective targeting, delivery and people empowerment at the grassroots are posed:

1. Public policies: Is there a neglect on urban poverty?
2. Crime, violence & dysfunctional families: Are these the root causes?
3. National unity and social cohesion: Is there an impact on ethnic relations and harmony at the neighbourhood level

4. Local government & delivery of services: Is the absence of local democracy a reason for weak delivery?
5. 11th Malaysia Plan strategies: How to ensure the urban poor can experience social inclusion?

Some critical questions for our review:

“What are some real causes of poverty? Is it low education, poor education, unemployment, illness, incapacity, poor productivity etc.? Are there structural issues as well? Is this not due to Government neglect to extend its services to the real poor? Is it the lack of adequate focus and coordination of Government services that are now so dispersed and weak? Is it not the way the poor have to be classified into categories of capacity to rescue from poverty and low incomes? Would the use of the old Tun Razak Red Book and Operation Room technique, assist to win the war against poverty more effectively?”

The output of these national dialogues is a policy paper to the Prime Minister on ensuring the urban poor who are part of the B40 have equal opportunities in access to the programmes and provisions for their social mobility.

Our call is for a special blueprint on addressing the needs, issues and concerns of the urban poor B40 and the establishment of a special unity/taskforce in the PM Office or Department to ensure effective coordination and delivery.

NATIONAL DIALOGUE ONE:

CONFRONTING URBAN POVERTY WITHIN THE B40: TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE AGENDA BY 2020

Date: August 4, 2015 (Tuesday)
Time: 2.00pm to 6pm
Venue: GMM, Conference Room, KL

Programme: 1.30pm Registration & Coffee
2.00pm Welcome & Session 1

Crime, violence & dysfunctional families: Are these the root causes or manifestations of urban poverty?

One of the key issues in the urban hot spot neighbourhoods are issues pertaining to crime, violence, drugs & alcohol abuse. These aspects are not often recognised as manifestations of urban poverty needing comprehensive intervention in addressing social support and social control systems in the neighbourhoods.

Panel speakers will review the initiatives so far and point out directions for the 11th plan period so as to effectively confront the root causes for anti-social and crime behaviour.

Moderator: Tan Sri Michael Yeoh (ASLI)

Panel speakers

- Dato' Dr. Amir Khan, the NKRA Director on Crime (Pemandu)
- Dato' Acryl Sani (PDRM – Crime Prevention & Community Safety)
- Mrs. Jasmine Adaickalam (C Codes)
- Dr. Sundramoorthy (USM)

3.30pm Session 2 Public policies: Is there a neglect on urban poverty in developing planning?

Moderator: Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah (GMM)

Panel Speakers:

- EPU representative
- Mr. Fabian Bigar, NKRA Director on Low Income Households (Pemandu)
- Dr. Muhammed Abdul Khalid (Khazanah Research)

5.00pm Concluding Remarks: 11th Malaysia Plan strategies: How to ensure the urban poor can experience social inclusion? Drawing lessons for the two sessions, by Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria (KITA-UKM)

NATIONAL DIALOGUE TWO:

CONFRONTING URBAN POVERTY WITHIN THE B40:
TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE AGENDA BY 2020

Date: August 5, 2015 (Wed)

Time: 2pm to 6pm

Venue: GMM Conference Room, KL

Programme:

1.30pm Registration & Coffee

2.00pm Welcome & Session 3

Urban Poverty and Social Cohesion: Is there an impact on ethnic relations and harmony at the neighbourhood level?

Moderator: Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah (GMM)

Panel Speakers:

Mr. Ho Khek Hua (IKLIN-JPNIN)

Mrs. Jasmine Adaickalam (C Codes)

Ms. Teo Ai Hua (Malaysian Association of Social Workers)

Dr. Wan Puspa Melati (School of Communication Studies, SEGi University)

3.30pm Session 4 Local government & delivery of services: Is the absence of local democracy a reason for weak delivery, accountability & efficiency

Moderator: Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam (ASLI- CPPS)

Panel Speakers:

Representative from Ministry of Housing & Local Government

Ms. Cynthia Gabriel (MBPJ Councillor & C4 - Centre To Combat Corruption And Cronyism)

Mr. Jeffry Phang (UTAR & Residents association)

Mr. K. Arumugam (Tamil Foundation & Former councillor)

Dr. Wong Chin Huat (Penang Institute)

5.00pm Concluding Remarks: 11th Malaysia Plan strategies: How to ensure the urban poor can experience social inclusion? – Drawing lessons for the two sessions, by

Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria (KITA-UKM)

PART TWO:

URBAN POVERTY, PUBLIC POLICY & COMMUNITY BASED DEVELOPMENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The obstacles and elements of poverty concentration in the inner-city neighbourhoods of Malaysia has independently become convincing of the need of a community-based urban policy. The cause and consequences of urban poverty are persistent with the failure of governance structure, bureaucracy and the socio-political apathy. A root cause analysis would reveal the gaps to be pertaining to the access of resources, lack of proper knowledge and under- or unutilised capacities and capabilities of community-based organisation, which are the voice of the urban poor. While urbanisation is obvious with Malaysia's rapid transformation from an agricultural to a manufacturing hub, the negative impacts are unavoidable too. It is time that the policymakers start noticing the needs of the minority community, howsoever small, on the lines of socio-economic development and not any form of ethnic divide. While local community organisations are entrusted for the betterment of the urban poor, they are not being empowered or function as parastatal agencies.

Key findings of the Workshop are as follows. There is a general consensus that one of the real problems of the urban poor is the failure of the bureaucracy and governance system. The way forward is in creating

awareness and education, but not at the cost of affiliation to politically vested interest. The role of civil servants and community-based organisations are most significant as the ground-level mobilisers in bringing a change in the mindset and perception of local communities, and empower them in the long run. Blaming the public or ruling out the private or even judging the civil societies is not going to lead us anywhere. If Malaysia wants to strengthen and solidify its roots as a fast developing nation, the needs and stakes of the bottom 40% should be taken into consideration.

The broad areas of concern and recommendation which arose from the RTD could be listed as below:

- A very obvious impact of urbanisation is the increase of the proportion of the Malaysian population in the cities. As a consequence, the problems of the people living in extreme poverty in the urban areas gained importance in the development agenda. Keeping pace with the international development targets of economic growth and equity and security, Malaysia as a fast developing nation needs to draw attention to the dynamics of the nature of poverty in the urban areas and the factors that are affecting the movement of the people into and out of poverty.
- Taking account of the existing policies and programmes for the development of the urban poor, additional focus needs to be built to implement more effective policies that can help the urban poor build on their available assets and gain access to improved services, as well as

for livelihood betterment and improvement in the quality of life.

- Poverty has mostly been studied in the context of rural settings. An approach needs to be developed on in-depth analysis of the problems and the overarching issues related to urban poverty. That is to say, the dimension of income-related poverty lines might not be enough for inferring other dimensions as conditions for poverty keep changing over time for people and households.
- With the inadequacies of the existent models of development, a more participatory and holistic strategy needs to be adopted for implementing policies, devising strategies and overcoming the vulnerabilities related to the conditions and multiple dimensions of urban poverty.
- A further policy dimension should explore on the growing international development strategy in this direction, i.e., analysis of the globalisation and its impact on the population changes, especially on the present day youth.
- The advantage of a people-centred view provides the right balance to the global normative and local strategic solutions to the sustainable development of a policy approach. For preparing a structured and conceptual policy framework for the development of urban poor communities, the elements of human development, better access to land, shelter, market, sources of income, information and education, health and other essential services,

particularly help in achieving poverty reduction in a local scenario.

- In a broader context of community-based and people-centred policy, an improved understanding of the human rights related to the issues of urban poverty and the governance structure of the local community and government organisations need to be ascertained.

2. PANEL PRESENTATIONS

Prof. Datuk Yusof Kasim, President, COMMACT Malaysia

Prof. Yusof Kasim began his discourse by relenting on the incapability of the major policy initiatives in addressing to the needs of the burning issue of urban poverty. Even Malaysia's five year Development Plans have stopped looking into community development as a concern area. With an overdominance of neo-liberal and market-friendly approaches to development, policy makers have ignored the major issue of urban poverty and the need for community-level collective action. The two have a deep connection in relation to developmental planning and people-centred public policies. The role of decentralisation, poverty alleviation policies, community leadership and the elite capture are enmeshed in a fascinating context of plaguing ailments of the society and calls for a consensus-based decision-making, and public and private space claiming to welcome transformation among the urban poor and the needy, with special relevance to those at the bottom 40%. As a contrast to developed countries, such as UK, Prof. Yusof indicated that the responsibility

for the provision of housing lies with the Federal rather than the local governments in Malaysia, limiting the role of local governance structures in policymaking and analysis.

With rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, rural migrants are drawn to urban areas, putting tremendous pressures on the available resources, such as infrastructure and environment. Recent reviews and the current trends of urban poverty, especially in the metropolitan areas of Kuala Lumpur, have indicated that the available policies and programmes for the development of the rising urban poor are inadequate. The problem of urban poverty is complicated in structure and requires an integrated approach to involve the public, private, community-based organisations and local governance bodies to actively involve the urban poor in the process of devising congenial policy framework for their betterment. With a dire need of a recommendation of a community-based alternative policy for the development urban poor in Malaysia, it is time to focus on a People-Centred Development (PCD) approach, which works on cooperation among different sectors of the society to bring positive impacts using economic, social, political, cultural, educational and environmental measures.

Later, in his individual presentation, Prof. Yusof highlighted on the need for a mainstream PCD approach. Poverty, in its different levels, could be relative, absolute, and varies for rural as well as urban areas. Literature of PCD, from as early as 1984, have especially stressed upon the fact that exists in various synonymous forms; the term PCD has its seeds sown in the pages of history long ago. For a country like Malaysia, in contrast to Spain or Africa that have a

more defined PCD approach, to be noticed as need-based, its impact is still very new to be assessed. From his years of experience on urban poverty studies, he enlightened the audience on the fact that one should understand the scenario of poverty based on a multitude of factors. Studies in Malaysia focus only on the Kuala Lumpur heartland, when there is a mushrooming growth of slums and squatters. As an academician, his focus is on ways to seek an alternative development approach, and not to abide by an adjustable complement of the neo-liberal model was explained on the basis of a situational analogy. A poverty incidence study for a certain group of rural poor would not be the same as hard core poor in urban areas. Their socio-cultural peculiarities would need to be given equal weightage as other factorial and economic dimensions. So, the discourse on why an alternative PCD is timely, was summed up on the basis of three major arguments:

1. The approach is on the community and not blueprint driven corporate imposition. PCD envisions the community to be not only the beneficiaries of the development process but also to be the active participants and the drivers themselves.
2. While economic growth is necessary, the thrust should be on strengthening the means to achieve a sustainable growth. It is necessary to differentiate the means from the end, in contrast to the neo-liberal model.
3. The socio-economic development is approached through social policies, but is held as disparate from the economic agenda. There is a need to integrate both when policy measures vouch for inclusive means of development.

Prof. Yusof Kasim, who represents the private sector, acknowledged the presence of public sector representatives and civil society representatives at the workshop. He identified the key areas for building by focusing in terms of contemplating community-based policy for obliterating urban poverty. In identifying the close link between an individual and the community at large, he stressed on the need to empower the individual for a holistic community development. In the government plans, budgetary allocations for poverty alleviation programmes should be allocated to the community directly, rather than institutional involvements, to eliminate exploitations by the less worthy. He also praised the role of cooperatives and dominance of micro-finance in the community development, and encouraged them to expand their horizons. At this juncture, he touched on the national agenda of cooperatives that involves expanding their contribution from a present statistic of 2% to as high as 10% by the year 2020. As an example, ~~avid instance~~, he mentioned that poverty alleviation is not enough and the measures should also look into job creation which would in turn, empower the needy. On a similar note, private measures like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding should be channelled into innovative lines, say for example as a national agenda, so as to make the social-giving more worthwhile.

At the end of the workshop, on the basis of the presentations and comments emanating from the audience and participants at the workshop as well as other proposals and recommendations related the dimension of Urban Poverty in Malaysia and Community-Based Policies, Prof. Yusof appreciated the experience to be especially important in promoting a

PCD approach to further community action and policy implementation in the identified problem areas.

Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria, Principal Research Fellow, KITA-UKM

In the beginning and while wrapping up, Datuk Dr. Denison's recommendation was on the major interventions in the area of urban poverty and community-based policies to be based on a responsible and a need-based framework approach. He drew reference from Amartya Sen's idea of human development as an expansion of citizens' capabilities. For Sen, freedom means increasing citizens' access and opportunities to the things they have reason to value. He challenges the mainstream concept of measuring development by economic growth. He also recognises that the increase of income alone "...has at best uneven and at worst has detrimental impacts on the majority of a country's population..."¹. His approach focuses on human flourishing as an entry point to the problem of poverty and global inequality rather than economic growth. His work hugely influences the redefinition of the concept of development, in the context of what includes human rights as a constitutive part, wherein all worthwhile processes of social change are simultaneously rights-based and economically grounded and readily conceived of in those terms (Uvin 2010: 168).²

¹ Sen, A. 1999. *Development As Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

² Uvin, P. 2010. From the right to development to the rights-based approach: how human rights entered development. In Cornwall, A. &

Datuk Dr. Denison especially stressed on the issue of civil servants as the ultimate identifier and protector of rights of ordinary people. He said that since they are the primary custodians of people's rights, they should remain humble and reachable. In matters related to land and resources, they should stick to rights and ethics, and should not take unfair sides with the government or political parties. If they betray, the whole community suffers.

While presenting his paper on a specific case study, Datuk Dr. Denison remarked on the context of publication of this workshop outcomes in the form of compiled report. He said that in the continuance of a high-level discourse on quality of life, focussing on inter-ethnic harmony, funded by JPNIN wherein the grassroots voices have been documented as a booklet publication by KITA, the same would be applicable to current workshop too. Mentioning about the earlier speakers, Datuk Dr. Denison highlighted that the entire spectrum of urban poverty and its investigation encompasses three broad areas; one is the developmental policy framework as pointed out by Prof. Yusof Kasim, the other issue is consumer pricing and the claim of rights, referred to by Ms. Jose Fernandez, and finally the conceptual frameworks of urban poverty and its definitions are also very valid. Against this backdrop, his paper looks into one specific area of urban-poor, i.e., flat dwellers or better named as urban settlers, who on migrating to the cities from rural areas, were shifted to *Rumah Panjang* (long houses) and later moved in to high rise low-cost flats. He instantly commented that in the post 1970s, these

Eade, D. (eds.). *Deconstructing Development Discourse: Buzzwords and Fuzzwords*, pp. 168. Oxford: Practical Action Publishing Ltd.

measures were introduced in the name of improving the quality of life and a large share of Malay from the *kampungs* (villages) were shifted to the cities. The Indians were the second largest in numbers and this resulted in the transformation of the Malaysia from an agricultural to a manufacturing oriented economy. Thanking JPNIN for playing role of a community mobiliser through the project supported, Datuk Dr. Denison provided an interesting analytics to ponder. His case study reveals that there is a varied differentiation in terms of demographics in each of these neighbourhoods. Despite being in highly compacted locales with minimum access to quality resources, with inhabitants from multi-ethnic, where the dynamics of power relations and the dilemma is pouring in their daily lives, all of them share the same socio-economic status: an urban poor. Here, comes the issue of the mindset, perception and the role of environment in shaping up the social position and condition of an urban poor.

As an urban sociologist, Datuk Dr. Denison through his case study, has identified seven key indicators impacting the urban communities and demographics. Among others, these include geography, zones, and commercial outlets, and housing, are implicit through the elements of social mobility. From a local perspective of the problems of an urban community, the factors such as infrastructure, social ills, national unity, management, and governance concerns, emerge as key issues.

On the issue of affordable housing, which is one of the most fundamental problem areas striking the core of urban poor in Kuala Lumpur, there is the need for sound and just local authority system, governance

structure and a democratic platform, that are unbiased in terms of ethnicity, religious beliefs and gender, and also promote and conserve the rights of the local communities. When it comes to the plaguing problems of class- and ethnic-based conflicts, the social realities need to be taken seriously in policy frameworks, according to Datuk Dr. Denison who is a universal proponent of human rights based approach of development.

Again, on the issue of social mobility, continuous improvement that focuses on education, skill-based training and orientation of mindsets, should be the way forward, especially to develop more resilience among the present-day youth.

On a concluding note, Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria presented a vivid reality on the issue of urban poor that is in dire need of a focused community-based urban policy. The urban issues could involve the affluent group as well as the poor, who have minimal or no access to resources, despite living in a sprawling posh locality. Also, the media has been impactful in stigmatising the issue of crimes in Kuala Lumpur, and yet, the associated issues of deprivation and criminalization have not been challenged holistically. As people start to build perception, the onus also lies on a complex range of other associated social ills that beckons to civil societies and policy makers to look onto.

Ms. Jose Fernandez, Community Researcher

In her presentation, Ms. Jose Fernandez appealed to politicians and government sector with her implicit remarks on the present state of the scenario. According

to her, the terms of urban poverty and community-based policy require participation from the community members, whom would be the actual beneficiaries. It is unfortunate that for most of the impoverished communities, excessive dependency on charity is actually crippling the community, with special reference to the indigenous people. On principle, even the most phenomenal rise of Islamic charity, *Zakat*, is to be offered only when necessary.

While framing new policies, policymakers need to follow a framework approach that fosters social, economic and political justice to ensure the participation of the target community, such as the urban poor. The world is being fast engulfed in this wave of ruthless consumerism; the top-down and obsolete policies defined by the government and corporate sector, fall out of place to benefit the poor in any manner. Ms Jose appreciated the reigning PM, Dato' Sri Mohd. Najib Tun Razak in encouraging active participation of the civil society and communities, such as Orang Asli, in advocacy. As a relevant model, she cited the example of Tasik Chini, an endangered natural ecosystem and a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status. Transparency International, through Ms. Jose, played the role of facilitator, in driving discussions with the Orang Asli community and Prime Minister's Office (PMO), in the presence of 18 other government departments. This is an ideal example of participation in advocacy that was officially announced by the longest serving PM of the country, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohammad in recognition of human rights. In this platform, it is time that one claims for his/her right too. In the context of the urban poor communities, the claiming of rights would posit community members and their situation more securely in official discourses. Although we acknowledge the

need of rights and their appropriate claim, another prerequisite is in a successful implementation that involves a proper master plan and efficient governance machinery. Thus, any solution to urban poverty through policy measures should be based on the tripartite arrangement of rights, claims and implementation. It should also include a high level participation of all actors and stakeholders, and an empathetic governance system that understands the people.

Ms Jose Fernandez also enlightened the participants on the strife of urban poor surviving in the long houses, i.e., *Rumah Panjang*. In some cases, communities were promised decent low-cost affordable homes, but their long wait doesn't seem to be over although years have gone by. Additionally, the long houses are located in areas that undergo sprawling growth of the affluent class. With rapid development of these places, the affluent-class people have failed to view these urban poor and low-cost housing in the neighbourhoods as a matter of extreme disgrace for them. Disadvantages of a highly stratified class society, rapid consumerism affecting the lives of people living in the metropolitan areas of Malaysia, the plight of the urban poor and those living in the low-cost housing flats, are some issues that need a special attention. A concerted effort on the part of all political parties, community leaders, and other local government authorities, could solve the grim socio-political malaise.

It is needless to say that the role of NGO and civil societies in this context, is extremely significant. Their approach should be action-oriented that aims in creating mediation among communities and resolving

conflicts towards a harmonious existence with each other.

With regards to the raising number of vandalism and crime in the city, a more creative approach could be adopted from other western countries, such as Canada. Malaysia could emulate examples wherein the police in such matter, does not lodge a complaint against the youth or the gang. Instead, law enforcement agency plays the role of a responsible conflict mediator, so that the wrong or the misdirected one is not wrongly punished. On this matter, Ms. Jose stressed on the home-grown models of Islamic philanthropy and explained how in such cases the mosque, as an institution could be a one-stop resolution centre.

On the issue of the standards of behaviour and approaches adopted by civil servants towards the community and its issues, Ms. Jose drew an example of a particular case that involved an indigenous community, where the misled decision was passed in favour of the ruling party. The decision was made based on the comments of a civil servant who took the wrong side and dismissed all obligation to morality and ethics. She said that officials must bear in their minds that it is the taxpayers, and not government, who pay for their salary, and therefore should practice a just stand on their decisions.

Finally, Ms. Jose highlighted the need for Malaysia to adopt sustainable consumption policies, especially with the key issues of urban areas, as an approach to practice moderate living and a sustainable way of life. People in Malaysia at one point should also consider peaceful and natural rural areas for settling down, rather than out-migrating to cities and contributing to the clutter, similar to developed countries like Japan.

Mrs. Jasmine Adaickalam, Community C Codes

Mrs. Jasmine Adaickalam presented on her case study of an urban low-cost high rise flats called Pangsapuri Enggang in Bandar Kinrara, Puchong . She began her description by providing the socio-demographic background of the community in the geographic setting. Interestingly, five out of the six lots of buildings are ownership flats; the rest are rented out by the actual owners. There is a particular C Block, which is being rented by MPSJ, with the people being relocated from elsewhere, held to be the poorest of the poor. From an ethnic perspective of the flats as a whole, 70% is Malay occupancy and the rest are held by Chinese and Indian.

She referred back to the time when the sponsors t approached her with an intention to achieve miraculous results of transformation for the community within a period of six months, which seemed impractical and unattainable at that point of time. In a short-term arrangement, only a pilot study could be designed and successfully attained. Considering the scale of problems and the challenges which are afflicting the lives of the urban poor in low-cost housineas, Mrs. Jasmine especially stressed on the apathy and lack of understanding nature of local administrative bodies, along with disproportional representation in ethnicity, religion, and gender composition. The increasing number of critical issues, from resources, health, hygiene, access and understanding, could be well-related to the presumptive attitude of the officials. In this point, the perception of the political parties from both wings was no different and mainly dependant on their political interests instead of actual commitment towards community welfare.

Using the action-oriented techniques of questionnaire survey and focus group discussions, Mrs. Jasmine's study made some remarkable findings on the key issues. Of all, the root causes to the plaguing scenario was represented by the factors of lack of self-determination, leadership skills, planning skills and community ownership for bringing any form of betterment. C Codes as a community mobilisers, instilled the community with proper training, capacity building, and confidence by focusing on a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and gender equality approach. The Community actively involved at all stages of the planning process; and over a period of 6 months, the actual beneficiaries became the drivers of the change. C Codes was keeping a close vigil by being a participating, observing, and monitoring agency for every progress of the project execution. Finally, the culmination through a gala carnival, organised by the instituted project committee and a democratic election through proper ballot system for choosing the leaders of the committee, revealed the success of the project in actually empowering the urban poor community to take charge of their needs.

On a concluding note, and drawing reference from her success story, Mrs. Jasmine exerted on the fact that diversities of each of the community is the actual secret to their solution. These peculiarities should be kept in mind while planning any community development scheme, especially for the urban poor. There can be no one-size fits all kind of solution for community development models. However, the required thrust should be worked on by building more self-determination and ownership, and a sense of belonging among the community. Simultaneously, skill-based training, education, role of local government

organisation, civil societies and other religious groups should be in tandem with one another to preach a sustainable way of life for these needy and impoverished communities; finding difficulties in making both ends meet with the rapid stride in urbanisation and commodification in their day to day lives.

Mr. Mohd Asri Abdullah (COMMACT Malaysia & ABIM Youth Cooperative)

Mohd. Asri Abdullah's presentation on the role of cooperatives was very thought-provoking in the sense that in promoting an alternative people-centred development (PCD) approach, current role of cooperatives might not be sufficient enough. From a practitioner's perspective, Mr. Mohd Asri identified certain factors which serve as the limiting agents in establishing cooperatives as it is, as a mean of achieving a full-fledged PCD in the context of empowering the urban poor. Analytics reveal that nearly 20% of the population is involved in cooperatives in one form or the other. However, it is undeniable that most of the cooperatives are limited by shareholders and for-profit organisations. Therefore, to get their benefits, one has to be a legitimate member. The major challenges in its total acceptability as means of PCD are:

1. Lack of proper leadership in cooperative sector. An over-reliance on the conservative leadership is highly observable
2. Cooperatives are not much socially responsible and are more concerned with investment in share markets or profit-oriented ventures.

3. Cooperatives in Malaysia are not much interested in contributing in community-oriented projects, and can emulate from projects, such as the Kesejahteraan Keluarga Soegijapranata (KKS) in Java who put in their money in community development projects.
4. The younger generation nowadays is not much interested in seeking membership in cooperatives. As a result, the cooperatives are lacking in vigour and vitality of passion, drive and energy.
5. Cooperatives are generally smaller in size and have small capital assets. Sometimes, this resulted in difficulties to explore possibilities due to undercapitalization.

Drawing references from his representing organisations and the previous speaker, Mrs. Jasmine Adaickalam, Mr. Mohd Asri promoted cooperative leadership as an essential aspect in a social group with multi-diversified backgrounds, such an urban poor neighbourhood with members from Malay, Indian and Chinese communities. Mr Mohd Asri's organisation has been trying to partner with other cooperatives in Malaysia, including non-Muslim communities.

While these structures have limitations to be fully accepted as PCD tools, there is no denying the fact that they have the potentials to mobilise the community and improve their economic conditions. For instance, Mr. Mohd Asri's organisation, Abim Youth Cooperative, looks into suitable low-cost technologies that would encourage migrant communities return to rural areas and engage in

farming as a job opportunity. Abim Youth Cooperative also imparts skill-based training to the youth from poor families to foster entrepreneurship among them. With over twenty years of experience in cooperative sector, the organisation also provide training and guidance to newly formed cooperatives.

Datuk Abdullah Malim Baginda (COMMACT Adviser)

COMMACT Malaysia Adviser and ex officio Honourable President, Datuk Abdullah Malim Baginda, was one of elderly participants to sit through the whole day session and analyse the findings from a strategist's point of view. According to him, the role of the civil society and NGO in Malaysia as represented in the workshop participation, has been very positive in the direction of community work. As challenging as the scenario might be, the gains are undeniably gratifying in the long run, he said. In this direction, institutional associations, such as COMMACT, are expanding the role of PCD as an enabling system to curb all forms of social ills affecting the present day Malaysian society. Datuk Abdullah proposed a three-step process to mark the 'way-forward':

1. Sharing of experiences or experiments among all stakeholders so that all could be inspired and educated in a shared learning process.
2. Existing projects and case studies need to be analysed through systematic impact studies to identify the variables that might even be adopted to build on the core strength areas.
3. While focusing on the urban poor communities, the developmental programmes and schemes need to be

properly structured and posited based on the communities. As such, a universal people-centred approach could be applicable, wherein the community is a part and parcel of the developmental paradigm.

In continuance with its long term goal of PCD, COMMACT which is an independent society is committed to the cause and will bring stakeholders and facilitate information dissemination and be a link with common wealth group of organisations.

Dr. Adnan Hezri (ISIS)

Dr. Adnan Hezri stressed on the issue of urban poverty and community-based policy from an environmentalist point of view. He related that the area of policy analysis for Malaysia has dynamically transformed over the last 50 to 60 years with active involvement by civil societies. In contrast to the previous scenario, the purview of environment and sustainable development would be universally applicable to any social scenario as it serves as an entry point to think about social, economic and environmental challenges.

The historical advent of environment and sustainable development, started with classical issues of conservation, controlled pollution and protection of natural areas. From 1980s, conservation was linked to development. With special focus on developing countries, Malaysia joined hands with India and Brazil in the preparation for United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. The UNCED launched three major conventions - biological diversity, climate change and the Agenda 21, where the concepts of local agenda 21 were introduced. Then following the Inter governmental panel on climate change convention, the

domain of environment protection was closely adhered to anthropogenic activities. In the year 2008-09, with a slowdown of growth rate, the need for a green economy emerged.

To sum up, from an environmental domain, Dr Herzi highlighted on the fact that there seems to be a disconnection between local and national agendas; there is a need to be more focused in order to bridge the divides. This gap could be well-occupied by the civil society and they can become more persuasive to capitalise on the efforts of the past. The inspiration for a social policy, such as the ones relating to urban poverty, could be inspired from the visibility of environmental policies, like the energy and forest laws that concern about the long-term impacts.

It is a good sign that from the 11th Malaysian Plan onwards, environment finds a place along with other social and developmental issues as one of five identified trust areas. One of the identified trust areas also focuses on inclusive development, where the problems of urban poverty and inequality could receive attention. The advantage of SD is in its interconnectedness; and it is time that the civil society and NGOs address the issues of fragmentation in public policy through strategic measures and long-term planning.

YB Rajiv Rishyakaran (ADUN Bukit Gasing)

The final session of the workshop had the privilege of welcoming the state assemblyman, Mr Rajiv Rishyakaran, representing the core political sector. With his background and specialisation in matters pertaining to urban poor and their plaguing issues, he deliberated on certain practical lacunae in the

government machinery at the local as well as the state level. Mr Rajiv honestly accepted that there are frailties within the system due to lack of effort by the government. However, he sounded positive by saying that from a personal belief, he encourages the NGOs to play a crucial role in this in expediting the process.

Generally speaking from personal experiences and real ground scenarios, he explained on the issues of miscommunication, whereby lack of information dissemination and absence of proper counselling assistance further exacerbates the scenario. The urban poor who are in genuine need, should be identified without any bias and assisted to come out of the vicious cycle of poverty through funds, public policies and assistance programmes. The two relevant measures in this direction would be the Public Low Cost Housing Programme, where rents as low as RM124 is charged per month; the other is in the area of issuance of business license in the informal sector that is predominantly occupied by the urban poor.

While sharing on some of his observations, Mr Rajiv mentioned that the question of genuineness and accountability is seriously lacking in some of the cases. Copious amounts of outstanding rents and no follow-up on the SOPs that were commissioned to the local councils, have been ailing the problems of mass coverage and reach in efforts. Again, on the scenario of issuance of licenses for business, a consultation and counselling assistance would be the dire need of the time. Mr Rajiv strongly believes that these roles could be well adopted by the NGOs, and this would also impart the opportunity for collaborative functioning which could be time-saving as well as efficient in terms of delivery systems.

EMERGING ISSUES

Towards a more inclusive and collaborative approach to urban poverty and public policy, the key findings of the workshop are as follows:-

Alleviation of urban poverty through community-based public policies needs to be done with direct involvement of community-level local organisations, representing the community and related government department. Collaborations between community organisation and government (federal or state), will help find new ways to plan and deliver services towards restoring the unfulfilled needs of the target community.

Through an extensive discussion, the pedagogical approaches to poverty as not based on a sole entity, was clearly defined. With this multidimensional understanding to poverty, a concerted focus on internal action plans, such as the Local Agenda 21 as a blue print for sustainable city development and management, needs to be strongly implemented. It would also entail on community-based initiatives as Local Agenda 21 comprises all the elements of environmental, economic and social development systems and processes.

In identifying the range of issues afflicting the urban poor, their agonies and sufferings need to recounted through advocacy, proper campaigning, education and capacity building, planning, participation via human rights approach. It is time for every civilian and public servant to deepen their knowledge on rights and take responsibility to claim them.

While we talk of collaboration, a strategic approach to build a democratic space for voicing their concerns, especially on behalf of the target communities, should

be enabled. While co-option might be critical, there should also be opportunities to build stronger steps by rethinking partnerships, i.e. whether such an arrangement could positive impact the urban poor.

For socio-economic development of the urban poor communities, legal protection through promotion and implementation of human rights might not be enough. There should be strict enforcement and monitoring systems to respect and obligate the needs of the target communities too.

With regards to urban regeneration among the poor youth, the problems of relative deprivation, experiences of antagonistic criminalization and stereotypic prejudice outlook towards the disordered youth in the troubled neighbourhoods have been in continuation for a fairly long time. Any community-based urban policy recommendation should also internalise those aspects.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The issue of community-based policy and urban poverty finds expression through a multitude of socio-economic barriers to inclusive development that lay thrust on comprehensive approaches to development. Through this workshop and its in-depth, session-based analysis, a consensus could be reached on what are the major deficits in the system and how could they be approached. The traditional approaches of charity and donations have been hampering a community-based development. Studies have revealed that a blended value proposition of a community-oriented approach with a legal form should be successful in empowering

the poor with entitlements in the form of sustainable solutions to poverty and access to resources.

In Malaysian scenario, reforms have mostly adopted a conservative approach, leaving a large vacuum in the domain of active participation and support. The legislations are mostly driven by the federal government, leaving the local community organisation powerless. When the government-initiated reforms fall scanty and the community voices are left unheard of, the NGOs and civil societies could take a more responsible role. However, the positive experiences of responsibility are aided by a rights-based framework. The facts and specifications of rights underline the legalities and formalities of entitlements and benefits for the poor. This means that a more positive approach in encouraging rights and policies should be propagated among the stakeholders.

Participation, collaboration and knowledge sharing encompass all areas of actions and decision-making. In the case of Malaysia, it is the federal government which is required to create more enabling structures for creating opportunities of meaningful participation in decision-making within the civil society as well as the target community. A people-centred developmental approach would facilitate the developmental initiatives, decision makings and resource allocation to reach down to the needy, whom in their own capacities, would be actually empowered in the long run.

The International Conventions, such as the initiated by UN, also recognise the vital role of a local governance system. This is because, it is at the local level that the people can best define their priority issues and organise necessary actions accordingly. Often, the communities are not strengthened to deal with such

issues on their own. Local governments as well as local communities could provide them the support through services, assistance, mobilisation, investment, linkages and policy appraisal. A centralised order emanates from a high level, relayed down via a chain of events. The top-down approach has met its failure in several accounts. With a heavy-handed and an inflexible supervision, the local community institutions often become powerless and ineffective.

The positive orientation in the outlook of the centralised government would not come about automatically. Effective supervision and synergistic environment would enable the exchange of ideas and managing participation. However, participation would require a political, legal, and administrative framework. By issuing clear guidelines of reform, structures of participatory governance could be built. While on the one hand, civil societies and NGOs will be involved in decision-making on behalf of the communities who are poor and needy, on the other hand, a democratic and a professional approach for internal learning, openness to constructive dialogue and willingness to work with the public sector could be enunciated for a fast developing country, such as Malaysia.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: PROGRAMME DETAILS

WORKSHOP ON URBAN POVERTY, PUBLIC POLICY & COMMUNITY BASED DEVELOPMENT

Organised by COMMACT Malaysia, Economics Faculty & the Institute for Ethnic Studies, UKM

Date: Dec 19, 2013 (Thursday)

Time: 9am to 5pm

Venue: UKM Puri Pujangga Hotel at UKM Bangi

Objectives

- To discuss public policy concerns for urban poor communities from a people centred perspective which places people at the heart of development
- To review contemporary public policies and also socio-economic programmes among the urban poor
- To review the impact of urban development on the improvement of quality of life, community cohesion and harmony in the context of prosperity, harmony and happiness.

Programme Schedule

9.30am Welcome & Keynote address:
to 10.30am People-Centred Development as the Core thrust of Public Policy, by Prof. Datuk Yusof Kasim, President, COMMACT Malaysia

10.30am Urban Development Polices &
to 11.30am Malaysian Society, by Ms Jose Fernandez
(Community Researcher)

11.30am Urban Poor Communities:
to 12.30pm Issues, Challenges & Possibilities, by
Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria (KITA-
UKM)

Morning session Moderator: Mr. Kon Onn Sein (YKPM)

12.30pm to 2pm: Lunch Break

2.00pm to 3.00pm: Case Study: Community
Organising and Urban Poor Communities,
by Mrs Jasmine Adaickalam (Community
C Codes)

3.00pm to 4.00pm: Case Study: Cooperatives and
People-Centred Development, by
Mr. Mohd Asri Abdullah (COMMACT
Malaysia & Abim Youth Cooperative)

Afternoon session Moderator: Ms. Mae Tan Siew Mann
(COMMACT Malaysia)

4.00pm to 5.00pm: Bridging Public Policies and
Programme Delivery – The Way Forward

Panel: Datuk Abdullah Malim Baginda
(COMMACT)
Dr. Hezri Adnan (ISIS)
YB Rajiv Rishyakaran (ADUN Bukit
Gasing)

Last session Moderator: Datuk Dr. Denison
Jayasooria (KITA-UKM)

Tea/Refreshments

For registration & directions, contact:
Puan Suhana Bahtiar
Tel: 03-89213967
Email: suhanahtiar@yahoo.com

APPENDIX 2: URBAN POOR COMMUNITIES LIVING IN HIGH-RISE FLATS: CHALLENGES & POSSIBILITIES FOR PEOPLE-CENTRED DEVELOPMENT¹

By Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria (KITA-UKM)

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia has undergone tremendous transformations from agricultural to manufacturing country, from rural to urban society. This is largely due to the socio-economic policies adopted by the Malaysian government over the past three decades.

Based on the 2010 Census the urban population now stands at 71.0 per cent. In terms of level of urbanisation Kuala Lumpur is 100 per cent; Selangor and Pulau Pinang are 91.4 per cent.

Furthermore, the 2010 Census also indicates that the most densely populated locations are Kuala Lumpur (6,891 persons), Pulau Pinang (1,490 persons), and Selangor 674 persons per square kilometre. The national average is 86 persons per square kilometre.

Urbanisation has both positive and negative impacts. In terms of the negative, we can note that in search of employment and better quality of life, Malaysia witnessed a rural – urban migration with large number of Malays from the villages and Indians from the estates, coming to urban centres.

At first, these communities found accommodation in urban squatter neighbourhoods. But with the government's low-cost housing plans, the majority of the communities have now been housed in high-rise low-cost flats. These neighbourhoods are located in

urban centres such as the Klang Valley, Kinta Valley and Perai area where there are factories and numerous job opportunities.

These communities are also categorised as low-income and falls within the bottom 40% whose household income are below RM3,000.00. Among them are those in urban poverty and some of the vulnerable groups include single mothers, the elderly and disabled people. These neighbourhoods are often categorised as high-risk neighbourhoods that are prone to crime, violence, anti-social behaviour.

STUDY ON URBAN FLAT DWELLERS

This action research study was undertaken by the KITA-UKM team between July 2012 and mid-June 2013.

During this period, we identified nine high-rise low-cost flat neighbourhoods; five in Selangor, two in Kuala Lumpur, and one in Perak and Penang respectively². The study were conducted by working the Department of National Unity and Integration's Rukun Tetangga and the Residents Associations in these areas.

We designed a community neighbourhood profile questionnaires which were filled with the assistance of local leaders. We made field visits and had focus group discussions with the local leaders. We also conducted a combined community leaders' workshop on December 15th and 16th, 2012 in Kuala Lumpur which was hosted by JPNIN.

Through the community profile and discussions, we identified the positive aspects of urban flat living as well as the challenges they face. However, our main

focus was on understanding the major issues and concerns facing these urban communities.

The next phase of the study was to find ways to resolve the various challenges in modern urban living so that this section of Malaysian society can also experience the good Malaysian life. These neighbourhoods could also be centres of inter- and intra-ethnic harmony in fostering a better Malaysian society for all.

In early 2014, we planned to host another workshop funded by JPNIN for the nine neighbourhood leaders to chart specific strategies to resolve these community concerns. The focus in the next phase would be targeting effective delivery and solutions. Part of this strategy would be on mobilising local community participation through capability building with a more effective response from the relevant agencies and voluntary organisations.

URBAN COMMUNITIES & DEMOGRAPHICS

We identified about 13,482 families with an estimated population of 66,908 living in the nine flat neighbourhoods. The flats ranged from four-storey walk-up flats to 17 story flats with lifts. With regards to occupancy, there were 402 families to 5,280 families in each neighbourhood. These are high-density locations.

In terms of ethnic composition in the population, they are largely of Malay and Indian families. In the four out of nine neighbourhoods, Malays are the majority, whereas Indians are the majority in the other three. The remaining two neighbourhoods consist of an equal number of Malays and Indians.

The ethnic representation in the research differs from the national average where the Malays/Bumiputras

occupy about 60% of the ethnic composition; whereas the Indians would be just 7%. In our study of the urban low-cost flats, Indians in three neighbourhoods comprise 53% to 65% of the families; and in the other three neighbourhoods, Malays form only about 20% to 30% of the population.

This description suggests that the idea of majority-minority differs from one neighbourhood to another; and these will have implications for community living in the new urban neighbourhoods.

What impact does this have?

Government agencies especially local government must take this into account as there will be many demands for services and use of public facilities. Each ethnic and religious communities have different requirements; therefore, knowledge on demographic break down is important in order to understand the local community.

In addition, the shift from rural to urban is a recent development. There are key concerns pertaining to local communities settling down in new urban locations and the whole process of new communities be formed, developed and nurtured.

Many things are taken for granted. There are new issues facing these communities such as sense of belonging in the new neighbourhoods, a sense of identity, and finally the level of social cohesion among the families and communities residing in the neighbourhood.

The neighbourhood consists of families from various squatters and long houses, rehoused in a new location. More often than not, they secured the flat unit through the cast of lots. Therefore, the families will have to

befriend and build new relationships with their new urban neighbours.

The new urban flats are very different from the rural neighbourhoods or even the squatter areas which was more defined by ethnic communities. In the flats which are a resettlement programme, there is now a new mix of families and communities with no social preparation or community organising.

Local history is important and documenting their transition from rural to urban through a process of movement is necessary. For the younger generation, this is lacking. Therefore, enabling the communities to reflect on these will allow them to secure a better sense of acceptance of the present realities and future hopes.

URBAN COMMUNITIES & GOOD DIMENSIONS

We undertook an exercise among the neighbourhood leaders to identify the positive dimensions of their neighbourhoods as there is often negative perspectives of the urban flats. Fostering a positive appreciation of one's local neighbourhood is an important step.

Seven positive indicators were identified. In general, this finding suggests that quality of life is an important factor. The seven positive indicators for the nine neighbourhoods are as follows:-

1. Location: five out of nine are in strategic locations
2. School: five out of nine are in strategic locations
3. Commercial zones: all nine neighbourhoods are near commercial areas

4. Shops: seven out of nine have shops within their flat vicinity
5. Industrial zones: all nine neighbourhoods are located near industrial areas
6. Job opportunities: Good job opportunities including informal sector jobs
7. Access to transport: Six neighbourhoods have good access while the other three have difficulties

There is also a demand to live in these neighbourhoods due to the affordability to purchase or rent flat units based on the subsidised rentals by local authority.

Having a positive attitude towards one's neighbourhood is important especially in terms of childhood memories. There tends to be greater appreciation of the rural areas due to a sense of belonging and childhood memories. Therefore, some efforts to focus on fostering a positive outlook towards the community's new urban neighbourhoods are needed.

Overall, nurturing positive indicators will enable these communities to have a greater sense of love for their communities. This approach could instil a greater sense of care and responsibility of the local environment and properties.

In this context, JPNIN launched a project entitled 'Program Sayangi Komuniti' to foster greater love and concern for the local neighbourhood through the RT system. In addition to local leaders' participation in the action research, JPNIN also introduced some social intervention programmes.

URBAN COMMUNITIES & LOCAL ISSUES

We identified issues and concerns in four major categories. These impact the quality of life of the residence; yet there seems to be very little formal mechanisms to resolve them. No one seems to be taking the lead in improving the quality of life of flat dwellers in a coordinated way or playing a lead role in initiating a dialogue at the various levels of government as well as with the various grouping at the grass-roots local community level.

Infrastructure Requirements

The most frequent complaints are on the maintenance of lifts and the cleanliness of the neighbourhood. Garbage disposal and rats are a major problem as the ground floor of most the flats are commercial units undertaking business, including running provision shops and restaurants/food outlets.

Public facilities such as community halls, community office, places of worship, recreational facilities, local clinics, and parking space, are a major need. Place to conduct funerals is another major area of concern. Local Authority requirements on developers are very minimal and therefore a lack of these impacts the quality of life of the residents.

There is a lack of service centres located in the neighbourhood areas. Some of the agency officers like health, education, welfare, local authority visit the locations, but there are no one-stop centres which would be a focal point for community engagement with the relevant agencies.

Social Ills

Crime, violence, gangs, fights, drugs and alcohol abuse are frequent occurrence in many of the neighbourhoods. Many local leaders feel that the local government authorities and police are ineffective in addressing the issues effectively.

Stereotyping the living environment is not helping to foster safe neighbourhoods. There must be greater neighbourhood help and support to make these urban flat neighbourhoods free from crime.

Fostering community policing and strengthening local leader's confidence and capacities are most essential. Many local leaders have complained that they are not recognised by the authorities nor the police, as their role as community leaders is not official like the leaders in the rural local neighbourhoods (JKKKs).

National Unity & Harmony

One major concern raised in this context is the relationships with foreign workers living in the neighbourhood. Many of them rent the flats and they are working in the commercial or industrial areas nearby. There is a disconnection between foreign workers with the local community that subsequently affects cohesion in the neighbourhood as a whole. Hence, some effort must be taken to foster neighbourly relations among the groups. This is from a human rights perspective and as a majority of the foreign workers are from Asian countries, there is a need to review this differently. By 2015 we are establishing the the ASEAN community. Therefore some serious recognition is needed as there foreign workers are not aliens but our neighbours. There is a need for a change in the way we think and relate on this matter.

Another factor impacting community harmony is the behaviour and conduct of some people pertaining to drug or alcohol abuse in the flat vicinity. With regards to drug abuse, neighbourhood leaders were satisfied with the good response from the police force that tends to take action if and when cases of drug abuse occurs. Local leaders tend to alert the authorities and make referrals to the anti-drug enforcement unit.

However, in the case of alcohol abuse, there are no such laws pertaining to alcohol consumption in the neighbourhood locations, nor any agency that addresses the issue of liquor abuse and social misconduct. Alcohol abuse often results in an antisocial behaviour which disturbs the peace at the neighbourhood level. Currently, there are no restraining measures available. Local community leaders are unable to undertake the social control measure informally as it often ends up in local misunderstandings, even with occasional fights ensued, when they tried to offer advices on alcohol abuse matters.

There does not seem to be much inter-ethnic conflicts in the neighbourhoods. Existing conflicts tend to revolve in the context of demand for the public space, such as the use of community halls for regular social or religious activities, instead of ethnically-motivated per se.

Developers undertook the minimum requirement of providing the basic facilities, such as pertaining to a surau, space for a kindergarten, some community facility and small recreation area for children's playground.

There are no detailed community analysis and community requirements. No social audit or social impact assessment had been done on level of community happiness in local neighbourhoods.

The needs and concerns of a particular community such as the Indian, are often neglected. One reason for this is the failure to understand the demographic situation where there are a significantly large percentage of Indians residing in low-cost urban high-rise flats. Policymakers tend to dismiss ethnic minority requirements as being insignificant. However, the local demographics in low-cost high-rise flats differ from the national average. Therefore there is a neglect at the policy level, and this matter must be ratified.

The majority of the Indian families do not seem to be participating in the JPNIN activities, and local communities seems to live as segregated communities with little interaction. On one hand, the complaint we received from the Indian community is that the programmes and environment is not conducive to multi-cultural participation. On the other hand, the Malay side views that they welcome Indians to participate but the latter are not interested. Food seems to be one possible obstacle for Malay-Indian participation.

Often there are divisions based on political party affiliations, and this impacts on the local community. This is especially apparent in Selangor and Penang where local leaders, due to their political affiliation, are closely associated with the federal or state government. In many places, there are different poor people's lists that are used for distribution of public welfare via federal or state governments. In some

context, access to services might be impacted in a similar way such as microcredit processing.

Management and Governance Concerns

There seems to be some confusion over who are the people responsible for the local neighbourhood area as there are a number of leadership groupings. The first, Joint Management Committee that is in charge of the building and public space, including the collection of maintenance fees. The second is the Residence Association. Then, there are other groups including the JPNIN-RT, religious leaders, political leaders and informal leaders (gang groups).

In some neighbourhoods, there is a good working relationship; but in others there is enmity and division that affects social cohesion. As indicated earlier, some of these local leaders are affiliated to federal or state government.

There must be a formal mechanism on the election of local leaders in a leadership team which is recognised by all the levels of governance. Local leaders must keep aside their political differences so as to ensure that this does not affect peace and harmony at the neighbourhood level.

JPNIN has introduced the community mediators groups through training. Although it is a good initiative, they are not recognised within the current structure of local government or other agencies. In fact, some RT leaders said they were not taken seriously by the local police. The community mediation team could become a major step forward in fostering a people-friendly policy.

The best way forward is the establishment of local government elections where local leaders are elected

by the people, and not appointed by the respective political parties. Local residence in the neighbourhood must be a prerequisite for qualifying for contest in local government.

There must be greater consultations on local planning and development rather than the current top-down approaches. Local 'town hall meetings' at the community level must be instituted on a regular basis for the residence to have a sense of ownership and responsibility for their local community.

From a governance point of view, situations do not seem very different on who is in control of the state government, and therefore, the local government. These communities seem to be neglected by all the political actors. Similar situation remains in opposition states like Selangor and Penang. The political changes have not ushered in changes at the local governance levels, such as in the aspects of garbage clearance and community organising.

CONCLUSION

Malaysia's plan to become a 'high-income developed' nation must take the issues and concerns of flat dwellers more seriously. Developed status means not just be income-focused but also overall improvement in the quality of life (socio-economic).

At the same time, developed status also means a better democratic system, including the local government elections where people's participation in local governance is best developed.

A number of suggested are made in this context:-

- Institutionalise a social dialogue process; political leaders & civil service must be in regular conversation with local people.
- Establish one main coordinating committee that is recognised by all levels of government, through local neighbourhood and local authority-based elections
- Establish a system to recognise local leaders and provide sufficient funding for local governance by taking all the local actors into account for inclusivity.
- Undertake a good grass-roots leaders training programmes, especially to enhance capability building for solving local problems and needs.
- Establish one-stop centres at the neighbourhood level for local people to liaise with all the relevant agencies.
- Appoint community workers who have the skills for community work (building trust & solidarity, bringing people together, motivating & mobilising people).
- Develop a national action plan to address urban poverty and inequality
- Chart out specific intervention strategies and support for the informal economy.

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Note

1 The breakdown of the nine neighbourhoods according to states are as follows: (1) five neighbourhoods in Selangor: Desa Mentari Zone Kelana Jaya, Petaling Jaya; Desa Mentari Zone PJS, Petaling Jaya; Pangsapuri Enggang, Puchong; Sri Pulai, Balakong; and, Pangsapuri Perantau, Port Klang; (2) two neighbourhoods in Kuala Lumpur: Seri Sarawak, Cheras; and, Pangsapuri Kg Muhibbah, Lembah Pantai; (3) one neighbourhood in Perak: Taman Harmoni, Buntong, Ipoh; and, (4) one neighbourhood in Penang: Pangsapuri Teluk Indian, Seberang Prai.

2 The paper was presented at the Workshop on Urban Poverty, Public Policy & Community Based Development organised by COMMACT Malaysia, UKM Economics Faculty & the UKM Institute for Ethnic Studies (KITA), on December 19th, 2013 at KITA-UKM.

*APPENDIX 3: WORKING WITH THE URBAN POOR:
D.Y.N.A.M.I.S.M©: (A CASE STUDY BY COMMUNITY
CODES)*

By Jasmine Adaickalam, C CODES

Introduction

C CODES (*Consultancy on Community Organizing, Development and Empowerment Solutions*), had been awarded with an opportunity to create an archetype of a pilot phase of a community development model; a test case model to work with an urban poor neighbourhood community. The ultimate challenge that was set before C CODES was to initiate a model that will raise quality of life of the neighbourhood households irrespective of race, religion, gender, or age specification.

Ethnicity Breakdown

With a principal strategic precept of "walk, work and win" with the clients, C CODES was appointed by Unit Inovasi Khas (UNIK) or the Special Innovation Unit of the PMO to spearhead a pilot project for a duration of six months³ at Pangsapuri Enggang in Bandar Kinrara, Puchong; it is a low-cost high-rise apartment predominantly with a low-income multi-ethnic (M : C : I : O \equiv 7 : 0.7 : 2 : 0.3) population staying within a neighbourhood spread of 6 blocks.

³ The pilot project was originally stipulated to be from November 2012 to April 2013. However, due to local stakeholders / leaders involvement in the 13th General Elections (May 5th, 2013), the project duration was extended until 26th May 2013.

Block by Block Arrangement

Of which, 5 blocks (A, B, D, E, and F) are occupied by owners themselves and in some cases are rented out to other tenants, who are working around that area. Residents staying in one of the blocks (the C Block) has been inherently categorised as the “poorest of the poor” for reasons associated with the status of house-ownership which belongs to the local authority, Majlis Perbandaran Subang Jaya (MPSJ); and in that block, MPSJ has leased out units to deserving poor, who are primarily subjected to the impact of urbanisation and house relocations. These are the group of people who are re-settlers from the previous Puchong Batu 14, 15 and 16 squatter areas. Even their maintenance fee is being looked after by the Local Authority MPSJ. On a geographical note, Pangsapuri Enggang is enveloped or surrounded by primarily a zone of affluent housing estates with few other low-cost apartments / high-rise flats within the vicinity of Puchong.

Initial Theories and Hypothesis

C CODES then launched its search for primary and secondary data to understand and internalise the issues. At the onset, one primary concern or rather the hypothesis was that Pangsapuri Enggang is heavily affected from rampant violence dominated or controlled by certain groups of informal leaders belonging to one particular ethnic group. C CODES was also made to understand that these manifestations of violent behaviours are in the form of gang-related fights and assaults, collection of “protection” money and self-destructive behaviour (in relation to substance abuse, chiefly alcohol and drug abuse). No other critical problems were highlighted then; except for other poverty-related issues and challenges.

Upon learning this, C CODES then worked towards zooming into the plague with the ambition to identify some quick access and path into the hypothetical situation / scenario. C CODES the then Managing Consultant and one assistant, began to connect other dotted lines. Some prominent (formal) leaders were approached and more insights were collected. Here C CODES realised that the formal local leadership structure comprised of mono-ethnic, mono-religious, mono-gender and mono-political party affiliated members, without even any participation of local young people. In fact, this was the birthing ground for the local leadership's **pre-supposition and blinked understanding of local issues** and problems. As these new insights get accumulated, C CODES realised that there were other impending issues which were of greater significance relative to the violent-related behaviours. **The emerging issues then were more political in nature.** Instead of uniting the community, political masters, both from state as well as federal governments, divided the community by conducting programmes and providing assistance on the basis of the recipients of service's political affiliation.

The issue challenged C CODES' main principle of being non-partisan; and C CODES has to strategize delicate and sensitive steps to enter into the "battle-ground" without falling prey to any political ploy or wooing mechanisms.

Leaders representing both the governments (the federal and the Selangor state) were approached independently, and cases were built to appraise a common ground for entry. Meetings with the formal leaders at the grass-roots level; Civil Society Groups (CSOs) were also not left for chances. C CODES also

realized that these two supreme opposing forces (at the macro and policy level), were acutely influencing the micro-level players at the real battlefield. C CODES learned and documented the presence of many different leadership entities within neighbourhood; some directly under the influence of the federal government, some under the state government; and some under certain NGOs (or CSOs) which either federal-linked or otherwise. In essence, there wasn't any to be called NEUTRAL. It is critically disappointing, that there was **no one single entity discovered to be with a clean agenda, or slated to only account for the real development** (and empowerment) of the people.

Moreover, there was no real communal living or empathy, and the community was not integrated or even interacted among different levels of the same block. While the Malay community could go back to their *kampung* roots to spend some time with their loved ones from their extended families, other ethnic communities lacked such sense of belonging nor having roots somewhere. To compound this further, even the CSOs operated on their own agenda and not giving the community the right to their self-determination. This was a disservice to the people of the neighbourhood as there was no dedication to, or negotiation with, the local community. Hence, everything was divisive, and suited to the whims and fancies of the external stakeholders. There was **no bottom-up approach**. Instead, there was a top-down trickle, the top being the ones who held the purse strings, those with more education, affluence and influence in political circle.

Hence, from a wild perspective of being a violent ground under the domination of certain ethnic group,

or even under some informal leadership, Pangsapuri Enggang revealed its real stance or equation of having been **more politically distorted** than any other demeaning equations. Racial polarisation was also indicated; but it wasn't really revealed as a plague within the society. **Racial disintegration was present**, but the situation is hugely manageable, supported by genuine appetite for harmonious inter-ethnic living. During C CODES' first formal meeting with the neighbourhood leaders, we witnessed this spirit and the basic readiness for a pro-1-Malaysia neighbourhood.

The appetite for change was evident; and the change, though not in its full force, was also indicative of the desire to not be politically maneuvered. The real desire for change was for real-time development of the people and in the process, the desire for the right and genuine anti-poverty interventions and opportunities. C CODES' first formal presentation of its intervention plan, together with, and in support of, UNIK's direct incentives (related to income generation opportunities, community literacy and safe community activities), was indeed instrumental for the immediate spark of those desires.

Theory Challenged

C CODES then conceptualised an aggressively assertive game-plan to challenge the status-quo. As much as there was a need to establish scientific baselines (to understand the status-quo and move beyond), the need to establish a neutral platform was seen as critical. As for the baseline indicators, C CODES managed to push through the agenda of understanding the status-quo without any political or ethnicity-based fabrications. A research team was engaged to conduct

an independent study of the community's issues, challenges, needs and aspirations.

The whole research design was calibrated with the best sampling practices supported by due rationales and tolerances. More interestingly, the research design also included the local leaders as the direct stakeholders by empowering them with some basic enumerators' skills. Though there were some hiccups in terms of the data collection process. However, the problems were immediately eliminated by establishing counter mechanisms to retrieve the missing data with the assistance of the local leadership. The very design of the questionnaire enlisted and incorporated the views of the local community to ensure that there was a participatory process at all levels and the locals moved with greater ease. The data collection and data entry (using SPSS programme), which was initially targeted to be completed by the first week of January 2013, was only fully realized by mid-February 2013. The preliminary study analysis were then released by the second week of March 2013, followed by a thorough write-up of the same analysis with other secondary data and illustrations by the end of April 2013 (refer to Appendix A for key findings of the study).

While the study process was progressing on an independent fashion, the impetus to advocate and testify for a neutral body of representation was high. C CODES developed and shared the concept of being non-partisan via the designated set of deliverables that needs to be satisfied under UNIK's rules of the project. C CODES shared snippets and lessons of the past to drive home the points related to equality, balanced and fair representations. The ethnicity balance, the gender balance, the religious balance, the age-group balance,

the balance of political-allegiance and so on, were continuously preached and eventually realised with the formation of a holistically balanced Jawatankuasa Projek Pangsapuri Enggang (JKPPE); each block was designed to be represented by a leader along with six representatives, totalling 42 members). Of which, three representatives per block including the block leader were incorporated into the Jawatankuasa Projek Pangsapuri Enggang (JKPPE).

The only shortcoming of the project was lack of a representative from the Chinese community, despite many attempts by the local leaders and also by one of Chinese coordinator⁴ (Penggerak Masyarakat from the Jabatan Perpaduan Negara & Integrasi Nasional, JPNIN). However, due to the fact the community was really small with a population size less than 0.7% of the total, their absence in the JKPPE was, sadly but duly tolerated. Characteristically though, the status-quo of "politically-maneuvered representation" was cauterized with the opening and acceptance for a non-partisan representation.

Leadership Alignment

"Opening and acceptance for a non-partisan representation" aside, it is not an easy sail altogether. Real mindset engineering was required. Meetings after meetings in a cocooned fashion (the same ambiance, environment, faces, personalities, and routines) worked, but egos ("I-am-who-I-am" attitude) weren't fading easily. Past achievement and glories were still taking the centre stage. C CODES was fast to detect this and new reinforcements were introduced. The idea was to break the silos by making the JKPPE leaders

⁴ Mr Chin, who is now, deceased.

revisit their real selves, leadership styles and preferences / choices. The challenge was to introduce the desired state of mindset; a leadership mindset which is free from political entanglements and purely aligned towards common growth, development and success of the community.

Leadership success stories, best practices and methodologies related to mindset engineering with a consolidated sharing of community development fundamentals became the order of the game. C CODES organised the first leadership camp; away from town (in Port Dickson), with new faces (of lecturers and practitioners), with the majority of them experienced for the first time, the combo of a hotel-stay and good food along with structured plan of classroom and outdoor activities enriched with new inputs in the form of new concepts, new ideas and new challenges to be reckoned with. With all these factored in, the take-away from this leadership camp, was a detailed set of community's self-analysis to look into their core strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; an analysis which was good enough for the leaders to gauge their real intentions and agendas by being in the JKPPE. Fun and leisure aside, many participants had returned home with a renewed sense of belonging and ownership towards their Pangsapuri Enggang. They went back home with many new ideas that were germinated during the two days one night leadership workshop.

Leadership Reinforcement

C CODES then continued to reinforce the leadership lessons in its weekly meetings. C CODES realised that these new leaders with ample of ideas need to be properly guided through. They needed advanced skills

to translate ideas into practical programmes or interventions. C CODES then organised a second leadership training that consisted of an intensive one-day workshop, to empower the leaders with planning skills. Related trainers and speakers were engaged to deliver these skills with the highlight being a comprehensive yet interactive session on mediation skills.

The role of JKPPE as mediators between the community and other forces in play such as the government, civil societies, enforcement offices, private sector, was interestingly covered and substantiated with sufficient case studies. The second part of the training was navigated into real-time and clinical planning skills, supported by quality management principles and other sciences related to risk management and mitigation, as well as outcome-based management. The leaders were engaged on how to use these principles and skills directly within their scope of planned activities that are categorised under three main initiatives which will be directly under UNIK's sponsorship. The initiatives include safe community, community literacy and alternative income generation programmes.

The Emergence of Co-Equality as a Dimension

C CODES mode of intervention beyond the second leadership workshop was heavily tweaked into a **situation of co-designing and co-ownership**. Based on the preliminary set of study findings that was presented during the second leadership workshop, and the immediate set of programmes under UNIK's three key initiatives, the leaders were "positively pressured" to take ownership from this point forward. C CODES played the role of facilitating the ownership-taking process and fine-tuned the programmes based on

strong community building principles. The leaders were given the liberty to make their own choices based on collective agreements and consensus. Some were quite reluctant to take up new roles, while some were readily engaged with the whole idea. More voices were then heard in terms of the decisions to initiate or participate in other related programmes outside the scope of the project. The trend continued and the ultimate test was realised with the co-planning and co-execution of the grand finale or product of the project which was the community carnival.

Local Community Leadership as Equal Stakeholders

While C CODES was given the mandate to deal with matters related to the invitations (VVIP, VIPs and federal, state agencies and the media community), the leaders got together to have special committees to look into the planning, progress and execution of many different programmes including the cleanliness campaign, mobilisation and participation of locals in related community projects under different banners, and finally the carnival. The Carnival Organising Sub-Committee Chairman was elected through the democratic process of secret blotting. The JKPPE took heed of, and religiously adhered, to C CODES continuous mantra of walking, working and winning together. The JKPPE also observed the need to be transparent, responsible, financially prudent and risk-accounting.

Finally, despite the odds and trials that were manifested in many different forms and nature, JKPPE and the local community managed to host a spectacular community carnival which was later endorsed and acknowledged as the "best-ever"

community programme held in Pangsapuri Enggang over the recent years. Among others, the carnival witnessed a few breakthroughs, namely the biggest event with the biggest number of family attendance, despite it was held during a long weekend and school break in conjunction with the Wesak Day celebration. It was also the first event with the biggest multi-ethnic participation. Even the Chinese children took part with a significant number of the community members turned up and remained through the carnival as silent observers. In addition, the event was the first of its kind to witness prayers being offered both in Islamic and Hindu way; it was also the first event with a balanced representation of both the young and old residents.

Lessons Learnt & Guiding Parameters

In retrospect, with the working approach of "*walking, working and winning*" together, C CODES is convinced that it has been always dynamic in **envisaging** (the desired outcomes), **encountering** (the process), **engaging** (the direct and indirect stakeholders) and **executing** (the right strategies and tactics if need be). But what came to be observed and engagingly learned over the course of this project was the emergence of a consolidated framework of reference; which C CODES has now reframed and named it as the **D.Y.N.A.M.I.S.M pillars of reference**. The name or the tag is not only reflective of the need to have dynamism in the nature of work with the urban poor but it also indicates the need to have eight distinct, yet integrated, parameters (pillars) to build and ensure vitality of projects of this nature. The elaboration of this framework is as below:

1) DATA, DIALOGUES AND DISCERNMENT

It is given that, in today's era of information-driven society, one cannot do away without **DATA**. Data, provided the authenticity is somewhat guaranteed, provides the basic pulse of a community. Before it is translated into operational information, the data has to be "humanized". In other words, scientific studies alone may not do enough justice but engaging series of focus group discussions, dialogues or conversations with laymen and the stakeholders, are needed. The idea is not to make conclusions which are judgmental, but to discern and distinguish the real needs of the community, as opposed to those presumed by the stakeholders.

2) YEARNINGS

YEARNING, in this context of the case study, is truly about establishing the resounding '**YES**' from the members of the community. It is not merely about estimating and internalizing the community's unassuming and underlying desires, but ultimately it is about igniting the right desires and the need to create a burning platform. It is about securely buying into the community, first.

3) NEUTRALIZATION & NATURALIZATION

As clearly witnessed in this project, the clear evidence of the evil in community building or community development programmes is none other politically-oriented interferences. By indicating this, C CODES is not implying political allegiances as a cardinal sin on its own; in fact, C CODES calls it as democratic rights of any individual. The cardinal sin, in this context, is the art of dividing or polarising the community based on politically-driven agenda and political affinities. Hence,

for a healthy development of a community, these political affiliations need to be **NEUTRALISED** at the onset. Neutralisation here also refers to the need of having or establishing the right balance of diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, age, physical ability. Once this neutralisation is realised, efforts must be adequately, consistently and constantly driven in to ensure that the representatives are duly **NATURALISED** to this new-found synergy and culture.

In other words, while individuals and leaders can remain faithful to their political domains, the moment they have come together for a common cause, they should be neutral in their approach and naturally binding to others in the team. Perhaps, in a more practical sense, reasonable time frame may be needed to allow for this naturalisation process to occur alongside the process of transformation.

4) ADJUSTMENTS AND ALIGNMENTS

ADJUSTMENTS and **ALIGNMENTS** is the other intertwined parameters. Leadership alignment is one; and followership alignment is the other corresponding factor. Adjustment and alignment also have to take place in terms of resourcefulness. The idea is, the goal which is the mutual desire, has to be clearly established; and everything else such as man, machine, method, material, money, motives, has to be in adjustment or alignment. This is where conceptualisation and planning becomes crucial.

5) MATERIALISTIC MODERATENESS

MODERATENESS is also important in community building or development. The fact that **MATERIALISTIC** affordability of the have-nots is limited and resources - especially financial resources -

are scarce, thus it has to be clearly understood, appreciated and observed. The essence lies in the community development system's ability to successfully deal with the materialistic gaps or crises that it faces, as well as its ability to manage the resources and assets within the community. In the end, it is able to keep them to a level that would enable it to be translated into desired changes that are necessary for meeting the stakeholders' minimum expectations and needs. The golden rule of thumb is to gauge the "middle" indicators (between two extremes), and work towards satisfying those materialistic indicators without compromising on the quality dimensions of the deliverables. To simply put, quality dimensions have to be aimed and maintained at its highest standards possible.

6) INTENSITY & INCLUSIVENESS

Community development is a viable and effective strategy for eradication of urban poverty; that is a given. However, community development will not be a viable if it doesn't have **INTENSITY** in terms of frequency of people contact, group meetings, momentum building and so on, to advocate and practice **INCLUSIVENESS** at every stage of the development right from its input, process, output and outcome planning. Projects of this nature should provide accessible services to enhance the quality of life, for any given individual of the community and his/her families within the ecosystem. Project owners, i.e., the leaders of the system, then must design and develop facilities and facilitations which are co-designed in partnership with individuals, groups and communities, agencies, enforcements entities, ministries, private sector and civil societies.

7) SYMBIOTISM OF SYSTEMS

The critical success factor here is the spirit of inclusiveness within a **SYMBIOTICALLY** responsible **SYSTEM** or **SYSTEMS** which are pro-poor. Here then, the "urban poor" as a community becomes inclusively co-equals and not merely "passive recipients" of one-off subsidies. The illustration below suggests the proposed shift of approach. This is a deliberate walk away from the established **Tripartite Model to a Quadri-Partite Model**, which befits aptly the Malaysian society.

8) MATURITY, MODALITY and MONITORING MECHANISMS

Community development is a process. A developed community is the end product of this process, and the criteria for a developed community have to be clearly established at the very beginning. It's purely about outcome-based management in which indicators of growth, development and **MATURITY** have to be closely monitored. These indicators, however, are not to be benchmarked by any given set of indicators derived from any other model of practice. The maturity gauge of a community is unique. The community under review has its own pace, culture, and its own set of experiences within a realm of its own history, existence and evolution. This **MODALITY** has to be clearly understood. As such, the interventions and the measurements of both the quantitative and qualitative critical success factors, have to be modular enough in documenting the success of individual projects under review. But then again, the rule of the game with reference to stakeholders' quality of life should never be compromised or manipulated in any context. This is where this process of community development calls for

a unique set of qualitative and quantitative monitoring that includes the use of measurable indicators and reliable real-time mechanisms at every single development stage of the chosen community/neighbourhood, which accumulate and steadily progress towards the holistic development of the chosen neighbourhood. These indicators and system of operation can be creatively adapted to develop on any chosen neighbourhood. As a key stakeholder in the people development process, the government should design and create national level community development process indicators for every single stage.

Conclusion

The process of community development, from its inception until the stage of measuring the outputs as well as gauging the outcomes, can only be noble and successful when one looks at it as a tool to ensure that the “people” wins in a grand way. In that, the other stakeholders in the symbiotic system, be it the CSOs, the private sector, the government and all other related peripherals, provided they have walked ‘the talk’ and worked based on the proposed C CODES’ D.Y.N.A.M.IS.M[©] pillars of reference, will also eventually win in a significant way. The rationale for this framework of reference, is as close as it is with the famous Aristotle’s tenet, “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”, whereby if all these eight pillars can be duly erected while constructing the community house, the final outcome will certainly be positively greater in its effect and manifestations than the sum of the isolated victories or success equations of each and every stakeholders. Ultimately, the whole community development approach proposed or narrated in this

case study, is closely linked to theories and concepts which are fundamental to plain truths which elucidate that humans seek rewards and avoid punishments; humans are rational actors, standards humans use to evaluate costs and rewards vary over time and from person to person, relationships are interdependent and relational life is a process altogether.

Appendix A : Key Findings of The Study

Parameters	Indicators (Ratio / % / Averages / Descriptors)
Ethnicity Ratio	Malays; 7 : Chinese; 1 : Indians; 2
Average Respondent's Age	42.57 (N=225)
Monthly Household Income	61.3% below RM3000
Average Monthly Income of household head WORKING FULL-TIME	RM1593.95 (N=88)
Average Monthly Income of household head WORKING PART-TIME	RM675.43 (N =7)
Average Monthly Income of household head DOING OWN BUSINESS	RM1388.50 (N=18)
Average Household Monthly Income (both Household	RM2027.06 (N=31)

Parameters	Indicators (Ratio / % / Averages / Descriptors)
Head & Spouse Working Full-time)	
Average Household Monthly Income (Household Head Fulltime + Spouse Part-time	RM1431.36 (N=11)
Average Household Monthly Income (Household Head Fulltime + Spouse Own Business)	RM1700 (N=2)
Number of Families with at least one child	N=216 (9 families without children)
Number of Children Staying Together	6.50 (N=216)
Number of Children Schooling	5.51 (N=216); mostly in primary or secondary level
Average Number of Children Working	4.48 (N=216)
Favourite Past-Times among children and young persons	Internet Based Activities (mainly Facebook & Video Games)
Average Number of Families Under One Roof	1.39 (N=216); 37 families living with a minimum of 2 families under single roof
Study Rooms	Only 49 out of 225 houses with study space; hence 78% without study space

Parameters	Indicators (Ratio / % / Averages / Descriptors)
Average Mean of Family Health Status (as per respondent's perception to the scale of 0 to 10; 10 being 100% perfect bill of health; 78% of the respondents are household heads)	7.74 (N=2225)
Medical Complications	Majority are diabetics related followed by asthma
Medical Facility	Almost 97% relies on Government Hospitals / Clinics
% Single Mothers	11.5% (26 over 225)
State of Origin	Perak (25%) followed by Selangor, KL, Kedah & Kelantan
Highest Educational Level	SPM (49%, N = 225); the second biggest majority are under SPM
Employment Status	45.3% full-time
Key neighbourhood & "living together" related issues	Malays, in relative, have highest mean values in cleanliness, crime-free environment, federal agencies role, overall happiness and income generation opportunities. Indians have the highest mean values in human safety & security, the role of civil societies, role of the state agencies and

Parameters	Indicators (Ratio / % / Averages / Descriptors)
	<p>overall opportunity of capacity building.</p> <p>Indians have the lowest mean value for income generation opportunities.</p> <p>Chinese have the lowest mean values for all the attributes.</p> <p>There is a degree of social apprehension in terms of living together as community</p> <p>Based on a ranking exercise, it was found that, "cleanliness" appeared to be the number one issue, followed by "poverty", "alcoholism", "mastery of English" and "vandalism"; it is interesting to note that the pattern of the "rankings" across the different ethnic groups is almost the same; however, unlike Malay and Indian respondents, the Chinese respondents have ranked gangsterism and inter-racial integration as among the top issues. Also, unlike the Malays and Indians, the Chinese respondents have ranked English proficiency and lack of income generation programmes to be least critical.</p>
Key "Needs" (based on Maslow's	"Self-Esteem" is the lowest; physiological needs fairly

Parameters	Indicators (Ratio / % / Averages / Descriptors)
Hierarchy of Needs)	"fulfilled"
Key "SOCIAL INTERVENTION" Dimension	<p>43 (63.6%) of the respondents are aware of social programmes / activities in PE, only 123 (54.7%) do partake in the programmes. Most popular form of social activity is FESTIVE related followed by sports and politically orientated</p> <p>97.3% believes that SOCIAL PROGRAMMES & COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP can solve most of the issues / challenges faced by the community as well as enhance their aspirations</p> <p>Medical / health issues and high-cost of living are the two main factors associated with the reason of being poor</p> <p>In-house talents were indicated but the readiness to come forth & serve within the community seems lacking</p>
Study Recommendations Based on Descriptive and Inferential Findings As Well As Observations / Casual	<p>Dialogue with the Chinese Community - As much as the study findings reveal corresponded by the actual reality on the ground, mobilisation of the Chinese community to participate in social related activities in PE seems to be difficult; hence a</p>

Parameters	Indicators (Ratio / % / Averages / Descriptors)
<p>Conversations with the Leaders & Members of Community</p>	<p>need for healthy & constructive dialogue to enhance the truly 1-Malaysia potentials</p> <p>Awareness on “Study” Facilities & Creation of Alternative Avenues (1-Malaysia Library or Resource Centre) – there is a need to create an alternative space – like a library or a resource centre – especially for school going children to gather and learn; if possible with specific educational and 1-Malaysia principles incorporated activities.</p> <p>Immediate Programmes Related To Top 5 Issues in PE, namely cleanliness, poverty, alcoholism, English literacy and vandalism as the top 5 issues as perceived by the residents of PE. In any context, since these 5 issues have emerged being the most critical ones, creative measures must be in place to manage them holistically. The idea is that the PEOPLE (especially the respondents) of the study should be able to FEEL immediate actions in place so that they are convinced that</p>

Parameters	Indicators (Ratio / % / Averages / Descriptors)
	<p>studies of this nature DO HELP them eventually.</p> <p>Unresolved Issues - While no specific mentions were made (in the findings), but in reading between the lines, there seems to be some unresolved issues among the people especially with regards to leadership, management, maintenance and perhaps some political issues. These unresolved issues also need to be specifically identified and addressed so that programs which are being planned (in the pipeline) are not sabotaged by anyone.</p> <p>Self-Esteem Enhancing Programs & Mechanisms - The cause of low self-esteem (subject to the background and socio-economic status of the person, the physical and social surroundings, age, association with the outside world and varied experiences in childhood and early adolescence, negligence, criticism, comparison with others, materialistic expectations, physical appearance, pressure and bullying, financial and social</p>

Parameters	Indicators (Ratio / % / Averages / Descriptors)
	<p>position, sense of achievements, unemployment, betrayal, ill-health and trauma and negative experiences) have to be clearly identified and documented via credible and authorised services entities followed by appropriate set of clinical actions / programmes to correct this discrepancy.</p> <p>Capitalizing The Power of INTERNET & FACEBOOK – the –young demographics of the community and its INTERNET based affinities (among the young ones) should be creatively harnessed for real constructive community gains</p>

APPENDIX 4: COOPERATIVES AND PEOPLE-CENTRED DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF MUSLIM YOUTH COOPERATIVE MALAYSIA BERHAD

By Mr Mohd Asri Abdullah (COMMACT Malaysia & Abim Youth cooperative)

Introduction

Cooperatives can be a major player in people-centred development in Malaysia. In fact, by helping their own members, it can safely be assumed that cooperatives in one way or another, are already involved in people-centred development in the country. As in December 2010, there are 8,146 registered cooperatives in Malaysia with 6.6 million members (Malaysian Cooperative Societies Commission 2012). Thus, against a total Malaysian population of 28.3 million (2010), it seems as if cooperatives are already helping 23.3% of the population in some kind of “people-centred development”, although the true percentage may be somewhat lower due to multiple membership, i.e., one person may belong to more than one cooperative.

However, this is not necessarily so; there are still rooms for meaningful participation of cooperatives in people-centred development in Malaysia. The benefits received by members in the existing framework falls short of the cooperatives’ potential in changing the framework to create sustainable communities. This paper will attempt to examine the challenges faced by cooperatives in order to equip themselves to be better players in creating more economic opportunities for the general public. It will also highlight some of the experience of Muslim Youth Cooperatives in engaging several communities. And finally, it will also give some

justifications why urban farming should be a core activity in alleviating urban poverty.

Challenges for Cooperatives to Champion People-Centred Development

First and foremost, the cooperative movement lacks visionary leadership to exploit cooperatives' full potential in empowering communities. Many cooperatives are complacent with the business as usual attitude and would not venture into activities that may affect organisation's bottom lines. Many cooperatives are contented with the usual activities such as savings and loans, hire purchase, emergency help, share purchase, investment in properties, etc.

Second, is the profit orientation. It is true that cooperatives should make profit in order to pay dividends to their members. However, the pursuit of profit should not be the topmost priority in conducting cooperatives' activities. The performance of a cooperative should instead be based on achieving the triple bottom line measures, namely profit, people's empowerment and preservation of environment. Thus, if there are two options: the first activity brings in the higher profit but negates community empowerment, the cooperative should choose the second alternative which offers modest return plus social benefits.

Third, investing for high returns. Generally, the cooperative is no different from conventional business whereby in most investment decisions, the sole criterion was to get the highest possible return. But, the appropriate investment decision for cooperative should be to achieve the kind of community we want to

live in. Thus there is still not much awareness among cooperative leadership with regards to the concept of local economy, which involves local investing, local food production, etc. In Indonesia, there are more examples of cooperatives' involvement to empower communities. A commendable example is the involvement of Koapgi – Garuda Airlines Staff Cooperative to empower the rural people through investment in a rice farming community in West Java.

Fourth, the cooperative movement in our country has the difficulty of reaching out to the younger generations as compared to the older ones. This can have an adverse impact on the cooperative business, sustainability and future success. Cooperative performance and progress clearly depends on the trust and commitment of not only older people but also the young.

Fifth, the majority of co-operatives are small in size and capital, and have poor networking among them.

Sixth, to make cooperatives work in urban areas is quite a challenge. Usually, this is a chicken and egg situation whereby potential members want to see the benefits gained by being a cooperative member before they agree to become a member. But then a cooperative needs members' support to achieve critical mass before it is able to give benefits to its members. To put it in another way, a cooperative will be successful if members stand loyally by their venture through a period when they *could* have gained immediate benefit for themselves by patronizing the people who were trying to run the cooperative out of business.

Muslim Youth Cooperative: Some Examples in Community Work

At the time of its formation in 1977, the mission statement of Muslim Youth Cooperative was to provide alternative financing to our members, so that by becoming members, part of their economic activities are free from interest-bearing instruments. But after about 30 years of providing this service, we now shift towards the community. Priority is given to our members but it is also inclusive of other people in the community. In the final analysis we still empower our members since every time a non-member needs assistance from us, he/she will be required to be our member.

The objectives of our program are:

- a) To generate additional income for every household family in the face of rising prices either in the form of employment or a business opportunity.
- b) To utilize abandoned lands in a smart partnership involving the land owner, the entrepreneur, the investor and the cooperative and where all parties will all benefit in a win-win relationship instead of renting out to a party in a win-lose relationship.
- c) To use low cost appropriate technology, using waste to create wealth
- d) To contribute towards food security, food safety and food sovereignty of the country.

Activities

In order to achieve our objectives, we undertake the following activities:

- a) Skills training – Automotive (mechanic), Bakery, Agriculture (general) and Rice Cultivation
- b) Community mobilisation whereby we encourage them to plant vegetables and where appropriate, rice.

Skills Training

We provide young people (under the age of 30) with training in the field of auto mechanic, bakery, and agriculture. By 2014, we will have a training centre specialising in rice cultivation using organic System of Rice Intensification (SRI) Method.

Besides skill, we also inculcate in them the spirit of entrepreneurship. Upon graduation, those who qualified will undergo some kind of apprenticeship and thereafter will qualify for our financing scheme to start their own business. In the beginning, the sharing between cooperative and the entrepreneur is in the ratio of 80:20, but slowly and steadily, the entrepreneur will increase his/her share to a maximum of 80% and the cooperative controls only 20% of the business.

Community Mobilisation

So far, we have mobilised five communities – three rural, one semi-urban and one urban – to plant vegetables organically. The benefits of organic farming

were explained to the participants and after a series of workshops on the making of natural fertilisers – IMO, composting – and natural insect repellent they were able to start planting vegetables. In the beginning we were involved in marketing their produce, but later on they are able to have their own arrangements.

Additionally, we also mobilised one community for rice cultivation using SRI organic method.

These communities are as follows:

- a) Kampung Bidadari, Bintangor, Sarawak
- b) Kampung Bukit Cerakah Jaya, Meru, Selangor (about 50 km from Kuala Lumpur City Centre, semi-urban community)
- c) Felcra Resettlement Area, Pulau Banggi Sabah
- d) Felcra Resettlement Area, Batang Lupar, Sarawak
- e) Kariah (Parish) of Salahudin Ayubi Mosque, (about 10km from Kuala Lumpur City Centre, urban community)
- f) Kampung Lunas, Langkawi, Kedah, for rice cultivation using SRI method.

Our Model

The following is our project implementation process:

- Step 1: Recruitment and Training of Community Mobilisers
- Step 2: Community Mobilisation
- Step 3: Identification of support system such as local organisations and institutions, local industries, natural and human resources
- Step 4: Project Selection and Implementation

Step 5 : Formation of Cooperative

We guide communities to plant vegetables organically for their own consumption (kitchen garden); health should be the first priority then only we talk about income generation (having a proper vegetable farm in the case of rural communities). The formation of cooperative is to serve as an umbrella for business generated in the community; whereby the cooperative can serve as marketing arm for the produce as well as to help them organise and explore different kinds of businesses in the future based on their comparative advantage.

Partnership with mosque-based cooperative:

Our partnership with one mosque, namely Salahudin Ayubi Mosque about 12km from Kuala Lumpur city centre, made it possible for us to use a small piece of vacant land (about 300 sq meter) within the mosque compound to start our farming activities. This serves as a demonstration plot to interest the congregation in urban farming, whereby we will share with them the right methods of doing it. So far, not much interest is shown by the community, but we are positive that there is big potential in the community since this kariah (parish) is inhabited by about 30,000 people. There will be enough demand for fresh, organic, locally grown vegetables if a section of the people were to grow the vegetables which in turn will be marketed by the mosque-based cooperative.

Community engagement to grow rice:

Malaysia's self-sufficiency in rice is only 62%, the other 38% is imported. Thus our involvement in mobilising communities to produce rice is to increase national

self-sufficiency in rice thereby enhancing food security. The government has given incentives to private companies to be engaged in rice farming, especially to rehabilitate abandoned farm lands – lands which were left idle for 20-30 years – because people migrated to urban area in search of better livelihood. Now that we have to find solution to new realities such as youth unemployment rate of 10%), rice cultivation could be one of the answers, even though we face the uphill task of convincing city youth to return to the villages.

Suggestion: Urban Farming for Urban Poor

Despite the problems mentioned above, and despite the fact that our model is far from complete, cooperatives have a big potential to assist the poor especially in the urban setting. The main activity of urban cooperative is to focus on urban farming. But like La Via Campesina (International Peasant Movement) or Growing Power movements, the goal is not just food production, but “to grow food, to grow minds, and to grow community.”

We should benefit from the achievement of Growing Power Movement. This movement hires local residents to supply farm labour, runs youth development programs, and provides training for future farmers. All growing methods are designed to be easily replicable and economically viable, in order to empower communities to create their own Community Food Systems that will simultaneously provide equal access to healthy affordable food, provide jobs to benefit the local economy, and take care of the environment. In addition, Growing Power works to change the city’s zoning codes and composting laws to make it easier for people to start urban farms and community gardens.

However, for a new framework to take hold, the food sovereignty movement needs to continue to increase in scale. To use Growing Power's term, the more Community Food Systems we create, the closer our global food system will come to a food sovereignty framework. Working towards food sovereignty from a community level could start to alter the social and economic structure of our society from the bottom up, bypassing corporate interests and tipping the scales in favour of small farmers. This effort could eventually build up enough support to bring about the needed policy changes.

There are many benefits of urban agriculture. First is food security and nutrition. The contribution of urban agriculture to food security and healthy nutrition is probably its most important asset. Food production in the city is in many cases a response of the urban poor to inadequate, unreliable and irregular access to food, and the lack of purchasing power.

Most cities in developing countries are not able to generate sufficient (formal or informal) income opportunities for the rapidly growing population. The World Bank (2000) estimates that approximately 50% of the poor live in urban areas (25% in 1988). In urban settings, lack of income translates more directly into lack of food than in a rural setting (cash is needed). Additionally, urban agriculture may improve both food intake (improved access to a cheap source of proteins) and the quality of the food may improve (poor urban families involved in farming eat more fresh vegetables than other families in the same income category).

Second, the economic impact. Growing one's own food saves household expenditures on food especially among the poor since poor people in poor countries

generally spend a substantial part of their income (50 – 70%) on food. Growing the relatively expensive vegetables therefore saves money as well as on bartering of produce. Selling produce (fresh or processed) brings in cash.

Third, social impact. Besides the economic benefits for the urban agricultural producers, urban agriculture stimulates the development of related micro-enterprises: the production of necessary agricultural inputs and the processing, packaging and marketing of outputs. The activities or services rendered by these enterprises may owe their existence in part or wholly to urban agriculture. Other services may also be rendered by independent families and groups (e.g. animal health services, bookkeeping, and transportation).

Urban agriculture may also function as an important strategy for poverty alleviation and social integration. Several examples exist of municipalities or NGOs that have initiated urban agriculture projects that involve disadvantaged groups such as orphans, disabled people, women, recent immigrants without jobs, or elderly people, with the aim to integrate them more strongly into the urban network and to provide them with a decent livelihood. The participants in the project may feel enriched by the possibility of working constructively, building their community, working together and in addition producing food and other products for consumption and for sale.

Fourth, contributions to urban ecology. Urban agriculture is part of the urban ecological system and can play an important role in the urban environmental management system. A growing city will produce more and more waste water and organic wastes. For most cities, the disposal of wastes has become a serious

problem. Urban agriculture can help to solve such problems by turning urban wastes into a productive resource.

Conclusion

Despite their many weaknesses, co-operatives are still regarded by the government as a tool for the country's economic development especially in helping to alleviate poverty, enhance rural and urban development and bridging unequal income distribution. Thus, the movement should equip itself with visionary leaders and competent management to contribute effectively to people-centred development. Urban farming is recommended as a core activity to alleviate urban poverty due to its many benefits as compared to other activities.

APPENDIX 5: CONNECTING PEOPLE-CENTRED DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY TO PUBLIC POLICY

By Dr. Adnan Hezri and Dr. Tan Jun-E, Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia

BACKGROUND

The practice of growth-focused development emphasises formal planning, specialisation, and central government control. These prescriptions in turn often results in the use of development resources to maintain vast national patronage systems and the concentration of wealth and political power in the hands of elites. If unchecked, the outcome is widening inequality and the stifling of democratic voices of the disenfranchised.

This shortcoming has instigated the conceptualisation and testing of many alternative development strategies in many countries in the recent years. One proposal is for a people-centred development (PCD) strategy that is underpinned by the values of justice, sustainability, and inclusiveness. The Commonwealth Network for People-Centred Development (COMMACT) sees PCD as “a process of empowering and enabling poor and marginalised individuals, groups, and communities”, and is important to provide these groups with the necessary skills and voice to participate in the wider society, to ensure that development is sustainable and equitable as a whole. Korten (1987) explains that PCD places a high priority on the process of democratisation, empowering people to mobilise and manage their own resources, with the government as an enabler instead of a controller. Related to this is the idea of community-based development which ushers in

the emphasis on decentralisation that devolves authority to the most local community level. It has been shown that decentralised and self-organising approaches generally result in more efficient and productive use of resources, better governance, reduced dependence on external aid, as well as increased equity and participation (Korten 1987).

This paper argues that sustainability is a development construct that is consistent with the notion of people-centred and community-based development. Poverty eradication and better maintenance of ecological commons are directly linked, as the benefit flows from natural capital are received directly by the poor (UNEP 2011). Ecosystem goods and services shape the livelihoods of the poor, providing a safety net against economic and natural disasters. A transition from a brown economy to a green economy is vital for higher quality of life and sustained economic activity. If actions on urgent environmental problems are not taken, many jobs could be lost due to resource depletion, biodiversity loss, extreme weather conditions, and other disruptions. Pre-emptive and strategic steps towards green growth can protect existing jobs against these threats, and stimulate job creation (UNEP 2008).

DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

The meaning of development changes with time. During the colonial era, 'development' was understood a set of concrete actions put into force by Europeans to exploit and draw profit from the resources of the rest of the world. This was followed by Walt Rostow's idea of five stages of nations' economic growth namely: the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high

mass consumption (Rostow 1960). Transitions from a traditional society into an industrialised one, require rapid economic growth which is indicated by continuous rise of GNP figures. It was believed that increasing the size of an economy would concomitantly distribute the benefits of development to all people. Next in the 1970s, the 'dependency' school of thought became dominant in development, with its import substitution industrialisation policy prescription. The 1980s was known as 'the lost decade' because most countries (Asian Tigers being the exception) in the developing world were undergoing development reversals, with notable loss in previous gains. The 1990s marked the rise of neo-liberalism, which considers the free market to be the best way to initiate and sustain economic development.

The sustainability model is a challenge to these conventional forms of development. It seeks to reconcile the ecological, social and economic dimensions of development, now and into the future. Sustainable development is a combination of all three; it is not an ecological problem, nor a social one, nor an economic one per se. Therefore, it embraces complexity. In this regard, sustainability contradicts the conventional prioritisation of economic growth as the sole measure of progress. More so, sustainability acknowledges there are biophysical limits to growth. In addition, sustainability reflects an agenda of social justice within and across current and future generations. It also challenges the belief that consumption is the most important contributor to welfare. More distinctively, sustainability prizes the preservation of ecosystem services.

THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF SUSTAINABILITY

That the biophysical elements are crucial to the debate on sustainability is a well-articulated and expended upon subject (Goodland & Daly 1996). In contrast, the question of what is the "social" is a long standing debate not just on the discourse on sustainability alone, but also in the broader realm of social sciences (Bloor 1991). It follows that 'society' as the analytical object of the social, presents significant theoretical and empirical challenges for its abstract nature. A social structure can be seen as a product of the interplay between relationships of individual experiences, relationships of production and consumption (economic), and relationships of power (politics). Needless to say, another layer of complexity is introduced into the "social" debate when the ontological status of social reality and human nature is considered in relation to the environment.

A socially just transition to sustainability may be considered through the lens of distributional and procedural justice. The former considers the different effects of policy or practice responding to greening across groups of people and the places they belong to. The latter, procedural justice considers questions of governance, voice and participation within decision making.

Distributional Justice

The influential Brundtland Report established the term "needs" into the debate on sustainability. It goes without saying that "needs" is a value choice. Underpinning the emphasis on needs is the Maslowan psychological construct which involves the ordering and fulfilment of a hierarchy of needs and wants (Maslow

1968). The hierarchy starts from the lower rung of merely physiological needs such as food to higher level self-actualisation that may bring about aesthetic appreciation of nature. The Brundtland Report advocates the fulfilment of equity between different periods of time (inter-generational), while stressing the importance of fulfilling the essential needs of the present day world's poor (intra-generational). If seen strictly from this anthropocentric angle, social sustainability appears as a continuation of the more traditional agenda of 'development'. Specifically, 'development' is the process and 'social sustainability' is the condition under which this development should take place. Herein lies sustainability's dilemma in social terms; the desirable social goal of development is far from being a completed agenda in the world today. Poverty and hunger are still rampant at the time when global material increase in wealth and consumption are threatening global ecosystems. As a consequence, development and sustainability merged inextricably together, but with 'sustainable' being used as a mere prefix implying environmental protection.

The social goal of eradicating poverty is a case in point. Poor communities and sustainable development at first blush seem incompatible and unattainable (Mestrum 2003). Furthermore, poverty is arguably both the cause and the outcome of an unsustainable development. The argument is that poor communities usually have few resources under their control, and thus the possibility of in situ resource exploitation for them is often an issue of survival. The World Bank's definition of poverty in terms of vulnerability, voicelessness and powerlessness is a manifestation of this view (Mestrum 2003).

There are two prescriptions as the antidote to poverty in the sustainability discourse. The first argues for income and consumption redistribution to poor and financially deprived people. It is further proposed that poverty alleviation is a prerequisite for environmental conservation. For the proponents of the second antidote, the social dimension of sustainability is often prescribed in the term human development. In brief, human development is defined as progress toward enabling all human beings to satisfy their essential needs, beyond monetary calculations. This includes the pursuit of achieving a reasonable level of comfort, to live lives of meaning and interest, and to share fairly in opportunities for health and education. Hence, human development is a final goal, an end to which other important pursuits such as sustainability are the means.

For an upper middle income country like Malaysia, both approaches only reclaim an old and established heritage, rather than implanting or importing a new diversion. Indeed, some would claim that these approaches are more 'economic' than 'social'. Surely, the figures need to be improved, be they for poverty eradication or income per capita. But, if left theoretically unpacked, a facile conception of social sustainability could lead to a political expediency that considers social sustainability in Malaysia a completed project.

The outcome of this deliberation must transcend the mere fiscal conditionality of achieving sustainability, which is too often judged from the criteria of economic growth and physical development. A grand scale project of reformulating normative goals for the country such as this one begs the question of who

makes the decision on sustainability – the government, or society, or should it be both?

Procedural Justice

Democratic institutions and unfettered political access are seen as key prerequisites for better resource management, and eventually sustainable development (Fischer 2006; Paehlke 1996). In an empirical study, Winslow (2005) demonstrates a positive correlation between higher level of democracy and lower pollutants concentration in a number of countries. Be that as it may, urban air pollution is just one of the many problems confronting the environment and its sustainability. That being the case, there is a counter-argument which argues that democracy might not be the best type of government to protect environmental quality in all circumstances (Ophuls 1977). There is a contention that authoritarian regimes (of benign persuasion) might be necessary in controlling ecological problems with long-term and distant impacts.

Under the influence of cosmopolitan environmentalism, many have come to regard the values of democratic participation as nearly universal. In short, better access to decision-making is assumed to hasten the achievement of sustainability, *ceteris paribus*. The desirable principles of people-centred democracy include the following. It has to give currency on free enquiry, promote open access to information and encourage informed critical debate about sustainability. Countries that could publicly display a transparent decision-making concerning the environment to their citizen theoretically should grow in legitimacy compared to those that could not be held publicly accountable for their activities. An expression of this goal is the growth of local Agenda 21 initiatives across

the world, which has brought about the formulations of Agenda 21 local plans and strategies. By and large, Agenda 21 'fever' was inspired by the objective of central governments to devolve authority to lower levels administration so that citizens could participate actively in city planning. Some countries, such as India and Bolivia, have even passed national legislation mandating popular participation in local governance, including planning and budgeting (Fischer 2006).

Desirable as democratic participation may be as a social goal, they are also, in practice, a subject of the specificities of policy styles in different political systems. This means that participation should be seen to exist in many models, with each entailing different costs and benefits. With some countries more accustomed to a top-down planning system, increased participation run the risk of introducing irreducible discord and confusion in the decision-making arena, which could have a destabilising effect. Interestingly, empirical evidence shows that devolution of policy planning and implementation does not necessarily bring about improved participation among citizens (Abel & Stephan 2000).

Therefore, any formulations of new democratic prescriptions for Malaysia need to be cognisance of its political realities. An explanation is in order here. Despite regularly held multi-party elections, Malaysia's political system has been characterised by scholars as semi-democratic (Case 1993), quasi-democratic (Zakaria 1989), and even as a repressive-responsive semi-authoritarian regime (Crouch 1996). Malaysia is also frequently described as a primarily consociational democracy, that is, a system of government based on inter-communal elite accommodation. The defining

principles of such a system, according to Singh (2001: 48), include, inter alia, "...a grand coalition comprising political elites representing the subcultures, decision-making based on ethnic proportionality, compromises, consensus and mutual veto...". Decision-making authority in Malaysia is concentrated in the hands of the elected executive and the bureaucracy. This applies to both federal and state governments.

Moreover, planned intervention is a common practice not just in Malaysia, but in other developing countries through the periodic development planning system. It is a question of policy style, which means that democracy is not the ultimate panacea. This contradiction can be seen in Southeast Asia whereby countries with higher level of democratic practices exhibit the most severe environmental problems. Malaysia, perhaps the least democratic in the region along with Singapore and Myanmar, has managed to top the league table of Environmental Sustainability Index 2005 for Southeast Asia.

Ergo, just like the goal of equity, the task to define democracy as a component of social sustainability is fraught with many contradictions. The causes are two-pronged. First, the underlying paradoxes are an outcome of ambiguous constructions of value spheres. Second, our grasp of the political experiences, or the 'political space' in Malaysia as far as the environment is concerned, is still minimal. For instance, movements concerned with the environment are known to have provided social forum, a laboratory for experimentation with power and political identity. It is imperative that scholars unpack these experiences and their cultural meaning in order to define social sustainability *vis-à-vis* the political space of democratisation more realistically.

Needless to say, this would require a more systematic research, one which is by no means easy because these experiences are embedded analytically in the questions of function and form of government. The next section explores this further under the rubric of governance.

BUILDING THE BRIDGES

Malaysia belongs to the club of upper-middle-income countries. In the Human Development Index assessment, Malaysia is grouped in the high human development band. In the past 50 years, the country has shown remarkable economic and social progress. For example, Malaysia has achieved the Millennium Development Goals' primary objective of halving poverty, whereby the aggregate figure fell from 17% in 1990 to less than 4% in 2009 (United Nations 2011). In fact, Malaysia has achieved most of the MDG targets at aggregate level.

As aggregate income levels rise, different levels of society do not benefit in equal terms. In 2012, the mean monthly household income for the top 20% income group was RM12,159, compared with the bottom 40% who earned RM1,847 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012). The income disparity in Malaysia is illustrated by a Gini Coefficient of 0.431 in 2012, although the figure had improved slightly from 0.441 in 2009. Urban inequality (0.417) is higher than rural inequality (0.382). With 71% of the population living in urban areas (as of 2010), bridging the gap between the haves and have-nots is a policy challenge, to ensure political and social stability.

Moving forward, the articulation of social values that are consistent with sustainability principles,

mainstreaming the concept of social and solidarity economy (SSE), longer term planning, and enhanced policy implementation are the actions that will facilitate the integration of people-centred development and sustainability into mainstream public policy process and outcome in Malaysia.

Articulate social values

There is a need to further contemplate on the questions of national unity and security, as well as what constitutes cultural integrity that needs to be inherited to the future generations. Both are higher-order value spheres concerning inter- and intra-generational justice and equity unique for Malaysia. Thus, it is imperative that civil society and government both engage continuously in a more thorough discussion on what constitutes societal well-being. We must also ask questions about who we are introspectively, and what institutions should govern our basic social allegiances, that together form the sustainability value spheres for Malaysia. The relevant questions may include, but are not limited to the following:

- i. What are the core values of a sustainable Malaysian society;
- ii. What are the elements of these core values that need to be sustained, nurtured or even removed;
- iii. What are the strategies to achieve task (ii) above?
- iv. What is the baseline in history upon which we are to base our conception of sustainable society for inter-generational considerations?

Long-term planning

People-centred development should not only take people of the present into account, but also the future generations. Inter-generational equity is about protecting the rights of the young and yet unborn, against a future of hostile living conditions because of overpopulation and scarce natural resources. For policy planning, this entails a long term vision of what Malaysia would look like, for instance, in the year 2050. The energy sector for instance is forward-looking, taking into account a few possible scenarios, if we proceed business-as-usual or with new policies of varying levels of energy efficiency (International Energy Agency 2012).

Short- or medium-term policy planning does not encourage visionary thinking that may involve making decisions that will be unpopular in the short term, but are necessary in the long run. Decisions made also tend to be reactionary and populist in nature, instead of being pre-emptive against foreseen and anticipated circumstances. For example, continued burning of fossil fuels may be cheaper than investing in renewable energy in the short-term, but in the long-term the costs of climate change may outweigh the economic gain, compounded by detrimental and irreversible impacts on the environment and society. According to some researchers, the cost of climate change and air pollution combined may rise to 3.2% of global GDP by 2030, with the world's least developed countries forecast to bear the brunt, suffering losses of up to 11% of their GDP (DARA 2012).

Looking at bleak figures like these, it may be worthwhile to pause for a moment and consider what

kind of future do we want, and what do we have to do (or not do) to get there.

Embrace social and solidarity economy

In the meanwhile, a move away from profit-seeking at all costs should be considered, as we revisit the idea of the economy as being a means to exchange goods and services efficiently, for the well-being of members of society. The social and solidarity economy (SSE) advances these goals, as it focuses on producing goods, services and knowledge while pursuing social aims (ILO 2011). SSE organisations like cooperatives and social enterprises have explicit economic and social objectives, which need to be framed in the context of a world of finite resources. In Malaysia, sustainable development is often skewed towards environmental sustainability. A lackadaisical attitude towards environmental issues with a “develop first, clean up later” mindset fails to appreciate the inextricable relationship between social and environmental health, and that development should not be equated to relentless economic growth. For this reason, SSE’s focus on social aims can be a vehicle for sustainable development, centring the discussion on social sustainability in the context of scarce natural resources and environmental crises.

Policy implementation and coordination

The implementation of sustainability agenda is beset by the silo effect, with policy integration made difficult for the following reasons. First, community development is designed as a sector in the current government machinery. As a result, its reach is limited by narrow government mandates. Community-based development involves a number of agencies from many ministries,

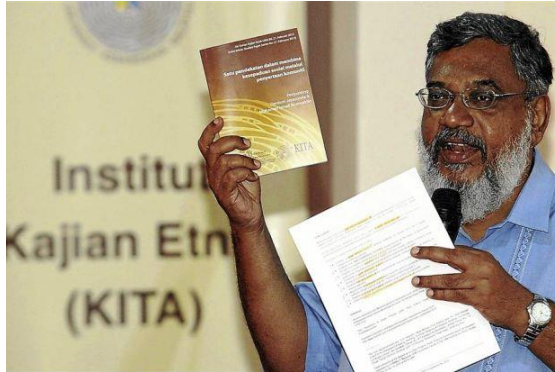
thus leading to several agencies undertaking the planning and implementation of programmes and handling the same target groups. This results in redundancies and turf wars. The novelty of social sustainability initiatives invites sporadic interventions, both from private and public sectors.

To circumvent these challenges, governments have to modify the behaviour of actors involved in policy implementation. It has to be understood that people-centred development should be viewed as a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. A possible way forward is to establish platforms for interagency and multi-stakeholder consultations which should be adequately resourced. There is no shortcut for a better policy design on green economy than to undertake a study to explore functional connections that match policy instruments to goals, policy problems, social impact and organisations.

APPENDIX 6: MEDIA ARTICLE

POVERTY: HOPE BEYOND HANDOUTS

By Lim Chia Ying



Dr. Denison Jayasooria says that income alone isn't a sufficient measure of poverty, and that there needs to be a more multifaceted approach that involves the entire system of public policy.

It takes more than charity to address the issue of poverty. A recent workshop shed light on how public policies should consider and impact the urban poor.

MOST of us would applaud charitable actions like giving food to the poor, right? But Josie Fernandez hates it when she hears of orang asal communities being given handouts, especially food.

This is because a visit to an orang asal village in Tanjung Malim, Perak, many years ago made her rethink what the word "poor" means to different communities. The orang asal might live very sparsely

by hunting, growing their own crops, fishing, and sharing whatever food they can harvest, but does that mean they are poor?

“While they spoke a lot then about sharing (including the occasional hampers that came from well-meaning folk), they did not once raise concerns that they were poor. It struck me that we were the ones who brought them the notion of being trapped in poverty, and the subsequent answer to solving that ‘problem’ is charity.



Josie Fernandez says the (sic) for too long, the fundamental flaw has been rooted in the belief that charity will help resolve the issue of poverty.

“Deforestation and land grabs have forced them out of lands that they used to depend on for their survival and income, and shifting them into boxy terrace houses without livelihood options only drives them to become part of the country’s urban poor. There are utility bills to be paid, for example, but how can they afford to do that when they have little equitable access to employment?” says Fernandez, an activist, researcher

and advocate of causes relating to indigenous people, the environment and anti-corruption.

As well as being the special representative for the Society for Rights of Indigenous People of Sarawak (SCRIPS), Fernandez has worked with various orang asal groups like the Jakun of Tasik Chini, Pahang, on gaining rights rather than handouts.

Though handouts and other charitable acts are done out of kindness, the supplies – especially food supplies – can realistically last only a few days while the orang asal’s situation will not change in the long run, she points out.

“For too long, the fundamental flaw has been rooted in the belief that charity will help resolve the issue of poverty,” says Fernandez.

“But we can never have successful poverty eradication programmes if the poor have no claims to rights that are provided for judicially and constitutionally. The rights to land, food and water, housing, education and healthcare must be equally available to all so that people can live lives of dignity.



What's in her future: It's easy to put smiles on the faces of orang asal children like this one with hampers and handouts. But charity isn't a sustainable solution to the problem of poverty. – File photo

“Merely providing for the minimum human existence pushes people into the mindset of constantly seeking *bantuan* (assistance). When they queue up for bantuan, it's an indication that people do not have enough to feed their families.

“Do our policymakers formulate and implement policies that emphasise these rights with a framework that translates into social and economic justice for everyone?

“It must also be stressed that political justice means that no one, especially the poor, should be excluded from political participation as it is politics that will shape the implementation of legal and institutional policies. We need bureaucrats who understand the

language of rights in order to develop policies that will ensure a (good) quality of life for all Malaysians.

“While strategic philanthropy may be used to empower communities towards sustainability, charity has no place in poverty eradication,” she reiterates.

Fernandez was speaking to an audience made up of representatives from non-governmental organisations and government departments at a recent workshop on urban poverty, public policy and community-based development. It was organised jointly by COMMACT (the Common Wealth Network for People-Centred Development) Malaysia and the Economics Faculty and the Institute of Ethnic Studies of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

COMMACT Malaysia president Prof. Datuk Yusof Kasim, in delivering his paper entitled “People-Centred Development as the Core Thrust of Public Policy”, stressed that there is a real need to shift the country’s current production-centred development to people-centred development.

“People-centred development necessitates the participation of locals in any development initiative process and decision-making. Essentially, this makes the people the beneficiaries, giving them a say in the use of resources.

“A development can only be effective if it’s based on people’s wants and needs rather than our pre-conceived ideas about what they want. Right now, people-centred development is placed on the periphery of the process rather than the centre,” says Prof. Yusof, a development economist who has been researching poverty for much of his academic life.

Some of his studies reveal “a disparity between statistical figures compiled on the poor and realistic figures on ground”. For instance, many of the urban poor we see nowadays are people who have migrated from rural areas. His studies have also shown that the poor are not the old but young men who have no skills or resources.

As such, Prof. Yusof asks why we are not addressing the very root of the problem: what is lacking in rural areas that is making people move into urban areas?

He says people-centred development should be made the core thrust of public policy because the well-being of mankind is the essence of development. And while economic growth is recognised as a necessity, it is not sufficient to eradicate poverty without the integration of economic and social policies.

“Development should be inclusive, not exclusive. The way forward is to allow people to have more say, and we should seek to blend the desirable and feasible. This calls for us to intensify efforts that will increase awareness about people-centred developments.”

Also present at the workshop was UKM’s Institute of Ethnic Studies principal research fellow and Society for the Promotion of Human Rights secretary-general Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria who pointed out that one of the most prominent urban poor groups are the low-cost flat dwellers, those who have been resettled originally from squatter areas and, later, temporary longhouses.

“For many of them, high-rise living is not by choice but a matter of public policy,” he says.

His group did a community neighbourhood profile questionnaire among nine low-cost flats – five in Selangor, two in Kuala Lumpur, and one each in Perak and Penang – to identify the positive aspects of urban flat living and challenges these flat-dwellers face.

The study revealed that there are four main issues plaguing the flat-dwellers: a low quality of life, lack of infrastructure, a lack of communal living, and an increase in social ills; another problem raised was the lack of recognition of grassroots leaders. For these people accustomed to village-style communal living, one of the worst aspects of living in these low-cost high-rises is the vanishing sense of belonging and identity.

“We can reach the status of a high-income nation but if nothing is done to address these grave issues, then what we’ll eventually have are ghettos where children of these backgrounds may never achieve the kind of academic performance of their peers from middle or high-income families, and the hidden poor suffer in silence. Statistics may show a low poverty (rate) but in reality, deprivation persists,” he says, adding that income alone isn’t a sufficient measure of poverty, there has to be a more multi-faceted approach that involves a whole complex system of public policy.

“The only way for social mobility to take place is through education, skills training and better job placements,” Dr. Jayasooria says.

Bukit Gasing assemblyman Rajiv Rishakaran, the workshop’s last speaker, said the challenge in moving forward with public housing is that many have no passion to deal with people who are in need of these housing. “It’s not about the standard operating

procedures. Most of the (low-cost flat) dwellers have no understanding of how the procedures work, while there's also frustration on the government end when the monthly rental fees are not paid.

"The dilemma is if these tenants should be evicted, where would or could they go? A lot of misunderstanding still happens between government mechanisms and the very people who require its services.

"We also do not have officers on the ground to look into (collection of) the rental payments, and evaluating people who have been previously assisted to see if they have risen up the economic chain," he explains.

Source:

Lim Chia Ying. 2014. Poverty: hope beyond handouts. *The Star*, 2 January.

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About the Editor

Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasoria is the Principal Research Fellow at the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA) UKM since 2008. He is also the Secretary General of PROHAM - Society for the Promotion of Human Rights, Malaysia. He was recently appointed as Adjunct Professor (Social Development) at UUM College of Arts & Social Science, Northern University of Malaysia in Sintok, Kedah.

About KITA

The Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA) was officially established on 8 October 2007 by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) to undertake academic research on subjects pertaining to ethnic studies in Malaysia. This research institute is 'only one of its kind' in Malaysia, focusing specifically on 'ethnic studies' with thematic studies orientation. The Institute emerged out of the need to maintain at home the present peaceful inter- and intra-ethnic existence against worldwide problematic, and sometimes violent ethnic situations.

Organisationally, KITA has six research clusters, each being led by a prominent scholar or a highly experienced Professional person. The six research clusters are: Social Theory and Ethnic Studies; Ethnicity and Religion; Ethnicity at Workplace; Ethnicity and Consumerism; The Arts and Social Integration; Ethnicity and Food. KITA's postgraduate programmes (PhD and Masters) were launched in December 2009.

Mengenai KITA

Institut Kajian Etnik (KITA) ditubuhkan secara rasmi oleh Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia pada 8 Oktober 2007. KITA merupakan satu-satunya institut penyelidikan di Malaysia yang memberi tumpuan sepenuhnya kepada segala kajian berkaitan dengan 'etnik' dan 'etnisiti'.

Dari segi organisasi, KITA mempunyai enam rumpun penyelidikan. Setiap satu rumpun diketuai oleh seorang sarjana atau ahli Profesional yang mempunyai rekod prestasi cemerlang. Enam rumpun penyelidikan berkenaan adalah: Teori Sosial dan Kajian Etnik; Etnisiti dan Agama; Etnisiti di Tempat Kerja; Etnisiti dan Konsumerisme; Kesenian dan Integrasi Sosial; Etnisiti dan Makanan. Mulai Disember 2009, KITA menawarkan program siswazah (PhD dan Sarjana).