

Community Development Programmes in Malaysia

¹Asnarulkhadi Abu Samah & ²Fariborz Aref

Department of Social & Development Science, Faculty of Human Ecology

Putra University Malaysia

¹asnarul@putra.upm.edu.my ²fariborzaref@yahoo.com

Abstract: This study looks at the philosophy, policy development and practices of community development as well as rural development programmes in Malaysia. The history of community development and its policy is important for provide community development processes to date. Since independence, the Malaysian government has introduced various types of community development programmes through its development policies, with the main of improving the economic, social and cultural conditions of the people. Understanding of these programmes can help to community leaders and stakeholders to achieve future programmes for realize community goals. [Nature and Science. 2009;7(12):86-89]. (ISSN: 1545-0740).

Keywords: Community Development, Participation, Malaysia Plan

1. Introduction

The concept of community development has a longer history (Kleiner et al., 2004). The concept of community development is explored in terms of community participation, community empowerment and community capacity (Singh, Timothy, & Dowling, 2003). Community development can be seen as building social capital for collective benefits. It uses skill and knowledge and essential strategy in their practice (Gilchrist, 2004). The key phase that links both government

efforts and the contribution of the nation's progress is people participation. Hence it is important to note that to understand the present community development programme, is necessary to trace community development history. For understanding community development history in Malaysia, this study provides a framework for community development programmes in local communities of Malaysia.

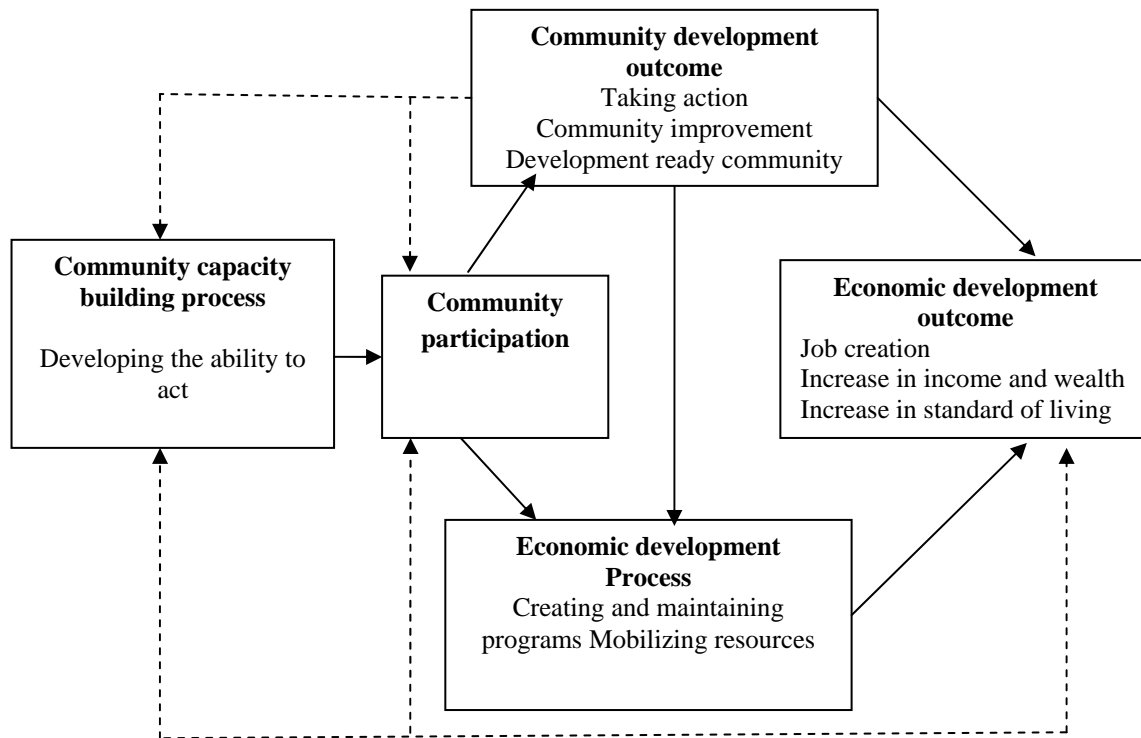
2. Literature Review

Community development aims to increase residents' participation in their community. In community development, emphasis is placed on community as a social network, bounded by geographical location or common interest (Talbot & Verrinder, 2005). According to Frank & Smith (1999) community development is the planned evaluation of all aspects of community well-being. According to Gilchrist (2004) community development helps local community residents to identify unmet needs. It seeks to build capacity by improving skill and knowledge for individuals and the community as a whole (Gilchrist, 2004). Community development is viewed as the best way to build the capacity of community residents to engage with each other and find solutions to issues that affect their community. Community development holds potential to build community cohesion by facilitating a community's capacity to engage connections between individuals, organizations and local groups (Chaskin et al., 2001). Helping a community to build its capacity

for development is a primary goal of community development (Ife, 2002). Community development is a process that allows community residents to come together to plan, generate solutions and take action developing the evolution of social, economic, environmental and cultural aspects of community (Hackett, 2004). Community development emphasizes the importance of participation as a means of strengthening local communities (Kuponiya, 2008). Community development builds peoples' skills for community issue. Hence it is vital to the survival of local communities (Talbot & Verrinder, 2005). Community development has evolved over the past few decades into a recognized discipline of interest to both practitioners and academicians. However, community development is defined in many different ways. Most practitioners think of community development as an outcome – physical, social, and economic improvement in a community (Phillips & Pittman, 2008). Figure 1 depicts the community development chain. The figure shows

that progress in the outcome of community development also contributed to developing community capacity building as well as economic development in local communities. This figure also

emphasized on community participation as important key for community development.



Source: Adapted from Phillips & Pittman (2008)

Figure 1: Community Development Chain

3. Methodology

The research was performed as a qualitative library in which the researcher had to refer to relevant and related sources. Secondary sources such as official reports, community development guideline, programme books, and working papers were used as a source of data in this study. The sources that

we used to collect needed information about community development in Malaysia were also obtained through the Agriculture Department and Ministry of National and Rural Development, Federal Land Development Authority, and United Malays National Organization.

4. Community Development Programmes

Community development is the basic policy formulated since independence to the present day, and it is stressed that people should take the opportunities provided by the state to participate in the government sponsored initiative. In its five years master plan, since the first Malaya plan (1956-1960) until the sixth Malaysian plan (1991-1995) community development has been as a philosophy of the development which underlies all government agencies policy. From 1951-1961,

Rural and industrial Development Authority played its major role at the forefront of the community development programme. However, not much had been reported on its success to mobilise local participation. In community development, except that based on the loans given by Rural and industrial Development Authority to sponsor small scale activities such as fish ponds, cottage industries, animals and agriculture (Ness, 1967). The success of community development

programmes during this period was not particularly significant. It was reported that poor public participation and poor condition between center and state government concerning the projects implemented contributed to this failure. Land development schemes were the government strategy for development among rural people. There were two such schemes, the first was carried out by the federal autonomous bodies such as federal land Development Authority, Federal land Consolidation and Rehabilitation, and the second by the state government. However the government support was limited to providing community infrastructures and subsistence allowance to the settlers for the first two years from the day they joined the scheme.

The second Malaya plan was since independence (1961-1965). In this plan two main strategies were embedded in the policy, the first was a continuation of the land development programme, and the second was the politico-administration improvement, meant enrich of the local participation in the development programme. In the first strategy, the land development scheme became the primary approach of the government to provide land for the landless and create job opportunities for the needy. The second strategy was concerned with improving human resource support and involvement, and to achieve this aim the government introduced a decentralized community development policy. With this policy, the decision making process was partially transferred from the central to the lower level within the state politico-bureaucratic administration system.

In The first Malaysia plan (1966-1970) to second Malaysia plan (1971-1975) the government discovered that although the development cover crops had achieved its target, it had failed to bring comprehensive community development. Participation from community masses was still low and poverty was still underlying problem in local communities. It was felt that people should be educated to enable them to fully utilise the amenities and programmes provided, as sponsored and initiated by the state. The government deep concern about the importance of people's participation in community development can be seen through the responsive strategy adopted beginning with the first Malaysia plan until the first half of the second Malaysia plan. For nearly ten years this strategy had been the dominant community development approach to mobilize local people to support the government effort in the processes of bringing about social change.

In the third (1976-1980) there was not new community development programme propagated by

the government. In the fourth Malaysia plan (1981-1985), the importance of people participation was rested by the government, which said "in the national development effort, the people must respond positively to the challenge and be prepared to play their part" (FMP 1981 paragraph 1097). And the main objective of community development programmes were to inculcate in community values oriented towards development and self-reliance. In relation to this policy, a new approach to village and community development was introduced by the prime minister in mid 1984. The main objectives of this programme were to tackle the backwardness and poverty as the classic problem among rural Malays, especially within the peasant community (Asnarulkhadi, 1996)

The fifth and sixth Malaysia plan were carried out in (1986-1990) and (1991-1995). In this plan the initiative popularized by the Agriculture Department and Ministry of National and Rural Development known as Village Revolution that was announced in 1986. Literally, the concept used was rhetorical rather than practical. This is because the aims were similar to the philosophy of operation movement in the 60's. In practice this campaigning slogan was to support the new approach to village and rural development policy, which aimed at improving standards of living, and increasing the levels of productivity. Increased productivity remained the primary goal of the community development programmes portrayed in both five year master plans. Although there was no specific clause calling for people's participation in this master plan, it is understood that without participation from the local people, all development programmes initiated and sponsored by the government aimed at increased productivity and community development were impossible to achieve.

In summary community development, however has different meanings but community development in Malaysia can be explained in two levels. At the policy level community development means the programmes inspired by the government aimed at improving and developing the masses which turn enables them to contribute to national development. At the implementation level, to achieve the programmes' objectives, community development is an approach used by the government to encourage people's participation in those initiated and inspired programmes. In both situations community development is the state induced planned change programme for people to participate together. The community development programmes in Malaysia is strongly related to the political processes and events (Shamsul, 1986).

5. Conclusion

This study attempted to discuss the policy and implementation of community development programmes in Malaysia. It is shown that the philosophy and principals of Malaysian community development programmes concentrate mainly on upgrading living standards and tackling poverty, especially among rural Malays. It is assumed by the government that by providing basic amenities and other social programmes, people could cooperatively contribute by participating in those activities towards achieving the community goals which leads to economic growth and national

progress. However the top bottom strategy of community development programmes initiated by the government was not an easy process. In fact, the process of mobilizing people through the responsive strategy advocated by the government to promote and enhance community participation in development programmes was not thoroughly successful. It is expected that the findings of this study could be utilized by the community developers for their future follow-up studies and reassessment of people's participation for community development.

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8/9/2009