

**A BASELINE STUDY OF AN INFORMAL MARKET  
ECONOMY AMONG DAYAK WOMEN IN  
BAU AND SRI AMAN DISTRICTS**

by

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I dedicate this study to my parents, Matthew and Helena.

Amy Chua.

## Abstract

This study attempts to examine empirical evidence on the participation of women in the informal economy sector in Bau and Sri Aman district. Two groups of Dayak women were involved in this study. The specific objectives were to determine the respondent's characteristic and their daily activities from selling vegetables in market.

The Bidayuh are the majority ethnic that settled in Bau district. And, the Iban are predominant settlers in the Sri Aman district. Both of these groups were involved in agriculture activities.

A random sampling of 60 respondents was collected through face-to-face interview using an interview schedule from the two areas. General characteristics of the respondent in the study were female and selling vegetables in a fixed place known as "pasar tamu" which is provided by local government.

The study revealed that about 36% of the respondents were in the age group of 37-47 years old and 40% of them do not have formal schooling. The result showed more women is entering the informal market and majority of them (55%) had only less than four years experience in selling at the market. About 58% of them depended on their own transportation as flexibility and mode of transportation enables them to control their time spent in the market. Income from market activities brings positive impact into the respondent's household income, self empowerment, savings and decision-making on personal spending.

As the sample of the study is small and limitation of the scope of study, the findings of the study cannot generalize the whole participation of women in the informal economy. Further similar studies can be done on different groups of Dayak women

## Abstrak

Kajian ini adalah untuk menyelidik data empirical terhadap penyertaan kaum wanita di dalam sektor ekonomi “informal” di daerah Bau dan Sri Aman. Terdapat dua kumpulan kaum wanita Dayak yang terlibat dalam kajian ini. Objektif-objektif spesifik adalah untuk menentukan ciri-ciri responden dan kegiatan aktiviti harian mereka iaitu menjual sayur di pasar.

Kaum Bidayuh merupakan majoriti etnik yang menetap di daerah Bau. Manakala, kaum Iban pula merupakan kaum etnik yang dominan di daerah Sri Aman. Kedua-dua kaum ini terlibat dalam kegiatan pertanian.

Satu sampel rawak sebanyak 60 responden telah diambil melalui “face to face” temuduga dengan menggunakan jadual temuduga di kedua-dua daerah. Ciri-ciri utama responden adalah wanita dan menjalani aktiviti menjual sayur-sayuran di pasar tamu iaitu kawasan tetap yang disediakan khas oleh kerajaan tempatan..

Kajian ini mendedahkan bahawa sebanyak 36 peratus daripada jumlah responden berada di dalam lingkungan umur 37-47 tahun. Manakala, 40 peratus daripada mereka tidak mempunyai pendidikan formal. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa lebih banyak wanita menyertai ekonomi tidak formal and majority daripada mereka (55 peratus) hanya mempunyai kurang daripada empat tahun pengalaman menjual di pasar. Lebih kurang 58 peratus bergantung kepada pengangkutan mereka sendiri kerana kefleksibelan dan jenis pengangkutan membolehkan mereka untuk mengagihkan masa yang digunakan di pasar. Pendapatan daripada kegiatan pasar membawa kesan positif kepada pendapatan keluarga responden, ‘*self empowerment*’, wang simpanan dan keputusan terhadap perbelanjaan sendiri.

Oleh kerana sampel kajian adalah kecil dan terdapat batasan dalam skop kajian, kajian ini tidak dapat mengangap bahawa kesemua wanita yang menyertai di dalam sektor ekonomi tidak formal.

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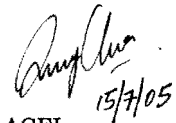
My heartfelt thanks also would like to go to all the professors and lecturers involved in the SLUSE Program. A special “thank you” to Assoc. Prof. Dr Lau Seng for his encouragement and his few penned words that helps to secure a lifetime opportunity for me to go out and *seize* the world.

Women who sell vegetables in Bau Market and Sri Aman Market, you all are the true testaments of what mother’s sacrifice is for – the future of her children and family.

Lastly, my classmates (all 27 of them) whom I will greatly missed as we part to go on our own journey. It was an interesting chapter of my life journey, where I have met and forge friendship with few friends that often “bring laughter and joy” into my life especially GO4 and those who went for Sunday brunch and late night drinks at Coffee Bean.

And, to sum up my work for the past three months, I would like to share this piece of interesting part taken from one of my favourite autobiography books:

Writing was not easy for Adam Smith also. He wrote of himself,  
“I am a slow a very slow workman, who do and undo everything  
I write at least a half dozen times  
before I can be tolerably pleasd with it.” (Corr. 276)



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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The agriculture sector has been the catalyst of Malaysia's economic growth ever since the British colonization period. It still continues to contribute and provide agricultural input to spur further growth of other industries, especially the growing manufacturing and agro-based industries. In the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001-2005) the government's strong emphasis on the development of agriculture can be seen through the new and innovative agricultural measures introduced in order to generate higher productivity from the agriculture sector, making it more competitive and capable of achieving its potential for growth. Numerous projects involving large-scale and organized farming were introduced to small-holders as land use was intensified to the maximum. Farmers were taught modern technologies and management skills so that they could abandon traditional agricultural practices and improve agronomic practices and in order to meet the demands of domestic food production

The expansion of modern industries and existing towns together with greater migration of the rural workforce to towns resulted in the increasing growth rate of the urban population. More people moved to cities to seek wage-employment rather than staying

behind and working on the family farm. The process of rural-urban migration indirectly exposed rural people to the influences of a market economy in which *cash* is widely used as a medium of exchange.

Creation of new towns and government policies which promoted urbanization likely formed a linkage of interdependence between urban centers and small to medium-sized towns and provided positive linkages between urban centers though the commercialization of agricultural produce the production of which is mainly concentrated in rural areas or *kampung*. The urban development strategy implemented by the government has definitely improved infrastructure networks which are expected to facilitate the spread of economic activities from major cities like Kuching to smaller towns like Bau and Sri Aman at the periphery.

The main focus of this study was the participation of women in the informal market economy. Women from two ethnic groups, the Iban and the Bidayuh, (in different districts) were the focus group. The Iban, the largest single ethnic group in Sarawak, are largely an agrarian-based community. The Bidayuh, another of Sarawak's indigenous communities, used to practice traditional subsistence farming but with progressive modernization have embraced the practice of mixed agriculture, growing cash crops like pepper and rubber together with rice, their subsistence crop.

## **1.2 The Problem**

Sarawak's total population of 2,071,506 (Anon, 2002) includes various indigenous groups. The Iban make up 29.1 per cent of the state's population. The Bidayuh are a minority indigenous group in Sarawak and constitute 8.1 per cent after the Iban, Chinese and Malay in that order (Hew, 2003).

Hong (1987) states the opening of the society to the modern economic, political and cultural system (which began under Rajah Brooke and the Colonial Rule) and Sarawak's subsequent entry into Malaysia, brought immense changes to the natives' social system. The Iban and the Bidayuh have been farmers for many generations and practise a longhouse social system culture based on subsistence economy. Rice is the staple food for most natives in Sarawak. Traditional shifting agriculture had been the most important economic activity carried out by indigenous communities. Rice cultivation and mixed crop cropping the whole year round had been enough to supply the farmer and his family with food. Cash crops like pepper, rubber and cocoa were introduced to improve the livelihood of the indigenous community

Indigenous communities are still dependent on forest resources for their daily needs. In the past they were hunters, forest gatherers and subsistence farmers. Farming activities were mostly carried out on their ancestral land through the system of shifting cultivation. This involved rotation whereby a new area of forest was cleared for each

crop and after cropping the land was left fallow for a period. Land laws were introduced to protect the forest from the damage and degradation caused by shifting cultivation and land clearing activities.

In order to curb further land clearing by indigenous people, land laws were introduced and implemented in the state of Sarawak around the late 1950's. Following an amendment to the Land Classification Ordinance 1955, activities carried out on British Crown lands were no longer done freely. Natives were forbidden to open up new forests and exercise customary rights or operate under customary tenure in these new areas (Hong, 1987). Farming activities were only done on natives' own given land and due to restrictions on opening up new areas most farm land was eventually over-utilized resulting in lowered soil fertility and affecting the production of crops such as rice.

Over the years a market economy replaced the traditional subsistence economy. Through changes in laws relating to land, land no longer belonged to a community but became a commodity with a price and many potential buyers. Restrictions on activities carried out on lands belonging to the State curtailed shifting cultivation activities and the practice of customary land tenure. Introduction of the practice of issuing titles to farmland curbed the opening of new lands which indirectly led to problems related to land over-utilization. Low rice production forced farmers to grow cash crops such as pepper, thereby reducing the land available for rice cultivation and thus reducing rice production. The fall in output meant that shifting cultivators found it ever harder to

meet their subsistence requirements (Hong, 1987:203). Thus they were more dependent on the market economy for cash to purchase food.

Large scale agriculture was introduced in the 1970s in Sarawak in order to generate more income for the state, and soon plantation crops such as oil palm, cocoa, rubber and pepper were planted over large areas of fertile land. The introduction of sedentary or settled agriculture was part of the agricultural policy of policy makers targeting the natives who still practiced shifting cultivation. The farmers, left to fend for themselves in the market economy, faced fluctuations in world market prices for cash crops and were unfortunately unable to sustain their livelihood. Young men left their farms to seek non-farm activities and wage work in the formal economy in big cities.

Introduction of the practice of issuing titles for land further marginalized natives from their customary native land and source of subsistence income. Based on this exercise, the classification of different type of land was later introduced under the Land Code 1958. Through legalization of land, the government was able to reduce further the land open for shifting cultivation and subsequently restricted natives from accessing more land. In the long term, the limited access to agricultural resources such as fertile land soon led more natives to abandon traditional subsistence agriculture.

In the traditional farming system the young men carried out the hard tasks involved in opening new farmland, such as felling trees and slashing and cutting branches off felled trees and the women sowed the rice seeds. The communities were now unable to clear new land for cultivation and the men's labour went unused. As a result, a pool of labour

became available for other sectors such as manufacturing. Establishment of timber companies and factories indirectly contributed to the demand for unskilled native labour. The introduction of a labour economy with fixed wages provided a demand for a male labour force. Natives were increasingly drawn into and dependent on the market economy as cash crop farmers and paid workers (Hong, 1987). Subsistence farming could no longer support their livelihood due to low productivity attributed to over-cultivation of land and the fluctuations of prices for agricultural commodities.

Economic development in Sarawak can be seen to be concentrated in urban centers where large state funds go to upgrade the facilities and infrastructure necessary to sustain the manufacturing sector. Emerging industries centralized in big cities like Kuching undoubtedly generated demands for employment that subsequently led to migration of young able-bodied men and women to urban centers. In her work on women migrant workers, Hew (2003) indicated that by the year 2004, 54.7 per cent of Sarawak's population would be urban-based.

Women were left to cope and carried out the work of their male counterparts as well as their own work when cultivating *padi*. As it was impossible for a woman to tackle the heavy task of clearing and felling trees for a farm the size of *padi* fields was reduced and inevitably the rice yield. The decline in food production has now forced many able-bodied members of the community to look for paid employment to buy food or to collect forest products like *rotan*, *damar* and camphor for sale (Hong, 1987:203). The

increasing need for cash to buy food, clothes and other daily necessities and pay for education put pressure on women to supplement their husbands' income to meet their daily needs. The question is what did women do in response to the need for cash?

The roles of women in the traditional subsistence system have changed over the years and have been widely influenced by the interplay of socio-economic factors. They now not only carry out the household responsibilities of housework and child rearing but also work in off-farm jobs. Their participation in the labour economy outside their homes is not limited to the agriculture sector but includes other economic sectors.

The emergence of an informal market in Sarawak started with barter trade in the 1960s. In his work on Central Borneo, Jerome Rousseau (1990) mentioned that trade mainly focused on the exchange of jungle products and handicrafts for local consumption or trade goods such as cloth, salt and tobacco. This exchange of goods was carried out during meetings or 'tamu' at selected longhouses.

The term 'tamu' has changed over the years. In the 1980s, the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authorities (FAMA) introduced the concept of a farmer's market or 'tamu' to enable farmers to sell farm produce (such as cucumber, maize, pumpkin, cassava leaves, egg plants etc) directly to fetch better prices. The 'tamu' also provided a proper place for farmers to display their produce as women from rural areas commonly sold their farm and jungle produce on makeshift stalls along main roads leading to town, or to timber camps and occasionally on the five-foot-way in front of shophouses or along the streets in major towns which annoyed local councils and shop keepers.

Women were able to generate their own livelihood by selling secondary crops at the nearest market place. The questions the researcher would like to ask are: has the market economy created an indirect opportunity for women to sell their farm produce and get paid for their hard work? and, what are the roles played by the women in relation to the informal market?

### **1.3 Objectives of Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine how Bidayuh women in Bau and Iban women in Sri Aman districts responded to the opportunities of the cash economy. The present field study focused on the characteristics of these women and their daily activities in the market and the relationship between supplies and vendor.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the role of women in the informal market.

#### **2.2 Globalization and the world market economy**

‘Globalization’ is a paradigm that has emerged over the last decade. The term refers to the flood of new information and technologies, including transportation and communication technologies, that affect and connect every aspect of the lives of people around the world at every moment. Globalization influences the global market. The immense amount of information being exchanged has transformed the market’s structure making it more competitive. The rules of competition have also changed with greater liberalization of the markets (OPP3). Globalization affects every part of the world, including developing countries like Malaysia.

In the ‘old days’ the market was already a symbol of capitalism and, some say, of globalization. Trading activities under foreign colonization resulted in the opening of new Asian countries and cultures to the West (which was deemed superior in terms both of culture and knowledge) and trade routes bringing

spices and raw materials to the West brought new information and technology back to the East.

The post-colonization epoch in Third World regions contributed to globalization. This epoch was characterized by rapid industrialization in North-West Europe and heralded the emergence of a world market and trade system in which the needs of capitalist interest in the industrialized 'center' were met through a 'periphery' which served to supply raw materials for its industry and a market for its manufactured goods (Jomo, 1988). This center-periphery concept of First World and Third World also explains how local markets were introduced to the world, slowly growing into a bigger, global market.

The global market brings diversity to products and competitiveness to its producers. It has created easy access to the market economy. Many argue that globalization enables more people to participate in the (global) market economy compared to the traditional market economy. Nand (2004) noted that with increased globalisation, activities in developing countries' urban and rural areas are in transition and at various stages of merging with the global economy. Urban people spend part of their income to purchase food, especially staples like rice, and vegetables. Meanwhile, urban manufacturers create a demand for commodities such as rubber, pepper and cocoa in their various industries.

Government policies and laws related to land use ultimately influence a country's economic development. Malaysia's agricultural policies and land reforms ensure that agriculture remains one of the nation's prime economic activities. This important sector ensures the country's food security, which is important as the country's population is still increasing.

By practicing an open-market economy with government intervention, Malaysia enabled foreign investment capital to flow into the country, stimulating a shift from the traditional subsistence economy (small-scale, low-technology mono-cropping) to large-scale, integrated, high-technology production, thus satisfying the national needs for imported food. At the same time Malaysia soon became a strong manufacturing hub for many multinational companies and is also a major exporter of natural resource products such as oil palm, petroleum and tropical timber. Some people deem Malaysia as one of the more successful developing countries among its Third World counterparts.

Encroachment of the market economy into the rural sector stimulated farmers in rural areas to cultivate cash crops. They were encouraged to include these crops with their subsistence agriculture to supplement their income. They reduced the amount of land for subsistence farming to make way for cash crop cultivation. The proportion of land, labour, time and other agricultural inputs allocated to each type of cash crop was dependent on prevailing market prices of the cash crops (Hew, 2003). However, the price of cash crops depends on the global commodity market and price fluctuations can, and did affect the resources (capital and labour) the farmer had invested in the crops and thus the income of rural households.

### 2.3 The informal economy

Large plantations offered job opportunities for rural workers who sought a fixed wage in the market economy. Under government policies more land was turned into large plantations and this immediately created a demand for plantation workers. By participating in the formal labour market, rural people were introduced to the cash economy and soon discarded farm work for employment. However, long hours and low wages for work in large plantations soon prompted many local workers to seek employment or income from other sectors.

One such sector is the informal sector, which:

*“Includes all unregistered commercial and non-commercial enterprises (or economic activities) without formal organizational structure, but generally with the following characteristics: family ownership, small scale of operation, labour intensive and adapted technology, reliance on indigenous resources, etc.” (ILO, 1972)*

The informal sector is characterized low technology and greater requirements for labour input. For instance, small scale subsistence agriculture normally is managed by family members and normally involves small parcels of land and labour contributions from every family member. The introduction of an informal market in rural and urban areas provided opportunities for farmers to sell their extra produce for cash. Vegetable prices, not dependent on world demand, were stable and generated reliable cash income for the farmers' households.

There are no barriers to entry to the informal sector (such as access to capital, markets, or technological and educational skills) and there is a high level of competition between producers (Scott, 1994). Better roads and transportation allow easy access to markets and enable farmers to sell their extra agricultural products for cash. Market activities include negotiating prices with buyers and selling and do not require a high level of education. As there is little diversification in terms of agriculture produce or packaging, producers or sellers compete with each other in terms of price and time spent in the market. Longer hours enable sellers to accommodate more buyers and reduce losses in terms of capital as agricultural produce, especially leafy vegetables, easily spoil.

The informal sector thrives in Latin American and also third world countries. It contributes to the dualistic theoretical paradigm that explains the market economy system of production and distribution. The International Labour Organisation (1972) and Hart (1973) conceptualized this in terms of 'formal' and 'informal' sectors (Nand, 2004).

## **2.4 Women, gender and social development**

Gender development, especially as regards women in the informal economy, has been the subject of many studies (Scott, 1994; Valodia, 1994; Chalfin, 2000). A woman's many roles in life include that of daughter, wife, mother and sometimes a member of the labour force in the world economy.

It is hard to estimate women's contribution. It is said that gender roles are seldom egalitarian (Handiman & Midgley, 1989:122). The division of labour is often decided by men and is unequal. Emergence of globalization and the global economy market has changed the division of labour between genders. For instance in South Africa, African women make up 57 per cent of those in the informal economy (Valodia, 2001). This shows the potential of the informal economy and how it thrives on the participation of women. However, still more of this implication for the roles of women still remains under-researched in other parts of the world.

#### **2.4.1 Dualism theory (production and reproduction)**

Marxist feminists see the capitalist state as the root of women's oppression. Capitalism is responsible for women's double oppression in productive and reproductive work (Barnett 1980 in Moser, 1993). The role of women in reproductive work involves maintaining human wellbeing by biological reproduction, childcare, health and household maintenance. Women also contribute productive work by supplying the labour market as paid or unpaid workers.

Women were seen as a relatively cheap and also rejuvenating (through reproduction) labour source. Besides carrying out household work, women were expected (partly due to patriarchal ideology) to help men in their economic activities such as farming. Their services were never acknowledged as production (which would have to be paid for)

though their earnings from participating in informal market activities helped supplement their husband's income and normally contributed towards meeting basic daily needs (food, children's education, health care etc).

Modernization and development would lead to a replacement of the traditional extended family by the modern nuclear family. There would be increased division of labour with women and men specializing in different aspects of household activities (Kabeer, 1994).

Given women's central role in procreation it would be rational for them to specialize in domestic labour (compatible with this role) while men specialize in full-time production for the market (Kabeer, 1994). However, by so doing, women were confined primarily to reproductive work and were recognized by society as being of a lower status than men. In some parts of the world the status of women in productive roles was higher than that of those in the reproductive role because productive women enjoyed considerable freedom of movement and some economic independence based on their significant role in production (Boserup, 1989 in Kabeer, 1994).

The market economy often subjected women to oppression and reduced the roles of women in production roles. In the Third World market economies employers demonstrated a preference for men, creating a sex-stereotyped job hierarchy, while women's own prejudices and preferences inhibited them from seeking employment in

the modern sector (Kabeer, 1994). Poorer job opportunities for women prevented them from productively contributing towards the household income.

#### **2.4.2 Women in the patriarchal society structure**

Rogers (1980 in Handiman and Midgley, 1989:122) point out that the dominance of patriarchal ideology in many cultures relegates women to the role of mother, housewife and nurturer. Thus women are ultimately deprived of education and are restricted to staying at home and producing babies. Young daughters were expected to stay at home and assist their parents in minding the farm. Farm work was highly labour-intensive and involved long hours. Thus young daughters were left out of the education system. This led to males dominating opportunities in the labour market as women were not expected to contribute by production but by reproduction.

Moser (1993) mentioned that radical feminists emphasize the importance of patriarchy in reinforcing women's subordination (which they define as the system of sexual hierarchy in which men possess superior power and economic privileges). In a society that has patriarchy in its structure, women would never have the chance to break men's control over the labour market, one of the barriers being their low level of education which hinders them from attaining jobs with a good wage or salary.

In Sarawak, in the Bidayuh and Iban society tradition, social etiquette and customary laws for women bind them to their home and husband. Freeman (1992) observed that

both men and women participate in *padi* cultivation, but, as with most subsistence economies, there is a well-defined division of labour between the sexes. The division of labour is based on the nature of the task: men would undertake slashing, felling and dibbling while women would be responsible for sowing and weeding. The women's work, maintaining the farm and looking after the *padi* field, was more time-consuming. During their 'free' time almost all the men and especially the younger men would go on journeys (*bejalai*).

In former times young men would collect jungle produce or go on short hunting trips and return with their produce. Subsequently, with the development of towns and economic activities, *bejalai* became more interesting and men were exposed to the capitalist economy. The collection of brassware and ceramics in each Iban household, considered valuables in Iban society, indicate this. Brassware and jars are not produced by the Iban, but are purchased from Chinese or Malay traders (Freeman, 1992). Such valuables can be obtained in exchange for money earned during a *bejalai* trip or by barter trading in exchange for *padi*. Women, on the other hand, do not travel away from the longhouse except to visit neighboring communities (Freeman, 1992). Thus, the society confines or restricts the movement of Iban women by handing down the responsibilities of managing the farm to them.

From another viewpoint, though the custom of *bejalai*, Iban men are perceived to be more cultured compared to the conservative Iban women, who appear more naïve and accepting of the development taking place outside their communities.

### **2.4.3 Changes in the division of labour**

The increasing population required more land for farming activities. One of the main consequences was the disappearance of forest resources. Land became more intensively cultivated and underwent a shorter fallow period. Changes in the division of labour between men and women seem usually to have been related to changes in population density and farming techniques (Boserup, 1989). Men spent less time felling trees but took opportunities to go hunting to supplement the food supply. However, the wildlife population was declining, attributed to the destruction of natural habitats by heavy machinery used in logging operations and to the establishment of commercial plantations. Gazettement of areas as national parks and protected areas by the government also restricted hunting activities.

As the traditional subsistence economy no longer provided enough tasks or money for men to support their family they took opportunities to work in sectors that had become available with the market economy and urban development. As commercial farming replaced subsistence agriculture men became familiar with modern equipment and learnt to adapt to modern ways of life. However, women continued in the old ways. As they were not able to access the resources available to men, they were handed the domestic chores and relegated to feeding, washing, cleaning and biological reproduction within the domestic sphere while men were primarily responsible for economic production in the public sphere (Hew, 2003). Women spent more time than men on traditional subsistence farming while their husbands sought jobs outside the farm.

Unable to modernize, women still mainly choose to farm in order to make the transition from reproductive to productive roles.

Jaquette (1982: 269 in Kabeer, 1994) states “Technological change would reduce the social impact of biological asymmetry between men and women’s physical strength and release women from the time-consuming drudgery of housework, while birth-control technology would give them freedom from the endless cycle of involuntary reproduction” By controlling reproduction women were able to reduce the time spent looking after children and have more time for productive roles in the market economy. For instance, once the children are in the care of the educational system, women can participate in informal work such as selling cakes, vegetables or other items at the local market as convenient.

## **2.5 Agricultural transition**

Traditional subsistence agriculture was still concentrated in rural areas where commercial operations such as oil palm plantations had not replaced other cash crops. Rural agricultural activities involve fewer resources than do large commercial plantations. Rural farmers cultivate their small privately-owned plots with minimal use of machinery. Low productivity generates a low income for most smallholders who still plant subsistence crops like rice and practice mixed farming besides. Most of these farmers make all the decisions on all aspects of how to manage the farm and what

types of crops to plant. Their agricultural practices are still greatly influenced by culture and their own communities.

Commercial plantation is, from the point of view of the concept of dualism, part of a modernization process in which capitalism generates capital accumulation and hence brings development to a country. Government policies accelerated the transformation of agriculture to a modern, dynamic and commercial sector. Several approaches emphasizing increasing productivity from effective use of agricultural resources were introduced in the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000). One such approach was to encourage private-sector involvement in large-scale plantations with government-provided support services, in order to better equip the agriculture sector with the latest information and machinery to help it to compete in the global arena.

The plantation sector was involved in growing pepper, cocoa and rubber. Large capital accumulation allowed plantation owners to utilize their land to the maximum in order to achieve economies of scale. The subsistence farmer, with low capital accumulation, produced such crops less intensively. Leakages from government-related agricultural policies soon spilt over to smallholders who were more dependent on the cash economy, and encouraged them to involve themselves in agro-based industry. Farmers were able to sell their extra agricultural produce at the local market and participate in entrepreneurs' programs linked to the production of chips, sauce, soya sauce, juice, candies, pickles, coffee powder, chocolate and cakes (7<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan, 1996).

The expansion of communication networks and transportation linkages between urban and rural areas soon integrated the agriculture sector into the world economy and created an economic structure that had a center-periphery (metropolis – satellite) relationship. As Frank (1969) makes clear, in the context of the national economy the capital city or urban centers represent the metropolis while the countryside is the satellite and the expropriation of the satellite's surplus by the metropolis caused the underdevelopment of the satellite (Wan Hashim, 1988). The relationship enables the market economy system to penetrate the traditional subsistence system and farming society thus slowly bringing changes into their mode of production. Women were no longer involved in only in the reproduction but also in commodity production.

Infrastructure such as roads, and public transport enabled people to travel outside their own area with ease. Men were able to seek paid off-farm jobs as labourers or unskilled workers in the nearest urban centers in the period between planting and harvesting and thus were no longer heavily dependent on forest resources or agricultural produce for their livelihood. Meanwhile, women could sell their garden produce at roadsides or markets and obtain a small amount of cash to purchase food and non-food items such as kitchen utensils and clothes.

As new towns were established and more people worked in the formal sectors, the rural areas became production centers supplying agricultural products such as rice to urban areas. The center-periphery paradigm emphasizes a linkage between urban and rural areas whereby urban areas use agricultural products or raw materials from rural

centers to spur the growth of their industries, in return providing employment in the formal sector. Meanwhile, rural areas support the urban industries by producing and supplying food staples and labour. In the end the market economy is introduced to the rural community. This encourages rural farmers to produce above their subsistence needs and sell their surplus to obtain cash income. Better roads and transportation enable rural entrepreneurs to transport different types of food from urban areas to rural areas.

Cash is required to pay for educational needs and utilize health facilities. In order to generate cash subsistence farmers were forced to sell some of the products of their subsistence agriculture. In Malaysia every Malaysian is required to send their children to school and subsistence farmers had to sell agricultural produce in order to obtain funds to do so and pay for uniforms and school equipment. Having extra cash, subsistence farmers were able to buy o meat or fish to supplement their daily diet and cooking ingredients such as salt and spices, which they themselves do not produce.

## **2.6 Market definition**

Bromley (1971:125 in Nand, 2004) states "The market is as much a part of the social and economic routine of the peasants as is their farming and that the very multitude of people gathered at a market attests to its importance".

Not all authorities agree that the center-periphery paradigm explains the role of markets in cities. Perry (2000) argues that markets are not spatially distinct but

dispersed in nature. Markets are considered places where local communities come to buy and sell things, be they agricultural products, animals or plants. They are well-distributed among communities and bring business and trade from the town (center) to the rural regions (periphery) or vice versa.

### **2.6.1 Characteristics of markets**

Few studies have been carried out on the role of markets. Geertz (1979), Alexander and Alexander (1987, 1991) and Appadurai (1986) bring to the fore a number of distinctions relevant to the study of rural markets and traders. The Kenya Report (1972) gives an in-depth description of the market, in which it was pointed out that the market has most of the characteristics of the informal sector (Nand, 2004.) It is almost similar to the market structure of perfect competition, in which a very large number of firms produce a standardized product (mostly agricultural products such as maize) (McConnell & Brue, 1993). A market operating under conditions of perfect competition has a large number of participants as it is easy to enter and is open to people of any age and either sex and the producers do not need much capital to get started.

An informal sector market, particularly one that sells agriculture produce, is a good example of this type of market economy model. Product prices are highly depended on supply and demand and no particular person or body controls the price of the products sold. Thus, during a rainy or festive season, shortages of vegetables will result in higher-than-normal prices as demand exceeds supply.

Tax (1963:15-16 in Nand, 2004) stated that the market-place is characterized as perfectly competitive in as far as it is atomistic (has a large number of small buyers and sellers who operate independently with no monopolistic associations), open, free (prices are determined by supply and demand) and based on rational behaviour.

Market trade involves small-scale operations. Minimal quantities of goods are purchased and sold with low capital accumulation. Although market operations yield slender profit margins and low capital accumulation they have a lower operating cost than formal establishments (Dewey, 1962:5, 9; Belshaw, 1965:56-57; McGee, et al. 1980:48; Anderson, 1980:755-756; Porter, 1988:86; Nand,1992:180-189; Perry, 2000: 465-473, Nand, 2004).

### **2.6.2 Women and the informal market**

Entry into an informal sector market can be undertaken full- or part-time and requires little capital, education or training (Nand, 2004). As such, it provides ample opportunities for women who did not have a chance to go to school.

Women trade in local agricultural produce and handicrafts and make up the majority of the traders, especially at local markets. The work is suitable for women as there is not much competition from men or disapproval from husbands. Apart from cultural constraints, men dominate women when there is less work on the farm, to do other business in town or supply produce from distant hinterlands or when trade becomes specialized and develops into a full-time occupation (Nand, 2004). Trading vegetables

at the market does not affect the women's role in maintaining the household as the market offers flexible working hours compared to formal work that requires fixed working hours.

Income from the market place may not be the women's sole income. Most of their husbands were full-time farmers or were involved in off-farm jobs between planting and harvesting as another source of income. All transactions were made in the local currency, local goods dominated with the incorporation of some imported items and women were the major traders (Belshaw, 1965:54-56; McGee et al., 1980:48; Brookfield, 1969: 20; Mintz, 1959:21, Nand, 2004).

Studies carried out by Chalfin (2000), Valodia (2001), Waylen (1996) and Kabeer (1994) indicate that many women, married or not, can easily enter income-generating activities through the informal market which is not dominated by the opposite sex. Waylen (1996), in her argument in relation to gender in Third World countries, said that for married women access to economic resources via their husbands' wages was very uncertain as men controlled their own earnings. She also argued that women would grow food in gardens they planted and sell the excess production for cash (Waylen, 1996). Such scenarios are not confined to urban situations but also occur in rural areas where agricultural activities still remain the primary income source.

Women were free to enter the marketplace as long as the jobs were compatible with their primary role as homemakers (Kabeer, 1994). As the marketplace facilities improve, and the market provides them with income, more married women are attracted to enter the market as a career that will allow them to cater for their basic consumption needs as well as remain involved in maintaining the household.

Poverty affects females to a greater degree because they have limited opportunities to control productive resources, attend school or engage in labour migration, and they are ultimately responsible for their children's material support and wellbeing (Tripp, 1981; Whitehead, 1995:49 in Chafin 2000). A vicious cycle binds women in their reproductive roles and also their daughter's futures. The informal market, allowed women, including single mothers, to earn an income sufficient to support a simple lifestyle and allow for some personal savings. Due to contribution by women to the household income fewer children were denied a proper education.

In order to gain freedom from patriarchal bondage, to be independent and to accumulate wealth, women have to earn their own income. In her study of shea market in Ghana Chafin (2000) observed that subsistence agriculture carried out via kin-based production regimes is the primary mode of earning a livelihood. In order to supplement their income, Ghanaian women involved themselves in small-scale trading and this is also important for rural economic life. The market not only provides an outlet for the sale or purchase of food staples but also links the rural areas with the urban areas.

The possibility of working flexible hours in the market encourages mothers with small children to be involved in selling vegetables as this does not differ much from farming activities. In her study on Bidayuh working mothers, Hew (2003) observed that in the village there was no disruption to mother's productive work in the fields, as women could combine agricultural work with child-bearing. She also indicated that the women were able to control the time and pace of their work and incorporate child-rearing into their routine. Most women left paid work once they got married and started their own families. By trading in the informal market, women were able to work productively and earn their own income while looking after their children.

Accessibility by road has made farming communities more mobile and enabled them to market their products more easily, reducing the time spent on transporting their produce to market. However, they have to allocate a certain sum of money for transportation by bus, van etc.

### **2.6.3 Income and self empowerment**

Introduction of the cash economy and the participation of women in the labour force were seen as enabling women to access economic resources. Other factors, such as gender, race, ethnicity and class also contributed to the transformation of women's identity. The status of women who enter the informal market increases as their productive work in growing and selling their crops in the market results in generation of income for the household.

Boserup (1979), in her study on women's development, found a fall in women's status due to gender biases that favored men's integration into the modern cash economy and women's relegation to an increasingly devalued subsistence economy (Freeman & Murdock, 2001). By trading their extra crops for cash in the informal market, women have found a means of obtaining income. The market serves as a perfect place for female farmers and full time women vegetable vendors to meet and negotiate suitable prices for their products. Earning their own money from the market increases their self esteem and improves their self-empowerment to obtain their own cash.

Safa (1980) pointed out that the concept of the male breadwinner is becoming a myth as women worldwide become increasingly important contributors to the household economy (Freeman & Murdock, 2001). Based on a study of working-class women in South America, she also showed the implications of wage labour for domestic labour and self empowerment. The burden of juggling domestic and productive labour increased for working women. Safa found that even though women had to work more, their satisfaction served to empower them more in terms of their important economic contribution to their own household income.

By having their own income, they no longer relied on men as the sole breadwinner for the family and this changed the perception of the male role as 'patriarch' in the household, who held a higher standing in the family and was the 'decision-maker' in family-related issues. Now, women were able to have some say in family decision-making as their own earnings allowed them to spend according to their own discretion.

Accumulation of capital in the form of personal savings also empowers women to be self-reliant and have their own sense of financial security.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter highlights how the data collection of the study was conducted. It includes the research location and sample, research design, research instrument, data collection and analysis and pertinent methodological issues involved.

#### **3.2 Research Location and Sample**

The study was conducted in two areas, which are Sri Aman district and Bau district. It is about 35 kilometers from Kuching town and takes about 40 minutes to reach Bau town. According to the 2002 census from the Department of Statistic Malaysia, it had a population of 43,190 people. And, the Bidayuh is the majority people with a total population of 29,215 people settled in the Bau District. Meanwhile, Sri Aman town is located 310 kilometers from Kuching town and it is about 4 hours drive using the Kuching-Serian-Sri Aman road. The number of Iban settlers in Sri Aman district is about 37,337 out of a total population of 64,475 people in the district, making them the majority ethnic in the area.

Both of these towns are rural towns and are still involved in agricultural activities such as rice planting and pepper cultivation. Being the nearest towns to the urban center like Kuching city though means of transportation and infrastructure, it serves as a supplier of human labour for growing industries that relies on human manpower. Women and old people were largely stay behind in their *kampung* and tend to their agriculture plots while young men were away to urban center to earn their livings by working as labourers, lorry drivers, professionals and etc.

The selection of respondents for the interview schedule is “purposely” selecting them based on my own judgment. In both district, the researcher have chosen 30 women from each district based on their nature of work and race. Most of the ladies been interviewed were working in the market place whereby they sold vegetables and fruits in both towns and along the main roads leading to towns.

### **3.3 Research Design : One-Shot Case Study**

The approach of the field study was one short cross-sectional design. A cross-sectional design entails the collection of data on more than one case and at a single point in time in order to collect a body of *quantitative* or *quantifiable* data in connection with two or more variables, which are then examined to detect *pattern of association*. (Bryman,2001) This case study that the researcher tried to explore was to determine the pattern of association between few variables like agriculture, labour, and the informal market in relation to female vegetables sellers in two different markets.

Therefore, data were collected using an interview schedule and face-to-face interview approach as the survey is to connect closely with the respondent's views towards the questions posed to them. Based on the research design, data were collected from a random sample of 60 respondents from the two areas. And, the strategy of the sampling is purposeful. The researcher determined the type of respondent by "purposely" choosing the respondent for the interview. The general characteristics of the respondent in the study were female and selling vegetables in a fixed place known as "pasar tamu" which is provided by local government. The places that the researcher has been to namely were the main markets in Bau town, Sri Aman town, Sg Tegang stopover, and Lachau. Both Sg Tegang and Lachau stopover were located along the Serian – Sri Aman Road. Basically, these places are rest area for tired lorries drivers, bus coaches, and individual drivers to drink, eat and rest before continuing their journey to Sri Aman town or Serian town and vice versa.

### **3.4 Research Instrument**

In this part of the study, the researcher only used an interview schedule as part of the instrument in the research design. It is a much suitable instrument to use as the respondents for the study were women and most of them have low level of education. It was easier to ask them questions than asking them to fill in the questionnaire. In the interview schedule, several questions were open-ended questions which were without any typical answers or choices. I have two sets of interview schedule written in English and Bahasa Malaysia. Inside the interview schedule, it was divided into several parts

mainly the respondent's characteristic, market, sources of the vegetables sold in the market, frequency and etc.

During the researcher's trial period, she went to the nearest town – Bau town at the local market to properly introduce herself and explained the nature of the study to few of the elderly women sellers as to build some rapport among them and gained some support from their friends. It is important as most of them who are regular sellers at the market served as informants and have vast knowledge on types of people who come to the market. The trial period started on 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005. The initial response to the interview schedule has mixed response from the respondents and to improve the weakness of my questions. Some of my first respondent felt that my questions did not reflect to their daily lives. Questions such as whether they plant their own vegetables provided answers that I did not predicted as some of them were not farmers and did not plant the vegetables sold by them in the market. Additional information like these helped me to modified and constructed new suitable questions for better data collection.

### **3.5 Data Collection and Analysis**

The purpose of data collection was to provide an empirical data for the study objective. Besides engaging face-face interview, I also relied on additional information such as published reports by national statistical office, relevant government ministries and research institutions. Equipped with an interview schedule, the researcher commenced the fieldwork starting from Bau town market on 3<sup>rd</sup> March till 4<sup>th</sup> March 2005 and to

Sri Aman district (comprised of Sg Tegang, Lachau and Sri Aman town market) on 5<sup>th</sup> March till 7<sup>th</sup> March 2005. The researcher also did several short trips to Bau town market on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2005 and 11<sup>th</sup> March 2005 for the purpose to interview respondents who were there at the market for a short time period (mostly few hours in the market – morning only).

The researcher carried out most of the interviews by herself and only the fieldwork in Sri Aman market that the researcher enlisted the help of two local upper secondary students to be Iban translator.

In Bau town market, the researcher was there during the weekdays and went there around 11am onwards as there was a group of regular vegetables sellers who spent the whole day at the market. It was an appropriate time to interview them rather than in early morning, whereby they were busy preparing and sorting vegetables for sales and attending to their customers. Thus, it was not a burden on the respondent's time, attention and patience when answering the questions posed by the researcher. The researcher tried not to take more than 40 minutes when conducting the interview as to avoid potential biased responses or multiple responses. It was during one of the early morning trips on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> March 2005, that the researcher was able to interview few respondents who only went to market to sell their agriculture produce for few hours before heading back to their farm. Unfortunately, these respondents were very shy towards strangers and have low understanding of Bahasa Malaysia. Due to their lack of

interaction with outsiders, it was difficult to get them to be interviewed. At that time, the researcher also did not have a Bidayuh translator at her side.

Meanwhile, in Sri Aman town market, the researcher was again faced with communication problems as most of the vegetables sellers spoke their own native tongue – Iban language. During the weekend, the researcher enlisted the help of two upper secondary students to become translators. Sunday was the time whereby most vegetables sellers sell their agriculture products like rice, farm vegetables, wild jungle produce and etc. It was easy to find respondents, as both of the translators were able to explain the purpose and nature of the researcher's work as a UNIMAS student in their own language. However, there was a potential disadvantage in using translators in which the researcher could not control the way the questions were posed to the respondent or the answers from the respondent as there could be a bias or misconception from the translator's part in interpreting the responses. Both of the translators have no particular background or knowledge on the type of studies that the researcher was particularly involved in.

After concluding the fieldwork period, the data collected were then studied and carefully coded, as some of the questions were open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were difficult to code, as the responses were varied and time consuming. In order to prepare empirical data to achieve the study objectives, the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. The analytical approach for this study was a descriptive approach.

### 3.6 Methodological Issues

As this study scale is relative small, there were several few areas of improvements or further studies can be carried out in the similar areas of the studies. Due to time constraint and limited resources, the findings of this study cannot show or generalize the whole participation of the women vegetables in these two districts.

Few methodological issues faced when undertaking this study:

#### *Data collected is not sufficient*

The data collected does not show the total number of the whole women participation in the markets for both areas. Thus it is not a complete sampling of the number of women participating in the informal market. There is more women involves in the market who were not present at the time of the interview. Therefore, the results of the finding could not generalize the role of women in relation to the informal market.

The information on the respondents' husband is also insufficient. At the time of the interview, most of their husbands were not present and the researcher also did not have to the opportunity to visit the respondent's home. This would able the researcher to assess the standard of living and also the wealth accumulation with the income earned by the respondents from selling vegetables at the market. .

*Similar studies in different areas / district*

A similar study could be undertaken in different areas in the state of Sarawak as the informal market has become an important venue for generating income especially for women. It also implies emergence of job opportunities for women who could generate income by working in the informal market. By doing so, it will help in understanding regional difference and also ethnic differences in the informal market.

*Further study can be done regarding the household data on the women who participate in the informal market*

This is interesting because by studying into the numbers of children in the household, the researcher could find the link to the demand for cash income. It also relates the expenses of a child and how it increases the financial burden to the family especially those who are still practicing subsistence agriculture.

*Language barrier* was a hindrance during the fieldwork and it is advisable to engage translators in order to carry out the face-to-face interview more effectively and less time consuming.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter discussed empirical findings collected from the field study which are discussed in 3 main parts: (I) Respondent's Profile whereby attempts to see the socio demography shown by the two groups of respondents; (II) Transaction activities in the market by describing daily routine of the respondents and the place where they carried out their dealings and; (III) Income Generated from the Market whereby attempts to determine average income per month earned by the respondents and its relation to self empowerment for women.

#### **4.2 Respondent's Profile**

##### **4.2.1 Respondent's Age Group**

The respondent's age ranged from 26 to 64 years with mean of 43.61 years. Fifty-four per cent of them were below the mean, while the remaining 46% above the mean age. The data summarized in Table 1 indicate the majority (36.1%) of women actively involved in the market activity were between 37 – 47 years old.

Table 1. Respondents by age structure

Age groups	Sample	Percent %
26 – 36	17	27.9
37 – 47	22	36.1
48 – 58	14	23.0
59 – 69	8	13.1
Total	61	100.00
Mean 43.61		
Median 42.00		
Mode 38 <sup>a</sup>		
Std. Deviation 10.176		

\*a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value shown.

About 13% of the respondents were in the ‘older’ age group which range from 59 years old to 69 years old. Due to old age, most women can no longer stand working at the farm but still can productively contribute in their household income by trading at the market. Trading vegetables in market required less strength and is very suitable for older women to help sell their family farm produce for their adult children.

#### 4.2.2 Level of Educational Achievement

Forty percent of the respondents had no formal schooling at all. About 30% of them had primary school education. The remaining 29% has secondary school education, of which 13.1% had attended Form 1-3, and the remaining 16.4% had studied up to Form4-5. This low level of formal education is common in rural areas whereby geographical constrains and transportation problem prevents many from having access to nearest school facilities.

And, the respondents from two older age groups (48 – 69 years old) showed the highest number of respondents who indicated to have no formal education. On this matter, one respondent indicated she has to quit school at an early age as she was needed to help her parents in their farm and her parents could not afford to pay for her transportation cost to school. In his findings, Freeman (1992) indicated young Iban children above the age of 12 years onwards were encouraged to work at their parent's side especially joining in farming tasks. Among the contribution towards sharing farm works included assistance in looking after younger siblings in the family and household chores.

Table 2. Educational status of respondents

		Level of Schooling (LOS)				Total	
		No formal schooling	Primary school level	Lower secondary (F1-3)	Upper secondary (F4-5)		
District	<b>Bau</b>	Count	12	7	5	6	30
		% within District	40.0%	23.3%	16.7%	20.0%	100.0%
		% within LOS	50.0%	38.9%	62.5%	60.0%	50.0%
		%of Total	20.0%	11.7%	8.3%	10.0%	50.0%
	<b>Sri</b>	Count	12	11	3	4	30
		% within District	40.0%	36.7%	10.0%	13.3%	100.0%
		%within LOS	50.0 %	61.1%	37.5%	40.0%	50.0%
		%of Total	20.0%	18.3%	5.0%	6.7%	50.0%
	<b>Total</b>	Count	24	18	8	10	60
		% within District	40.0%	30.0%	13.3%	16.7%	100.0%
	% within LOS	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	40.0%	30.0%	13.3%	16.7%	100.0%	

Both respondents from Bau and Sri Aman town have the equal percentage of 20% that had no formal schooling at all. About 18.3% of the respondents from Bau town have attended up to secondary level compare to 11.7% of the respondent from Sri Aman town. The respondents in Bau town were able to attend more school years compare to their other counterpart in Sri Aman town. It could be possible that the respondents in Sri

Aman town majority consisted of farming households whereby their parents preferred their children to help in the farms rather than sending them to school. Another reason is that the remoteness of their place to send their children to the nearest school in town would be financial burden to them as it spending cash on high transport cost.

#### **4.2.3 Years of involvement in market activities**

The respondent's involvement in market activities ranged from 2 months to 30 years with mean of 6.20 years<sup>1</sup>. Seventy-one per cent of them were below the mean, while the remaining 29% above the mean year. The data summarized in Figure 1 indicate the majority (55%) of women involved in the market had less years involving in market activities which ranged from zero to four-years. This shows an increasing numbers of new sellers entering the informal market activities and also implied that women in the market were relatively new to the trade.

Meanwhile, about 18% of the respondents have been selling at the market for five to eight years in the market. Fifteen per cent of the respondent been interviewed indicated that they have started selling at the market for nine to twelve years. The remaining number of respondents who have more than 13 years of involvement in market activities is seven respondents. This showed only 11% of the total respondents actively involved in market activities and making it as their profession. The years of selling in the market activities undoubtedly provided them extensive knowledge of the local market and its regular customer loyalty towards them.

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<sup>1</sup> There is only one respondent who has been selling vegetables at market for 30 years.

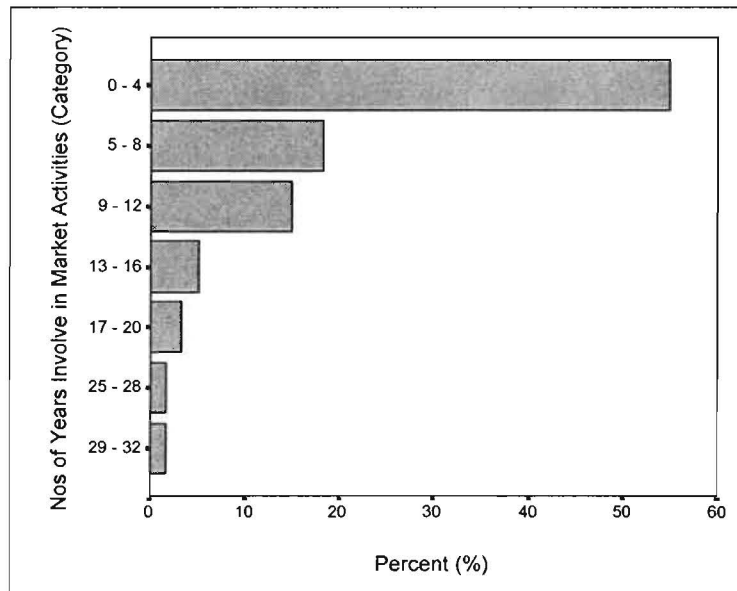


Figure 1. Years of involvement in market activities

However, by comparing respondents according to district, 38.3% of the total respondent in Sri Aman has less than 4 years experience selling vegetables in the market. Meanwhile, the respondents in Bau town were well distributed among each category. (Figure 2) It could be possible Bau town is located nearer to Kuching city and thus provided easy access to urban areas. By having easy access to market place, those respondents who live near to main roads and have direct access to public transport would be more productive to produce more garden crops to meet the market demand.

The above-mentioned figure also indicated that most of the respondents in Sri Aman town were newcomers in the trade. Better roads and easy access to public transport for the past years have reduced the barriers for rural people who stay in remote places and far from town center. They could sell their extra garden produce that they grow for own

consumption in the town market area and in return earned cash to buy consumption goods.

Increasing need for cash to buy for foodstuff, rice, their children personal needs, medicine and others were some of the reasons why they are in the market selling vegetables. Their earning would be additional monetary contribution to their household's income besides cash crops or monthly wage earned by their husband.

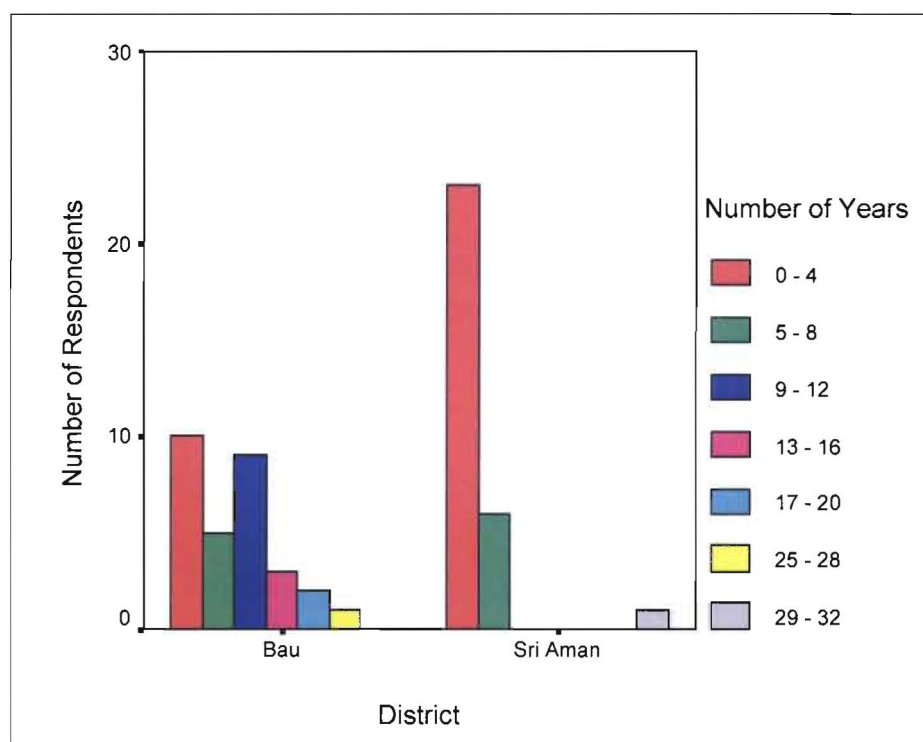


Figure 2. Years of involvement in market activities according to district.

As an attempt to understand the interaction between these two factors i.e. education level and number of years involved in market activities, the data obtained were summarized in Table 3. Forty per cent of the total respondents had no formal schooling before and had been in trade for number of years with one respondent indicated that

she had been selling vegetables for more than 29 years. Thirty per cent of the other respondents were more fortunate and were able to attend up to primary school level. Meanwhile, about 13.3 per cent of the respondents attended lower secondary level and only 16.7% of the respondents had upper secondary school education. This implied as the level of education increased, less women were inclined to participate in the trade. Young girls who had finished their secondary school were given better opportunities to join in the formal sector especially in service industry compare to their parents. Rapid urbanization in major cities like Kuching encouraged young girls to migrate to nearby cities to seek for better wage and escaped the hardship of toiling off their parent's ancestral land.

Table 3. Educational Level Compare With Number of Years Involved in Market Activities

		Number of Years Involved in Market Activities							Total
		0-4	5-8	9-12	13-16	17-20	25-28	29-32	
Level of Schooling	<i>No formal Schooling</i> <i>Count</i>	12	2	4	3	2		1	24
	% within level of Schooling	50.0%	8.3%	16.7%	12.5%	8.3%		4.2%	100.0%
	% within Number of Years Involve in Market	36.4%	18.2%	44.4%	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	40.0%
	% of Total	20.0%	3.3%	6.7%	5.0%	3.3%		1.7%	40.0%
	<i>Primary School</i> <i>Count</i>	9	5	3			1		18
	% within level of Schooling	50.0%	27.8%	16.7%			5.6%		100.0%
	% within Number of Years Involve in Market	27.3%	45.5%	33.3%			100.0%		30.0%
	% of Total	15.0%	8.3%	5.0%			1.7%		30.0%
	<i>Lower Secondary</i> <i>Count</i>	4	2	2					8
	% within level of Schooling	50.0%	25.0%	25.0%					100.0%
	% within Number of Years Involve in Market	12.1%	18.2%	22.2%					13.3%
	% of Total	6.7%	3.3%	3.3%					13.3%
	<i>Upper Secondary</i> <i>Count</i>	8	2						10
	% within level of Schooling	80.0%	20.0%						100.0%
	% within Number of Years Involve in Market	24.2%	18.2%						16.7%
	% of Total	13.3%	3.3%						16.7%
<b>Total</b> <i>Count</i>		<b>33</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>60</b>
% within level of Schooling		55.0%	18.3%	15.0%	5.0%	3.3%	1.7%	1.7%	100.0%
% within Number of Years Involve in Market		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>% of Total</b>		<b>55.0%</b>	<b>18.3%</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### **4.3 Transaction activities in the market**

The following discussion highlights the daily transaction activities of women vendors in the market in terms of sources of vegetables sold in the market, mode of transportation, farming activities, time and frequency, market place, and their opinions on changes in household work, the contribution of market income in their household income, self empowerment, decision on spending and on saving.

#### **4.3.1 Sources of vegetables sold in the market**

The findings indicated that there was four main sources vegetables supply in the market. There are: own grown vegetables, bought from their neighbour's garden, wholesale market and regular vegetable suppliers. Vegetables are one of the important food sources for daily consumption.

Overall, about 78% of the respondents grow vegetables that were later sold in the market while the remaining 21% of the respondents do not grow any vegetables at all. The latter did not sell their own garden produce in the market or were full time farmers. It is likely they bought their neighbour's vegetable produce or at the nearest wholesale market and then resold it at the market. This indicated a sense of entrepreneurship among some of the women sellers. By investing a small sum of money as capital, these women were able to reap some profits from buying-selling transaction and reinvest in back to their capital. The more capital they had, the bigger the volume of vegetables they were able to buy and thus increased their profits.

Table 4a Percentage of respondents who grow vegetables which later were sold in the market.

		Grow Vegetables Sold (GVS) in the Market			
		Yes	No	Total	
District	Bau	Count	24	6	30
		% within District	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
		% within GVS	51.1%	46.2%	50.0%
		% of Total	40%	10.0%	50.0%
	Sri	Count	23	7	30
		% within District	76.7	23.3%	100.0%
		% within GVS	48.9%	53.8%	50.0%
		% of Total	38.3%	11.7%	50.0%
Total	Count	47	13	60	
	% within District	78.3%	21.7%	100.0%	
	% within GVS	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	78.3%	21.7%	100.0%	

By comparing both towns, 40% of the respondents from Bau town and 38.3 % from Sri Aman town actually grow their own vegetables that were later sold in the market. The rest 10% and 11.7% respectively did not grow any vegetables especially for the market. This is because most farmers went to the market to sell their extra secondary crops which is more than enough for their own consumption. In return, women farmers were able to earn extra cash income.

The data summarized below indicated four main sources of vegetables supplies in the market, which allowed the respondents to increase their volumes of vegetables, sold in the market. (Table 4b) More than one third (38.3%) of the respondents bought vegetables from their neighbours and thirty percent of the respondents sold their own grown vegetables. About 16% of the respondents traveled occasionally to wholesale market in Gambier Street, Kuching and Sri Aman town besides buying from their

neighbours. Less than eight per cent of the respondents sourced their vegetables from the wholesale markets while the remaining about six per cent have their own vegetables supplier who sold vegetables to them.

The wholesale market in Gambier Street, Kuching is the center of garden produce whereby rural farmers would use public transport to transport their garden produce whereby would be sold to suppliers or individuals for a higher price. This provides the rural farmers with more choices of how they would conduct selling transactions and at what price. Most of the suppliers or individuals who went to Gambier Street, are buyers who supplies garden products to restaurants, hotel and food related industry.

For the respondents in Bau town, 25% of them purchased their vegetables supplies from their neighbours. Ten per cent of them sold their own garden produce and the remaining six per cent and five per cent respectively sourced their vegetables from the wholesale market, their neighbours or both. About three per cent of them had their own vegetables supplier who bought the vegetables to them in the market.

As for the respondents in Sri Aman district, 20% of them grow their own vegetables and sold it at the market area provided by the local authorities. They seldom bought vegetables from their neighbours or wholesale market. They are considered full-time farmers who went to the market occasionally to sell their garden produce. Thirteen per cent of them bought their vegetables sources from their neighbours and some of them (10%) bought from other farmers who went to the same market to sell their garden

produce. They pay straight to the farmers and repacked and resold it at the same market. More than three per cent of them regularly sourced their vegetables from their neighbours and their own regular vegetables supplier while the remaining 3.3% only used the same market as their main place to source for vegetables. By having their own transportation and good access roads to nearby cities, they move easily and in such were able to source for vegetables from other places.

All the respondents pay straight to the seller whom they bought the vegetables from based on market price and also haggling for the best price. For those respondents who do not grow any vegetables at all, their only source of vegetables comes from buying other people's farm produce and then resold it at the market. These respondents functioned as full time "entrepreneurs" and not as growers who participate in the market as sellers.

Table 4b. Different vegetables sources sold in the market

		Source of Vegetables Supplies in the Market					Total
		Wholesale Market	Neighbour	Wholesale Market & Neighbour	Neighbour & Other Vegetable Supplier	Own grown vegetables	
District	<b>Bau</b> <i>Count</i>	3	15	4	2	6	30
	% within District	10.0%	50.0%	13.3%	6.7%	20.0%	100.0%
	% Source of Vegetables	60.0%	65.2%	40.0%	50.0%	33.3%	50.0%
	% of Total	5.0%	25.0%	6.7%	3.3%	10.0%	50.0%
	<b>Sri Aman</b> <i>Count</i>	2	8	6	2	12	30
	% within District	6.7%	26.7%	20.0%	6.7%	40.0%	100.0%
	% Source of Vegetables	40.0%	34.8%	60.0%	50.0%	66.7%	50.0%
	% of Total	3.3%	13.3%	10.0%	3.3%	20.0%	50.0%
<b>Total</b> <i>Count</i>		<b>5</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>60</b>
% within District		8.3%	38.3%	16.7%	6.7%	30.0%	100.0%
% Source of Vegetables		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total		<b>8.3%</b>	<b>38.3%</b>	<b>16.7%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>30.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Based on Figure 3, by omitting those who only sold their own produce, more than half (54.8%) of them bought or sourced their vegetables from their neighbours.<sup>2</sup> It is much easier and less time consuming to buy from neighbours rather than to travel to wholesale market to buy vegetables.

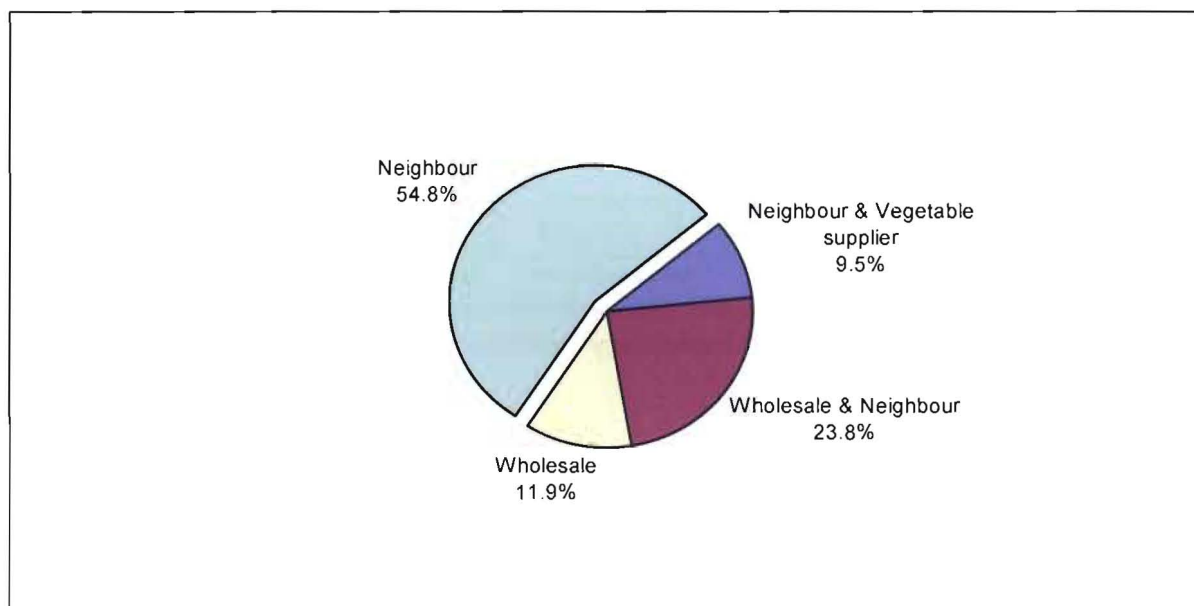


Figure 3. Different sources of vegetables sold in the market

Figure 4 showed the frequency for those respondents who bought vegetables from their neighbours is relatively high with mean at 5.73. Seventy three per cent of those respondents bought their vegetables supplies from their neighbours every day while 18.9% of them bought theirs twice a week and more than eight percent of them bought from their neighbours three times a week.

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<sup>2</sup> The percentage of the respondents growing their own produce was omitted from the pie chart because the remaining respondents who sourced their vegetables elsewhere were also selling their own produce. The pie chart is to show the percentage of different sources of vegetable supplies excluding the farmer's own grown vegetables.

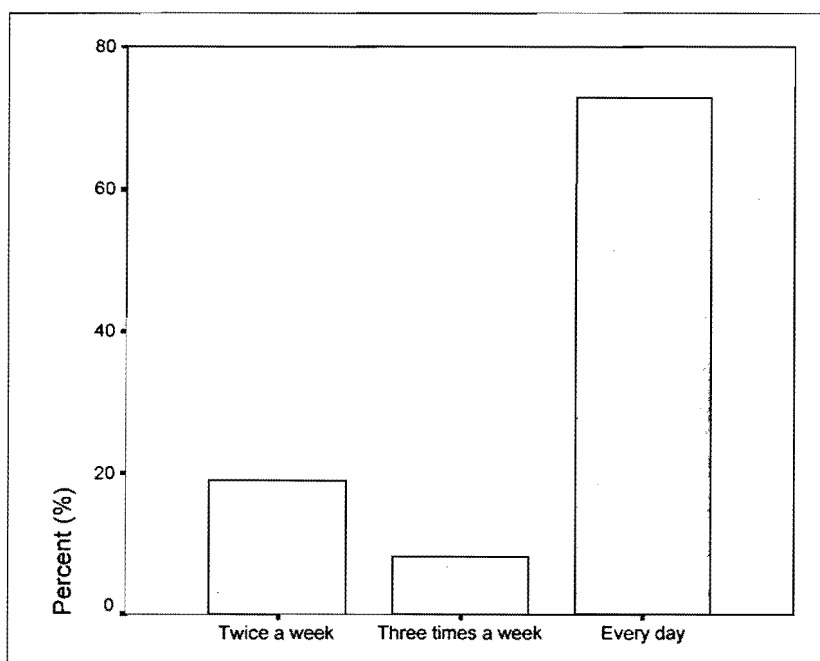


Figure 4. Frequency for sourcing vegetables from neighbours in a week.

The data summarized in Table 4c indicate the frequency for those respondents who went to wholesale market to buy their vegetables is relatively low (22.1%) with mean at 4.20. The remaining of 66.2% of the respondents did not go to wholesale market at all. Only 15 out of 60 respondents went to wholesale market to buy vegetables. Forty per cent of those respondents bought their vegetables supplies from their wholesale market every day while 26.7% of them bought theirs twice a week and 26.7% of them bought from wholesale market three times a week. More than six per cent of them went to the wholesale market once a week.

Table 4c. Number of trips to the wholesale market in a week

		Number of trips to the wholesale market in a week				Total
		1	2	3	7	
District	<b>Bau</b>	Count	1	3	3	7
		% within District	14.3%	42.9%	42.9%	100.0%
		% within Number of	100.0%	75.0%	75.0%	50.0%
		% of Total	6.7%	20.0%	20.0%	50.0%
	<b>Sri</b>	Count		1	1	6
		% within District		12.5%	12.5%	75.0%
		% within Number of		25.0%	25.0%	100.0%
		% of Total		6.7%	6.7%	40.0%
<b>Total</b>		Count	1	4	4	6
		% within District	6.7%	26.7%	26.7%	40.0%
		% within Number of trips	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	6.7%	26.7%	26.7%	40.0%

Forty per cent of the total the respondents who bought their vegetables from the wholesale market seven times a week comes from Sri Aman. (Figure 5.) The market in Sri Aman town and Engkelili also served as main area to source for vegetables for the respondents. The respondents were able to buy vegetables from farmers who went to the market and resold it back to their customers. For the respondents in Bau town, they sometimes traveled to the wholesale market in Gambier Street, Kuching to buy vegetables product from other farmers and then repacked and resold it in the Bau town. High transportation cost was one of the reasons why the respondents from Bau town had limited their trips to the wholesale market in Kuching. Overall, the respondents in Bau and Sri Aman district were depended on good road access to transport their vegetables to the market and also it allowed them to move around to source from different sources of vegetable sellers. It allowed the respondents to market or purchase vegetables more easily as there is no lack of transport or road access.

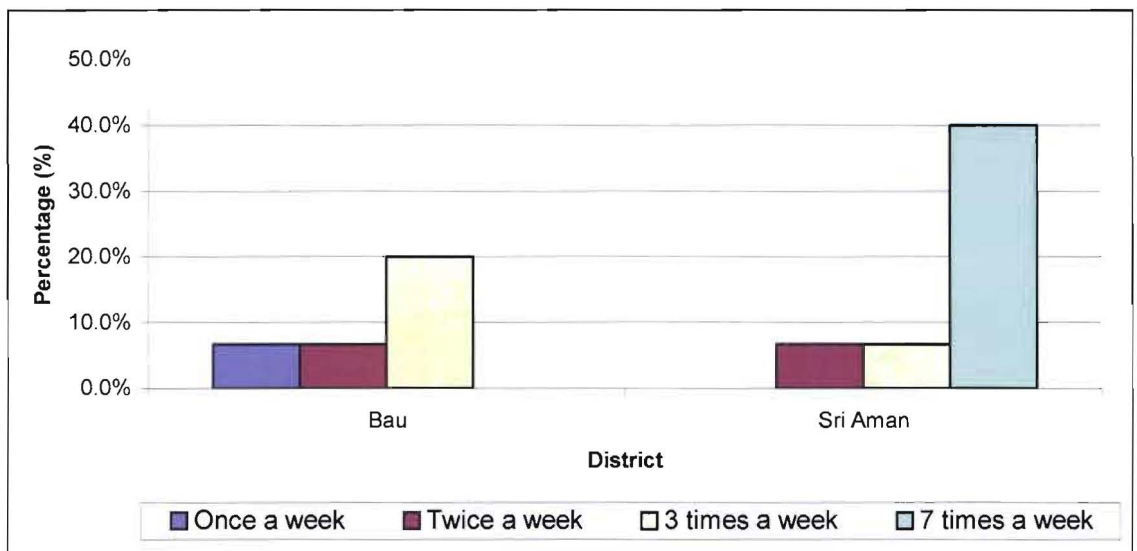


Figure 5. Frequency visit per week according to district.

#### 4.3.2 Mode of Transportation

Accessibilities to roads and public transport provide positive linkages between rural villages with nearest town centers. These provide good opportunities for more women farmers to bring their farm produce to be sold in the nearest market.

The data summarized in Figure 6, more than half (58.3%) of respondents depended on their own transportation to travel back and forth to the market place. These respondents may have their own transportation provided by their other family members or themselves to transport vegetables to the market. For those who relied on public transportation, about 21% depended on commercial van and 18.3 % of the respondent still traveled in the public bus. More than one per cent or one respondent

did traveled by express ferry from Engkelili to Sri Aman in order to transport her vegetables. By omitting percentages from the total respondent using their own transportation, the most preferred mode of public transportation would be the commercial van, and then followed by the public bus.

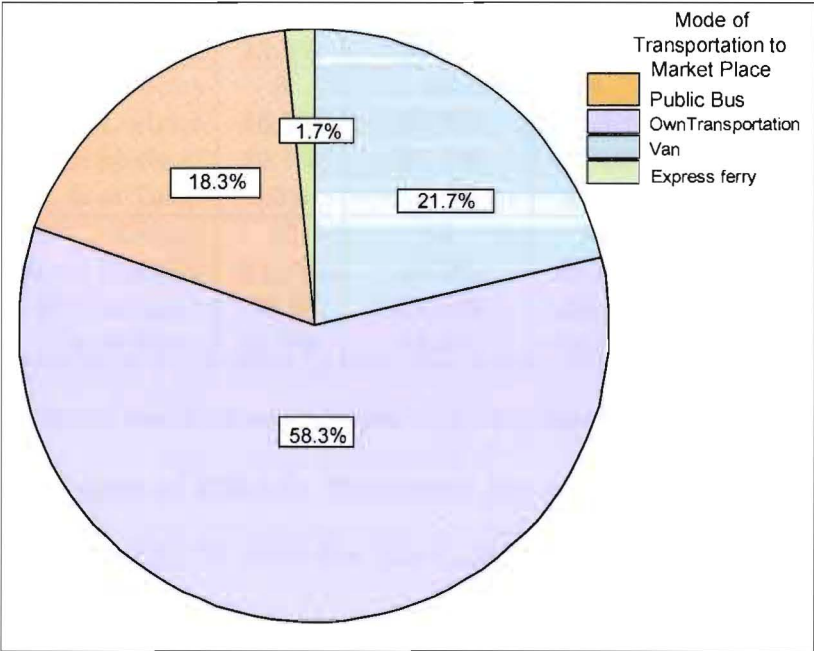


Figure 6. Mode of Transportation

About 33.3% of the respondents in Sri Aman preferred to use their own transport to the market compare to 25% of the respondents in Bau town. Commercial van is the most convenient public transportation for the respondents for both districts respectively with a total of 21.7%. Bus transportation service in Bau town fared better, with more than 11% of the respondents depended on the public bus service unlike the other respondents from Sri Aman with only 6.7%. As the Sri Aman town located near the Batang Lupar River, daily express ferry services enabled other peoples from other smaller town like Engkelili to commute to the town to sell their agriculture produce.

Table 5. Mode of Transportation According to District

		Mode of Transportation to Market Place				Total
		Van	Own Transport	Public Bus	Express Ferry	
District	<b>Bau</b>	Count	8	15	7	30
		% within District	26.7%	50.0%	23.3%	100.0%
		% within Mode of	61.5%	42.9%	63.8%	50.0%
		% of Total	13.3%	25.0%	11.7%	50.0%
	<b>Sri Aman</b>	Count	5	20	4	30
		% within District	16.7%	66.7%	13.3%	100.0%
		% within Mode of	38.5%	57.1%	36.4%	50.0%
		% of Total	8.3%	33.3%	6.7%	50.0%
<b>Total</b>		Count	13	35	11	60
		% within District	21.7%	58.3%	18.3%	100.0%
		% within Mode of Transport	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	21.7%	58.3%	18.3%	100.0%

Overall, the respondents spent on average per day for transportation cost ranged from RM0 – RM1.00 with mean of RM.0.81. Sixty-eight per cent of them spent below the mean, while the remaining 31.7% above the mean age. The data summarized in Figure 6 indicate half (58.3%) of them used their own transportation. The number of respondent who used their own transportation, as they do not pay fare to come to the market, likely influences the mean. However, the respondents who used their own transportation also entailed lost in transportation cost in terms of petrol and diesel.

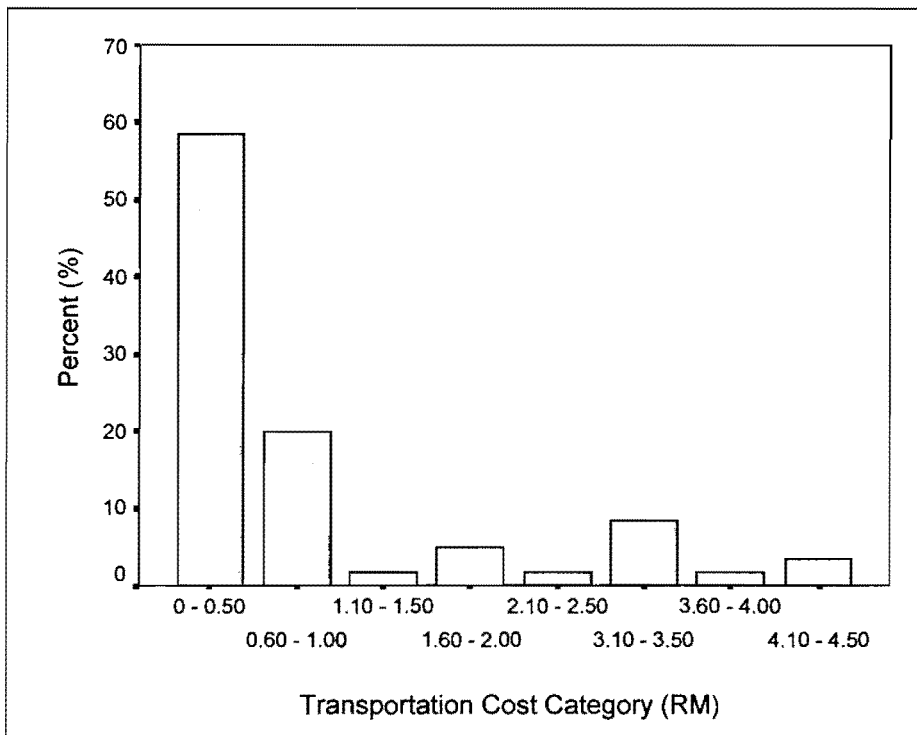


Figure 7. Average transportation cost per day

Comparing between both districts, about (15.1%) of the respondents from Bau town spent more than RM1.00 for their daily transportation to the market compare to their counterpart (6.7%) in Sri Aman market. (Table 6) More than one third (43.3%) of respondents from Sri Aman spent less than its counterpart in Bau respectively (35%). The range between the maximum and minimum transportation cost spent per day by respondents is RM3.90.

Table 6. Percentage Average Cost of Transportation between District

			Percentage < RM1.00	Percentage > RM1.00
<b>District</b>	Bau	Sample	21	9
		% of Total	35.0%	15.0%
	Sri Aman	Sample	26	4
		% of Total	43.3%	6.7%
<b>Total</b>		Sample	47	13
		% of Total	78.3%	21.7%

#### 4.3.3 Time & Frequency

This section covers the total hours the respondents spent in the market, their normal routine hours at the market and how frequent they sold in the market. The data showed in Figure 8 summarized that a large portion of the respondents (63.3%) arrived at the market around 6am to 8am to sell their produce with mean of 6.32. Less than one third (28.3%) of the respondent arrived at the market as early as 4:30am. Only 8.3% of the respondent arrived after 8:00am. The mode of the data showed that more of the respondents arrived at the market around 6am. This could be the peak period for respondents to buy from regular suppliers or neighbours and set up their stalls. In both towns, the customers who come to market were mostly government servants including residents staying nearby and those who have business in the town such as going to the local government clinic and others.

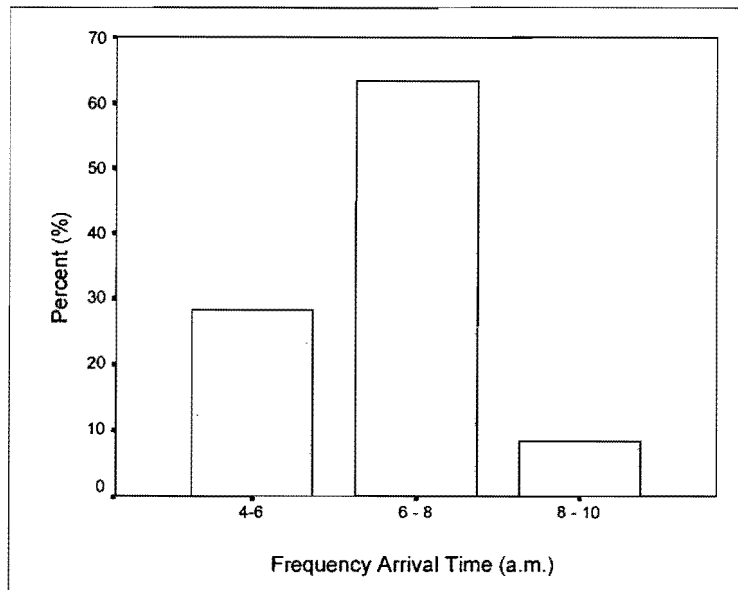


Figure 8. Frequency Arrival Time (a.m.)

Less than half of them (40%) went back home around 5pm to 7pm. (Figure 9) And, the mode showed that most respondent left the market area by 12p.m. More than one third (33.3%) of the respondents left the market at around 11am to 1pm are not full time sellers at the market. They went to the market to sell their vegetables and once it is sold, they would leave the market and head home to tend their farm. Normally these respondents depend on the public transportation to travel from their villagers to market. The remaining 5% of the respondents left the market around 3pm to 5pm. Only 3.3% of the respondents left the market area after 7pm. who normally packed up their stalls after serving their last customers who would drop by at the market after work before heading off home.

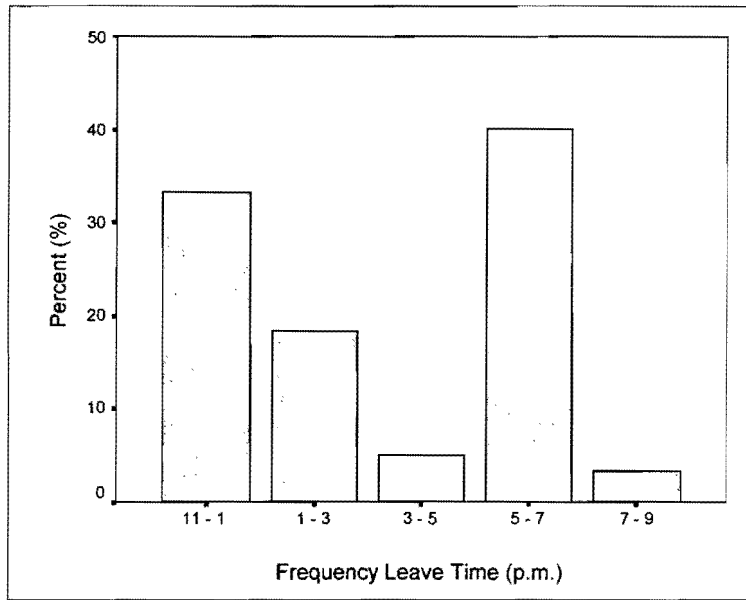


Figure 9. Frequency Leave Time (p.m.)

Overall, about 56.7% of the respondents spent less than 8 hours with mean of 8.47 while the remaining 43.3% above the mean hour. The data summarized in Table 7 showed the majority of 31.7% spent about 7 hours a day in the market. Less than 20% of the respondents spent less than 6 hours in the market and the remaining 48.3% spent more than 7 hours in the market. The range between the longest hour and the shortest hour spent in the market is 9 hours. About 80% of the respondents spent up to more than 7 hours a day could be considered as full time seller in the market.

Table 7. Total hours spent in the market

Total Hours	Bau		Sri Aman		% of Total
	N	N%	N	N%	
4	0	0	2	3.3	3.3
5	3	5.0	1	1.7	6.7
6	2	3.3	4	6.7	10.0
7	3	5.0	16	26.7	<b>31.7</b>
8	1	1.7	2	3.3	5.0
9	0	0	1	1.7	1.7
10	7	11.7	2	3.3	15.0

11	6	10.0	0	0	10.0
12	7	11.7	1	1.7	13.3
13	1	1.7	1	1.7	3.3
Total	30	50.0	30	50.0	100.0
Mean	8.47				
Mode	7.0				

In Figure 10, the data showed about 58.8% of the respondents ranged 26 – 36 years old spent about 4 – 8 hours a day at the market and the remaining 41.2 % of them spent up to 12 hour a day. About 50% of them who spent 8 – 12 hour a day at the market comes from the older respondents ranged from 48 – 69 years. Due to old age, the older respondent tends reduced work in the farm, as it required much strength and agility. As most of their children are in school or working, they now have more free time due to fewer children care responsibilities.

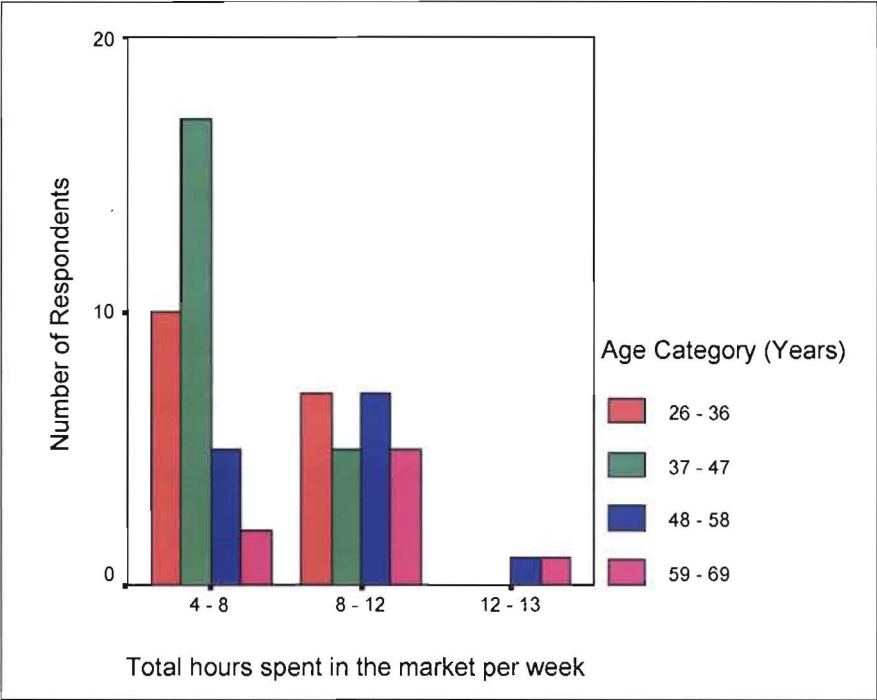


Figure 10. Frequency of respondent based on total hours spent

In Figure 11(a) and 11(b), the respondents in Sri Aman district seem to be spending less time in the market compare to the other respondents in Bau district. About 83% of the Sri Aman respondents spent about 4 – 8 hour a day at the market while compare to only 30% of the total Bau respondents. About 43% of the Sri Aman respondents belonged in the age group of 37 to 47 years old. Meanwhile, 26.7% of the same respondents belonged in the age group 26 to 36 years old. Only the remaining four Sri Aman respondents (13.3%) were older women aged between 50 to 60 years old.

Meanwhile, majority (66.7%) of the respondents in Bau district have longer working hours ranged from 8 to 12 hours in the market. Only four respondents in Sri Aman were selling vegetables at the market more than 8 hours a day at the market. About 23.3% of the respondents in Bau aged between 48 to 56 years old were spending 8 to 12 hours a day by just selling vegetables in the market. In the same Figure 11(b), it shows that respondents aged between 26 to 36 years old has same percentage of 16.7% as the other age group of respondent aged from 37 to 47 years old who were working more than 8 hours a day. Only three respondents or 10% were older women who are in their early sixties and spent less than 12 hours in the market. This implies market activities can provide safe employment for young women and older women, as they are willing to work full time in the market to earn cash income.

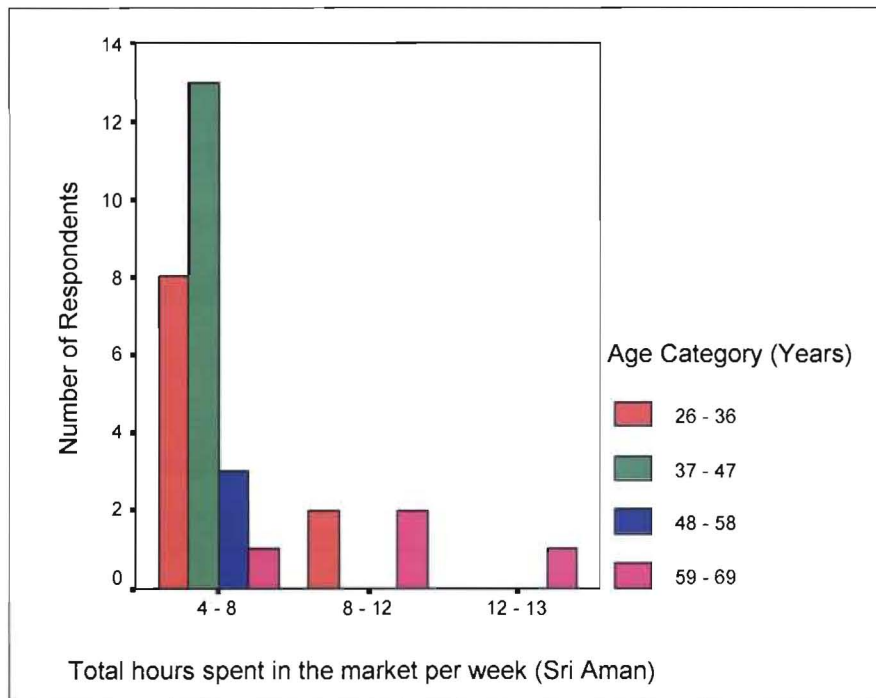


Figure 11(a). Frequency of respondent in Sri Aman

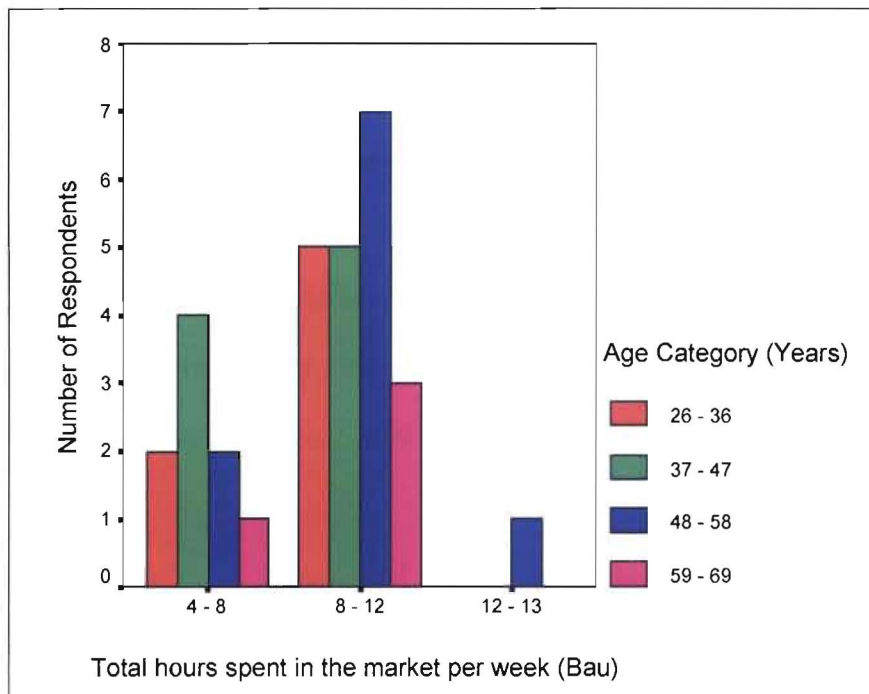


Figure 11(b). Frequency of respondents in Bau

In Table 8, more than half (71.7%) of the respondents sell vegetables at the market every day with mean of 5.68. Less than 11.7% of them went to the market twice a week, while the remaining 16.7% of them went to the market once a week (6.7%), three times a week (6.7%) and lastly five times a week (3.3 %). The data significantly showed these respondents were working in the market full time and spending less time at home and farm.

Table 8. Frequency of selling at market per week

Times Per week	Sample	Percentage (%)
1	4	6.7
2	7	11.7
3	4	6.7
5	2	3.3
7	43	71.7
Total	60	100.0
Mean	5.68	
Mod	7	

A large portion of the respondent (71.7 %) worked about 28 days a month with mean of 22.73. (Table 9) The range between the lowest number of days and the highest number of days is 24. Seven % of the respondents worked at an average 8 days in a month while more than six % of them worked at least 12 days a month. More than three % of them were at the market at an average of 20 days a month and the lowest numbers of days for the respondents is 4 days in a month with about six percent of the total respondents.

The data summarized in Table 9 indicated the respondents in Bau town spent more days in the market selling vegetables compare to the respondents in Sri Aman town. The respondents in Sri Aman could be spending more days in farming activities such as

paddy planting. Majority of the respondents in Bau town seldom went to the market once a week as most of them were “full-time” vegetables sellers.

Again, this could showed that the respondents depended on the market as a place to generate cash and selling vegetables has become a full time job for them. The data have a greater significant on the average income earned by the respondents, as discussed later in the income section.

Table 9. Number of days spent in the market per month

		Total days spent in market per month					Total
		4	8	12	20	28	
District	Bau	1	2	4	1	22	30
	Count						
	% within District	3.3%	6.7%	13.3%	3.3%	73.3%	100.0%
	% within Total Days Spent	25.0%	28.6%	100.0%	50.0%	51.2%	50.0%
	% of Total	1.7%	3.3%	6.7%	1.7%	36.7%	50.0%
	Sri Aman	3	5		1	21	30
	Count						
	% within District	10.0%	16.7%		3.3%	70.0%	100.0%
	% within Total Days Spent	75.0%	71.4%		50.0%	48.8%	50.0%
	% of Total	5.0%	8.3%		1.7%	35.0%	50.0%
Total		4	7	4	2	43	60
Count							
% within District		6.7%	11.7%	6.7%	3.3%	71.7%	100.0%
% within Total Days Spent		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total		6.7%	11.7%	6.7%	3.3%	71.7%	100.0%
Mean = 22.73							

#### 4.3.4 Reduction in household work

By spending an average of 8 hours a day at the market, the respondents would have to reduce their hours in household work. Surprisingly, about 70% of the respondents did not felt that they have to reduce time in their household work and were able to manage

both working in the market and still looking after the household welfare. The remaining 30% of the respondent felt that by working at market, they have less time doing household work and have to rely on other family members such as their husbands and their daughters to help them in their household work. The age factor is an important factor in influencing the time spent on household chores. Older children were taught to help out their parents by looking after the younger siblings and helping in simple household chores.

Table 10. Reduction of time in household work

Response	Bau		Sri Aman		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	6	10	12	20	18	30
No	24	<b>40</b>	18	30	42	<b>70</b>
Total	30	50.0	30	50.0	60	100.0

### 4.3.5 Market Place

Both market in Bau and Sri Aman towns shared similarities and differences. Local authorities provided these markets facilities and therefore a certain fee was imposed to the respondents who were using the facilities. But, the fee imposed by local authorities in both areas was different for the respondents. For instance, a sum of RM0.50 was imposed daily to every respondent in the market in Sri Aman town and no fee was imposed for the respondents selling at Sg Tegang and Lachau stopover. The market area in Sg Tegang and Lachau stopover were provided by local authorities for the respondents to sell their farm produce especially to those people who were traveling to

Sri Aman town from Kuching city and enables local farmers nearby to earn extra income by selling their farm produces.

In Bau market, the fee imposed by the local authority was depended on the size of space used to display their vegetable products. For instances, the minimum fee imposed is RM2.50 per day for a size space of 2 feet by 2 feet. This showed that the higher the fee, the bigger the volume of vegetable products sold by the respondents. In this study, the highest fee paid by any respondents is RM8.00 per day and this included leaving the vegetable products overnight at the market.<sup>3</sup> Regular vegetables sellers were allocated to their own space but due to increasing numbers of sellers, several sellers have to sell their vegetables products at the sidewalk of the market area. These areas were usually exposed to hot sun and this prevents these sellers to stay long at the market area. They are also subjected to pay the same imposed fee as the rest of the vegetables sellers.

In Sri Aman market, makeshift tables and individual stalls were built around the market area. Mixed range of products was sold in the market including poultry, food, vegetables, dry foodstuff, fish and others. There was no allocation of areas for certain type of products sold in the market. People were allowed to sell, as long there is place for them to display their products. The market lacked of public facilities or amenities such as water and proper toilet facilities. It has a bigger market area compare to Bau market.

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<sup>3</sup> During the interview, one respondent from Bau district revealed that she paid RM8.00 daily to the local authority so that she can keep the unsold vegetables at the market and avoid transporting it back and forth to her house.

The market in Bau town is a concrete double storey building, equipped with public facilities such as water, toilet, and proper drainage and maintenance services. The market area is divided into to several sections such as food and beverage section, poultry and fish section, vegetables section and other services such as dry foodstuff shop and hair saloon. The first floor of the market place is allocated to cooked food and beverages section. All other sections were allocated on the ground floor. For the respondents, they were only allowed to display their products on the ground floor.

The remaining 58.3% of the respondents indicated that the market is not the main source of cash income for the family but rather as an additional source of income. (Table 11) Out of 60 respondents interviewed, only 25 respondents (41.7%) indicated that their family livelihood is dependent on the income generated from market activities. For some older respondents, it is good opportunity for them to contribute towards their household income, as they no longer involved in farming activities due to old age and also to pass time. By having their own income, the younger respondents felt that they were able to reduce their husband's expenditure for food consumption. The data later attempts to explain the significant contribution from market activities in household income earned by the respondents, as discussed later in the income section.

Table 11. Market is the main source to generate cash income for family

Response	Bau		Sri Aman		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	12	20.0	13	21.7	25	41.7
No	18	30.0	17	28.3	35	58.3
Total	30	50.0	30	50.0	60	100.0

The data summarized in Table 12 showed the majority of the respondents (95%) have never been to any other place to sell their products beside their respective market. Only five per cent of them have been selling at other place before moving to the current market. Among the places they have been selling before were local market at 7<sup>th</sup> Mile, wholesale market in Gambier Street and Satok weekend market. All these markets were located in the Kuching city. High transportation cost and having young children that still needs looking after were some of the reason why they have stopped selling at other markets. Their current market was nearer to home and they were able to bring their young children to the market area. They also indicated that they were earning higher in their previous market compare to their current market. More buyers and the vegetables sold in the market fetched higher price were some of the reasons given by the respondents.

Table 12. Selling activities at other places beside the market

Response	Bau		Sri Aman		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	3	5	0	0		5
No	27	45	30	50		95
Total	30	50.0	30	50.0	60	100.0

#### 4.3.6 Involvement in formal activities

Majority of the respondents (76.7%) have never worked before in any formal activities before involving in the market activities. However, the remaining of the respondents (23.3%) has been working in the formal activities before entering the current market

activities. (Table 13) Among of those respondents who answered “Yes”, seven of them (11.7%) belonged to the age category of 26 – 36 years old. (Figure 12) Higher educational achievement allowed them to seek work in the formal sector especially in the service sector. The types of job that they have done before were sales assistant, cashier, assistant supervisor, office cleaner and farm worker at nearby SALCRA plantation.

Being nearer to Kuching town, the respondents in Bau town have more opportunities to seek job employment in the service sector. They worked in the service sector when they were single and have not yet started their own family.

The reason of leaving the formal sector was the flexibility of market activities in which enables them to look after their young ones and nearer to their home.

Table 13. Involvement in other service sector

Response	Bau		Sri Aman		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	11	18.3	3	5.0	14	23.3
No	19	31.7	27	45.0	46	76.7
Total	30	50.0	30	50.0	60	100.0

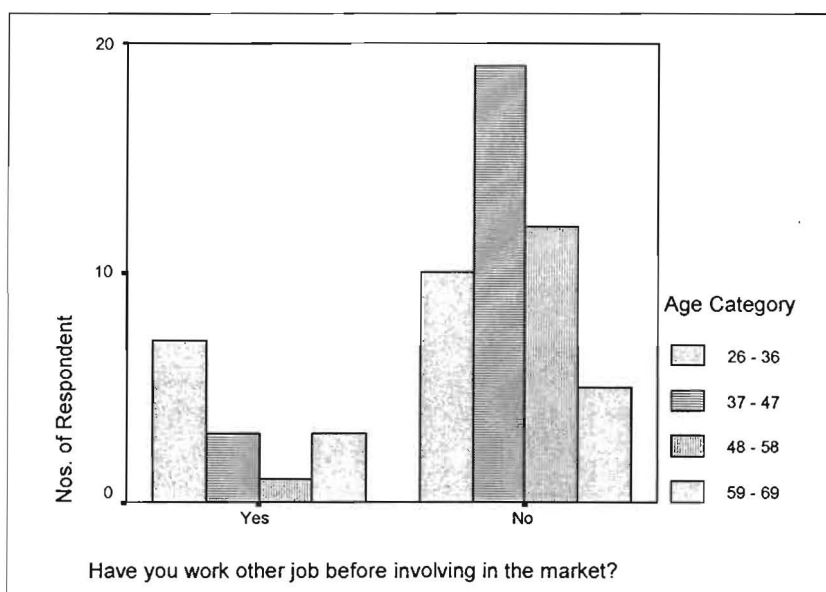


Figure 12. Involvement in formal sector

#### 4.4 Income Generated From Market and Other Sources

This part of the discussion highlights the respondent's income generated from market activities and its contribution towards infusing self-empowerment values and capital accumulation for the respondents. This study attempted to compute the other components of household cash income besides income generated from the market activities. The respondents were asked to provide information on estimation of their sale of farm produce such pepper and paddy; and wages derived from their husband's non-farm employment in terms of monthly salary. However, the responses from the respondents were only rough estimation of their household cash income contributed by various sources as their other family members were not present at the time of the interview.

4.4.1 Overall Total Household Cash Income

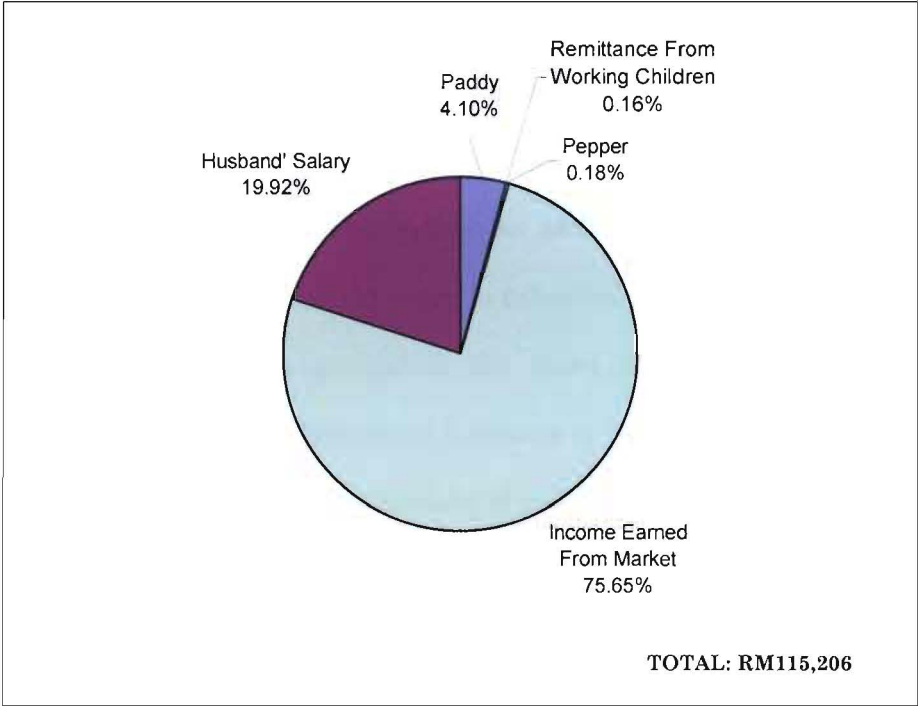


Figure 13. Total household cash income per month

All of the 60 respondents non-farm income from market activities totals to RM87,153.34 or about 76% of the total contribution to household cash income. Meanwhile, their husband’s monthly contribution from waged salary accumulated to RM22,949.03 or around 19% of their household income.<sup>4</sup> Another source of non-farm income was the remittance from their working children which only 0.16% or RM184.32 in a month. For those respondents who have working children, they indicated that their children did not sent regular remittance home as most of their children have to support their own families.

<sup>4</sup> Out of 60 respondents, only 24 respondents indicated that their husband were earning fixed income in the formal sector.

The rest comes from farm related activities such as pepper farming and paddy farming. Most respondents indicated *paddy* is seldom sold but rather for consumption of the household. Few respondents indicated only small sums of the total *paddy* produce by them were sold in the market but rather to rice milling factory. However, the respondents faced difficulties in providing an estimate of the amount of cash they obtained from the sale of *paddy*.<sup>5</sup> In order to calculate the amount of paddy in terms of cash income, the researcher multiplied the average market price for milled rice gathered from the published Agriculture Statistics of Sarawak (2002) by Department of Agriculture Sarawak with the total amount of *paddy* produced by the respondents in a year.

From the sale of pepper crops, it only contributed 0.18% or RM207.37 in the overall total household income of the respondents. This occurred because only a small handful of the respondents were involved in pepper farming scheme.

#### **4.4.2 Average Earning by Respondents**

Based on the respondents' estimation, on average their earning from the market activities ranged from RM41 to RM61 per day with mean of RM58.47. About sixty five percent of them earned below the mean and the remaining 35% earned above the mean. The data summarized in Table 14, majority of them (26.7%) earned between RM21 to RM40 a day at the market. The remaining of them earned an average earning ranged

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<sup>5</sup> This only applied to respondents from Sri Aman market. No respondents in Bau market plant *paddy* or pepper as cash crops.

from RM41 – RM60 (23.3%) with less than 16.7% of them earned around RM61 to RM80 a day. However, only 18.3% of them were earning between RM81 to RM266 in a day from market activities.

Table 14. Categories of Earning According to Respondents

Categories in (RM)	Sample	Percentage (%)
20 or less	9	15
21 – 40	16	26.7
41 – 60	14	23.3
61 – 80	10	16.7
81 – 100	6	10.0
101 – 120	2	3.3
121 through highest	3	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Mean = 58.47		

Based on the total numbers of day they spent in the market in a month and their average income per day, their average monthly income was calculated and categorized. Based on calculation, their monthly income ranged from RM61.67 to RM7,891.67 with mean of RM1,922.56. Sixty percent of them earned below the mean and the remaining 40% earned above the mean. The data summarized in Table 15, most of them (23.3%) earned between RM1,001 to RM1,500 in a month. Fifteen per cent of them earned less than RM500 while about 13% of the respondents earned from RM501 to RM1,001. The remaining of them earned an average earning ranged from RM1,501 to RM2,000 (13.3%) with less than 11.7% of them earned around RM2,001 to RM2,500 a month. Meanwhile, five per cent of them were found earning from the range of RM2,501 to RM3,000. However, only six per cent of them were earning between RM3,001 to RM3,500 in a month from market activities. Only very small percentage of respondents

had an average household income more than RM4,500 and above. The range between the highest and the lowest income is RM7,830.

There were some discrepancies on the projected incomes by 5 respondents which had an average income more than RM4,500 and above. One of the reasons for explaining the discrepancies is that the respondents did not disclose their true incomes or over estimated their earnings. It is likely possible because their daily earnings were not fixed or derived from regular sales from customers every day. Another reason is that they are weak in arithmetic skills due to low level of literacy.

In Figure 14, it indicated there is higher numbers of respondents earning above the mean from Bau town compared to numbers of respondents from Sri Aman town. About 19% of the respondents from Bau town were earning RM2,000 and above compare to 15 % of the respondents from Sri Aman town in the same categories. It is only a slight difference because most of the respondents in Sri Aman still carried out more paddy and pepper farming compare to their other counterparts in Bau town.

However, when other cash sources including paddy and pepper were excluded from the computation, the calculated monthly income range from RM53.00 to RM7467.00 with mean of RM1,452.44. Sixty % of them earned below the mean and the remaining 40 % earned above the mean. The data summarized in Table 16, majority of them (30 %) earned less than RM500 in a month. This showed an increase in the number of respondent earning less than RM500 compare to the data in Table 15. About 18 % of them earned between RM1,001 to RM1,500 in a month while about 13 % of the

respondents earned from RM501 to RM1,001. The remaining of them earned an average earning ranged from RM1,501 to RM2,000 (16.7%) with less than 11.7 % of them earned around RM2,001 to RM2,500 a month. Meanwhile, 3.3 % of them were found earning from the range of RM2,501 to RM3,000. However, only 1.7 % of them were earning between RM3,001 to RM3,500 in a month from market activities. A significant dropped in percentage about five % compare to the data summarized in Table 15 for the same category. Only very small percentage of respondents had an average household income more than RM4,500 and above. The range between the highest and the lowest income is RM7,414.

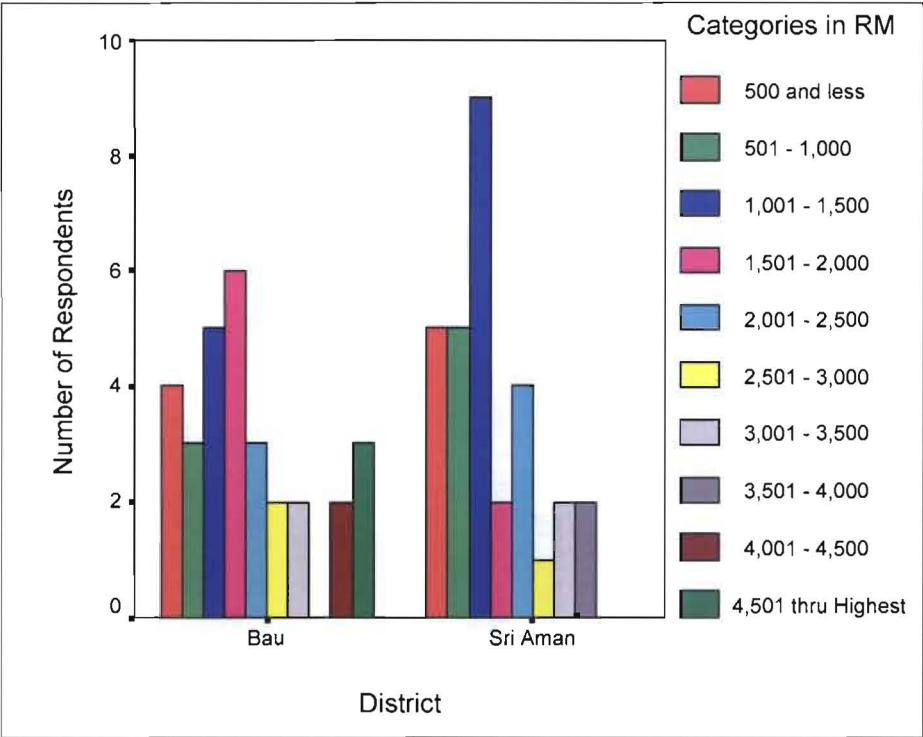


Figure 14. Categories of total monthly income with other sources

In Figure 15, it indicated the respondents in Bau town were not affected in excluding other sources in the household income. This could also mean that the respondents in Bau town derived more income from market activities compare to the respondents in Sri Aman town. About 15 % of the respondents from Bau town were earning from the range RM1,501 to RM2,000 compare to 13.3 % of the respondents from Sri Aman town earning around RM1,001 to RM1,500. Income is one of the several indicators to measure level of livings. This means as incomes increases so does the standard level of livings of the respondents. Thus, higher incomes would improve the standard of education, health, saving and etc for the respondents. In this case, the respondents in Bau town fared better than its counterparts in Sri Aman town. However, transportation cost might contribute to higher cost of living in Bau compare to Sri Aman.

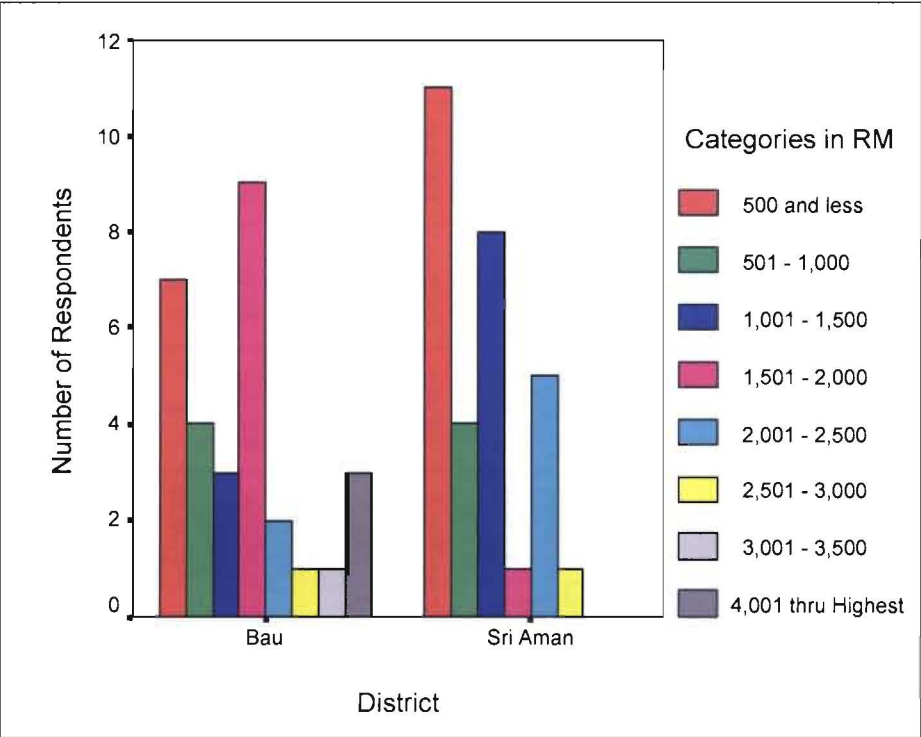


Figure 15. Categories of total monthly income without other sources

Table 15. Categories of total monthly income *with* other sources according to district

		Categories of Total Monthly Income With Other Sources (In RM)										Total
		500 or less	501-1,000	1,001 – 1,500	1,501 – 2,000	2,001 – 2,500	2,501 – 3,000	3,001 – 3,500	3,501 – 4,000	4,001 Highest	4,501 Thru Highest	
District	Bau <i>Count</i>	4	3	5	6	3	2	2		2	3	30
	% within District	13.3%	10.0%	16.7%	20.0%	10.0%	6.7%	6.7%		6.7%	10.0%	100.0%
	% within Category	44.4%	37.5%	35.7%	75.0%	42.9%	66.7%	50.0%		100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	6.7%	5.0%	8.3%	10.0%	5.0%	3.3%	3.3%		3.3%	5.0%	
	Sri Aman <i>Count</i>	5	5	9	2	4	1	2	2			30
	% within District	16.7%	16.7%	30.0%	6.7%	13.3%	3.3%	6.7%	6.7%			100.0%
	% within Category	55.6%	62.5%	64.3%	25.0%	57.1%	33.3%	50.0%	100.0%			50.0%
	% of Total	8.3%	8.3%	15.0%	3.3%	6.7%	1.7%	3.3%	3.3%			50.0%
<b>Total</b> <i>Count</i>		9	8	14	8	7	3	4	2	2	3	60
% within District		15.0%	13.3%	23.3%	13.3%	11.7%	5.0%	6.7%	3.3%	3.3%	5.0%	100.0%
% within Category		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total		15.0%	13.3%	23.3%	13.3%	11.7%	5.0%	6.7%	3.3%	3.3%	5.0%	100.0%

Table 16. Categories of total monthly income *without* other sources according to district

		Categories of Total Monthly Income Without Other Sources (In RM)									Total
		500 or less	501-1,000	1,001 – 1,500	1,501 – 2,000	2,001 – 2,500	2,501 – 3,000	3,001 – 3,500	3,501 – 4,000	4,001 Thru Highest	
District	Bau <i>Count</i>	7	4	3	9	2	1	1	0	3	30
	% within District	23.3%	13.3%	10.0%	30.0%	6.7%	3.3%	3.3%		10.0%	100.0%
	% within Category	38.9%	50.0%	27.3%	90.0%	28.6%	50.0%	100.0%		100.0%	50.0%
	% of Total	11.7%	6.7%	5.0%	15.0%	3.3%	1.7%	1.7%		5.0%	50.0%
	Sri Aman <i>Count</i>	11	4	8	1	5	1	0	0	0	30
	% within District	36.7%	13.3%	26.7%	3.3%	16.7%	3.3%				100.0%
	% within Category	61.1%	50.0%	72.7%	10.0%	71.4%	50.0%				50.0%
	% of Total	18.3%	6.7%	13.3%	1.7%	8.3%	1.7%				50.0%
	<b>Total</b> <i>Count</i>	18	8	11	10	7	2	1	0	3	60
	% within District	30.0%	13.3%	18.3%	16.7%	11.7%	3.3%	1.7%	0	5.0%	100.0%
	% within Category	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	30.0%	13.3%	18.3%	16.7%	11.7%	3.3%	1.7%	0	5.0%	100.0%

#### 4.4.3 Self Empowerment

More than half of the respondents (83.3%) indicated that they themselves decided on how the money earned in the market to be spent. The remaining of the respondent (16.7%) indicated that the decision on how to spend the money earned in the market is based on mutual agreement. Most of the respondents indicated that they would spent it on food such as meat, fish, sugar, rice, salt and also kitchen utilities. Only a few indicated that the money they earned was for saving purposes. But by having their own saving and contributing to household income though purchasing foodstuff for family consumption, the women felt more secured and have higher self esteem for themselves in having more say in their family decision-making.

Table 17. Decision making on spending

Response	Bau		Sri Aman		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Herself	22	36.7	28	46.7	50	83.3
Together	8	13.3	2	3.3	10	16.7
Total	30	50.0	30	50.0	60	100.0

Explanation to the response in Table 18 is that majority of the respondents (93.3%) feel that they have more say about spending now because they now the ones who decide what to buy for their household needs. This implies that by selling at the market, they were giving the chance to spend more time in the town area and also exposed them to the cash economy. For those who answered “No”, they indicated that the decision on how to utilize

the money earned in the market is based on the common decision made by both husband and wife.

Table 18 More say about spending now that you have earnings of your own

Response	Bau		Sri Aman		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	27	45.0	29	48.3	56	93.3
No	3	5.0	1	1.7	4	6.7
Total	30	50.0	30	50.0	60	100.0

#### 4.4.3 Saving

When the respondents were asked, “Whether they were able to save from the money earned from the market”, more than half (55%) responded “No”. They explained that any of the money earned that day at the market would be spent to buy consumption food for the family and pay for the transportation cost. The remaining of the respondents (45%) who able to save but the money they save is not much because it depends on their earning. The respondents indicated several methods of saving. Some respondents kept their money at their home, while some kept their saving in the nearest post office.

Table 19 Able to save from the cash earned from market

Response	Bau		Sri Aman		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	14	23.3	13	21.7	27	45.0
No	16	26.7	17	28.3	33	55.0
Total	30	50.0	30	50.0	60	100.0

Again, the rate of saving is much dependent on the rate of income earned by the respondents. The respondents who earned higher were able to cover their expenditure and still able to save.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 5.1 Summary

The introduction of a cash economy in rural areas has meant that the traditional of subsistence economy can no longer be sustained. Farmers need cash for their daily expenses and are becoming more dependent on cash to purchase food and pay for kitchen utensils, utilities, clothes and transportation. Subsistence crops like *padi* are produced only for the household's own consumption and not for sale. Products like rubber and pepper from plantation crops are subject to fluctuations in production and commodity prices so it is important for farmers to practice mixed cropping. Men also sought full- or part-time work in nearby towns as semi-skilled labourers while their wives managed the farms in order to earn a stable cash income.

The cash generated from selling vegetables in the market can help to diversify and stabilize a household's source of income as the prices of vegetables are determined by factors of supply and demand. The informal market provides opportunities for female farmers to earn income while waiting for the sales of their husband's cash crops.

Most women entering the informal market economy were seeking safe employment opportunities to earn cash income. About 36 per cent were in the 37-47 years age group and at their prime in terms of labour productivity. The results showed more young women were entering the informal market and majority of them (55%) had less than four years' experience in selling at the market. In Bau district, young women were spending more than 7 hours in the market and this is considered as full-time work in the formal sector.

Public transport and better roads linking villagers to nearby towns enabled women to move around with ease, carry their own agricultural produce (mostly garden vegetables) to market and to sell their products in town. The majority (58.3 per cent) used their own or their family members' transportation to get their agriculture products to market.

The informal market has no barriers in terms of age or level of education and definitely provides easy entry especially for young mothers and older women. Older women can choose to work productively by selling vegetables produced by their husband or children in the market. Young mothers were able to look after their young ones in the market area while the older children were looked after in the school system. The majority were able to reduce the time spent travelling between home and market by using their own rather than public transport.

Women gained financial independence and status from earning their own income. They were given access to economic resources through their market activities. This has brought

self-empowerment and enabled them to share in the role of decision-making within their household. Eighty three per cent of those who earn their own income decide how the money earned in the market should be spent. They were able to contribute to the household income by buying foods and kitchen utensils. About 93.3 per cent of them indicated that they have more say in determining their household spending. Less than 45 per cent of the respondents were able to save from the income earned at the market. The average earning was RM 58 per day, while only 35 per cent of them were earning up to RM 100 or more per day.

The market also provided good training grounds for entrepreneurship. Women were able to negotiate prices and haggle for the best price for their goods. The market provides opportunities for women to trade and earn more or the same income as their menfolk.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This study clearly indicated that factors of age and education do not hinder women from participating in the informal market economy. Forty per cent of the women are illiterate and were still able to seek income in the informal market economy. Even in their fifties, they were still able to use their labour and actively contribute to the household income.

By participating in the informal market economy, women show a positive response to the cash economy. They understand the need for cash for daily expenses like transportation, food and education for their children. They are willing to take risks by leaving home and

actively participating in the market economy. Thus the informal market economy does provide positive employment opportunities for women in rural areas, especially those who are involved in farming or seeking job security.

Women's living conditions also improved due to the income earned from the market activities. Contribution of extra income to the household could elevate their standard of living away from poverty levels. In Sarawak, the poverty line income for the year 1999 was estimated at RM 584 per month per household (Anon, 2001). Sixty per cent of the respondents were able to earn at an average of RM2,000 or more per month from the informal market sector. This clearly shows the importance of the market economy towards the development of women as they were able to control their own economic resources like labour and cash earned from the market.

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## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR IBAN VEGETABLE SELLERS IN SRI AMAN MARKET

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In this project we want to find out a bit more about the Iban women who sell at the Sri Aman market. We are interested in what you sell, how much work it takes to prepare for the market, and who does all the work.

Note: The information you give to us is confidential and no-one else will be able to identify you from this report.

***First we'd like to start with a few questions about yourself.***

1. Where do you live?.....
2. How old are you?.....
3. What level of schooling have you had?.....
4. Where do you get your source of vegetables?
  - a) Grow your own vegetables .....
  - b) Buy from the wholesale market in Gambier street .....
  - c) Buys from your neighbours .....
5. Which wholesale market .....
6. How many trips to the wholesale market .....
7. Neighbours...(.....) Yes ...(.....)..No.
8. How many times you bought vegetables from your neighbours.....
9. Do you buy from them using cash or owe them first and pay them later after you have sold them? .....

***Now about the market***

10. How long have you been selling vegetables at the Bau Market?.....
11. What got you started in selling at the Bau Market? .....  
.....
12. How often do you sell things at the Bau market?  
Every week.....Except.....Why?.....
13. How do you reach to market? Type of transportation  
Truck.....Van.....Car.....Bus.....Other.....

14. How long does it take to get there? .....
15. (a) When do you arrive at the market?.....  
(b) When do you leave for home again?.....
16. (a) How much do you pay for the trip down to the market? .....  
(b) And the same to come back?.....
17. And how much do you pay for your stall at the market? .....
18. Do you pay it to market authorities? .....
19. How much of what you sell at the market is collected from the jungle? .....  
all.....most.....about half..... not much .....none.....
20. What are the main forest plants that you gather for sale?  
Leaves.....  
Roots/vegetables.....  
Wild/fruits.....
21. Do you grow some things especially for the market? .....
22. Do you do this all yourself, or do others in the family help? (Who helps?)  
.....
23. What day of the week do you start harvesting things for the next market? And how much time would you spend preparing for the market on that day (excluding growing time)? *(move on to the following days in turn, asking for time spent in market preparation.)*

Day	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Time (hrs)						

24. Does anyone else help with the market work, and what do they help with?  
Do you reward the people helping you, with money, goods, or by helping them with their work when they need it?

Task	Who helps	Reward		
		Money	Goods	Labour
Growing				
Harvesting				

Preparing the vegetables				
Packing for transport				
Setting up stall				
Selling goods				
Going to the wholesale market				
Other				

25. Have other people at home taken on some of your former chores while you are busy with the market, such as farming or household work? Do you reward them for their help?

Task	Who helps	Reward		
		Money	goods	labour
Paddy				
Other farming				
Housework				
Childcare				

26. With all the time spent on preparing and going to the market, have you had to cut down on other work on the farm or in the house? .....

*If YES, proceed to next question, otherwise jump to Q24.*

27. What are the main changes that you have had to make?.

.....

28. Have you ever worked other jobs before selling vegetables in the market?

.....

29. Do you sell your goods at any other place besides the Sri Aman Market? .....

If Yes, go to Q28, otherwise skip to Q29

30. Can you name the places and how often? Why?

Places: .....Once a week .....Twice a week.....

Reason:.....

31. Do you earn a lot more by selling at that particular market?  
 .....  
 .....
32. How much would you take on an average day at the market?  
 .....
33. What is the most you have earned in one day, and the least amount?  
 .....
34. Is the market the main source of cash income for your family?  
 .....
35. What is the combined average monthly income for your household? .....  
 Market.....Remittance.....Farm work.....  
 Off – farm work .....Husband.....
36. What are the main things you buy with the money you earn at the market?  
 .....  
 .....
37. Who makes the decisions about how to spend the money from the market?  
 .....
38. Do you have more say about spending since you have been earning money at the  
 market? .....
39. Are you able to save any of the money you earn?.....  
 Now just a few final questions
40. Do you enjoy going down to the  
 market? .....
41. What's good and what's bad about it?  
 .....  
 .....
42. Ever heard of any scheme introduced by agriculture officers to small farmer like  
 you?.....  
 If Yes, What scheme .....
- .....