

SALCRA: ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF SARAWAK RURAL AREAS

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ABSTRACT

Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (SALCRA) is currently managing 19 oil palm estates for participants and five oil palm mills. These oil palm plantations and oil mills employ thousands of workers both professional and handymen/women. Our findings indicate that the oil palm industry has enhanced people's economic well-being and has ensured that unutilised land is economically viable as a result of oil palm cultivation. At the same time, it is logical to argue that the oil palm plantations and oil mills have economically empowered many communities that are housing them directly and indirectly. Data from the field indicates that people around oil palm fields and those involved in the cultivation process show pictures of benevolent plants. Working within the premises of the Sarawak state government, SALCRA works to create a well-balanced urban and rural development based on a holistic development benefit for the people of Sarawak, regardless of their place of residence and work. The oil palm has different meanings depending on the informants involved. Furthermore, the SALCRA management team has continued to promote and implement a systematic development plan for Native Customary Rights land (NCR land) on a commercial basis.

Keywords: development, economy, rural communities, SALCRA, social.

Received: 7 July 2022; **Accepted:** 29 November 2022; **Published online:** 9 March 2023.

INTRODUCTION

In 1980, Alex Yui-Huen Kwan wrote;

In most developing countries, past development efforts appear to have failed to bring about a real development breakthrough (especially in the rural areas) ... the recent spate of the world economic crisis associated with global inflation-cum-recession ... has hit many developing countries very hard, especially those in South Asia. In Malaysia, some even suggested that although money income has gone up, there are disquieting signs that the quality of life is deteriorating and that many people are finding it more and more difficult to satisfy their basic needs.

Outcomes of socio-economic debates often conclude that the most poverty occurs mostly in rural areas throughout the world. Hence, many government agencies and non-governmental agencies give high priority to rural development. Although the nature of the problem is changing, it will continue to change in the future. The contemporary rural reality challenges our traditional view on how to develop rural areas in a dozen different ways. According to Maxwell *et al.* (2001), there is no shortage of narratives about-or prescriptions for-rural development. Past narratives have included 'Community Development', 'The Green Revolution', and 'Integrated Rural Development'. Current narratives include a new, doubly green revolution, sustainable agriculture, rural livelihoods, and a growth-based, liberalisation-friendly narrative, which might be labelled the Washington Consensus on agriculture and rural development.

Today, Covid-19 and other factors have ensured the above 1980 assumption by Alex Yui-Huen Kwan

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