COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN FELCRA OIL PALM PLANTATION: A CASE STUDY OF KAMPUNG PINANG, KOTA SAMARAHAN DIVISION

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Master of Environmental Management
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COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN FELCRA OIL PALM PLANTATION:
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KOTA SAMARAHAN DIVISION

by

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Finally I acknowledge the indirect contribution and moral support from family members upon the completion of this paper.
The main objective of the study is to assess socio-economic impacts of participation in oil palm plantation scheme, Kampung Pinang, Kota Samarahan and alternatives of the community to sustain their lives in the village. The specific objectives are 1) To determine participants' demographic characteristic; 2) To determine socio-economic data of the participants; 3) To study the impact of community participation in oil palm plantation; 4) To assess involvement of the participants in other land use; and 5) To assess level of participation of the participants. The study found that the participants are generally have very low level of education (only 2 respondents with primary education level) and mostly are working as farmer and fulltime housewife. Participants' income has slightly increased after the participation where the average monthly income has increased from below RM 500 to in between of RM 501-1000. More than half of the respondents owned an extra land used and mainly for farming purpose. However, the yield from the farm is for subsistence only. Most of the respondents farm fruits and vegetable whereas the rest are planting paddy. The response from respondents showed that the members are only moderately active to participate in term of communication with the management. Any decision regarding management of plantation is made by FELCRA. Most of the respondents did not have comment on dividend distribution pattern but 65% of the respondents commented that participation in FELCRA scheme did not improve their quality of life. Women play an important role in farming as an alternative to their livelihood compared to men with percentage of 85.7% and 71.4% respectively. Overall of the study shows the increment in socio-economic level of participant in Kampung Pinang after they join FELCRA scheme.
ABSTRAK

Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti impak penyertaan komuniti dalam skim perladangan kelapa sawit Kampung Pinang, Kota Samarahan dan strategi untuk mengekalkan gaya hidup mereka di kampung tersebut. Spesifik objektif adalah 1) mengenalpasti cirri-ciri demografik para peserta; 2) mengenalpasti data socio-ekonomi para peserta; 3) mengkaji impak penglibatan peserta dalam skim kelapa sawit; 4) mengkaji penglibatan dalam aktiviti lain; dan 5) mengkaji tahap penglibatan peserta. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan mereka mempunyai taraf pendidikan yang amat rendah di mana hanya 2 peserta mendapat pendidikan di sekolah rendah. Kebanyakan peserta bekerja sebagai pekebun dan surirumah tangga. Pendapatan bulanan para peserta telah meningkat daripada di bawah RM 500 kepada pendapatan di antara RM 501-1000 selepas penyertaan dalam skim FELCRA. Lebih daripada 50% peserta mempunyai tanah lain yang diusahakan untuk pertanian untuk kegunaan sendiri. Tanaman yang ditanam adalah terdiri daripada buah-buahan dan sayur-sayuran dan selebihnya menanam padi. Pandangan peserta FELCRA menunjukkan peserta terlibat secara sederhana aktif dari segi melibatkan diri dalam berkomunikasi dengan pihak pengurusan. Keputusan berkenaan dengan pengurusan ladang hanya dibuat oleh pihak pegurusan. Para peserta tidak memberikan banyak komen terhadap pembahagian divideh tetapi sebanyak 65% menyatakan bahawa penglibatan mereka tidak banyak memberikan perubahan ke atas kualiti hidup mereka. Peserta wanita memainkan peranan penting dalam pertanian sebagai kegiatan tambahan dalam kehidupan berbanding dengan peserta lelaki iaitu sebanyak 85.7% dan 71.4% masing-masing. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa terdapat peningkatan dalam socio-ekonomi peserta Kampung Pinang selepas penglibatan mereka dalam skim FELCRA.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Plantation in Malaysia

In Malaysia, palm oil continued to lead the development of agricultural plantation crops as the production of crude palm oil and palm kernel increased from 7.9 million tonnes in 1995 to 10.2 million tonnes in 1997. The oil palm plantation area expanded from 1.7 Mha in 1990 to 3.37 Mha in 2002. The increase in production was largely due to the increase in yield as well as favourable prices in the international market. The yield of crude palm oil increased from 3.5 tonne per hectare in 1990 to 3.9 tonnes per hectare in 1995, while the average price increased from RM 796 to RM 1,472 per tonne.

In addition, the increase in production was also attributed to the expansion of planted hectare by 4.1 percent per annum as a result of new land development and conversion of rubber and cocoa plantations into oil palm cultivation. Much of this expansion was realised in Sabah where the oil palm plantation area increased from 1% of the State's territory in the 1980s to 11% in 2002 (over 1 Mha) (WWF Malaysia, 2003).

Generally, there are three major types of oil palm producers: independent smallholders, producers in the land development schemes, and private estates (Table 1). The farms of independent smallholders are generally small (less than
100 ha). Land development schemes are projects introduced by the government to resettle landless farmers on new land as producers of export crops such as palm oil. One main agency entrusted with this scheme is the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), which is also involved in the marketing of the produce. Other land development agencies are FELCRA (Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority) and RISDA (Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority). Private estates are farms which are larger than 100 ha and operated by private firms. Currently, private estates account for about 45% of the area planted in oil palm, land settlement schemes 46%, and independent smallholders 9% (PORLA, 1992).

Table 1: Distribution of Oil Palm Planted Area by State and Sector (hectares), 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Smallholders licensed</th>
<th>FELDA</th>
<th>FELCRA</th>
<th>RISDA</th>
<th>State schemes/Govt Agencies</th>
<th>Private Estate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Johor</td>
<td>108,450</td>
<td>129,382</td>
<td>19,656</td>
<td>3,901</td>
<td>17,578</td>
<td>308,025</td>
<td>586,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td>8,095</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1,016</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31,737</td>
<td>41,629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelantan</td>
<td>1,052</td>
<td>39,119</td>
<td>6,168</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>8,943</td>
<td>17,121</td>
<td>72,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malacca</td>
<td>3,182</td>
<td>1,191</td>
<td>1,215</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29,237</td>
<td>35,588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Sembilan</td>
<td>10,444</td>
<td>24,675</td>
<td>5,986</td>
<td>1,770</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>62,404</td>
<td>105,279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahang</td>
<td>11,591</td>
<td>285,632</td>
<td>25,507</td>
<td>9,719</td>
<td>50,220</td>
<td>157,433</td>
<td>540,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penang</td>
<td>7,035</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7,297</td>
<td>14,872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perak</td>
<td>43,291</td>
<td>23,542</td>
<td>29,526</td>
<td>3,259</td>
<td>6,629</td>
<td>169,701</td>
<td>275,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selangor</td>
<td>35,553</td>
<td>8,929</td>
<td>3,872</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>9,880</td>
<td>81,183</td>
<td>139,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terengganu</td>
<td>3,011</td>
<td>42,272</td>
<td>19,410</td>
<td>16,425</td>
<td>14,633</td>
<td>47,898</td>
<td>143,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabah</td>
<td>26,178</td>
<td>118,057</td>
<td>1,348</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>58,591</td>
<td>511,562</td>
<td>715,736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarawak</td>
<td>2,158</td>
<td>8,383</td>
<td>3,547</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>58,036</td>
<td>74,883</td>
<td>147,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>26,004</strong></td>
<td><strong>981,182</strong></td>
<td><strong>601,251</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,024,074</strong></td>
<td><strong>224,515</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,496,461</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,819,316</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Malaysian Agricultural Directory & Index, 1999/2000)

The 8th Malaysian Plan (2001-2005) calls for 365,249 hectares (about 6 times the size of Singapore) of new agricultural development, primarily in Sabah and
Sarawak (WWF Malaysia, 2002). As reported in the local paper, The Star (15 April 2003) Sarawak has 380,000 hectares of oil palm estates in early 2000's and this is expected to surge to 500,000 hectares by 2008. However, others report plans of the Sarawak State government establishing 1 Mha of oil palm while expansion in Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah have not yet stopped either (New Straits Times, February 13th, 2001). In Peninsular Malaysia, the Malaysian Plan stipulates that the expansion of oil palm plantation will be done through a conversion of 42,870 ha/yr of forest, basically until the remaining State Forest (conversion forest) of 340,000 hectares in 2000 is exhausted (Tan, 2001). Most of this conversion will probably be associated with oil palm development.

1.2 Oil Palm Plantation in Sarawak

Plantation agriculture is considered apt in Sarawak as a mean to improve and uplift the livelihood of the plantation, especially the rural poor due to its large tract of underutilized land. Unlike Peninsular Malaysia that had started plantation agriculture in as early as 1903, plantation agriculture development in Sarawak is relatively new. Plantation development in Sarawak was started with the resettlement schemes, such as the Skrang and Malugu Schemes, which began in 1964. These early plantations are believed not to be profit-oriented but rather, for security reasons (King, 1999).

Commercial plantation in Sarawak started in 1960s when the Department of Land and Survey prepared a regional development plan for the Lambir-Subis Area in Miri-Bintulu Region. It was in December 1976 and land was made
available in 1968 to the Sarawak Oil Palms Sendirian Berhad (SOP), a subsidiary company of the Colonial Development for cultivation of oil palm. By the end of 1969, SOP had planted 202 hectares of oil palms (Joseph Belandoi, 2002).

Plantations development in Sarawak started to gain attention in the 1970s whereas according to Dandot, the emergence of plantations during the beginning of the 1970s was part of the Government's programme towards raising the income of the rural community, providing employment opportunities, and as a means to alleviate rural poverty (Dandot, 1987: 3-24). In 1980's, land development activities were mostly undertaken by Government agencies such as Sarawak Land Development Board (SLDB), Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (SALCRA), and Land Custody and Development Authority (LCDA) plantation development. The private sectors started to join in the 1990s, when the political leaders called all developers to implement plantation or large-scale land development activities in Sarawak (Dandot, 1987: 3-24).

1.3 Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (FELCRA)

FELCRA was formed in 1966 by Federal Government, with the task of developing rural sectors and assisting the community in contributing towards national economic activities, while improving their quality and standards of living (FELCRA, 2005).
FELCRA’s mission are first is to uphold the participants philosophy and continuously grow with equity, while at the same time manage, maintain and protect the interests of its target group, the participants as a whole, to accomplish its social obligation activities and to re-develop existing productive lands into other profitable business sectors and finally to vary activities that is profitable while at the same time to plan and to execute export oriented programmes in achieving successful future (FELCRA, 2005).

The objectives are (FELCRA, 2005):

1. To ascertain strong returns on its output for the developed estates;
2. To increase the quality of living for its participants and for its staff;
3. To improve the productivity levels with intelligence and up-to-date technological management;
4. To enlarge technology and land management; and
5. To upgrade value-added economy.

In 1 September 1997, FELCRA was corporatised and changed its name to FELCRA Berhad and its status changed from a Government body to fully owned and incorporated by the Ministry of Finance. The change to a corporate entity enables FELCRA Berhad to restructure its new business operations in-line with the national development (FELCRA, 2005).
**FELCRA’s definition of participation**

The local community joins FELCRA and surrenders their land to be fully managed by FELCRA whereas by they will receive a benefit in term of dividend. However, they are also encouraged to participate as a labour or a contractor in the plantation.

**Participation Methods**

FELCRA will only initiate a land development project upon request of the landowners themselves. The land size is preferably with 100 ha of contiguous land (FELCRA, 2005).

FELCRA will conduct dialogue or briefing on the function, mission and the objectives of FELCRA and how their lands are to be developed and managed.

Normally, the session involves a direct participation of representative from Land and survey.

Upon willingness of landowners to participate, the next step is to obtain formal consent of the landowners by signing an agreement of participation (Appendix 2).

1.4 **Problem Statements**

The community participation in oil palm plantation allowed the community’s land to be developed by the land developer especially those left out and remained idle. The community, once participated has to surrender to FELCRA to be developed.
Upon surrender of their land to FELCRA, individual and those participated in the project or also known as participants are entitled to get the dividend twice a year for 10-15 years depend on the settlement of development cost. Development cost is initial cost spent by FELCRA including land preparation cost, operation cost and management cost of oil palm plantation, normally in the first three years. The amount of dividend received depends on the size of the land contributed towards the project.

This study sought to have a better understanding whether the community participation in this project is able to bring them to a better quality of life or if the participants involved other alternative livelihood strategies to sustain their recent live instead of depend on the dividend during the participation period of agreement as in the following question.

1. How is the impact of participation in oil palm plantation to the participant in the study area?
2. What is the alternative livelihood strategy to improve their recent live (after participation in oil palm plantation)?

1.5 Objectives of Study

The objectives and specific objectives of this study were being formulated at the beginning of the study to assess socio-economic impacts of participation in oil palm plantation scheme and alternatives of the community to sustain their lives in the village.
The Specific Objectives consists of:

1. To determine participants' demographic characteristics and socio-economic data of the participants;
2. To study the impact of community participation in oil palm plantation, their involvement of the participants in other land use and level of participation of the participants.

1.6 Significance of Study

The study attempts to provide a better understanding of the impact of the community participation in oil the palm plantation and their livelihood strategies to sustain their live in the study area.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 History of community participation

Since 1973 Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has been engaged in an innovative programme in the Asian and Pacific Region aimed at helping the poorest of the poor in rural areas to participate in and benefit from on-going rural development programmes. This Small Farmers Development Programme (SFDP), as it became widely known, was the outgrowth of the FAO/UNDP Regional Project "Asian Survey of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development" (ASARRD) which terminated in June 1976.

The historical approaches to community participation in development can be categorised into "means" or "ends" approaches. In the history of South Africa, development - for those who had been allowed to participate - has been based on a 'means' approach to community participation in which community participation was viewed as a method of achieving a specific, generally project-related, objective.

Typical examples of this are the various public participation meetings that took place regarding the roads programmes in various municipalities. The problems that professionals faced in such situations were generally those of communication and transparency.
In the broader international context, however, the disenfranchised have tended towards an "ends" approach to community participation. This had its roots in South America where it was a tool for the achievement of political power by the poor. The poor represented the majority of the population and access to land in a rapidly urbanising society was a key issue. The political nature of the participation process and the negligible effect of specific projects on the process were seen in both South America and Asia. The issues that arose in the "ends" approach were: legitimacy of the authorities and the impartiality of the professionals, their transparency and accountability, and the nature and ownership of the development.

2.2 Definition of community participation

What is community participation? It is an ambiguous term with vague but positive overtones (Kuntala, 2004). It implies an interactive process between members of the public, individually or in groups, and representatives of a government agency, with the aim of giving citizens a direct voice in decisions that affect them.

2.2.1 A community

A community is generally defined as a group of people with common beliefs, language and culture. In many instances village or tribal boundaries can delineate a community. In other instances this relationship is inaccurate. If a family or a group of families moves from their tribe and takes up residence in
another tribe's village, the recent immigrants should not be considered as part of the community. Even though they live inside the village's boundaries, they may function as a separate community. Communities are social systems comprised of interwoven institution such as governments, schools, churches, and other formal and informal organizations (McDonough et al., 2002). A community can be a city, town, neighbourhood, or even a single block.

According to McDonough et al. (2002), there are two main types of communities. They are Communities of place and communities of interest. Communities of place are defined by their geographic boundaries, that is, by their locations. They are made up of people living near each other in the same locality. Whereas communities of interest are groups of people sharing a common values, interests, beliefs, heritage or circumstances. They may or not live near each other.

As suggested, the rural community represents the only definable unit in which the relationship between society and nature finds expression and it is also in good measure the sector best placed to manage its own development in a way that takes account of the conservation and sustainable management of its own natural resources. Support for peasant communities is based on recognizing the right (and the duty) of local inhabitants to discuss land use planning in their own neighborhood with a view to making a contribution to improving the standard of living of the people and protecting the natural base for economic, social, and cultural development.
It is impossible to define participation in formal way; however it can be defined through understanding of interpretation of the some of development thinking.

There has been a lot of definition given to participation, as the United Nation Research Institute of Social Development (UNRSD) defined participation as the organized effort to increase control over resources and regulative institutions by groups and movements of those excluded from such control (Pearse and Stiefel, 1979: 8; In Shepherd, 1998: 179). The definition recognizes that it is potentially conflictual, and that redistribution of power is involved. There will be interests opposing participation, based on political affiliation, class, race, ethnicity, or gender.

Rahman (1990: 45-49; In Shepherd, 1998: 179) identified several dimensions of empowerment which provide a good starting point for developing indicators about participation. They are (i) organization of the disadvantaged and underprivileged in structures under their own control; (ii) knowledge of their social environment and its processes developed by the disadvantaged; (iii) self-reliance, an attitudinal quality strengthened by the solidarity, caring and sharing of collective identity; (iv) creativity; (v) institutional development in particular the management of collective tasks, and mass participation in deliberation and decision-making; (vi) solidarity-the ability to handle conflicts and tension, to care for those stress, and a consensus that all should advance together; (vii) progress for women in
articulating their points of view, and the evolution of gender relations towards equality, as assessed by women themselves.

Participation by the people in the institutions and systems which govern their lives is basic a human right and also essential for realignment of political power in favour of disadvantaged groups and for social and economic development. Rural development strategies can realize their full potential only through motivation, active involvement and organization at the grassroots level of rural people, with special emphasis on the least advantaged, in conceptualizing and designing policies and programmes and in creating administrative and other voluntary forms of organization for implementing and evaluating them (The Peasants' Charter, FAO; in Burkey, 1993: 56).

1.2.3 The concept of community and community participation

Concepts such as 'community' and 'community participation' have been intensively problematized in recent decades in both developed and developing countries. There may, however, be many interpretations of what is meant by the terms in these two different contexts. Contexts are indeed different and varied (Guha, 2000). The concept has been defined many times in different ways. Barraclough, in a recent UNRISD overview of many studies regarding this topic in relation with food policy and hunger, indicated that UNRISD researchers identified over a dozen senses in which the concept participation was employed in the development literature. These concepts were to some extent overlapping and sometimes contradictory. Particularly with the participation of the poor in mind.
the UNRISD researchers accepted the following working definition for popular participation: "the organized efforts to increase the control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control" (Barraclough, 1989: 279-280).

The idea, widely cherished among development workers that underprivileged groups such as peasants and rural women, do not participate in development because of their apathy and resistance to change has been seriously challenged (Huizer, 1973). The main issue is not whether people can participate or not but rather how, in what form, they will participate. The main question is will the people effectively participate in (and share in the results of) development projects or will they participate in resistance or revolt against developments which frustrate their expectations or are disadvantageous to them. In the latter case, they may change the institutional set-up of rural or overall development through a radical reform programme or revolution.

In many cases, however, government and citizens act as two different groups starting from disparate backgrounds and interests, often clashing with each other. How are the interests of the community articulated in this battle between two adversaries? As the community is essentially diverse and can comprise a wide range of interest groups – a lobby, a pressure group, a religion, a neighbourhood, rural, urban, rich, poor – its preferences can be taken as a system of knowledge that is not institutionalized but does exist nevertheless.
1.2.4 Type of community participation

The meaning of participation varies enormously between different individuals and development agencies. A more precise understanding of how communities participate in project activities can usually be determined by reference to ownership, management and control of project information and resources. Catley (1999) described the different type of community participation is as follows:

- **Manipulative participation (Co-option):** Community participation is simply pretence, with people's representatives on official boards who are unelected and have no power.

- **Passive Participation (Compliance):** Communities participate by being told what has been divided. Involves unilateral announcements by an administration or project management without listening to people's responses. The information belongs only to external professionals.

- **Participation by consultation:** Communities participate by being consulted or answering questions. External agents define problems and information gathering processes, and so control analysis. Limited if any local decision making, and professionals are under obligation to take on board people's view.

- **Participate for material incentives:** Communities participate by contributing resources such as labour, in return for material incentives (e.g. food, cash). Local people have no stake in prolonging practices when incentives end.

- **Functional participation:** Communities participation is seen by external agencies as a means to achieve project goals. People participate by forming
groups to meet predetermined project objectives; they may be involved in
decision making, but only after major decisions have already been made by
external agents.

- **Interactive participation**: People participate in joint analysis, development
  of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions.
  Participation is seen as a right not just the methodologies that seek multiple
  perspectives and make use of systemic and structured learning processes.
  As groups take control over local decision and maintaining structures or
  practices.

- **Self-mobilisation (Collective action)**: People participate by taking initiatives
  independently of external institutions to change systems. They develop
  contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they
  need, but retain control over how resources are used. Self-mobilisation can
  spread if governments and NGOs provide an enabling framework of support.
  Such self-initiated mobilisation may or may not challenge existing
  distribution of wealth and power.

By knowing who has power in the project, different levels of community
participation can be defined.

In the FELCRA Scheme type of participation is a combination of “participate for
material incentives” and “passive participation”. The participants participate by
surrender their land and in return they receive dividend. However, the
participants are also encouraged to participate as labour and contractor of the
plantation. The participants have no say in the management whereas they