Issues In Development in Malaysia And Nigeria: Multi-Dimensional Approaches

Editors:
Gusni Saat
Sanib Said
Sharifah S. Ahmad

Institute of East Asian Studies
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
ISSUES IN DEVELOPMENT IN MALAYSIA AND NIGERIA: MULTI-DIMENSIONAL APPROACHES

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Gusni Saat
Sanib Said
Sharifah S. Ahmad

Nusantara Chair
Institute of East Asian Studies
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

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**LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS**

**Abdul Halim Ali** held the Chair of Nusantara Studies at the Institute of East Asian Studies in UNIMAS from 2002 to 2009. From 1 October 2012 to 30 September 2013, he was appointed as an Adjunct Professor to the Faculty of Social Sciences where he conducted seminars, lectures, writing workshop and book discussion.

**Arif Jawaid Moghal** is the Director of Centre for Modern Languages and Communication at Linton University College, Malaysia. He has written on quality improvement in TESOL, ethnographic research, comparative cross-national case studies, learning organizations and benchmarking. He has a wide working experience in various professional engagements, which include leading, teaching, training, developing curriculum and consulting.


**Dayang Asmah Awg Hamdan** is a lecturer in the Department of Development Studies. She received her M.A from La Trobe University in 2010.

**Faizah Mas’ud** is a lecturer in Social Work Studies Programme at University Malaysia Sarawak. Her academic interests are on topics including family and child welfare, and social welfare policy. The up coming publication is a book chapter with other authors in New Paradigms in Evidence-Based Social Work Research and Practice, Institut Sosial Malaysia (ISM), Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, “Promoting Social Inclusion of Disabled Children through Participation in Theater: An Exploratory Research”.
Gusni Saat is a lecturer in Anthropology & Sociology programme School of Social Sciences at Universiti Malaysia Sabah. His area of specialization is urban sociology and community studies. The most recent publication is Sama-Bajau dalam kancah urbanisasi. Pengalaman di Teluk Bone, Sulawesi Selatan (Sama-Bajau under current of urbanization. Bone Bay experience, South Sulawesi), the research Book publish by UNIMAS Press 2010.

Kamsiah Ali is a senior lecturer in Social Work Studies programme in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Her academic interests are on topics including Criminology and Sociology. The most recent publication include: Nor Ba’yah Abdul Kadir, Kamsiah Ali. 2012. Women’s voices in relation to fate, cultural practices and life satisfaction: a case study of Sarawakian single mothers in Samarahan, Sarawak. In e-Bangi, FSSK, UKM. Volume 7, Number 1, pp. 107-118. 2012. ISSN: 1823-884x.

Mohd. Shazani Masri obtained his Bachelor’s degree (with Honors) in political science and economics from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA. He is currently a candidate for MSc in Political Theory in London School of Economics and Political Sciences, United Kingdom. He is a tutor in the Department of Politics and Government, Faculty of Social Sciences Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. His general areas of interest are political Islam, political theory and electoral studies.

Nicholas Gani obtained his M.A. in Archaeology from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Penang in 2010 and his B.Sc. in Anthropology and Statistics from University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA in 2006. He is currently a lecturer in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), Kota Samarahan. His research interests are the archaeology and anthropology of Borneo and Island Southeast Asia. His recent publication includes: Gani, N. (2012). Salt production in Long Midang, Krayan, East Kalimantan, Borneo Research Bulletin 43, 216-224.
Parveen Kaur is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University Malaysia Sarawak. She is a Sociologist and her research interests are on gender relations, marital power and poverty. She is currently involved in research related to disability, education among the Indigenous people and ICT in the rural areas.

S.Z.A. Ishak (Siti Zanariah Ahmad Ishak) is a senior lecturer in the Department of Communication. She received her PhD degree from The University of Western Australia, Masters of Management Study (Management Communication) from University of Waikato and Bachelor of Arts (Writing) from University Malaya. Her research interest is on television and audience; social change and women studies. Her recent publication was: Siti Zanariah Ahmad Ishak (2011) ‘Cultural hybridity: adapting and filtering popular culture in Malaysian television programmes’ Jurnal Pengajian Media, Vol. 13 (1).

Sharifah S. Ahmad is a lecturer in the department of Anthropology and Sociology, University Malaysia Sarawak. Her area of interests are social and political theory, cultural studies and trade unionism. She can be reached at wassophia@fss.unimas.my

Umar Adamu Madu is a lecturer in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, Adamawa State University Mubi, Nigeria. His area of interests are agriculture and rural development. His most recent publications are: Rural Infrastructure: A pathway for sustainable Agricultural Development in Nigeria, Farmers’ Media Use Pattern in Adamawa State, Nigeria, The Effect of Agricultural Development Project on the Rural Communities in Adamawa State, The impact of Fadama II on the Adoption of improved technologies among farmers in Adamawa State, Nigeria (2012)
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Gusni Saat
Sanib Said
Sharifah S. Ahmad
When Andre Gunder Frank's Development of Underdevelopment essay was published in 1966, critical attention was cast on the ideological assumption of western development model as a route towards progress to be emulated universally. In many cases, development was enthusiastically applied by the post-colonial nations eager to stand equal with the rest of the (formerly imperial) developed countries. Development is associated with pride and dignity of the nation to chart its own history free from the shackles of colonial structures and to fulfill the promise of the hard-earned independence.

Gunder Frank's central thesis was the economic, cultural, social and political relations that we saw in the developing countries today was the result of the capitalist forces that have usurped into the very rubric of societies even at the most remote of places. The economic establishment in developing countries can be traced back to history, where imperialism and colonialism had accelerated the paces of capitalism commonly equated with growth and productivity by its proponents. Upon closer examination, capitalism has resulted in the underdevelopment of the economies as a result of the relation with major capitalist-imperialist power. From economic point of view, the consequence of imperialism is twofold: the integration of colonial economy into international market had led to its exposure to the volatility and uncertainty of forces beyond its reach. The second effect was the subordination of the domestic colonial economy to the imperialist economic prerogative which dictated the course and the supply of the commodities solely for the interest of the imperial centre. As the primary production took place in the domestic industry, the economic manipulation of prices and determination of values took place at the international stage. These implications are extended even to this day because the colonial economic relation that existed earlier remains strong, albeit under different guises. As the ties with the former imperial centre continue to persist, it follows that there
remains a continuing asymmetrical relations of producer and capitalist ownership.

Thirty-three years after Gunder Frank’s thesis, another work of significance appeared in 1999. It was a compilation of essays edited by Ronald Munck and Denis O’Hearn called *Critical Development Theory* aimed to revive a debate about development from perspective that was critical to the complicity between theory and Eurocentrism in promoting development. One of the contributors, Victor Tucker in his essay “The Myth of Development: A critique of Eurocentric discourse” invoked the earlier thesis of underdevelopment when he described the current relations between the industrialised north and the developing south:

> Development is a process whereby other peoples are dominated and their destinies are shaped according to an essentially Western way of conceiving and perceiving the world. The development discourse is part of an imperial process whereby other peoples are appropriated and turned into objects. It is an essential part of the process whereby the ‘developed’ countries manage, control, and even create the Third World economically, politically, sociologically and culturally.

(Tucker 1999, 2)

Works by Tucker and Gunder Frank collectively argued that development must be viewed within their historical and ideological framework which have accounted for the creation and perpetuation of a model biased towards the western interest. The development model proposed to the countries through the roles of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund are ideologically synonymous with the imperialist belief that the rest of the world required to be led to the path of progress and civilisation. In response to the challenge to dislodge Eurocentrism from theory and discourse, the exploration of development categories and needs from the perspective of the community becomes an agenda for social science globally.

This critical awareness about the disquiet infiltration of Eurocentrism into disciplines of knowledge has captured the attention of Malaysian social scientists. In an address delivered at the Malaysian Studies Conference (MSC 4) 2004, Abdul Rahman Embong recounted
a remark made by James Scott about the peril of the "law of the instrument" (2010, 11). It refers to the tendency for a study to appear more like a technical report laden with jargons instead of providing an analysis that can assist to an improved understanding about Malaysian society. While the speaker's caution for the pitfalls associated with methodology excess was correct, it must also be pointed out that the effort towards questioning the categories, methods and perspectives long upheld in the mainstream social science are part of a critical response to perceived ideological conservatism in the academia and in broader socio-political environment.

**Social science and development**

This project is a modest attempt in participating at the debate of development. The composition of the essays fairly reflects the composition of the faculty where both experienced and young academics collaborated in the spirit of intellectual exchange of ideas, expertise and interests.

The chapters are categorised into three sub-themes: community development, media and society, and research perspective on Malaysian studies. Community development is addressed in Chapter 1 to Chapter 4. Chapter 5 to Chapter 7 deal with Media and Society, and Chapter 8 to Chapter 10 present a research perspective on Malaysian studies.

In Chapter 1, "Telecenter as a means for better livelihood among the indigenous communities in BIMP-EAGA Zones: potential and challenges", the author found out that all studied communities indeed have rich economic and cultural resources. As so far these potential economic resources still remain disintegrated in the BIMP-EAGA economic development because the particular communities refrained from the advantages of the Zone. However telecenter is a potential tool for the communities to participate actively in the BIMP-EAGA economic growth as was proven by five indigenous communities under ISITI-CoERI community telecenter projects. Nevertheless since new technology and innovation is involved, there are some challenges to be resolved by the stakeholders of the community's telecenter projects.

In Chapter 2, Madu Omar discusses the community development issues faced by state rural community development program in Nigeria. He found out previously that most of the programmes almost failed to
meet their goals due to inappropriate implementation of top-down approaches. As a result in general it was rejected by targeted rural communities. But however, the recent implementation of bottom-up approaches complemented by top-down approaches has given more freedom to the participants to make decision. Positive impact on the success of the project has resulted from this approach.

In Chapter 3 the authors discuss the issues in teaching and learning in a primary school of Orang Asli in Pos Senderut, Kuala Lipis Pahang. After doing some field investigation they outlined main issues that hinder effective teaching and learning, namely, amenities and infrastructure, role of parents and teachers.

In Chapter 4 the authors discuss religious conversion among the Orang Asli community members of Temiar in Gua Musang Kelantan and Semai in Kuala Lipis, Pahang. The findings showed that the Orang Asli communities in general believe that their conversion either to Islam or Christianity brought positive impact on their livelihood.

Chapter 5 discusses television as a means for better understanding of Islamic knowledge and morality. Based on her empirical study in Malay urban community in Kuching the author analysed how housewives used television as a mainstream media to acquire the knowledge on Islam and morality. More interestingly, the author also found out by applying their Islamic knowledge learnt via TV, some of the housewives successfully resolved their domestic conflicts.

Chapter 6 addresses the challenges faced by young Malay women in Kuching. Through a careful analysis of empirical data, the author identified three social problems the young women assumed as challenges of being housewives, namely, premarital sex, substance abuse and child abuse. The author attributed these social problems to a lack of parental guidance, the influence of modernisation and western lifestyles. The author views parents as the key solution to these social problems by strengthening good communication with their children and from then they can become the true guidance to their children.

Chapter 7, “Understanding marital power: a conceptual discussion” examined issues of marital power by analysing five interrelated issues: intentionality of power; its effectiveness; latency of power and the nature of the effects produced by power. Finally the author concluded that power in the context of marriage refers to the ability of the spouses
Chapter 8 discusses framing juvenile delinquents as the pathological individual. The author examined how the two Malaysian national news papers (*Berita Harian* and *The New Straits Times*) portrayed the youths involved in crime and its impact towards government policies on such issues. The claim-makers (media) constructed youth crime as individual flaws with two main sub-frames, namely, character flaws and the nature of the youthfulness. This construction of youth crime has influenced the Malaysian Youth policies in terms of policy making and programmes.

Chapter 9, "A question of difference", is about approaches in reading autobiography from post-colonial perspective. The perspective was chosen because it adopted a critical view on the role of history in the shaping and structuring the power relations in the post-independence. The authors tried to raise the methodological issues involved in the interpretation of freedom or agency in the autobiographical works of the anti-colonial nationalist Khatijah Sidek. The essay argued that while approaches at reading autobiography currently inclined towards a search for the "evidence of difference", there remains ambivalence and possible distrust on the status of agency in the post-colonial discourse.

In Chapter 10, the author discusses "insider-outsider" perspectives of researchers on Malaysian topics in the context of Malaysia. Finally in Chapter 11, "Missing links in the evolution of Sarawak social research", the author reviews social science research in Borneo with a focus on Sarawak. After reviewing the evolution of social science research in Sarawak since 1947 until today, the author highlighted the domination of traditional disciplines such as anthropology and biology to economic, politics, languages and humanities by western scholars in the past, but local scholars have since made their mark. The author also identified some "missing links" in social science research analysis in Sarawak that deal with capitalism and comparative studies. In the final analysis, the author advocated for a development of theory as a means of achieving a critical and reflective perspective about the corpus of social scientific knowledge pertaining to Sarawak.
The chapters in the book pursued development issues from various trajectories and indeed, there is no unified view about what constitute development. The generality of such presentation may have its shortcoming; however, it goes to demonstrate the book's mission to raise issues formulated from the empirical and textual studies conducted by the contributors. Nevertheless, the depiction of development scenario across various contexts indicated the problematic, complexities and ambivalence of the term 'development'.

References


COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PART

References


Introduction

Malaysia has almost fully implemented information communication technologies (ICTs) as a delivery system in its administration and development management but a gap of ICT utilising between the urban and rural folks remains huge. This fact is supported by Ministry of Rural and Regional Development report that the ratio of internet users for rural and urban inhabitants was 6.7% and 93.3% (INFOdesa, 2012). This evidence proves that the National ICT policy in rural development is almost a failure unless the internet usage among the rural inhabitants is increased by a significant volume. Due to this Malaysia has eagerly embraced telecentres as one of the important methods to bridge the digital divide between its citizens who have access and those who have not access to ICT and internet (CoERI, EPU & KKLW, 2012).

For rural remote communities, the internet is a single means for them to get access to government policies, development programmes, government matters and to communicate directly with a particular government agencies or officials. On the other hand, businesses involved in promoting local economic and cultural products and eco-tourism also cannot materialize without effective ICT usage especially the internet.

In a state of post modern circumstance which is popularly termed as a globalized world (Giddens, 2004), many are of the view that
indigenous communities that are isolated in rural remote areas will be lost but they have a huge potential to develop because of the abundant economic resources found in various forms. The most well-known are economic produce like agricultural and fishery produce which are much needed by global consumers but unfortunately are unmarketable due to marketing constraints. Without proper and systematic marketing for these valuable economic resources the rural remote inhabitants will remain trapped in a vicious cycle of underdevelopment and poverty. Therefore many developing countries including Malaysia have identified ICT as the most suitable resolution for such issues.

It is general knowledge that the traditional way of life is gradually disappearing and various ethnic groups in the advance society worldwide are losing the natural and traditional mode of life. In view of this, the United Nations took responsibility by preserving the mode of life of the indigenous peoples worldwide under UN Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples (UN, 2008). The important point here is that potential economic resources are needed to develop and upgrade their well-being in line with the spirit of UN declaration that aims to halve world poverty by the year 2015 (Giddens, 2008).

Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines-East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) in nature is an economic growth centre which is operating under market forces propelled by capitalists as main players which is clearly stated in its five objectives (mission). Interestingly under it, policies stated that two types programmes are to be carried out, namely, “productive” (directly create wealth) and “supportive” (indirectly create wealth) which provides room for the local people particularly the indigenous communities to partake actively. Under the productive programme category, for instance, various indigenous communities have rich local products such as traditional economic produce based on nature, agriculture and fishery. Other than that, the local indigenous communities also have cultural-eco-tourism products that are viable for trading in BIMP-EAGA.

In order to integrate the local community’s products into the framework of BIMP-EAGA development concepts, a suitable and powerful mechanism is much needed. In this regards and in line with Malaysia ICT policy, ICTs is one of the most appropriate means for them to develop in view of the multi-effects chains on the economic activities of the communities. In Bario, the telecenter is more than
a technology centre because it provides an ideal platform to build flexible and powerful environment for sharing and learning. As a communal facility, the telecentres provide space for users to share, support and learn from one another: they are socially constructive (CoERI, EPU & KKLW, 2012). This is especially important as noted by Anderson (1998) in that telecentres can also be living laboratories not only for global information, but also for creation of a common local development vision.

Although it can promote community development, in many cases recipient communities have also failed to achieve the objectives of the community ICT. Internet is a tool of communications for various business matters needed by community to be settled but communities sometimes cannot link their livelihood with internet. The essence of the "ICT culture" here refers to the needs of the ICT in community livelihood which covers multiple dimensions of their everyday life but the community is ignorant of the ICT culture. This is a major problem that has been encountered by many governments worldwide to employ ICT as the means for the development of rural remote communities. In Malaysia, for example, most of the remote rural ICT projects failed because of top down implementation without proper feasibility studies (INFODesa, 2012).

As a response to the issues of government ICT projects for rural communities, in 1987 Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) initiated a pilot ICT project for remote rural community in Sarawak that is known as "telecenter". A chosen community was the Kelabit of indigenous group of Orang Ulu. Bario is a home for the people of Kelabit with a population of approximately 4,200 that situated in the heart of Borneo (Bala, 2008) close to the Kalimantan Malaysia-Indonesia international border. The telecenter was established based on a proper feasibility studies for the sake of functionality and sustainability of the project.

Ten years later the ICT projects of Bario community has been successful in achieving most of its objectives, and in 2007 the Center for Rural Excellence Informatics (CoERI) was established as a center of academic excellence in UNIMAS. Its aims are two-fold, firstly to innovate ICT for rural development; and secondly, to develop community telecenter particularly in rural remote areas. Motivated by CoERI’s success in establishing another four community telecenters
in interior Sarawak and Sabah, COERI was upgraded to Institute of Social Informatics and Technology Innovation (ISITI) which later is called ISITI-CoERI.

The main task of ISITI-CoERI is to establish telecenter for rural community development to serve real needs of the communities, and it would be managed by the community as their own property and for their mutual interest. It is the communal facility functioning to provide space for users to share, support and learn from one another and they are socially constructive (CoERI, EPU & KKLW, 2012). In this regards telecenter is functioning as a center for community development (CCD). The concept of the community telecenter has developed through Bario Telecenter Model which its foundation principle is that the ICT must function to meet people needs. To achieve this purpose, an in-depth needs analysis is needed prior to implementation of the telecenter for any targeted community. The main objective of the study is to investigate and analyze every livelihood dimension of a particular community which is being able to serve by telecenter.

The following is the Bario model needs analysis studies carried out from inception to the full operation of the telecenter.

1) To conduct preliminary assessment of actual ICT needs and uses in the communities to be served by these facilities at a telecentre. The viability study includes the following elements:
   i. Identification of community. This part is to establish whether or not the community meets the eligibility criterion (necessary and additional criteria) that has been set up by all partners (stakeholders) in the plan and programme activity (funding organisations, implementers and developers).
   ii. Identifying the community’s needs, felt and unfelt: a. Situational analysis to identify the community’s needs; b. Baseline social-economic survey as community audit.

2) To provide training to all stakeholders who are involved in the telecentre development. This training will centre on means and ways to conduct community engagement, and on how to mobilise community to develop goals towards which a telecentre is heading.

3) The training for stakeholders will include: i. Establishing rapport and working relationships between development agencies and target community to develop and negotiate the objectives and goals of the telecentre; ii. Community mobilisation identification
of potential local champions to carry out the ideas and strategies on the ground (CoERI, EPU & KKLW, 2012).

Problem statement

BIMP-EAGA was established in March 1994 involving approximately 1.54 million square kilometres that is home to more than 45.6 million people (BIMP-EAGA Website). The vision is to uplift the people residing in these areas through the potential economic cooperation (BIMP-EAGA Website). In the era of globalisation, a new approach of delivery system of development known as ICT has revolutionised the development process (CoERI, EPU & KKLW, 2012) which has been playing vital roles in initiating of BIMP-EAGA. Most of the 45.6 million inhabitants within BIMP-EAGA zones are living in communities and most of them are poor indigenous people in remote areas. Nevertheless to what extent such group of people is able to benefit from BIMP-EAGA have not been spelt out clearly in the policies. Hence this research confines the discussion on the development issues among the indigenous communities in Malaysia to that of the BIMP-EAGA area.

Since the 1990’s Malaysia has adopted ICT as one of the pertinent national policies particularly as government delivery systems that cover all areas of administrative and development matters. ICT policy was extended to rural development matters such as to solve the issue of digital divide between urban and rural inhabitants. It is a critical issue in ensuring that ICT as delivery system of the nation can reach its target. Without accessibility to internet, the policy totally fails. As the delivery system of development, ICT is assumed to be the most suitable technological tool to promote the development of rural communities located in remote and inaccessible areas. As an effort towards realizing such intentions, since then the Malaysian government has launched many rural ICTs centres throughout the country with generic term as “INFOdesa” which are clustering in three targeted groups, namely, clinics, library and community. However according to Division of Community Empowerment and INFOdesa Ministry of Rural and Regional Development, ICT centre for remote rural community remains small in numbers and yet its implementation was not done in a proper manner.