

RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A LEGACY CONTINUES...

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Abstract

Traditionally, rural developments are centered on the intensive utilization of land natural resources such as agriculture and farming. Hence due to the globalization of production networks and urbanization, rural development is now about improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in remote and sparsely populated areas. These include economics, social and leadership improvements. Malaysia - home to the three great diasporic communities – Malays, Chinese and Indians, has always and will always being judge and asses us by the way we manage our internal economics, political and racial relationship. Notwithstanding, Malaysia has successfully transformed by Tun Abdul Razak Hussein's enlightened recruitment of talent. Under his supervision and approach to leadership, economics and communal racial issues, many young rural Malaysian has step up and becomes qualified leaders and economist – passionate and committed to Malaysian development. His legacy continues with his son- our own Prime Minister Dato' Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak. Realizing the percentages of rural Malaysian lived below poverty line, he and his government accelerate with more plans and progression upon improving the quality of lives and incomes for all rural Malaysian. The introduction of new opportunities, entrepreneurships and many economics and social growth, have effectively boost the sustainability standards of living amongst Malaysian rural community. This paper will enlighten further the successful effort, struggle and determination done by both excellent leaders - Tun Abdul Razak Hussein and Dato' Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak in supporting rural Malaysian Development

Key Words: *Rural Development, Rural Social Development, Rural Leadership Development, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Dato' Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak*

1.0 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement has emerged as a key strategy for governments and community organisations to develop relevant and coherent policies and programs of development (Evans 2005). Community engagement involves more than just a basic level of interaction with the community members. It is a process of engagement that involves information gathering and dissemination. It moves towards a two-way interactive mode and requires involvement and collaboration among members. According to McCabe, Keast and Brown:

‘The community engagement complexities of community, community development and community capacity building demonstrate the interrelated and interconnected loop existing between the concepts. Community, community development and community capacity building exist and form through interrelationships’ (McCabe, Keast & Brown 2006, p. 6)

In relation to the community development needs of a community, community engagement exists as a key driver. The opportunity to develop a community is further facilitated through the processes of active citizenship, working partnerships and social inclusion (Gilchrist, 2003). Hence community development incorporates four fundamental principles: engagement, participation, empowerment and ownership.

Community development focuses on the development of participatory mechanisms that will further improve the local citizenship. In principle, community development is about human orientation and engagement, involvement and participation, and community empowerment (O’Toole & Macgarvey 2003). Community development is explored as a combination of initiatives designed to engage communities in future decision making processes (McCabe, Keast & Brown 2006).

Community development also involves the improvement of decision-making processes. It is not just about improving the situation of a community economically but also ensuring that the community functions strongly by itself. It is about the overall directions of being in a community. Hence, community development means that ‘a community itself engages in a process aimed at improving the social, economic and environmental situation of the community’ (Cavaye 2001, p. 3).

Taking all the above descriptions and definitions into consideration, emphasis in a community development approach is placed on empowering individuals through education, training and equal opportunities to participate in a wider social, cultural and organizational context, where all sectors of the community can become involved. Nigel Curry explains that,

‘national community development policies very much rely on the development of partnerships between government and communities, it is to foster community survival and empowerment of individuals that are at risk in society and to help restore a sense of responsibility’ (Curry, 2001, p. 561)

Helping a community to build its capability for development is the primary goal of community development. Its aim involves building social capital, strengthening the social interaction within the community that is united through geographical location or common interests, and bringing people together and helping them to communicate with each other in a way that can later lead to genuine dialogue, understanding or social action (Talbot & Verrinder 2005; Ife 2006). In brief, community development is about improving the abilities of individuals within a community to collectively make better decisions about the use of local resources and knowledge.

2.0 MALAYSIA AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Since its independence in 1957- for us Malaysian, our national development efforts are often denotes to our ability to improve the social welfare of Malaysian by providing social economical amenities like quality information and education, portable water supply, transportation, infrastructure, medical care, and many more. Presently, Malaysian understanding of national development covers the expansion and the growth of not just community economically but also socially and politically. In addition, Malaysian rural development are being describe as the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas.

In Malaysia rural development terms has often being centered on the intensive utilization of land and natural resources such as agriculture and farming. Nonetheless, upon the development on 10th Malaysia Plan in 2010, it is stated that more than 7.1% rural communities in Malaysia are still living in poverty. This is due to changes in world global production networks and the increases of urbanization - rural areas transformation becomes intensely. Despite of the current scenario, rural development efforts has always been Malaysian leaders' urgency and focus. The intention to improve the quality of life and incomes for all Malaysians, including rural inhabitants, new employment opportunities and an improvement in their living standards by providing rural entrepreneurs with business ownership opportunities, linking rural employment to employment in cities, and increasing sustainability of income in the agriculture sector through contract farming – and all of this hard work started with Tun Abdul Razak Dato' Hussein.

3.0 EARLY MALAYSIA RURAL DEVELOPMENT: TUN ABDUL RAZAK DATO' HUSSEIN

The most substantial qualities that make Malaysia what it is today were introduced during the tenure of the second prime minister - Tun Abdul Razak Dato' Hussein. In spite of his brief tenure, many attributes of Malaysia – socially, politically and economically were Tun Abdul Razak Hussein's creation. Tun Razak's is also known to be very dedicated towards rural development. He is remembered by Malaysians as the "father of development." He is often closely associated with development and changing the mindset of the rural Malays since 1955 when he became Chief Minister (Menteri Besar) of Pahang State. His name is synonymous with efforts to enhance rural poverty through the construction of roads, bridges, community centres, adult education, clinics and midwifery centres and Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA). His dream was that there would be "land for the landless" and "jobs for the jobless", and his belief was that this was crucial in order to eradicate the poverty which was prevalent in the rural sector. Due to his intimacy with the rural constituency observers have pointed him as pro-Malay unlike.

The three main focuses of rural development during the Tun Razak Period (1960s) were:

- Infrastructure development such as building roads, schools, bridges, clinics, irrigation schemes, mosques, community halls, water supply and electricity;
- The opening up of new land schemes to resettle landless peasants;
- Modernization of agriculture and diversification of agricultural crops.

Tun Abdul Razak succeeded Tunku Abdul Rahman as the second Prime Minister of Malaysia, heading the country from 1970 to 1976. He was born in Pulau Keladi, Pahang on March 11, 1922, and was the only child to Dato' Hussein bin Mohd Taib and Hajah Teh Fatimah bt Daud. Tun Razak is a bright student, of the Malay College Kuala Kangsar and was awarded a scholarship study at Raffles College in Singapore in 1940. In 1947 Tun Abdul Razak left for Britain in 1947 to study law. In 1950 he received a Degree of an Utter Barrister from Lincoln's Inn. Upon his return, Tun Razak joined the Malayan Civil Service and became the youth chief for United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in 1950. In February 1955, he became State of Pahang's Chief Minister. After the general elections in 1959, he became the Minister of Rural Development in addition to holding the portfolios of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence.

3.1 The Red Book

Tun Abdul Razak Dato' Hussein most outstanding achievements includes the formulating of a development policy known as the Red Book. RED program had a simple objective, which was to fast track the development of rural areas through the building of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, schools clinics and community halls. "Red Book" that comes with "operations room" which recorded the details plan of each district including the progress and failure of the plans.

Red Book was basically a district rural development plan manual, containing instructions on how to prepare a rural district plan including the setting and working of the District Rural Development Committee, procedures of plan preparation, sectoral policy to be considered in the preparation of development programmes and projects, costing and responsibility for implementing the plan. The methodology of the Red Book was very effective, the approach brought together top-down and bottom-up planning. In line with this new approach of rural development, a structure of district development machinery was set up such as the Village Development and Security Committee (or JKKK) and the District Rural Development Committee.

This Red Book development policy has become the foundation on which the nation was built. Malaysia embarked on an "agriculture revolution", which saw it becoming the world's largest producer of many agricultural products such as rubber and palm oil.

3.2 RISDA

The Rubber Industry Smallholders' Development Authority was established while another natural resource – oil – was exploited to the maximum, with the setting up of Petroliam Nasional Berhad (Petronas) – which is today a Forbes-listed entity.

3.3 FELDA

The Land Development Act 1956 provided that "It shall be the duty of Felda, to promote and assist the investigation, formulation and carrying out of projects for the development and settlement of land in the Federation." Felda thus started off with a very clear and simple objective of developing land to resettle the poor. To quote the words of Tun Abdul Razak..... The Authority should aim to provide opportunities to those living by the margins, to those who have initiative, rather than to provide charity. The best land for the best people should be the basic principle. (August 8, 1956 during the first meeting of Felda....New Straits Times, 7

July 2006). The opening of Felda schemes in remote locations provided the impetus for the acceleration of the RED program and both projects implemented together was able to achieve significant results that uplifted the economic status of the rural areas and its people.

3.4 New Economic Policy (NEP)

The New Economic Policy (NEP), introduced in 1971, has helped many bumiputras escape a life of poverty – Abdul Razak launched the controversial New Economic Policy (NEP) with 2 stated goals: (1) to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty, irrespective of race; and (2) to reduce and eventually eradicate the identification of economic function with race. although it is today criticised for creating loopholes that allow the policy's principles and spirit to be hijacked by the rich to become even richer (Wade, G. 2009).

The NEP was incorporated in the Second Malaysia Plan as presented to Parliament on 11 July 1971. The plan had a two-pronged objective of the eradication of poverty, irrespective of race, and the restructuring of society so that the association of different ethnic groups with specific economic roles would be eliminated within a planning period of 20 years (1971-1990). In rural areas, new land development, regional development and in-situ development programmes became important instruments for restructuring and reducing rural poverty and regional imbalance. The NEP was Razak's way to eradicate racial distrust that came to a boil during the May 13, 1969 racial riots – an incident which accelerated Razak's journey to the top.

Tun Razak's concept of democracy based on social and economic balance where all citizens can play a role in the nation's development. Development of the country has huge meanings because according to him the greatest bastion of defense of national sovereignty lies not only in defense but more important is the development. Rural development movement was spearheaded by him with the first step was formulating a policy that covers every aspect of the country development needs.

4.0 RURAL MALAYSIA DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS: DATO' NAJIB TUN ABDUL RAZAK

Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak was born in 23 July 1953. He is the eldest son of Tun Abdul Razak Hussein. Currently he is the sixth and current Prime Minister of Malaysia. He was sworn in to the position on 3 April 2009 to succeed Abdullah

Ahmad Badawi. Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak started his carrier in politics in 1976 as a member of the Parliament at the age of 23. From 1982 to 1986 he was the Menteri Besar (Chief Minister) of Pahang, before entering the federal Cabinet of Mahathir Mohamad in 1986 as the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports. Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, served in various Cabinet posts throughout 1980s and 1990s. He later became Deputy Prime Minister on 7 January 2004, serving under Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, before replacing Badawi a year after Barisan Nasional suffered heavy losses in the 2008 election.

Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak tenure as Prime Minister has been marked by economic liberalization measures, such as cuts to government subsidies, loosening of restrictions on foreign investment, and reductions in preferential measures for ethnic Malays in business. Despite of all, like his late father, Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak local community development and empowerment are very much near and dear to his heart.

Under his administration, Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak focuses in improve the quality of life and incomes for all Malaysians. His government focus on supporting Malaysia's rural population by upgrading with more than 11,000km of paved roads, thus benefiting more than 3.3 million people, providing more than 140,000 homes with access to 24 hour electricity; and ensuring that more than 300,000 households have access to clean or treated water. Information and communications technology (ICT) facilities and basic rural transport services will also be provided. Indeed, improving rural basic infrastructure is such a priority that we named it one of our six National Key Results Areas (NKRAs). Furthermore, under the 10th Malaysia Plan, the rural communities 40% can now look forward to new employment opportunities and an improvement in their living standards under specific programmes that include providing rural entrepreneurs with business ownership opportunities, linking rural employment to employment in cities, and increasing sustainability of income in the agriculture sector through contract farming.

4.1 1Malaysia

1Malaysia is an on-going campaign announced by Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak on 16 September 2008, aiming for the cabinet, government agencies, and

civil servants to emphasize on ethnic harmony, national unity, and efficient governance. He introduces eight values of *1Malaysia*:

1. Perseverance,
2. A Culture of Excellence,
3. Acceptance,
4. Loyalty,
5. Education,
6. Humility,
7. Integrity, and
8. Meritocracy.

In conjunction to his campaign, he later launched 1Malaysia.com.my information site in his effort to communicate with all level the residents of Malaysia more efficiently hence supporting broader *1Malaysia* campaign. He has used the site intensively to highlight his policy initiatives and provide a forum platform for all Malaysians.

4.2 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) Project

The BR1M Project is a system formulated by Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak to help underprivileged Malaysians. Under this scheme the amount of RM 500.00 Ringgit Malaysia was given to households with an income of less than RM 3,000 a month. Later in 2013, the second BR1M Project, also known as BR1M 2.0, more than 2.5 billion ringgit were be distributed to Malaysians nation wide. In addition to the RM 500.00 for household, the government has also allocated RM 250.00 to single individuals. In 2014, there was an increase in the amount of handout - from RM 650 to RM 950 for individuals earning less than RM 2,000.00, while households earning less than RM 4,000 will receive RM 750.

4.3 1Malaysia Housing Program

Perumahan Rakyat 1Malaysia (PR1MA) Berhad was established under the PR1MA Act 2012 with the aim to plan, develop, construct and maintain affordable lifestyle housing for middle-income households in key urban centres. In accordance to Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, Middle-income residents is defined as a monthly household

(husband and wife) income of between RM 2,500 and RM 7,500. PR1MA is the first organization that exclusively targets this middle segment with homes ranging from RM 100,000 to RM 400,000 in a sustainable community. In 2012 - Under 1Prima Project- Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak built more than 50,000 new houses for the hardcore poor.

Many development plan incorporates the important of development strategy that he personally feel strongly about: leveraging on cities to drive economic growth in rural areas. Instead of a balanced development approach where projects are distributed across states and districts equally, he focuses on clustered development that later allow allocated resources and the potential of each area to be maximised more efficiently and strategically. Meanwhile, these development programmes and projects must be economically and socially integrated to the suburbs, which in turn, will be matched by the connectivity to the villages surrounding these suburbs.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Both Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak and his late father - Tun Abdul Razak Dato' Hussein, has organized many efforts to stimulate national development through many major orientations such as focuses on rural community development by increasing the local participation at their own pace; and mixed output cultural goals, which involve an effort to create a new culture, to change the economic or social structure or small parts of it, and to produce some service or amenity (Isa 2010). Currently, 'development' in Malaysia connotes both direct productivity-raising programs and efforts to improve infrastructure and social services for consumption as well as production purposes. In the end, it is vital for the Malaysian themselves to have good access to knowledge and information about any developments that are planned for them, their community, their surroundings and their environment, as well as having a thorough understanding of the local social, economic and political background. It is also important to assist in the development of local literacy, and the related aspects of learning, information and knowledge.

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