

# Influence of Local Leadership in Poverty Eradication among the Orang Asli Communities in the State of Terengganu, Malaysia

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## Abstract

Statistics show until now more than 30% of Orang Asli in Malaysia is still living in poverty. The government plans to eradicate the poverty facing many challenges. One of the challenges is related to the local synchronic factors, which include aspects of culture, belief, attitude, values and leadership. A survey was conducted on Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Pergam, Terengganu to identify the importance of the role of local leaders in ensuring the successful implementation of a development project that aims to poverty eradication among the local population. The village is chosen based on its performance in a number of development projects, and has successfully enhance socio-economic status of the population. Objective of the survey is to identify: (i) What are the characteristics that are capable of leadership impacts on local poverty alleviation project success. (ii) What role should be played by local leaders to make sure every development project undertaken to achieve objective. Survey data were collected by using interviews and observation techniques. Survey findings show personality traits of a leader is an important factor affecting the success of a leader of its own related to the implementation of development projects. In addition to the leadership structure also has a significance practiced in community development. From the point role of leadership, the element of awareness of the responsibility and commitment of the leaders in developing the village is important. Orang Asli leaders in the Kampung Sungai Pergam have initiative and commitment in ensuring their future progress of development for their village.

**Keywords:** Orang Asli, poverty, leadership, development, poverty eradicated

## 1. Introduction

Development of a country or society is not only measured in terms of economy, but also about the social aspects such as education, health, family, political, intellectual and spiritual. Development involves a continuous process undertaken by individuals, communities, government and anyone in authority do. The process is thus a difference in the pattern or patterns of life, both qualitatively (there has been a good change and bring well-being) and quantitative (size or number of aspects and items) (Nor Ashikin Mohd Saad, 2008).

Determination of the need for the implementation of the development is to be accomplished so that the results benefit the next target for a healthy life. The fact of development is actually something that can bring happiness to the people involved. Each planned development has the target. Therefore, the goal of development to bring prosperity to the target. The meaning behind his development agenda is development that can bring quality of life which encompasses all aspects of social, physical, economic and human. Its impact on the lives of very large universal whether development brings positive results or otherwise. Smoothness development occurs in stages in the context of a country that is on a national, regional and local levels.

For Malaysia, the existence of a society of different cultures together require different initiatives in development planning. Our development efforts are directed to everyone regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, gender or social class. Similarly, ethnic minority groups in Malaysia. Ethnic minorities such as Orang Asli, aborigines of Sabah and Sarawak did not escape the attention of government to plan of development them.

In the context of the Orang Asli community, Malaysian government never marginalize this community to develop of their socio-economic order in line with other communities. Various efforts have been taken by the

government (JAKOA, 2011). The evidence, since the First Malaysia Plan (1966-1970) again Orang Asli development agenda of the country has become known for sure as you indulge them weak and marginalized groups. Allotment for Orang Asli community continues to increase from time to time to draft begins during the first Malaysia Plan to be introduced so that the 10th Malaysia Plan.

The success of a planned development program depends on the target group of the main players on every program implemented. The government is aware of their involvement is needed to work together and achieve the objective of developing countries (Hood Salleh, 1986). The active involvement of the local community, especially organizations at the village level is very important in determining the success of this exercise.

### *1.1 Orang Asli Leadership Issues in Development*

In the context of the public, the leader of the village known surely rank as an important mechanism in helping convey government passion in the grass roots level. They play a important role create involvement of villagers in the local development plan and so voiced desires, purposes, and problems that can not be resolved host itself to rank the top in order to put forward and take action (Nicholas, 1998).

However, the failure often associated with the Orang Asli community development program designed by the government in eradicating poverty among other factors caused by local synchronic namely the failure of leaders in grass root function properly. There are several obstacles that qualify the role of leader of the Orang Asli to fulfilling the task of bringing into the mainstream of local community members (Odin Abdullah, 1995). Due to these constraints can be formulated as a problem of knowledge, culture, and social psychology. Odin Abdullah(1995) describes the stages bahawa low education is a major factor as most traditional leaders and the head of the village bomoh lack of knowledge and can not arrange things with better village management. It can be proved as busy as 80 percent Orang Asli leaders should not be read.

In the same period, Ma'arof Redzuan & Zahid Emby (2008) explains, the some Orang Asli leaders (penghulu / batin) have low self-esteem that outrageous attitude in addition to embarrassment, fear and belief. Such attitudes lead to the penghulu / batin is not capable of being a good middleman between the government with the villagers. What are the desires of the villagers can not be clearly caused feelings of fear and shame to deal with related parties. In addition, they also do not believe in implementing development programs designed something by government. This led development efforts undertaken stunted and did not reach the objective due to a cold welcome by the villagers.

However, the situation during the Orang Asli community in the Terengganu, especially in the village of Sungai Pergam seen to be in the opposite situation. In this 10 years back, the poverty level has come down a little high off the entire period of 10 years. This changes is the result of the triumph of development program that was conducted by the government, especially economic development. The success is influenced by the organization's leadership role in the local community. This paper will explain good features that exist in the organization leadership of Orang Asli Terengganu community in helping to tackle the problem of poverty in the country among their group. Objective of this paper are: (i) Describe the leadership character that gives the impression to the glory that is capable of development projects to eradicate poverty in the local community. (ii) Explaining the role of successful leader each host in the development project.

## **2. Method**

Research is conducted using qualitative methods that seek to answer this research issue. The use of qualitative methods can help researchers obtain comprehensive data, more accurate, clear, and allows researchers to connect descriptive aspects of the study. More specifically, the study was conducted within the scope of the design of an ethnographic study that was conducted on Orang Asli tribe in the Orang Asli village Semaq Beri in Sungai Pergam, Kemaman. The data collected is in the form of descriptive. Researchers have used three techniques of data collection, observation and follow, in-depth interviews and content analysis. The use of three different techniques is a triangulation technique that will strengthen the reliability of the results.

Participation observations is the main techniques used to collect data from informants study. This technique is used to understand the characteristics and role performed by local leadership as a key player in the process of acceptance of all development programs planned by the government. In applying this technique, the researchers participated in all the daily activities performed by local leaders, especially on the process of managing the affairs of the village, JKKK meetings, as well as the relations with external parties. Use this technique especially beneficial in the following areas:

- i. Give researchers the opportunity to directly observe the number of issues or events related to the research problem.

- ii. Obtain a clear and accurate picture of an issue may be.
- iii. Avoid the possibility of falsification of information by informants during the interview process implemented.

Regarding depth interview technique as well, it is an important source of data intended for a complete description and explanation on the matter observed, participated and things that are not understood by researchers. The interview also aims to add as much information or data. Several informants interviewed range from 20 local leaders and members of the *batin* covering Village Development and Security Committee (JKKK).

In addition, the researchers also used the content analysis technique, which analyzes the document associated with this study. Researchers have examined the documents relating to the results of previous studies considered relevant and can be relied on to clarify further the study of phenomena related issues.

Once data is collected, analyzed and coordinated data using computer software QSR NVivo. Software to help researchers transcribe, store, coordinating, organizing, coding and making a systematic study of the theme.

### 3. Literature Review

By tradition, the Orang Asli community, led by the leader of their traditions such as *Batin penghulu*, witches (*hala*) and also the parents. Historically, the village chief of formal institutions is a new institution in the Orang Asli community organizations (Benjamin, 1968; Williams-Hant, A.1993; Ma'arof Redzuan & Zahid Emby, 2008). They explained that this institution was introduced by British colonists in the colonial era and they are responsible induct heads in the Orang Asli village. Between the village chief purpose inauguration is intended to help the royal British give intimation and keep the Orang Asli community rather than engaging in subversive activities, terrorist communist. This inauguration reflects the Orang Asli community does not have the head of the village (formal leaders) in the past (Ma'arof Redzuan & Zahid Emby, 2008). In the past many aborigines people rely on traditional leadership (not formal) as well as parents and witches to make certain decisions and as a source of reference group members.

In Temiar Orang Asli society, Benjamin (1968) described in the past Temiar community does not have an aging system and formal leadership. The existence of this leadership system only occurs when there is close contact with the Malay community. Establishment of contacts with the Malay community needs Temiar people choose 'leaders' representing their communities.

Itam Wali Nawan (1993) explains, the traditional leaders in the Orang Asli community known by various terms. For traditional Malay tribes, known by the title of their leader Tok Batin. For Negrito and Senoi tribe, their leader known as *penghulu*. However, in general the indigenous communities, particularly indigenous peoples, there are a number of leadership positions such as chiefs, headmen, Tok Batin, healer, shaman, healer, Traditional Authority and Council Old Folks (Ma'arof Redzuan & Zahid Emby, 2008), depending on the related tribes. For tribes findings usually there are at least four leadership positions. While for most of the Negrito tribes only have one position only (Ramle Abdullah, 2001). However, that is certainly now almost the entire indigenous villages have a leader who is known as the *penghulu* or *Batin* appointed formal or informal.

Itam Wali Nawan (1993) also explained that there are two methods of appointment of the Orang Asli community, through inheritance and appointment system. Appointment through inheritance is the position of Village Heads / ruler will be automatically handed to her if one heart dies. Members of the group will try to replace it immediately. Position will normally be replaced by the oldest son in the family Tok Batin. There is also the possibility of another person as his brother would take place if the Tok Batin had no son. Successor Tok Batin always been trained to carry out informally by the Batin self during his lifetime (Ibrahim, 2013). If there is no suitable candidate, the non- relative in the old chief would be appointed (Williams-Hant, 1993).

However, there are Orang Asli communities who elect their leaders through the appointment system. Because there are people who are appointed by the head of the inheritance system of functioning properly, then the community members elect a leader who is more credible. General appointed based appointment system is dependent on whether he has the leadership ability or have a lot of support and well-liked by members of the group (Redzuan & Emby, 2008).

However, in recent years the government through the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) directly involved in the selection of the village chief. In the Orang Asli Act (Act 134) Chapter 16 (1) and 19 (1) (c), the minister has the power to appoint and terminate the services of an Orang Asli leader whether they are appointed by legacy systems or appointment. Selection / appointment is required by JAKOA as per Bil.5/91 and categorized as 'A, B and C' (Abdullah, 1995). There is a tendency to JAKOA appoint someone who has the education and understanding of all tasks to be performed when directed. Usually they are made up of young people who lack the knowledge and experience of the traditions and customs of their group. JAKOA intervene in

the appointment of the head of the village has been an issue, where the indigenous people assume JAKOA downplayed arcane institution and does not respect the will of the local community. There are also cases of sexual appointed by the community has been denied appointment by JAKOA (Redzuan & Emby, 2008).

From the point of leadership influence, the Odin Abdullah (1995) explains, the psychological factor is the dominant factor that hindered the effectiveness of leadership in the Orang Asli community. As a result of poor knowledge and had never been exposed to modern education cause they are not motivated to develop their village. Local leaders also had no idea that a proactive and innovative in directing development effort that could change the lives of local communities. This results in a large number of Orang Asli communities have no direction in participatory process of development. They depend solely on the government through various agencies to develop them.

Studies done by Ma'arof Redzuan & Zahid Emby (2008) on leadership Orang Asli leaders found that the relationship with the community is very important to preserve. Chieftain has two main duties as a government agent and a spokesman for the village. In terms of traditional functions, the chief of a village custom to act as the principal cultural system that allows him to be a judge, the handler, and the determinant to the traditional culture of a ritual which must be observed by the locals. But lately, many chief function is focused on driving or JAKOA and government agencies to establish a program for the social, economic and infrastructure.

Asmawi Ibrahim (2013) explains, among an Batin Batek tribe have vital roles. Among other things, (i) as to all members of the group complained the placement. Any problems that arise will be referred to the arcane knowledge to find solutions. (ii) To protect the welfare of members of the group such as mortality, health, medicine, marriage and divorce. If it matters, must be notified to the heart prior to any action being taken. (iii) Administer the village, but it was not placed on the Batin sole, JAKOA also play a role or set in most cases, especially the activities required by JAKOA. Inward act as a liaison between the villagers with JAKOA.

#### **4. Discussion**

##### *4.1 Development Program and Economic Status Changing*

In every Malaysia Plan for Orang Asli communities, various programs have been developed to address different aspects of life, especially the problems of poverty. Among the programs that have been designed from the First Malaysia Plan to the Tenth Malaysia Plan is; Poverty Eradication Programme, Programme Regroupment Traditional Village (RPS), Village Rehabilitation Programme, Land Development Programme, Economic Enhancement Program, Infrastructure Development Program, Program, Human Development, Training and Careers, Entrepreneurship Program, Structured Settlements Program, Program of Economic Development and Social Development Programme (Ali, 2008).

In the 9th Malaysia Plan, Economic Stimulus Package 2, the provision of RM40.1 million was spent on the construction of infrastructure and public facilities, agricultural inputs, farm infrastructure and agriculture, as well as the upgrading of infrastructure and economic resources in some selected villages RPS People Natural. Almost all of the programs implemented are associated with policies to increase income and create jobs among the indigenous people (EPU, 2012).

In addition, the core development of the agriculture of Orang Asli peoples in the 9MP is more geared towards commercialization more widely and smallholders producing high income. Land development, in-situ developed for indigenous peoples are in line with this policy which is to make agriculture as areas that can generate high economic impact, as a viable business, developing new agricultural entrepreneurs, and increased productivity for the agricultural sector.

On the whole, it can be noted that in each five-year Malaysia Plan was formed, the various strategies and programs designed to improve the income and quality of life of Orang Asli peoples. In addition to economic development programs through commercial Replanting Project (CSR), some form of resettlement programs and the development of human capital has also been implemented. This is all done with the intent to benefit the economy and tackle the problems of poverty and high poverty among Orang Asli peoples. As a result, based on data from E - Damak (2013) continued reduction in poverty percent of Orang Asli households across the country to 35.1 % in 2011; reported the percentage of poor decreased to 11.5 % and extreme poverty to 23.6 %.

A similar situation is also reflected in the Orang Asli community in the Terengganu. At the end of 1990 the average monthly income not exceeding RM300.00 per month KIR. However, in 2009 almost 60 % KIR earned more than RM2000.00 per month. In 2010 only 32.45 % KIR still fall below the poverty line (JAKOA, 2010). Increased income and poverty reduction among Orang Asli peoples in Terengganu is the result of success of development projects, particularly through commercial cultivation of rubber and oil palm. In order to develop

this commercial cropping, local communities not only as recipients of development projects but are also involved in the planning of each project. This is because they have a leader who has high credibility in the development of their communities.

#### *4.2 Leadership Transformations*

As described by Nicholas (2001), local community, especially the Orang Asli many groups led by parents; leaders are much guided by their life experiences, but have little or no direct use in leading intellectuality community. With that, when faced with the new paradigm and new influences such as capitalism, technology and globalization they are not able to advance to the front of the well. Without the principle of science older leaders did not attempt to bring their local community along with other communities.

Consciousness above the issue, since the year 2000 with the cooperation of the state government and JAKOA have taken the approach embodied Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung (JKKK) Orang Asli in every village across the country. JKKK composed than a Chief, Deputy Chief, secretary, treasurer and assisted by several other committee. Each member of the JKKK paid allowance by country based on each department. They also paid to attend in case meeting allowance held once a month.

This institution is an alternative embodiment to help institutions batin / penghulu (traditional leadership) are seen not attempt to lead alone the village. JKKK embodiment seen very helpful especially the government in an attempt to wake the Orang Asli community. It's his deep many committee members of JKKK is comprised of experts rather than the young group inducted based their skill and personality versus tradition inaugurated leadership through inheritance system. So also in the Orang Asli community Sungai Pergam, Terengganu. JKKK institution to assist the institution embodied views do not mind carrying the villagers attempt to change society in line with the others. Chief and expert consist committee members than those aged between 25 to 45 years. Although they have not seen the customs and heritage -related skills, but they are very impressive leadership towards bringing members of the group out of the shackles of poverty. Effectiveness of development programs are implemented is to have regard to the character of JKKK Chief chair meeting as knowledgeable, open-minded, have a high commitment, communication skills and proficiency to take care of.

##### *4.2.1 Knowledge*

The effectiveness of an organization is dependent on the leadership and the knowledge. With the knowledge they possess a leader capable of leading the community towards their well-being. In the context of Orang Asli leadership JKKK Sungai Pergam, they also consist of individuals who have received formal education. Although the level of education that belongs not reached the level of pride, but they are a new generation of leaders who have a basic knowledge such as reading, writing and arithmetic. Therefore, each program of economic development that is planned and undertaken by the government can be effectively managed as they not only act as receivers but they also act as a playmaker. Brilliant ideas related to development projects are often presented as they have the knowledge than his predecessors. At the same time they also pass on all relevant information effectively to the development of group members.

##### *4.2.2 High Commitment*

JKKK leader of Orang Asli in Sungai Pergam also showed a very high commitment to any attempt by the government to help local people out rather than poverty. They are so earnestly successful any programs that run for a local community. They argued, is very important to work with serious to warrant the comforts of life. They also have a high desire Want affect members of the group to support business goals and goal set by government. The informant explained, when want get the pleasure to work with more persistent.

##### *4.2.3 Open Mind / Liberal / Moderate*

The basic success of an organization depends on the openness of thinking individuals who act as leaders of the organization. Orang Asli Semaq Beri communities seen to be a better situation than other Orang Asli communities as leaders JKKK they have very positive thoughts. They not only open minded but very shortsighted. They are able to create new ideas that are useful to the interests of community members. The informant explained, to achieve progress they can not expect help and support from the government on an ongoing basis alone. They explained that a long time ago of course they only expect help from JAKOA completely, but if they still like it even reaches the point when they will not grow and prosper. The informant said the community needs to be independent and work hard to change your life without depending on others.

#### 4.2.4 Communication Skills

Skills in communication is a vital part of the character of an effective leader. This feature is also owned by Orang Asli leader of JKKK in Sungai Pergam. These skills are seen much of development efforts undertaken by the government in order to eradicate poverty. This is because the ability to explain, deliver information and give directions influenced members of the community to accept development projects. As a result of information and guidance on an ongoing basis allows a very high incidence of awareness among members of the community to change. The informant also said he was not ashamed and afraid to get in touch with the relevant parties, especially in matters of economic, social and infrastructures villagers.

#### 4.2.5 Management Skills

The most important feature of which is owned by the chairman and members of Orang Asli of JKKK leader in Sungai Pergam is the ability of serving as a leader and manager. He is not only able to help manage development programs undertaken by the government even be able to plan and administer the affairs and all the villagers. The informant explained, to be a good leader, there must be careful planning of each thing you want to do. Also, a point to be made must have the support and response from members of the group. Without the support of community members who run things are useless. The informant also explained that the key to the success of a leader is able to solve and overcome problems among villagers accordingly.

### 4.3 JKKK Role in Development

#### 4.3.1 Project Planner

Among the leading role in the development JKKK is to identify and plan a project or program deemed suitable to be implemented in the local population. They act as the determination of strategy planning and implementation of development programs and projects in the village. A development project to be accomplished will be decided after a meeting among committee members JKKK implemented. Sometimes meetings are also attended by officials from relevant agencies such as JAKOA, FELCRA, KETENGAH and others. They explained, a project to be implemented should be discussed in detail in the first JKKK committee members. It is to ensure that a project is to be implemented in accordance with the needs of community members. In addition, informants also explained the success of development projects in their villages as the government is particularly JAKOA will take into account the views and suggestions of local people are represented by JKKK. In other words JKKK act determines the priority list of development projects in the village.

#### 4.3.2 Connection Agents

JKKK Orang Asli Sungai Pergam also acts as an intermediate / two-way communication between the villagers and elected representatives or officials of related agencies in managing the development of Orang Asli as JAKOA, FELCRA, Central Terengganu Development Authority (KETENGAH), Department of Health and other agencies. They act as agents of change and act as an important link with the government. Anything problems associated with resident the need JKKK village officials will contact the relevant agencies. Similarly, if the relevant agencies to plan a program for the residents, the agency will contact the JKKK chairman advance for approval of a matter to be accomplished.

During the survey, informants (chairman JKKK) often call the Legislative Assembly constituency Air Puteh, Kemaman MP (Minister of Information and Communication Technology) and Chief Minister to resolve several issues related to the villagers. Courage informants in building relationships with the highest state and federal administrative seen key to the success of development projects to eradicate poverty among Orang Asli Semaq Beri at Sungai River. The relationship was so close to the highest administration also catalyze the development projects implemented unflinching in their village.

The JKKK also responsible as a agent of relationship between the villagers and rural communities like the Malays and Chinese. Normally built relationships is related to economic affairs. The Malay and Chinese residents usually require energy to find small sticks for agricultural activities. They also hired villagers to set up a temporary home (secret) for logging. Therefore, JKKK responsible for residents who want to find work as well as agents that determine the amount of the wages of the work to be accomplished by the related parties.

#### 4.3.3 Action Bodies

JKKK Orang Asli Sungai Pergam also acts as a action body and capable of harnessing energy, resource development, and the changing attitudes of society at the village level to further improve productivity. If there is a new program or project implementation, JKKK members is the main driver and initiator of the project so that it

can be emulated by the locals. They are also responsible for mobilizing the villagers to be more independent so that energy can be exploited in an integrated population towards development to be achieved.

#### 4.3.4 Coordinator and Project Monitoring

The JKKK is coordinating the implementation of development programs and projects in the village. With the ability JKKK members, they maximize their efforts and lead to the success of the projects that have been agreed upon, especially in terms of the following; cooperate with the encouraging participation by all segments of society; monitor and ensure the smooth running of all the projects that are being implemented; provide or assist and so provides for the implementation and development project. The informant explained, the mobilization of energy between JKKK, residents and agencies need to continue to create community-building communities / areas with a high quality of life in terms of spiritual, intellectual, beautiful and clean environment and the need for economic development.

The success of the development program in Kampung Sungai Pergam is also due to ongoing monitoring by the members of the JKKK on the progress of a development project in the village. They also serve to evaluate the projects that constraints or problems that arise in this project should be addressed. Measures to monitor all activities and projects undertaken significant impact on the economic changes of the villagers to maximize the objectives of a project. As a result, the villagers would increase household income thus can move out of poverty.

### 5. Conclusion

Orang Asli community leadership Sungai Pergam has undergone changes in line with the passage of time, changes in the community and the needs of the community. Although there has been a change, leadership tradition is still maintained because it is considered as a fundamental symbol of heritage and identity customs of indigenous peoples. The emergence of a new generation of leaders among Orang Asli Sungai Pergam is attributed to an increasing number of educated community members. They emerged as a leader whose role is alerting members of their communities about the need to shift to a better life.

Members of JKKK Orang Asli Sungai Pergam plays a very significant role in the success of development programs in their villages. They are able to function and respond to the new paradigm shift in tandem with other communities. The role played had a big impact so as to remove the villagers out of poverty. In addition, JKKK leadership has complete character to influence the villagers towards achieving the aims and objectives of development. In other words, characters belonging to influence that led them to change their attitudes and behavior.

JKKK leadership in this village are very helpful in expanding the opportunities provided by the government - resources for the benefit of local residents. The process of effective leadership practices JKKK village leadership to allow it to act as an agent of change at the grassroots level. They serve as intermediaries in information sharing between the government and villagers. Therefore, this study proves that JKKK capable and able to fulfill the wishes of work to bring change at the village level in line with its position as a development team.

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