



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***PARTICIPATION, CAPACITY BUILDING, EMPOWERMENT AND  
SOCIOECONOMIC WELL-BEING AMONG INDIAN COMMUNITY THROUGH  
MYKASIH ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM IN KUALA LUMPUR,  
MALAYSIA***

**MAHAGANAPATHY DASS**

**FEM 2015 19**



**PARTICIPATION, CAPACITY BUILDING, EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC WELL-BEING AMONG INDIAN COMMUNITY THROUGH *MYKASIH* ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA**

By

**MAHAGANAPATHY DASS**

**Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Studies,  
University Putra Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the  
Requirement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**August 2015**

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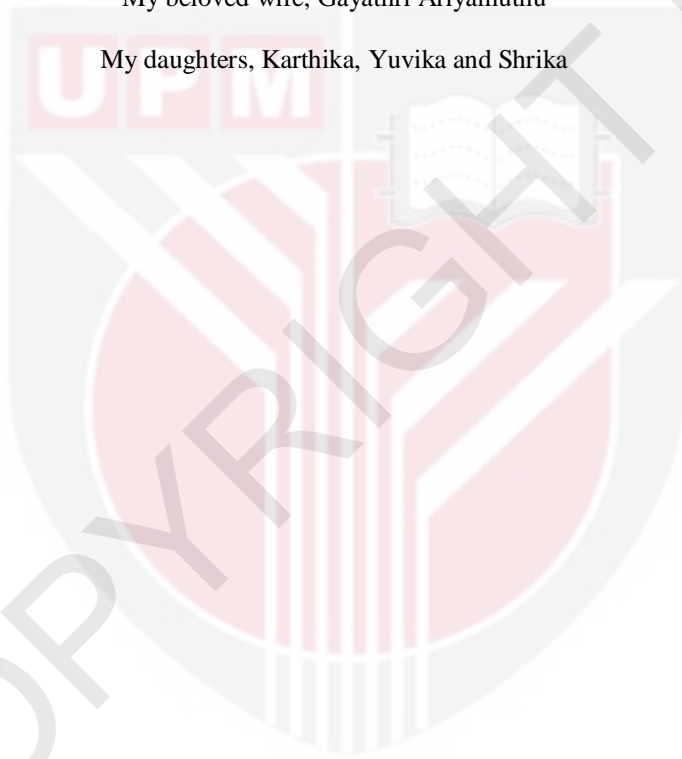
## DEDICATION

This dissertation is especially dedicated to five special individuals who is my inspiration to complete this meaningful journey:

My beloved mother, Jayakodiyamah Manaroo

My beloved wife, Gayathri Ariyamuthu

My daughters, Karthika, Yuvika and Shrika



I hope I have made all of you proud.

Thank you very much for the encouragement and tolerance during this journey.

*Thanks to almighty.*

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of University Putra Malaysia in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**PARTICIPATION, CAPACITY BUILDING, EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC WELL-BEING AMONG INDIAN COMMUNITY THROUGH MYKASIH ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA**

By

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**August 2015**

**Chairman: Associate Professor Sarjit Singh Darshan Singh, PhD**

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The main purpose of this study is to holistically understand the factors influencing the socio-economic well-being of the Indian community in the urban areas of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The socio-economic well-being effectiveness is tested by analyzing community development domains and MyKasih Program run by a Non-governmental Organization. There is no recent study to test effectiveness of any governmental or NGO's socio-economic well-being efforts on this minority community. This study utilized a quantitative approach supported by qualitative data. Quantitative approach was used to address the main objective of this study which is to derive regression model, while qualitative approach was utilized to understand the issues and to support the development of study instrument. The community also revealed that the scarcity of resources especially financial support is a big threat for poverty eradication. The influence of the community development and MyKasih Organization on achieving poverty eradication was tested using multiple regression analysis to identify the predictors. The findings of the multiple regressions show that five variables can be significant in predicting the urban poverty eradication; motivation, participation, empowerment, capacity building and entrepreneurship skills. The result of the study also does not contradict the empowerment theory, which says that people, who are empowered, will be free of poverty. The Indian people involved directly in the MyKasih programs tended to have positive perceptions of self-development, because they directly received economic benefits from small business and job involvement. Although the results show no significant contradiction with culture of poverty theory, which states that it is the marginalisation of the poor urban community through systematic implementation of government policies and mechanisms that influence its socio-economic well-being. The outcome of this study can be treated as an important branch of minority poverty eradication through empowerment within the scope of the community participation.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PEYERTAAN PEMBINAAN KAPASITI, PENDAYAUPAYAAN DAN  
KESEJATHERAAN SOSIO-EKONOMI KAUM INDIA MELALUI PROGRAM  
KEUSAHAWANAN MYKASIH  
DI KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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**Pengerusi: Profesor Madya Sarjit Singh Darshan Singh, PhD**

**Fakulti: Ekologi Manusia**

Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk memahami faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kesejahteraan sosio-ekonomi masyarakat India di kawasan bandar di Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia secara holistik. Keberkesanan kesejahteraan sosio-ekonomi diuji dengan menganalisis domain pembangunan masyarakat dan program MyKasih yang dijalankan oleh sebuah Pertubuhan Bukan Kerajaan (NGO). Kajian ini untuk menguji keberkesanan sebarang usaha kesejahteraan sosio-ekonomi kerajaan atau badan NGO terhadap masyarakat minoriti ini. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kaedah kuantitatif. Pendekatan kuantitatif digunakan untuk menjawab objektif utama kajian iaitu membentuk model regresi kajian disokong oleh data kualitatif untuk membantu mengukuhkan lagi data kuantitatif. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa kekurangan sumber terutamanya bantuan kewangan merupakan ancaman besar bagi membasmi kemiskinan. Pengaruh pembangunan masyarakat dan MyKasih Pertubuhan atas pencapaian pembasmian kemiskinan ditentukan melalui analisis regresi berganda untuk mengenal pasti pembolehubah-pembolehubah bebas yang signifikan. Penemuan daripada regresi berganda menunjukkan bahawa lima pembolehubah signifikan boleh meramal pembasmian kemiskinan bandar; motivasi, penyertaan, kuasa, pembinaan keupayaan dan kemahiran keusahawanan. Hasil kajian itu juga tidak bercanggah teori pendayaupayaan, yang mengatakan bahawa orang-orang yang diberi kuasa, akan dikeluarkan oleh kemiskinan. Responden yang terlibat secara langsung dalam program-program MyKasih cenderung mempunyai persepsi positif terhadap pembangunan diri, kerana mereka menerima faedah ekonomi yang langsung daripada perniagaan kecil dan penglibatan kerja. Walaupun keputusan tidak menunjukkan percanggahan yang ketara dengan teori budaya kemiskinan, yang menyatakan bahawa, ia adalah peminggiran masyarakat bandar yang miskin melalui pelaksanaan sistematik dasar-dasar kerajaan dan mekanisme yang telah meningkatkan lagi sosialisasi politik dari masyarakat bandar yang menentukan kesejahteraan sosio-ekonomi. Hasil dari kajian ini boleh dianggap

sebagai cabang penting kesejahteraan sosio-ekonomi melalui pendayaupayaan minoriti dalam skop penyertaan komuniti.



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Mahaganapathy Dass  
August 2015



I certify that an Examination Committee met on 26 August, 2015 to conduct the final examination of Mahaganapathy Dass @ Paskaradass to evaluate his thesis entitled "Participation, Capacity Building, Empowerment and Socio-Economic Well-Being among Indian Community through *Mykasih* Entrepreneurship Program in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia" accordance with to the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of Universiti Putra Malaysia [PU (A) 106] March 15, 1998. Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the degree of Philosophical Doctorate (PhD).

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	i
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	ii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	iv
<b>APPROVAL</b>	v
<b>DECLARATION</b>	vii
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	xiii
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	xiv
<b>CHAPTER</b>	
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.0 Urban Poverty in Malaysia	1
1.1 Indian Community in Malaysia	3
1.2 Urban Poverty among Indians in Malaysia	5
1.3 Problem statement	8
1.4 Research question	12
1.5 Research objective	12
1.6 Urban poverty eradication program: The My Kasih Initiative	13
1.7 Research Framework	16
1.8 Theoretical underpinnings	17
1.8.1 Participation theory	18
1.9 Significance of study	21
1.10 Organization of the thesis	21
<b>2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>23</b>
2.0 Introduction	23
2.1 Poverty and Socio-Economic Well-Being	23
2.1.1 Socio-Economic Well-Being Measurement	24
2.1.2 Objective and Subjective Measurement	26
2.2 Poverty	26
2.3 Urban Poverty Perspective	29
2.4 Political Perspectives and urban poverty	32
2.4.1 Socio-cultural perspectives and poverty	34
2.4.2 Socio-economic perspective and urban poverty	37
2.4.3 Environmental Perspective and Urban Poverty	39
2.5 Factors of Urban Poverty	42
2.5.1 Alcohol and other drugs	42
2.5.2 Work and Unemployment	43
2.5.3 Education Issues	45
2.5.4 Population Issues	46
2.5.5 Majority and Minority Relations	47
2.6 Community	48
2.7 Development	50
2.8 Community Development	52
2.9 Participation	54
2.9.1 Forced Participation	54
2.9.3 Volunteered Participation	55

2.10	Capacity building	60
2.11	Empowerment	61
2.12	Community Entrepreneurship	63
2.13	Entrepreneurship Motivation	64
2.14	Financial Literacy	64
2.15	Entrepreneurship Skills	65
2.16	Summary	66
<b>3</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>67</b>
3.0	Introduction	67
3.1	Location of the Study	67
3.2	Research Design	69
3.3	Population and Sampling Design	71
3.4	Instruments of the Study	72
3.5	Pilot Study	72
3.6	Data Analysis	73
3.7	Qualitative Approach	74
3.8	Summary	78
<b>4</b>	<b>FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS</b>	<b>79</b>
4.0	Introduction	79
4.1	Quantitative Data Analysis	79
4.2	Demographic Profile	79
4.3	Descriptive statistic	82
4.3.1	Measuring the Level of Financial Literacy among the MyKasih Entrepreneurship Programme Participants	83
4.4	Participation	84
4.5	Tokenism	86
4.6	Citizen Control	88
4.7	Measuring the Level of Attainment of Community Empowerment among the Participants of the MyKasih Entrepreneurship Program	90
4.8	Economic Empowerment	91
4.8.1	Political Empowerment	93
4.8.2	Psychological Empowerment	94
4.9	Measuring the Level of Attainment of Capacity Building of MyKasih Participants	95
4.10	The Correlations between the MyKasih Entrepreneurship Programme Domains and Socio-economic Wellbeing and between Community Development Domains and Socio-economic Wellbeing of Poor Urban Indian Community in the Kuala Lumpur	98
4.11	Correlations between Community Development Domains and Socio-economic Wellbeing of Poor Urban Indians in Kuala Lumpur	99
4.11.1	Correlations between Community Participation and Job Wellbeing	99
4.11.2	Correlations between Community Participation and Life Wellbeing	99
4.11.3	Correlations between Community Participation and Health Wellbeing	100

4.11.4	Correlations between Community Empowerment and Job Wellbeing	100
4.11.5	Correlations between Community Empowerment and Life Wellbeing	100
4.11.6	Correlations between Community Empowerment and Health Wellbeing	101
4.11.7	Correlations between Community Capacity Building and Job Wellbeing	101
4.11.8	Correlations between Community Capacity Building and Life Wellbeing	101
4.11.9	Correlations between Community Capacity Building and Health Wellbeing	102
4.12	Influence of the MyKasih Entrepreneurship Programme domains and Community Development Dimensions on the attainment of Economic Wellbeing.	111
4.13	Summary	111
<b>5</b>	<b>SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>113</b>
5.0	Introduction	113
5.1	Summary of Main Findings	113
5.2	Limitations and Recommendation for Future Research	115
5.2.1	Limited literature on urban poverty eradication	115
5.2.2	Language used for Primary Research	115
5.2.3	Gender Issues	116
5.2.4	Response Rate	116
5.3	Study Approach	116
5.4	Theoretical Implications	116
5.5	Practical Implications	118
5.6	Recommendations	119
5.6.1	Leadership	119
5.6.2	Cleanliness and Sanitation	120
5.6.3	Self-help Programme for Single Mothers	120
5.6.4	Genuine Participation	121
5.6.5	Government Intervention	121
5.6.6	Affirmative Role of Politicians	121
5.6.7	Skill-based Vocational Education	121
5.7	Recommendations for Future Studies	122
5.8	Summary	122
	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>124</b>
	<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>136</b>
	A Face sheet (Topic guide of in-depth interview)	138
	B Survey questionnaire	142
	C Images and picture	153
	<b>BIODATA OF STUDENT</b>	<b>153</b>
	<b>LIST OF PUBLICATIONS</b>	<b>154</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table</b>		<b>Page</b>
1.1	Percentage of the Indian Population in Urban Areas in Malaysia	4
1.2	Incidence of Poverty by Ethnic Group, Malaysia 2012	10
1.3	Total Number of Families Participating in MyKasih Program	16
3.0	Data Collection Technique Based on Research Objectives	70
3.1	Proportionate sampling	71
3.2	Cronbach Alpha	73
4.0	Demographic Profiles of Respondents	80
4.1	The Level of Attainment of Community Participation of MyKasih Program	84
4.2	The Level of Attainment of Community Empowerment of MyKasih Program	90
4.3	The Level of Attainment of Community Capacity Building of MyKasih	96
4.4	Correlation Value Interpretation	98
4.5	Relationship between MyKasih Program & Socio-economic Wellbeing	99
4.6	Model Summary	102
4.7	Anova Test	103
4.11	Regression Model Coefficients	103



## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure</b>		<b>Page</b>
1.1	Evolution of Welfare Regime since 1957	2
1.2	Research Framework	16
1.4	A ladder of citizen empowerment	19
1.5	A ladder of Participation	20
2.1	Arnstein's Ladder of Participation	56
2.2	Community Participation Benchmarks	60
3.1	Map of Kuala Lumpur	68
3.2	Research Process	75
4.1	The Predicted Model for Socio-economic Wellbeing of the Poor Urban Indian Community in the Kuala Lumpur	105

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Urban Poverty in Malaysia

Malaysia, with a population of 31 million is a multi-ethnic country that comprises three major races namely the Malays, Chinese and Indians, and it has a rich variety of culture, background, language and customs. Since the 1950s and especially after independence, the Malaysian government has made various efforts to reduce poverty among urban and rural communities through implementation of economic policies as well as providing direct support to the needy (Gan, 2007).

Jomo (2004) condemned the New Economic Policy (NEP), which was initiated in 1970, as a great failure. According to scholars, the NEP, which had eradication of poverty regardless of race as its main objective, was not implemented effectively. The policy was more focused in rural areas and targeted the majority Malay community.

Apparently, the government of Malaysia was successful in lowering poverty levels to 5.7% by the year 2004 (Ali, 2013). As a result, the poverty line has been reduced through driving forces that eradicated hard core poverty. Serious attempts to tackle the problem of poverty began in 1957 with adjustments of inflation rates up till recently (Ali, 2013). Poverty eradication is primarily targeted at rural areas, without neglecting the urban areas. The figure below shows the evolution of the welfare regime since 1957. This evolution is recorded under the government ruled by the Barisan Nasional (BN) Party which has been dominant since the era of pre-independence.

**Figure 1.1: Evolution of Welfare Regime since 1957**

1957- 1980	1981- 1997	1998- 2002	2003- present
Narrow "welfare state" style policies	Rigorous social policies	Financial crisis: Effects	National Social Welfare
Public health programmes			
Free education	Combat Poverty		
Unemployment benefit of Women.	Target Hardcore poor	Impact on the poor	Ministry
State pension/ EPF NEP (1970)	NGO's involvement	Inadequate social	Family
Income support broader "welfare state" style policies	Microcredit- aim	Protection plans	Community Development Agricultural Productivity
Land reforms	Private Involvement		Zero Poverty Target
FELDA, FELCRA, IADP	Privatisation		
Poverty eradication (rural)	Moderate government expenditure		

Source: (Mohd,2012)

Figure 1.1 illustrates the Malaysian government effort in downsizing poverty line through problem identification, implementation of social policies and strong governmental support (Ali, 1983). This can be seen in the figure above where the evolution started in the 1970s with the provision of social welfare services. The purpose was to accelerate economic development by enabling equal and fair opportunities for everyone and providing additional facilities for health, education and infrastructure which are emphasized for welfare purposes (Economic Planning Unit, 2013). Urban poverty in Malaysia occurred because of rapid migration by the rural citizens to cities (Siwar and Kassim, 1997).

However the poverty line has been tackled by the government through various efforts such as reducing poverty by fast economic growth with constant improvement of its micro economy (Hatta and Ali, 2013). This effort has been augmented by the New Economic Policy and National Development Plans that have allowed greater human capital power to be redistributed.

### **1.1 Indian Community in Malaysia**

A large number of Indians was brought from South India in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Rose, 1962). As a result, Indian settlements began from rubber estates where they worked as labourers. However, today the demographic changes taking place have a direct impact on Indian communities in major cities of Malaysia. This is because, most urban Indians are living in densely populated areas (Ramasamy, 1993) .

In addition, after the independence of Malaysia in 1957, through good governance, Indians enriched themselves with quality education and migrated from estates to urbanized townships to gain value by engaging in more lucrative employment to uplift their living status. The rise in industrialization has caused migration of Indians to the urban cities of Malaysia in search of more promising jobs for the survival of their family and many moved to the urban regions of the country. Arriving at cities, unprepared and unequipped for the reality awaiting them there, many ended up unemployed, or were employed with meager wages that was insufficient for a decent living (Marimuthu, 1975). This resulted in the forming of squatter areas, which led to the categorizing of these individuals as the urban poor.

The Indian squatters were mainly concentrated in West Malaysia. However, the biggest population was largely at the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur and the Kuala Lumpur (Nagarajan, 2008). Moreover, as the years passed by, the Indian community together with other communities in Malaysia showed a tremendous growth of career and educational achievements (Arokiasamy, 2010). Despite this growth, the large Indian population concentrated in urban areas has been experiencing socio-economic and cultural decline and have struggled to survive as their social status remains a puzzle whilst the government's quest for urbanization continues (Jayasooria, 2006).

In Malaysia, urban poverty is becoming a cause for concern among Indians, increasing from 57.0% to 62.0% in 2012. About 79.7% of the total Indian population in this country is concentrated in urban areas and the remainder 20.3% reside in rural areas. Table 1.1 below shows the percentage of urban Indian population in various districts in Malaysia.

**Table 1.1: Percentage of Indian population in urban areas in Malaysia**

State	District	Citizens	Indian	Percentage	
Kuala Lumpur Selangor	Gombak	1,286,937	146,621	11.4	
	Klang	541,302	71,944	13.3	
	Kuala Langat	647,603	129,408	19.9	
	Kuala Selangor	199,200	33,333	16.7	
	Petaling	166,319	31,447	18.9	
	Sepang	1,193,650	166,542	13.9	
	Ulu Langat	108,176	20,744	19.2	
		874,494	96,598	11.0	
N.Sembilan	Ulu Selangor	153,572	30,415	19.8	
	Port Dickson	106,557	22,811	21.4	
	Seremban	378,758	73,059	19.3	
Penang	S.P.Tengah	298,117	33,248	11.2	
	S.P.Utara	254,926	23,095	9.1	
	S.P.Selatan	121,543	23,592	19.4	
	Timur Laut	427,425	42,631	10.0	
Perak	Batang Padang	154,944	23,416	15.1	
	Manjung	194,640	28,240	14.5	
	Kinta	716,124	104,471	14.6	
	Kuala Kangsar	148,219	20,550	13.9	
	Larut / Matang	281,040	32,393	11.5	
	Hilir Perak	192,585	35,892	18.6	
	Johore	Johor Bahru	1,080,508	109,864	10.2
		Kluang	254,584	26,818	10.5
Kedah	Kuala Muda	349,641	51,517	14.7	
	Kulim	195,933	38,635	19.7	

Source: Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2013)

Based on the statistic above, the Indian population in Malaysia is densely populated in five main states namely Selangor (14.6% - 585,368), Perak (13% - 262,121), Kuala Lumpur (11.4% - 146,621), Penang (10.6% - 133,899) and Negeri Sembilan (16% - 132,754). As a result, with 12.9% of Indians living in cities, they are the second most urbanized ethnic group in Malaysia (My Gov, 2012). However this minority group has the highest number of social problems in Malaysia. As a result ethnic Indians represent 71 % of the hard core criminals in Malaysia (Chennai, 2013).

Apart from that, the Indians have equipped themselves with quality education to improve their standard of living. Furthermore, the growth in industrialization has increased their opportunities in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Johor Bahru and Penang. The Indian community in urban areas strove hard to make good earnings in order to sustain themselves in urban areas (Mani, 2009). Apparently the government emphasized in its national policy to reduce poverty by means of assessment of minimum consumption levels of household food, shelter, clothing and other non-essential food needs. The present, highly competitive living standards in urban areas have led the Indian community to social ills and unhealthy lifestyle. As a result, this phenomenon had an impact on other ethnic group such as the Malays in the urban areas, facing lack of income and unfair political involvement (Hashim, 1998). In addition, Indian and Malay ethnic populations that ARE concentrated in urbanized environments face numerous challenges such as domestic violence and crime which have resulted from lack of social development.

## **1.2 Urban Poverty among Indians in Malaysia**

In Malaysia, the urban poverty statistics between 1970 and 2000 shows that in terms of poverty, Indians comprise about 80% of the total population of Malaysia (Nair, 2009). This problem is due to unregulated labour regulations, poor working conditions and lack of job security. However the Malay population features largely in the rural poverty in Malaysia. This issue resulted from low educational levels, low skills, low income, low status of employment and poor housing in rural areas with inadequate basic amenities. As a result, this phenomenon affects them adversely, causing them to experience a high level of stress and daily struggle to earn a living (Jayasooria, 2002).

The issue of urban poverty among Indians is likely worsened by the high number of workers from overseas (Kim, 2009). As a result migrant workers from other countries have become another problem affecting the poverty line. Thus employment opportunities have a direct effect on the urban poor which consequently resulted in low income and unemployment (Hatta and Ali, 2013). Malaysia is a rapidly developing country so there is a high demand for skilled and knowledgeable human resources.

Thus, an increase in foreign labor power is supporting the growth of Malaysia's economy (Kuruville and Arudsothy, 1995).

This situation could be related in other developing and highly populated places such as Mumbai, India, where the population is approaching the 33 million mark, resulting from rapid urbanization development which can then transform into urban poverty (Hossain, 2009). Despite this diversity, the incidence of poverty resulted from income inequality where they suffered loss of shelter, food and essential expenses. In fact, income inequality and poverty is becoming a worrying phenomenon in the multiracial society of Malaysia today (Kusnic, 2012).

The Indian ethnic group comprises less than 10% of the total Malaysian population. They are mostly involved in the agricultural sector, manufacturing, professional and clerical occupations. As compared to Malays in rural areas, they are concentrated in agriculture and government sector that has increased in recent years. Apparently the Indian ethnic group comprises 60 % of urban squatters that have been classified as hard-core poor in Malaysia (Moorthy, 2008). Although the Indian ethnic group is facing numerous challenges, the government and Malaysian civil society are still failing to address this dilemma.

In terms of finance, urban Indians they face extreme hardship due to job insecurity; permanent jobs in manufacturing and construction sectors can help assure job stability and better income for them to increase social and economic mobility. However, the construction sector generally hires workers based on a temporary or day-to day-basis which makes these workers economically vulnerable (Jeyakumar, 2008). This dilemma is apparent when a large number of these Indians are engaged in dead-end jobs offering little scope for promotions and also have high occupational and health hazards. As a result, the strain and pressure of maintaining a decent livelihood and securing good education for their children poses enormous problems.

Poverty among Indians is strongly aligned with Malays in rural areas as they are also facing similar socio economic issues. To compound this dilemma, migrant workers have been flooding the Malaysian job market, and this has caused job opportunities for urban Indians to be further restricted (Hatta, 2013). Apparently due to low incomes, they have insufficient money to spend for food, rent, transport and other necessary expenses. This situation also arises from poor money management and unnecessary expenditure on alcohol and luxury goods (Jeyakumar, 1993).

Moreover due to shortage of money, the Indian ethnic group in urban cities has low savings which poses further risks for future living. This is because urban living requires good medical care and decent living conditions with appropriate working

environment, but low savings could put this group at risk during contingencies. Apart from that, the high cost of urban housing presents yet another challenge for these Indians to buy residential properties (Mani, 2009). However government intervention is being implemented through policies such as the New Economic Policy which provides low cost housing programmes that provide some measure of security (Razak, 2011).

Although studies have noted the government's intervention in addressing urban poverty among Indians, the level of participation of the community is still doubtful. In fact this phenomenon is also similar among poor Malays and Chinese in urban areas. This could be seen where educational achievements of the Bumiputera (Malays and some minority ethnic groups) and rural students is fundamental for the economic growth of Malaysia (Hatta and Ali, 2013). In addition to that the poverty is becoming a disease towards urban communities into poor family units in urbanised settings (Hatta and Ali, 2013). In early stage of Indian settlement begin from squatters in Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru, Butterworth and Penang. The settlement was largely focused on outskirts of Kuala Lumpur such as Old Klang Road, the Federal Highway, Cheras, Sentul, Selayang and Damansara including Petaling Jaya (Rajoo, 2008).

As this settlement were growing, there were many migrants from estates came to cities for earnings and job. As a result Indians mostly attached to Malayan Railway, City Council and Petaling Jaya Municipality which made their journey starts as urban living. Today the rising cost of urban living make them to find new job opportunities or getting into unhealthy lifestyle (Sandhu, 2008). This dilemma is surrounding the Indian ethnic into urban poverty of lowly paid jobs, low self-esteem, low savings and poor community cooperation (Jeyakumar, 2008).

Moreover, religious institutions have also made an impact through temples and their related activities whereby authority is given to the temple committee to indoctrinate servile behaviour among temple-goers and the community at large. This practise could lead to the formation of individuals with a stereotyped ideology through selective interpretation of the Hindu religion (Marimuthu, 2008). Apparently, this also contributes towards social inequality leading to low self-respect, low morale and despair among the poorer Indian community. In addition to that, the community is not cooperating with each other by highlighting and delving on social status which is determined by factors such as economic and social standing, as well as type of occupation. Furthermore, this dilemma prevents them from being independent and causes them to be influenced by unhealthy habits as drinking alcohol which makes them further lose confidence and interdependency (Rajoo, 2008). Studies however have failed to explain the impact of the social issues on the economic well-being.



As a result, the subculture of Indian poverty results in painful experiences for poor Indians whereby they fail in building good relationships with other communities, have poor economic and social participation and are subject to increasing economic hardships (Jeyakumar, 2008). Remedial actions need to be undertaken to counter the lack of self-reliance, low self-respect, and weak community participation and involvement. There needs to be avoidance of overwhelming influences, living beyond one's means and corruption in Malaysian society (Mani, 2009).

Urban poverty figures reveal that the Indian ethnic group makes up a substantial percentage of this figure. Apart from that, poverty line income is also heavily affected by urban lifestyle. The current per capita income of the nation is still low where those households earning below RM 2300 are still struggling. This shows that a wide gap is being formed between income levels and economic status (Hatta and Ali, 2013).

The ethnic groups in Malaysia comprise Indian, Chinese and Malays who are becoming more interested and focused in urban living. In early 2000, there was a large population of Malays about 43.9%, while Chinese decreased to 33.0 % whereas the Indian population which is equal (Nair, 2009) The Malay rural poverty level is still arising and they have similar difficulties as Indian in confronting urban poverty, which has come to occupy centre stage of Malaysia's development. Urban poverty is a dominant factor for individuals and households of Malaysia (Nair, 2009).

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

A number of studies conducted earlier have clearly stated that poverty has direct influence on socio-economic well-being (Cutler and Katz, 1991; Jorgenson and Slesnick, 1987; Mayer and Jencks, 1993; Slesnick, 1993, 1994, 2001; Jorgenson, 1998;

Garner and Short, 2001; Johnson, Smeeding, and Torrey, 2005; Meyer and Sullivan, 2003; Rogers and Gray, 1994; Zaidi and de Vos, 2001). According to these scholars, many studies are focusing only on income as an indicator to determine socio-economic well-being of a community. However, placing emphasis on income levels alone as a determinant of urban poverty status is not accurate. The role of participation (Arnstein, 1969 and Wilson and Wilde, 2003), empowerment (Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988) and capacity building (Atkinson and Willis, 2006 and Aref and Marof, 2010) is less explored. The need to integrate community development domains in reducing urban poverty is essential to provide sustainable economic development (economic wellbeing).

These studies also highlight urban poverty issues from the perspective of reasons. There are limited studies to address the role of empowerment, participation and capacity building to reduce poverty and enhance economic well-being. Oseberg and Sharpe (2002) argued that economic well-being is the best long term indicator of status of a community. Farr et al., (1998) also argued that freedom of a community to make decisions (empowerment) and do their own business (entrepreneurship) can guarantee economic well-being.

Generally it can be argued that, in Malaysia studies on urban poverty is inadequate. Most of the studies are concentrated on rural poverty or on general poverty issues of the nation. One of the leading Malaysian scholars in urban poverty studies also stressed the importance of studying urban poverty:

"The studies specifically on urban poverty is there but very few...in fact only in the year 2000 some scholars started to look into urban poverty research. The studies on rural poverty are being dominant. May be growing concerns of rising prices of things and rapid urbanization will provide importance to understand more on urban poverty" (*personal communication, Emeritus Professor Chamhuri Siwar, urban poverty scholar*)

This can be referred where the research on urban poverty about Malaysia has been focused into determinants, Malays in rural areas and migrants urban poverty in Malaysia (Nair, 2009). This shows that the past studies has specified on general research about urban poverty in Malaysia. Besides that the urbanisation that takes place has resulted towards an increase of Indian and Malay ethnics in urban areas of Malaysia (Taib, 2011).

"There are several factors of urban poverty in Malaysia. Income, education, health, facilities, environment...It is important to understand that the poverty is not always measure economically...it is multidimensional, although economic well-being is the priority (mainly economic and also non-economic)" (*personal communication, Emeritus Professor Chamhuri Siwar, urban poverty scholar*)

This research will be highlighting the development of socio-economic well-being among Indians in the Kuala Lumpur. Since no specific study has been conducted, so this research could provide positive outcome for the community in future. Siwar and Kasim (1997) also argued that the studies of urban poverty in Malaysia is inadequate and are mainly concentrated in squatter areas. Table 1.2 below represents incidence of poverty by ethnic group in Malaysia for 2012.

**Table 1.2: Incidence of Poverty by ethnic group, Malaysia 2012**

<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Urban Poverty (%)</b>
Bumiputera or Malay	1.4
Chinese	0.2
Indian	<b>1.5</b>
Others	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.0</b>

*(Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia)*

Table 1.2 clearly shows that Indian ethnic group represents the highest percentage of urban poverty with 1.5 %, which reflects the unsatisfactory levels impacting this community. This scenario has created a clear justification to study this community. It illustrates income inequality among Malay and Indian ethnic group where poverty is prevalent. Therefore it is the poverty occurring among Indians from the socio cultural and economic standpoints which determine their background (Jeyakumar, 2008). Apart from that, this situation has also affected the Malay community in past research findings. This can be categorized as: poor income, poor living conditions, and high unemployment levels. As a result, the Malay ethnic group in urban areas shows that a gap has developed between the rich and poor (Roslan, 2010). However this situation is creeping more towards the Indian community as a spreading disease. However, urbanisation development has the potential of providing more financial benefits for Indians.

On the other hand the main causes of Indian socio economic problems, such as urban poverty can be described as unemployment or underemployment, low wages, high inflation rate and expensive urbanised lifestyle. According to a key informant of the community, it is not difficult to find jobs in Kuala Lumpur, but they are not empowered, either by their employers or the government

"We are poor because we can't get good jobs...nobody wants to trust us and give us a job..the see us as gangsters only...how to come out from poverty if the outsiders such as government and private sectors do not give us better jobs and business contracts?"  
*(personal communication, Dass, Head of the community in Air Panas Flats,11<sup>th</sup> June,2012)*

In addition to that, the socio economic environment acts as a determinant of Indian urban poverty through employment and income (Sandhu, 1993). The unsatisfactory employment level among Indians has increased their level of dependency due to family commitments. Moreover the effect of unemployment is due to lack of skills, lack of educational qualification and shortage of jobs in the Kuala Lumpur (Kesavapani et. al, 2008). As a result, this high unemployment figure has created reduction on their selfconfidence and dignity of the families. The studies of Sandhu (2008) and Kesavapani et al. (2009) however failed to explore the influence of community empowerment on the urban poverty.

A study by Gopal et al., (2011) mentioned that urban poverty among Indian people in Malaysia is mainly caused by the perception of other communities viewing the Indian community as manual workers. The study however failed to explore the participation of the community in the government sectors. This creates another gap in terms of community development perspective on urban poverty.

Socio cultural issue is another contributing aspect of urban poverty among the Indian community in Malaysia. This issue could be referred as poor parental guidance or responsibility, excessive drinking, low self-respect, female subordination, depressed and apathetic community (Rajoo, 2008).

"We must agree that our youths are involved in gangsterism, alcohol and drugs. These activities are the main reasons of our situation (urban poverty) now. There is no consistent income...they go in and out of jail like they go holidays..." (*personal communication, Saminathan, Head of the community in Taman Angkasa Flats 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2012*)

This unhealthy lifestyle was brought from living conditions in plantations where the subculture of poverty among Indians could not be prevented. As a result, the negative cultural traits have become somehow ingrained among the Indian community, discouraging them from being active participants towards a developed nation.

Based on the current phenomenon, the Indian community should prepare their resources in order to prevent negative repercussions by means of anticipating them. The mismatch of urban adaptation and income pattern does not show any relationship to determine a comfortable living status (economic well-being) among the Indian ethnic group. This problem could be related with household and monthly income (Sandhu, 2008).

Several studies have been done specifically on urban poverty and social impacts. However, very limited studies have been done on urban poverty eradication from

community development perspectives. Hatta and Ali (2013) argued that issues of urban poverty clarified before the community empowered and participated in the urban poverty eradication process. It can be said that no studies have been done to understand the role of community development domains such as participation, empowerment and capacity building on urban poverty reduction in terms of creating economic well-being.

#### **1.4 Research Question**

The problem statement which highlights the literature gap and real issues of the Indian community in cities has created the main research question; to what extent has the participation, capacity building and empowerment influence the socio-economy wellbeing of the poor urban Indians; what is the effectiveness of current poverty eradication programs on the urban poverty? It is also important to monitor and understand the level of community development of the Indian people in recently developed programs by the government. Thus the research questions of this study are:

1. What are the community development domains that have an impact on the socioeconomic development of the poor urban Indian community in the Kuala Lumpur?
2. What is the level of participation, capacity building and empowerment attainment of the poor urban Indian community in the Kuala Lumpur through the MyKasih Entrepreneurship Programme?
3. What are the relationships between community development and socioeconomic well-being of the poor urban Indian community in the Kuala Lumpur participating in the MyKasih Entrepreneurship Program?
4. What are the factors influencing the socio-economic well-being of the poor urban Indian community in the Kuala Lumpur participating in the MyKasih Entrepreneurship Program?

#### **1.5 Research Objective**

Poverty has been one of the biggest challenges of the urban Indian community in Malaysia. The government's and Non-Government Organisations' efforts like the MyKasih Entrepreneurship Program is intended to reduce poverty among the urban Indian community. Any developmental programs should also be seen as an on-going process to achieve sustainable development for the urban Indian community. The factors influencing urban poverty reduction and economic well-being enhancement need to be studied and justified using scientific measures. The general objective is to holistically understand the effectiveness of existing poverty reduction programs such as the MyKasih Entrepreneurship Program and community development process to

foster socio-economic well-being of the poor urban Indian community in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and enhance participation, capacity building and empowerment. Thus the specific objectives of the research are:

1. To explore the domains of community development that has an impact on the socioeconomic development of the poor urban Indian community in the Kuala Lumpur.
2. To determine the level of participation, capacity building and empowerment attainment of the poor urban Indian community in the Kuala Lumpur through the MyKasih Entrepreneurship Programme.
3. To determine the relationships between community development and socioeconomic well-being of the poor urban Indian community in the Kuala Lumpur participating in the MyKasih Entrepreneurship Program.
4. To determine the factors influencing the socio-economic well-being of the poor urban Indian community in the Kuala Lumpur participating in the MyKasih Entrepreneurship Program.

#### **1.6 Urban Poverty Eradication Program: *The MyKasih Initiative***

MyKasih program was selected to be tested for its effectiveness because this program specifically targets the low income group in the urban areas to eradicate poverty. MyKasih Program which was established in April 2009, is a charity organization funded by NGO's and individuals to help low-income families through food aid and education (MyKasih.com, 2013). Although the initiative is fully done by NGO's, the programs are also supported by several governmental agencies; The Selangor Pilgrims Funds Board (Lembaga Zakat Selangor), Johor State Government and the Ministry of Federal Territories and Urban Well-being. The programs are mainly focused in the urban areas such as Lembah Pantai, Selayang, Batu, Wangsa Maju, Petaling Jaya and Pasir Gudang (MyKasih News, 2011). By having eradicating poverty as the ultimate goal, the general objective of the MyKasih food aid and student bursary scheme is to help alleviate the burden that underprivileged families have in putting food on the table and in keeping their children in school. MyKasih also intend to fulfil the basic needs of a family, to ensure their children can complete proper education and obtain better job employment.

*Our aim is to enable poor and needy families achieve more independence and give their children a chance to break out of the cycle of poverty. We don't just give out food to the poor and needy on an ad-hoc basis. Instead, we make a long-term commitment to empower the people we help. Besides giving them a chance to make their own choices when buying groceries, we also offer training in important life skills. MyKasih Foundation has indicated that many of the poor people eke out an existence in*

*rundown homes with little hope of pulling themselves out of the poverty trap. We saw these problems first-hand, and it became imperative for us to do something. We quickly realised merely handing out food, money and clothes to poor families was not the answer. Frequently, nutritional needs are not met, health standards slip, the children's education suffers, which in turn leads to low job prospects. The cycle of hardship and poverty begins anew. (personal communication, Sukhbinder Singh, Project Manager, MyKasih Foundation, 20 February 2014)*

Apart from the food aid and student bursary program, MyKasih also carries out health screening workshops, financial literacy and skills training courses, tuition classes, as well as income-generating initiatives with the objective of helping beneficiaries achieve financial independence by providing them with opportunities to improve their economic productivity and quality of life. Due to the rapid urbanization and cost of living in the urban areas, another program called petrol was also introduced to provide petrol subsidies to the poor people ([www.mykasih.com](http://www.mykasih.com), 2013).

The list of the programs is as follows:

- i) Health awareness and basic medical screening (Program Nur Kasih), as well as financial management workshops (SMARTBelanja@LPPKN) for low-income households by the National Population and Family Development Board (locally known as LPPKN), an agency under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development of Malaysia. ii) Skills training in cooking, baking, floral arrangements, and grooming by the National Association of Women Entrepreneurs (NAWEM).
- ii) Sewing skills training and income-generation programme by Sew4Life and Mostwell.
- iii) Income-generation Entrepreneurial Programme with People's Systems.
- iv) Income-generation Empowerment Programme called "Mengecapi Aspirasi Diri" by LifeWorks.
- v) 'Fuel Your School' community campaign to raise funds for high-needs public schools (primary and secondary) to purchase learning materials for classroom projects focusing on Science, Technology, English and Mathematics.
- vi) 'Fuel Your School' community campaign to raise funds for high-needs public schools (primary and secondary) to purchase learning materials for classroom projects focusing on Science, Technology, English and Mathematics.
- vii) Tuition classes (extra tutorials) for selected school subjects for underprivileged school-going children, in 7 locations, in collaboration with Kassim Chin Humanity Foundation.

viii) Youth development workshops by Lions Club, Rotary Club, LPPKN, Malaysian Red Crescent and Dale Carnegie;

ix) Basic primary healthcare and home safety (first aider) by the Malaysian Red Crescent.

According to the organization the number of families benefitting from the program is increasing.

**Table 1.3: Total Number of Families Participating in MyKasih Program**

Month/Year	Population (Families)
Dec, 2008	25
Dec, 2009	1027
Dec, 2010	7674
Dec, 2011	10,874
Dec, 2012	91,608
Oct, 2013	167,720

(Source: MyKasih.com, 2013)

Table 1.3 shows the number of families given aid since 2008 from 25 to 167,720 families in 2013. The number of families involved in the MyKasih programs increased tremendously within five years. However, there are no studies specifically done to determine if the poverty level has been reduced after the implementation of the initiative for more than five years. Thus, in this study, the role of the MyKasih in creating socio-economic wellbeing will be highlighted.

Although many programs are done under the MyKasih initiative, the entrepreneurial income-generation programme with People's Systems is found to be fostering sustainable economic well-being of the urban Indian community. This particular program is not intended to provide money or materials directly to the recipients but it serves as a platform to train them to be self-reliant in terms of economic well-being.

"Entrepreneurial income-generation programme with People's Systems is an unique program that we do here in MyKasih, this program is not like other programs which focuses more on short term relief from poverty. Our entrepreneurship program will

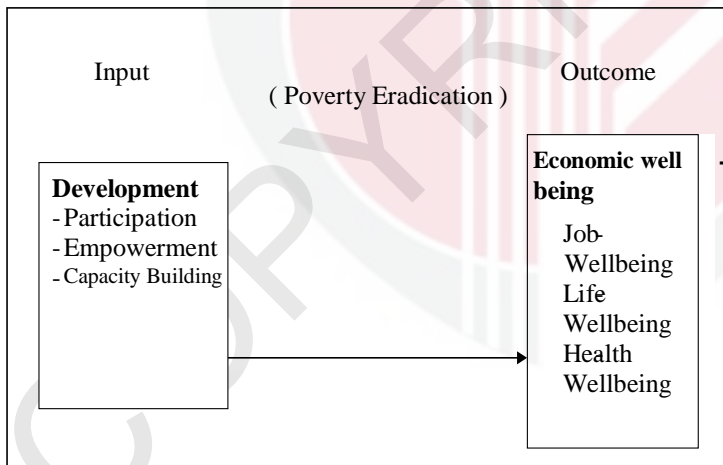


train and empower the recipients to do their own business and become stable economically." (personal communication Yuvendran, MyKasih Operational Manager, 12 June 2013)

According to the Operations Manager of the the MyKasih Entrepreneurship Program, many local Indian participants of the Program were given assistance to open shops or other types of small businesses around the Kuala Lumpur. However, there are no studies undertaken in the past to assess the effectiveness of the program in eradicating urban poverty and enhance economic well-being of the poor urban Indian community although many studies done on other socio cultural perspectives (i.e Sandu 1993, Rajoo 1993, Gopal et.al (2011), Kesavapani et.al (2008), Jeyakumar (1993), and Nair (2006 & 2010).

### 1.7 Research Framework

The crystallized understanding of the problem from the theoretical gaps and practical issues leads this research to the formation of objectives to be achieved. As drafted in Figure 1.4, the set of two main domains (MyKasih Domain and Community Development Domain) can influence the urban poverty eradication.



**Figure 1.2: Research Framework**

The independent factors like food aid programme, bursary programme, financial education, health awareness, skills training, youth development, participation level, community capacity level and empowerment level will be used to identify the

significant predictors of the dependent variable which is the urban poverty eradication. The urban poverty will be mainly measured using the indicators of economic, education, living standard and health dimensions.

### **1.8 Theoretical underpinnings**

Theories of community participation have received considerable academic attention particularly since the early 1990's but have been a source of debate since at least the 1960's. Participation refers to the involvement of the community in development programs at various stages of the process (Asnarulkhadi, 2003). In this study, participation is seen as a process that will attach the community to the community development programs by MyKasih as urban poverty alleviation effort.

Well-being is a situation of being with others, able to achieve human needs, able to act meaningfully to pursue one's goal, and able to enjoy a satisfactory quality of life (WeD, 2007); a self-reported measure as appraised by a person and perception of ones' life satisfaction that incorporates all life events, aspirations, achievements, failure and emotions of human beings as well as their neighbouring, cultural, moral and political environment (Rojas, 2006, 2004; Gasper, 2007a, 2007b). In this study, well-being refers to the evaluation of the one's situation of life conditions that one has attained and experienced. It is self-reported measure of the multi-items question asked related to specific areas of an individual's domains of life (income, financial status, health, living condition, life as whole, etc) by using subjective approach.

Empowerment generally referred as giving authority to the local community to decide their own destiny. In this study, empowerment is seen as process that enables the urban poor to take own decision with limited control from MyKasih Programme. Urban poverty has become the concern of many academics especially for the developing countries in the last ten years (Zwanenberg, 1972). We can obviously deduce that the research on urban poverty was started from the 1960s in developing countries. The evidence also appeared in the research for developed country like America. According to Curley (2005), poverty has become more focus on inner-city neighbourhood in the nation since the mid-1960s. Before study on the theory of urban poverty, it is significant to understand the definition of the term. According to Masika (1997), there are two points of view to define the meaning of urban poverty: economic and anthropological. Economic definition adopts some elements related to income, consumption, as well as some other social indicators such as nutrition, infant mortality, and life expectancy; the other interpretation is developed by Wratten and Satterthwaite (1995), it believes that poverty are the people own disadvantage often differ from those professional experts, such as independence, identity, security, self-respect, decision making freedom, and legal and political rights (Masika, 1997).

### 1.8.1 Participation Theory

This study mainly utilizes the participation theory especially the well-established Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (1969). Public or community participation is adopted by Stoker (1997) for 'political participation' (Parry et al, 1992): members of the public taking part in any of the processes of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies. The emphasis of public participation is beyond the development policy to decision making and implementation.

Arnstein's ladder of participation work stems from the explicit recognition that there are different levels of participation, from manipulation or therapy of citizens, through to consultation, and to what we might as genuine participation, i.e. the level of partnership and citizen control. Each of the steps represents a very broad category, within which are likely to be a wide range of experience. For example, at the level of 'informing' there could be significant difference in the type and quality of the information being conveyed. The use of a ladder also implies that more control is always better than less control. However, increased control may not always be desired by the community and increased control without the necessary support may result in failure.

There has been a shift towards understanding participation in terms of the empowerment of individuals and communities. This has stemmed from the growing prominence of the idea of the citizen as consumer, where choice among alternatives is seen as means of access to power. Burns et al (1994) modified Arnstein's ladder of participation and proposed a ladder of citizen control power where more qualitative breakdown of some of the different levels. A distinction is drawn between 'cynical' and 'genuine' consultation, and between 'entrusted' and 'independent' citizen control. The phenomena of 'civic hype', recognized in 1990s are incorporated at the bottom rung of the ladder. This essentially treats community participation as a marketing exercise, in which the desired end result is 'sold' to the community.

**Figure 1.4 : A ladder of citizen empowerment ( Burns et al, 1994)**

<b>CITIZEN CONTROL</b>
12. Independent control
11. Entrusted control
<b>CITIZEN PARTICIPATION</b>
10. Delegated control
9. Partnership
8. Limited decentralised decision making
7. Effective advisory boards
5. Genuine consultation
5. High quality information
<b>CITIZEN NON-PARTICIPATION</b>
4. Customer care
3. Poor information
2. Cynical consultation
1. Civic hype

As a development of this ladder concept of participation Wilcox identifies five interconnected levels of community participation.

**Figure 1.5: A ladder of participation ( Wilcox, 1999)**

Information
Consultation
Deciding together
Acting together
Supporting individual community initiatives

Wilcox's work has arisen from the UK regeneration context and reflects a philosophical progression in thought around participation. That is that different 'level's of participation are acceptable in differing context and settings, this progression recognises that power is not always transferred in apparently participative processes but that the processes still have value.

Stewart and Taylor (1995) suggest that although the idea of empowerment is often implied, there is little explicit discussion of the operation power. Also argued that determining which issues that community are allowed to be involved in is central to an understanding of participation and empowerment.

Burns and Taylor's (2000) Auditing Community Participation provides tools and appraisal exercise for measuring:

- The history and pattern of participation
- The quality of participation organization adopted by partners and partnerships;
- The capacity within partner organization to support community participation;
- The capacity within communities to participate effectively ; and
- The impact of participation and its outcomes.

The starting point for research which generated the benchmarks as being a recognition of the heterogeneity and elaborate nature of communities and the need for qualitative analysis that measure progress from diverse perspective' (Wilson and Wilde, 2003)

### **1.9 Significance of Study**

This study will benefit stakeholders related with the urban poverty eradication policies. The broad community, that will utilize the findings of this research, includes residents of host communities, natives, industry experts, governmental planners, policy makers, corporate sectors, academicians and non-governmental organizations. It is hoped that the findings of this research will contribute to existing literature in the urban poverty field that could determine real problems underlying this mass issue. Any new factors found, which affect the minority Indian community's perception of urban poverty would be a unique contribution to literature on urban poverty.

By specifically identifying the demographic profiles that influence urban Indian community's perception of urban poverty, the attitudes, constraints and problems of their involvement in developmental programs by government may be addressed. The newly developed scale can also be used as a tool to measure urban poverty reasons in future studies. In addition, it is anticipated that more research would be carried out on the socio economic impact of poverty to the urban community, which will strengthen both current and previous literatures.

### **1.10 Organization of Thesis**

This thesis will be organized into five different Chapters: (1) Introduction, (2) Review of related literature, (3) Research methods, (4) Data analysis and (5) Discussions and conclusions.

The first chapter briefly introduces the study and the purpose of the research after justifying the main issue of the study. It also clarifies research questions/objectives and the terms used as a guide throughout the study. The second chapter expands the literature of each topic within the concept of urban poverty, which has both direct and indirect links with urban poverty. The interdisciplinary concepts are examined to gain a better understanding of the urban poverty and community development throughout the study. It also conceptualizes a model that will be proposed for testing.

Chapter 3 describes the methods to be utilized in pursuing this research. It discusses the study area, sample selection, data collection procedure, the survey instrument

development - and how the data was analysed. The fourth chapter reports the results obtained from the empirical study. The results of statistical analysis will also be discussed in the second section of this chapter. The fifth chapter will give an overall summary, including contributions and recommendations. Study limitations will also be discussed in the final chapter.



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