



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**PARTICIPATION OF THE RURAL WOMEN IN THE GROUP-BASED
APPROACH OF THE COTTAGE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME IN KUCHING, SARAWAK**

MUNIRAH MOHD HASSAN.

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By

MUNIRAH MOHD HASSAN

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The purpose of this study was to explore the participation of the rural women in the group-based approach of the Cottage Industry Development Programme (CIDP) of the Ministry of Agriculture Sarawak. The participants of the study comprised members of the CIDP from the villages of Sejingkat, Buntal, Telaga Air and Selang Ulu located in Kuching District. Seventeen participants were purposefully selected and interviewed. The research questions for the study were: (i) How did the women start to get involved in the Programme? (ii) How was the Programme evolved? (iii) What did the women understand about the Programme? and (iv) Why did the women leave the Programme?

The findings of this study were predominantly based on the qualitative methodology employed by the researcher. Guided by the constant comparative method and questions stipulated for this study, the findings revealed that participants joined the Programme because of (i) the need to make up the number to be eligible for the Programme; (ii)

deference to the senior members and (iii) their interest in business and programme activity. Secondly, the findings revealed that none of the participants was involved in the formulation of the CIDP. Formulation of the CIDP was top-down rather than participative and participants were passive recipients rather than seen as partners. Thirdly, the findings revealed that there was lack of information and understanding of the concept and purpose of the Programme. Lastly, the findings revealed that participants left the Programme due to the main reasons of lack of incentives, absence of responsible leadership, lack of capacity and unfulfilled promises.

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that:

- i. Participation in the CIDP was sustainable on a short-term basis only.
- ii. People's participation in the CIDP was seen only as beneficiaries of the programmes and not as one of partners.
- iii. There was lack of capacity of the CIDP participants to run the Programme.
- iv. Capacity building and self-reliance were positive outcomes of the group approach of the CIDP.

This study offers theoretical and practical applications for developing micro-enterprise programmes aimed at improving the socio-economic development of the rural women. A model of participation of rural women in micro-enterprise programme was developed. The model suggests that participants must first be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills needed in entrepreneurship in ensuring sustainability of the participation of the rural women in a micro-enterprise programme.

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

**PENGLIBATAN WANITA DESA SECARA BERKELOMPOK DALAM
PROGRAM PEMBANGUNAN INDUSTRI KECIL DI KUCHING, SARAWAK**

oleh

MUNIRAH MOHD HASSAN

November 2005

Pengerusi: Professor Dr. Rahim Md Sail, PhD

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Kajian ini bertujuan untuk memahami penglibatan wanita desa dalam Program Pembangunan Industri Kecil secara berkelompok anjuran Kementerian Pertanian Sarawak. Peserta kajian terdiri daripada ahli program pembangunan industri kecil dari kampung Sejingkat, Buntal, Telaga Air dan Selang Ulu yang terletak di Daerah Kuching. Seramai tujuh belas peserta kajian telah dipilih dan ditemuduga. Kajian ini berpandukan kepada empat soalan seperti berikut: (i) Bagaimana wanita ini mula-mula menyertai program tersebut? (ii) Bagaimana program ini dibentuk? (iii) Apa kah yang difahami oleh wanita ini tentang program tersebut? dan (iv) Mengapa wanita ini meninggalkan program tersebut?

Penemuan kajian ini berdasarkan kepada kaedah kualitatif yang dijalankan oleh Pengkaji. Hasil kajian mendapati bahwa penyertaan wanita ini dalam program tersebut adalah kerana (i) memenuhi syarat bilangan ahli bagi melayakkan peserta

memohon program tersebut; (ii) nilai-nilai menghormati kepada golongan yang lebih tua dan (iii) minat dalam bidang perniagaan dan aktiviti program tersebut. Kedua, kajian ini mendapati bahawa tiada seorang peserta pun yang terlibat dalam pembentukan program ini. Peserta hanya dianggap sebagai penerima dan dikehendaki untuk mengimplementasi sahaja apa yang dirancang oleh agen pembangunan. Ketiga, kajian ini mendapati peserta kurang faham tentang konsep dan tujuan program pembangunan industri kecil ini. Akhir sekali kajian ini mendapati peserta tidak lagi menyertai program ini kerana kurang insentif, ketiadaan pemimpin yang bertanggungjawab, kurang pengetahuan untuk mengendalikan program dan tidak menepati janji yang telah dibuat oleh pihak program ini.

Rumusan yang dibuat berdasarkan kepada penemuan kajian ialah:

- i. Penyertaan dalam Program Pembangunan Industri Kecil ini hanya dapat bertahan untuk sementara waktu sahaja.
- ii. Peserta program hanya perlu menerima apa sahaja yang telah dirancang dan bukan sebagai penyumbang bersama untuk membentuk program.
- iii. Peserta kurang pengetahuan untuk mengendalikan projek ini.
- iv. Hasil positif dari penglibatan dalam pendekatan berkelompok ini ialah peningkatan keupayaan dan berdikari.

Hasil kajian ini boleh menyumbang kepada aplikasi teori dan praktis dalam melaksanakan program industri kecil yang bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pembangunan sosio-ekonomi di kalangan wanita luar bandar. Model penglibatan

wanita luar bandar dalam perusahawanan kecil telah dibentuk. Model ini mencadangkan agar para peserta hendaklah dilengkapi dahulu dengan pengetahuan dan kemahiran dalam keusahawanan sebelum menceburi dalam projek perusahaan industri kecil.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CIDP	Cottage Industry Development Programmes
CP	Community Participation
CD	Community Development
WEDA	Women's Economic Development in Agriculture

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Participation of the rural women in development programmes is recognised as an essential element in strategies for sustainable rural development (FAO, 1991). According to the FAO (1996), the key element in people's participation programme is the formation of small homogenous self-help groups as a first step in a long-term institution building process. The FAO People's Participation Programme has demonstrated that participation is possible when the people form small self-help groups that allow them to pool resources in pursuit of their own objectives. Thomas (1996) noted that the small-sized groups permit a high level of internal democracy and promote farmers' participation in Sri Lanka's rural development programmes.

Waheed (1997) in her assessment of group-based savings scheme in rural Pakistan found that the project has successfully achieved its main aim to increase the participation of the rural poor in development through the promotion of self-created groupings at the sub-village level, which engage in income and employment-generating and other need-fulfilling economic and social activities. Similarly, Geran (1996) in her study on the effect of group formation on rural women's access to services in Zambia found that the establishment of small, informal self-help groups has achieved in promoting the participation of women in the various development initiatives. The study also revealed a sustainability rate of 70 percent. In Sri Lanka (cited in News Archives, 1996) researchers found that small farmer inter-group associations had proven to be highly effective in promoting self-reliance, improved farming practices, group and individual

savings, and access to institutional credit. Government and other development agencies had found the group to be excellent “receiving systems” for their services.

There has been an increase in the number of women entrepreneurs in the past two decades due to the economic recession and the increased rate of unemployment in the mid-1980s, resulting in many of unemployed graduates choosing self-employment (Malaysia, 1991). The involvement of rural women in micro-enterprise and entrepreneurship programme has shown to improve the economy of the majority of the women. As contended by Tinker (1995), the impact of women’s rural development projects is on reducing poverty, promoting operational efficiency, opening up employment opportunities for women, and empowering them in terms of status, decision-making power and self-confidence.

Malaysia, in its attempt to improve and develop the rural sector, especially the lower income group, has recognised the importance of the people’s participation as an essential element in strategies for sustainable development. The emphasis on participation of women in a wide range of economic-based projects has been intensified in the New Economic Policy of Malaysia which was initiated in 1971. According to Jariah and Laily (1997), a rural enterprise project has the potential of providing an avenue for the rural women not only to improve their socio-economic well-being, but more so to increase their entrepreneurial abilities and personal empowerment. The study by Sarimah (1994, cited in Jariah and Laily, 1997) shows that women’s micro-enterprises contributed to about 30 percent of the total household income. The micro-enterprise activities provide

opportunities for women to develop the skills in decision-making, problem-solving and information-seeking.

The group-based approach has been favoured in promoting the participation of the rural women in the cottage industry development programme aimed at improving their socio-economic status. The rural development agencies such as the Agriculture Department, Farmers Organisation Authority, and more recently, the Ministry of Women Development have actively supported the involvement of women in rural micro-enterprises to promote economic development. The activities of this sector include agriculture, food processing, retail businesses, tailoring and handicraft.

In the State of Sarawak (Figure 1), the Ministry of Agriculture is the agency responsible for planning and implementing agricultural and community development programmes. One of the community development programmes implemented by the Department of Agriculture is the Cottage Industry Development Programme (CIDP), aimed at improving the socio-economic well-being of rural women. The primary goals of the CIDP were to increase household income and provide useful employment for the rural women in improving their socio-economic conditions.

The CIDP was implemented through the participation of the rural women as a group based on the needs and interest of the people and availability of resources in the area.

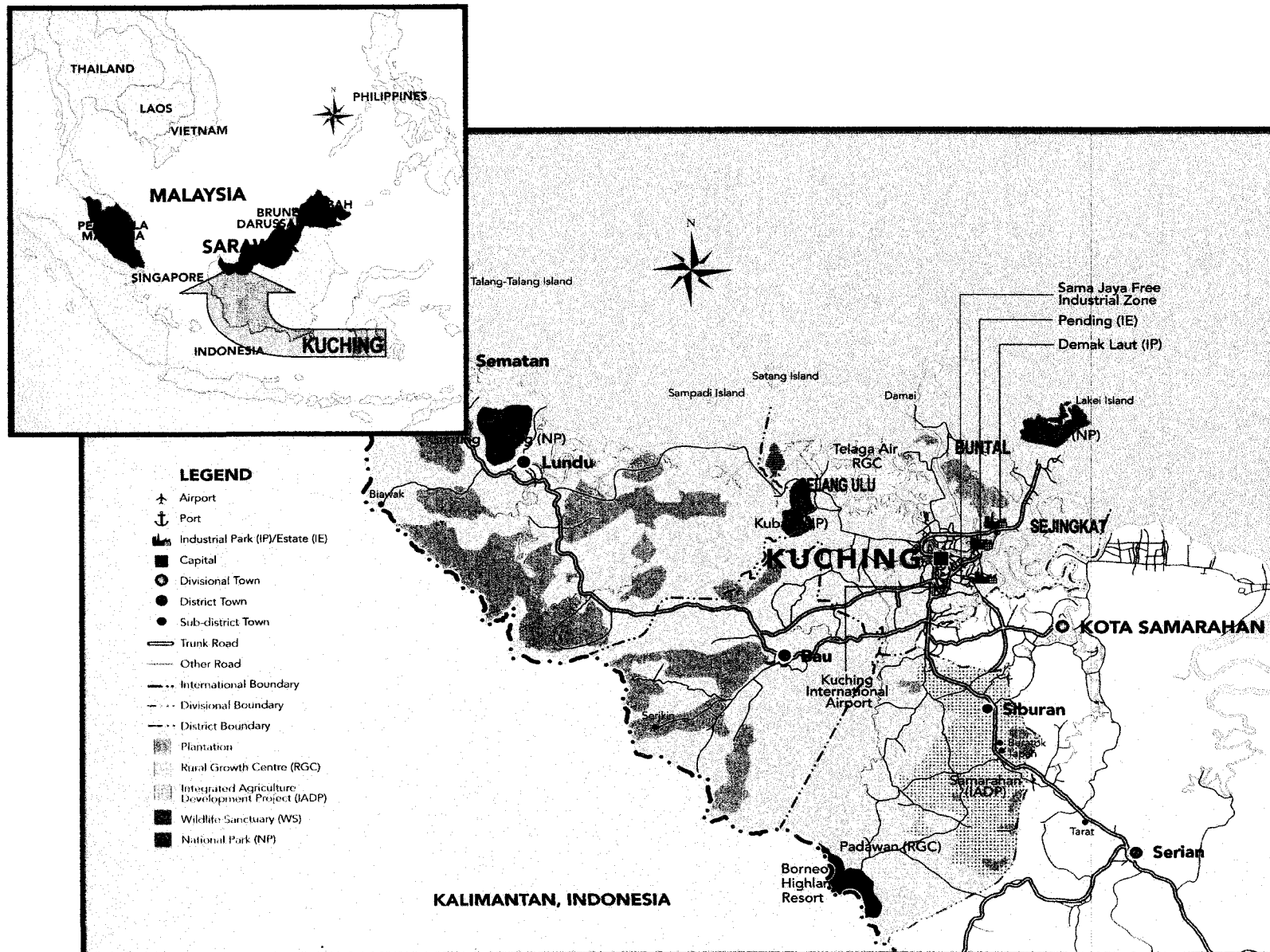


Figure 1: Locations of the CIDP Villages in Kuching, Sarawak

The CIDP was intended to bring sustainable benefits to the participants of the Programme, namely the rural women. Programme participants were given assistance in the form of building materials, equipment and other accessories to open up or improve the existing processing centres.

Background of the Problem

The Cottage Industry Development Programme (CIDP) was implemented in 1992 with the main aim of developing viable small-scale industries among rural women groups in the processing of marine products, agriculture products and handicraft. The marine and agriculture food processing activities include the production of *keropok ikan* (fish chips), shrimp paste, salt fish, *kerepek ubi* (tapioca chips), various types of traditional cakes, sago biscuit, *gula apung* (nipah palm sugar), coconut oil, bakeries, noodles and fruit jam. The handicraft programme includes sewing, basketwork made from various materials such as rattan, *nipah* palm, bamboo and *bemban* (arrow root family), beads made into hats, necklaces, belts, rings and pendants and woodcraft.

When this study was conducted there were a total of 204 villages with 4,242 rural women all over Sarawak who participated in the Programme (Agriculture Department, Sarawak, 2001). The activities in the Programme were implemented through the participation of women's group based on the needs and interest of the groups and availability of the resources in the areas. Each women's group consisted of a minimum of two members and a maximum of twenty three members. Besides the material assistance, the participants

were given training to enhance their knowledge and skills in the areas of their involvement. Officers from the Agriculture Department would monitor the participants' activities from time to time in ensuring that the Programme was successful.

The CIDP in Kuching

Kuching Division, the smallest of the eleven divisions in the State of Sarawak, has an area of approximately 4,566 sq. km. It comprises three districts, namely Kuching, Bau and Lundu, with a total population of 542,000 people (State Planning Unit, 2001). From 1992 till 2002, there were a total of ten CIDPs implemented in Kuching District with a total of 97 participants (Table 1). The villages in Kuching District that participated in the CIDP were Kampung Buntal, Semariang Batu, Telaga Air, Selang Darat Sejingkat, Bako, Rampangi, Stapok, Batu Kawa and Bako Tengah.

Each individual village developed its own products depending on the availability of the resources in the respective villages. For example, Kampung Bako, being a fishing village, produces fish products such as *keropok ikan* (fish chips), shrimp paste and fish cake. There were four villages involved in sewing activities, namely Kampung Buntal, Sungai Apong, Telaga Air and Batu Kawa. The rest of the villages were mainly involved in the production and selling of traditional cakes/cookies.

Statement of the Problem

The yearly reports of the CIDP (Table 1) in Kuching show that the net profit of the sales of food/handicrafts had been satisfactory and in some cases there was a marked profit margin. The CIDP remained a viable Programme in terms of profit, from its implementation in 1992 and up to the time of conducting this study. However, as depicted in Table 1, the CIDP in seven villages failed to sustain its group members except for Bako, Rampangi and Stapok which were run by family members. The CIDP had not been successful in sustaining its group members for long even though the Programme was formed according to the needs and interests of the group members. The informal, homogenous and voluntary groups were not able to sustain their members. Most of the projects were abandoned and in some cases the projects were left with only one member who took over as an individual or family business.

Sustaining the participation of group members to function collectively, either in making decisions or implementing group activities, is critical to ensure success of group projects. The present strategy of developing the rural women through the CIDP has not been successful in sustaining their participation. Issues that have hindered effective participation and implementation of the CIDP need to be explored. The issue of ability of the members of the CIDP in playing a participative role in development programmes is regrettably often disregarded. The CIDP groups, which were informal self-help groups, were formed around viable income-generating activities and foremost were voluntary and self-governing yet failed to sustain participation of their members. Contrary to most studies in the literature which viewed the group-based approach to socio-economic