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Exploring the status of Community Capacity Building towards urban poverty alleviation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Mahaganapathy Dass, Sarjit S Gill, Puvaneswaran Kunasekaran

Abstract: This paper presents the level of community capacity building attained by the urban poor minority group of My Kasih program participants towards urban poverty alleviation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. My Kasih is one of the Non-governmental Organization focused to combat urban poverty issues in the country. This study was conducted at Kuala Lumpur urban squatters' concentrated destination in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Qualitative approach was used where in-depth interview was used as the data collection method. The results show that the community does not have full capacity and they are still dependent on outsiders' assistance. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to existing body of knowledge within urban poverty and community development disciplines.

Keywords: Urban poverty, community capacity building, urban poverty

I.   INTRODUCTION

Poverty is defined as hunger, lack of shelter and inability to obtain for medical treatment (Bocciaetal., 2011). In addition to that poverty is considered as powerlessness and lack of freedom. Besides that, poverty is a condition characterized by poor housing, inadequate food, low income and loss of employment (Ajayi et al., 2013). These essentials that are needed are known as material resources such as food, water, and shelter or social resources like access to information, education, health care, social status, political power or the opportunity to develop meaningful connections with other people in society. Based on this statement poverty is identified as shortfall in consumption and deprivation of basic capabilities (Nussbaum, 2006). In terms of the aspect of "inabilities", poverty is perceived as the inability of the poor. This refers to access to basic needs such as food, clothes, shelter, education, health facilities, welfare and other social facilities. There are two aspects in defining poverty, which are "lacking of" and "inability"(Sen, 1981). In first aspect, "lacking of" refers to insufficient quantity of food and incomes, unemployment, low health level, unsecured shelter conditions, low education levels, inability to access modern facilities, and unsecured jobs (Zaman,1999). Capacity building is an important element in research in the field of community development. In the past fifty years, the term is rarely used capacity building in policy making (Noya,2009).

However, the term empowerment is used arbitrarily (Eade,1997). When it is used indiscriminately, it is feared it will not achieve the exact purpose of the use. Community capacity building basically refers to 'local solutions to local problems' that allows communities to overcome problems, ultimately without relying on external sources (Atkinson and Willis, 2006). In the context of the major components of community development the ability to leverage community development process is the physical capacity (infrastructure and material resources), economic capacity (funds, credit, grants - financial resources), support capacity (government policy and practice) , and finally, the community capacity (Rahim and Asnarulkhadi, 2010).

According to (Atkinson and Willis, 2006) community capacity building is defined as a network, organization, attitude, leadership and skills that enable communities to develop according to their own preferences and needs. Community capacity is the result of a dynamic interactive process of knowledge, attitudes, skills and practices of community development (Rahim and Asnarulkhadi, 2010). 'Capacity' that includes a variety of components, the people who are willing to get involved, skills, knowledge and abilities, well-being and health of the community, the ability to identify and take advantage of, motivation and ability to carry out initiatives, infrastructure, institutional support and physical resources, leadership and structure needed for participation, economic and financial resources as well as the policies and systems (Frank and Smith, 1999).

According to Cavaye (2000), the government also played a role in developing community capacity include several principles, namely:

a) Provide a "vehicle" for the local communities to express and act on existing problems.
b) Evaluate the appropriate interaction with the community through "negotiations" for a genuine partnership and facilities ,
c) The relationship between civil servants and members of the community is very important,
d) Unity is an intermediate between culture community involvement with grassroots participation,
e) Members of the community "forget" about the government's role is just as "suppliers" and the government "forget" approach to technical assistance to communities.

Generally, community capacity building is not an evolutionary process, but rather it can be designed to achieve an effective community development (Rahim and Asnarulkhadi, 2010).

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So, be a need to build the capacity of people in the developing country to promote economic growth and improve the quality of health (James, 1998). Without proper planning in community capacity building, development at the community level has negative outcomes.

II. METHOD& MATERIALS

This study employs a qualitative approach. The respondents of this study are the low income minority people of the squatters area of Kuala Lumpur. The respondents are selected on one criteria which is their official participation in Mykasih programme which is conducted by MyKasih Foundation. The aim of this program is to enable the community to build their own capacity towards sustainable community development. The ultimate target is to reduce urban poverty in long run. In-depth interview was used as the data elicitation method. In terms of data analysis, thematic analysis is utilized.

III. RESULT

Majority of the informants claimed they neither know how to get the resources to grow the business nor have access to resources to develop their business. However, they claimed that there is adequate training to improve knowledge and management skills to improve their business.

"I can honestly say that I do not know how to get the resources to grow the business or have access to such resources but as far as developing knowledge and management skills is concerned to improve their business, there is ample training. We do not have issues on training to develop knowledge and management skills for business but we have issues with resources to grow the business because we neither know how nor have access to these resources. All these training to improve knowledge and management skills are really very good and necessary for business but we also need resources like capital and the real issue is we do not know how to gain access to the resources to run a business" (Informant 1, 45 years old, Kuala Lumpur).

"I am sincerely grateful for the MyKasih Entrepreneurship Programme which provided us with knowledge and management skills and prepared us for business but we cannot go further because we do not have access to resources like capital to start a business. We can surely do something soon if we knew where to get the resources. I wished I knew where to look for resources because without resources, there is practically nothing that we can do and our situation is not going to improve until we know how to gain access to resources. Getting a loan is impossible because I do not have any collateral. However, the knowledge and management skills acquired have prepared us for business" (Informant 5, 27 years old, Kuala Lumpur).

"The MyKasih Entrepreneurship Programme has given me sufficient training in business management but I also need resources to start a business. Even to start something small I need around RM50,000.00 and the problem now is I do not know how to find this money. Finance has always been the stumbling block for me besides education. The training has made up for the lack of education but to start something, I need resources and I do not know how and where to get it. I wished the government would render assistance in this matter" (Informant 7, 41 years old, Kuala Lumpur).

Although sufficient training is given by the MyKasih Foundation, some respondents felt that financial assistance is much more important in building their community capacity.

"I honestly do not want to go through the hassle of applying for a loan at this age and I will most probably not be able to get one. I do not know how else to find the resources. I also do not want all these training in business management to go to waste especially after they have prepared us well. I believe that the MyKasih Entrepreneurship Programme was effective and prepared us well for the business world and if only someone could show us how to gain access to resources, then the programme would be complete" (Informant 9, 55 years old, Kuala Lumpur).

Through this MAD programme the participant able to acquire knowledge that will enhance the capacity building but they need more resource to uplift themselves from the poverty. The Level of Attainment of Capacity Building of MyKasih participants is measured with capacity building dimensions

Table 1: The Level of Attainment of Capacity Building of MyKasih Participants

Capacity building	Indicators	M	SD
Capacity	1) I have access to resources to develop the business.	2.85	0.361
building	2) I know how to get the resources to grow the business.	2.86	0.382
	3) I have access to financial resources to grow the business.	2.73	4.11
	4) There are adequate training to improve knowledge and management skills of my business.	0.411	0.823

The first indicator of this dimension which is, the participants' having access to resources to develop their business that recorded a mean value of 2.85 indicates participants are still not fully capable of gainingaccess to resources for business development. The second indicator of this dimension which is, the participants having sufficient knowledge how to get resource to grow their business that recorded a mean value of 2.86 indicates that despite all the entrepreneurship training provided, the participants still lack capacity to participate fully in community development. The third indicator of this dimension which is, the participants having access to financial resource that scored a mean value of 2.73 indicates the inability of the participants to secure financial assistance for their business venture.

Lastly, the fourth indicator of this dimension which is, the participants having adequate training to improve knowledge and management skills to improve their business that scored a high mean value of 4.11 indicates the significant role played by MyKasih Entrepreneurship Programin community development and urban poverty eradication.

IV. CONCLUSION

The perception of the community is often neglected by the authorities making the community feel that they are not empowered. The community agreed that the outsiders especially the government always discuss with the community before any implementation of projects. According to the respondents, the discussions are considered as mere routine for the officers to show respect to the residents. The final decision on development projects will eventually be taken by the government. If this goes on, the community will feel detached from any community development projects initiated by the government. Thus, the government should not just consult the community simply to meet the administrative procedures. They should respect the community's ideas and give them opportunities to make decisions. By doing this, the community can learn by themselves and improve their status.

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