

## Geography of the Poor: Case Study of a District in Sarawak, East Malaysia

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**Abstract:** This study emphasizes on two important points: first, area markedly differentiated by socio-economic levels and development exposure cannot be reached through standardized development policy. Second, poverty issues are intermixed and intertwined among cultural and between social and political differences. And, because of this complex differences, the interpretation and the subsequent implementation of poverty policies tended to be vague and marginalizing. Kuching District, the most rapidly urbanizing area in Sarawak is selected as the case area. This study finds, despite dynamic growth, the image of past history, that is villages distinctly separated by ethnic and economic differences have remained relatively intact. Sadly, in retaining the old living approach many are incrementally left out on current opportunities. To join the already competitive economy and society proved to be very difficult for these villagers, especially when most of them have no skill and education. The dilemma facing policy-makers is that they cannot stop development while waiting for these backward villagers to make adjustment. While many villagers could not make adjustment fast enough to meet current living requirements. The gap is widening and policy-makers are still contemplating.

**Key Words:** Poverty, Illiteracy, Geography, Decision-making

### Introduction

A third or about one billion of the world population are poor. Most of the poor are in the south, and the worst area is Asia (World Bank, 1997). Within Asia differences of poverty are further differentiated between East, South, and South-East Asia. The differentiation as a matter of fact can be refined down to intra village level. Ironically, poverty policy and strategy are rarely differentiated according to geographical areas, rather they are formalized according to administrative or political boundary. In the case of Malaysia, for example, there is one poverty policy for the whole country and one poverty line for every state. Paradoxically, these rules and indicators are used despite glaring differences between West and East Malaysia, between states, within states and between villages in Malaysia. The act of aggregating poverty indexes has efficiently ignores the state of people who are not within the designated poverty line. For example, in the case of Sarawak, a poor household is defined as those with a monthly income of less than RM543 and a family size of more than 4.8 persons. This guideline merely tells Sarawak aggregate standard of living; it provides zero messages, for example on poverty type, the depth of inequity within the poor and non-poor, and the differentiated impoverishment among the poor themselves.

The issue highlighted above is however becoming important concern among many researchers (Guillaume, 1998, Henninger, 1998, Bigman and Fofack, 2000; Akinyemi, 2001). Simply because without differentiated information on the poor, distribution of resources will continue to be inequitable and issue of marginalization will remain unchanged. Conversely, disaggregate information on the poor could provides decision-makers with facts that are directly relevant to the area and villagers needs.

In this study, Kuching District an area (about 2293.84 km<sup>2</sup>), which takes up only 1.8 percent of Sarawak land area (124,450 km<sup>2</sup>) is selected to exemplify the difficulty in interpreting poverty, and accordingly the drawbacks policy-makers may face in standardizing poverty interpretation. A brief background of the district is provided in next paragraph as a way to highlight the status of the district within the context of Borneo and Sarawak, and most importantly the levels of differentiation that existed within the district itself.

Kuching is the second most urbanizing area (5.4 annual growth rate) on the Island of Borneo after Kota Kinabalu (6.3 annual growth rate) in Sabah, Fig.1. Topographically the district could be divided in two; the northern area is located in the lower reaches of Sarawak River, most of its land form is topographically low and undulating. The southern part is hilly and forested. These land forms interestingly relate directly with the district multi-cultural population way of living. The Bidayuh (or land dayak) who makes up about 13 percent of the district population commonly choose the hilly areas, living quite isolated from the hassle and bustle of Kuching urban activities, which is located in the northern part of the district. The Iban or Sea Dayak (make 7 percent of the district population) usually has similar living characteristics as the Bidayuh, but in this study they are found in the fringes of Kuching town. The Malays, which make 34 percent of the district population, are found in the lowlands, namely river embankments, the coastline and back swamps. Finally the Chinese, they represent more than 40 percent of Kuching population, most lived in well-organized and well-maintained town lands (DOS, 2000 and GOM, 2001).

## Materials and Methods

This study main objectives are to: 1 define and describe poverty through spatial patterns of income; 2 to provide new insights into the causes of poverty, which in turn can determine what type of interventions to consider; and, 3 to inform policy makers that uniform policy and strategy is not an effective approach, and cannot deliver policy decisions.

In developing this study, highest account was provided to the complexity and diversity of the so-called 'poor' communities in the Kuching District. The study underwent two initial phases before moving into the field. The first phase involved drawing of research methodology and exploring current research. Broadly, the task includes desk study of existing poverty research and documentation; a day workshop with officers in the area of poverty management, namely, the welfare office. In addition, interviews with related Government officers, namely Statistics Department and several NGOs agencies were carried out. Results of the preliminary study produced a list of households living below poverty line (that is, households with monthly income of less than RM543.00) and below core poverty line or households with monthly income of less than RM271.50. Geographically these poor households are spread out all over the district Fig. 2. Thus for the purpose of this research the disparate households were first group according to geographical areas. Four differentiated geographical groups were identified. Group 1 consists of villagers living near the coast, in this study they are referred as coastal villages. Group 2 consists of villages along the Sarawak river Embankment; they are referred in this paper as Riverfront. Group 3 consists villages that settled on semi-reclaimed and non-reclaimed Swamplands. They are referred in this paper as Swampland villages. The fourth group is villages that spread into the district interior areas; they are referred as interior villages Fig. 3. After organizing the villages by geographical groupings, the next step was selecting villages to be sampled from within each group. A total of 28 villages were randomly obtained (using table of random numbers) in proportion to number of villages within each grouping. Ten villages were selected from the coastal areas, six from the riverfront, four from the Swamplands, and eight from the interior areas; then, from within each village, households (villagers) were randomly selected in proportion to village total households. A total of 440 households were obtained - 181 households from the coastal areas, 136 households from the riverfront, 45 households from the Swamplands and 78 households from the interior areas. Questionnaires were the only instrument used to collect statistical data, and interviews were used to probe into opinion on major development issues, namely village politics and economic prospects. Apart from survey data, maps are equally valued in this research. In producing maps, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is the main software programs used to handle geographically referenced data. In this research, GIS is used firstly to capture survey data into visual format. Secondly, it is used to improve communication of analysis results.

## Results and Discussion

**Villages Socio-Economic Profile:** The starting point for understanding poverty must be from the area itself. Generally every area has its own history, a factor that rationalizes the area current situation. The findings of this study have specifically identify this fact, the growth and development of villages and villagers are inter-linked and inter-twinned with combinations of Sarawak rich cultural heritage, social history and more than hundred years of political history. Living arrangements of the distance past, which is about 150 years ago, are still apparent and in fact some villages are still adapting to the traditional way of life. The Bidayuh or land dayak whom retreated from the coast about 100 years ago for protection from other tribes (namely the Iban) have remained to dominate the interior namely the hills in the sub-district of Padawan. Whilst the Malays originally were sailors, boat-builders and fishermen, most have remained to populate riverbanks and the coastal areas. The Chinese who came to Sarawak as explorers and traders in the early 1800s, most have remained where they were few hundred years ago, then were trading posts, now are towns and urban centers. The villages' economic interests are also found not to differ (in type) from the past; most villagers have remained to source their livings from the natural settings - the sea, rivers, swamps and hills. Villagers near the coast are dominantly fishermen or engaged in fishing-related activities. Ironically, primary related activities have remained popular among the coastal villagers despite the existence of extensive resort-related development in the area. Research finds the main objective reason that hinders villagers' participating in the area development opportunities is inadequate education. About 11.4 percent of household heads (average age of 45) have never attended school, majority (14 percent) have only primary education and less than 2 percent completed a full secondary schooling. Frighteningly, almost similar statistics are found among villagers' children, in almost every household there are school dropouts, most completed up to 8 or 9 years of schooling only. In other words, most of these fishermen children leave school upon ending their lower secondary education, (Fig. 4 and Tab. 1). Ironically many of these dropouts, about 50 percent, are also working in fishing related activities. Others, who do not choose fishing-related activities seemingly are not better off, most opt to be only part-time workers in the village center or in Kuching City. Apparently, the once upon a time sea fearing adventurous villagers have now been turned into a more or less domicile people who dares to venture no further than the Kuching City. This statement is further supported by figures, which show that almost 99 percent of these coastal villagers have lived in their respective villages since birth and many have no plan to migrate. The riverfront villages Fig. 5 are located in the vicinity of Kuching City. Specifically they occupy the untouched area of Kuching City, the haphazard narrow path of the Sarawak River embankment. Because of this topography 90 percent of these villages could not be provided with proper sanitation (namely modern toilet) and urban infrastructure. Paradoxically these infrastructural and

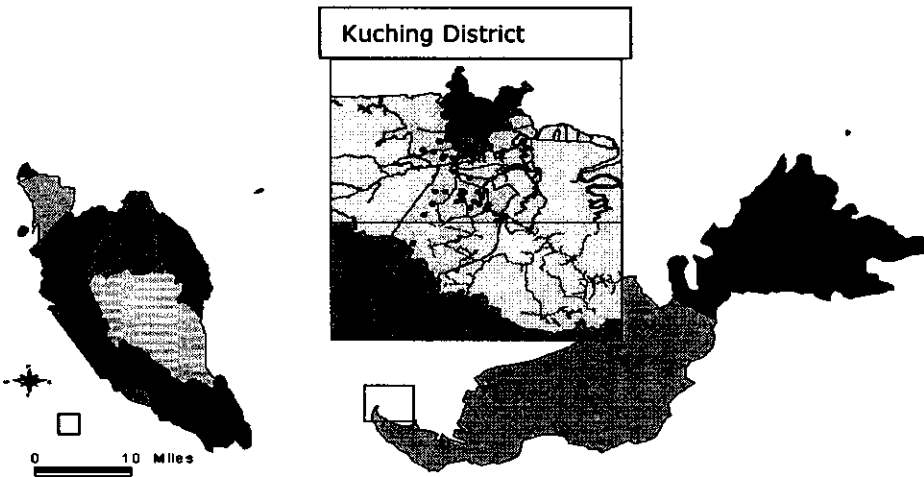


Fig.1: Location of Kuching District in Malaysia

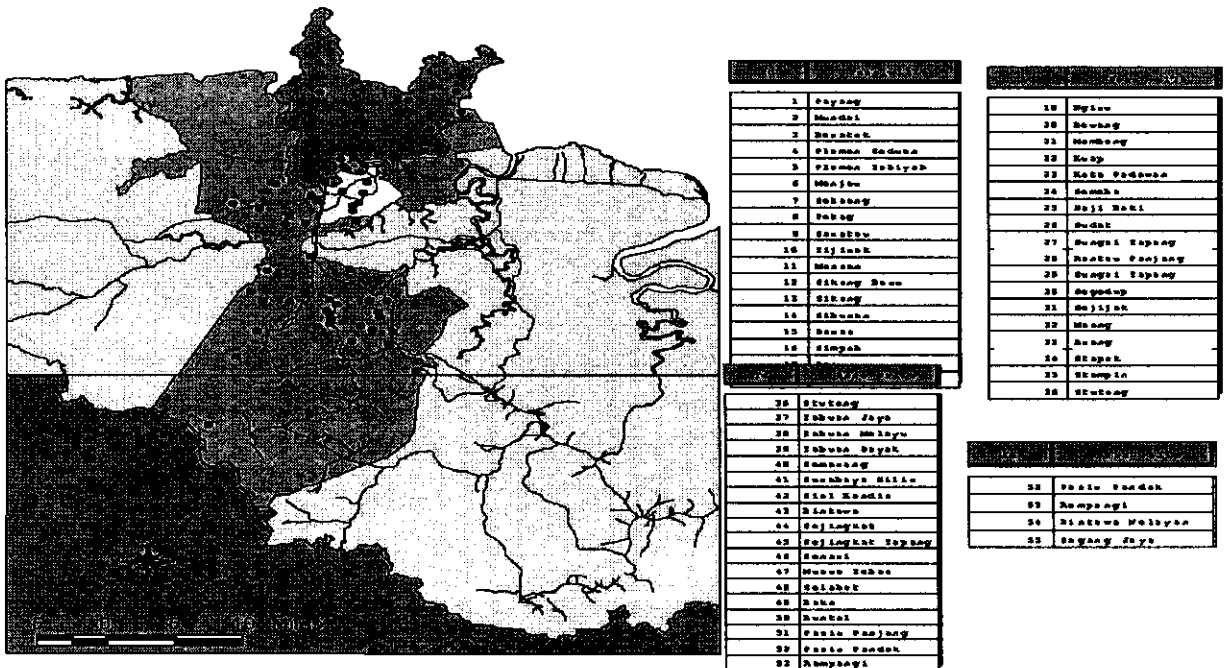


Fig. 2: Distribution of Villages in Kuching District with Significant Number of Poor Households

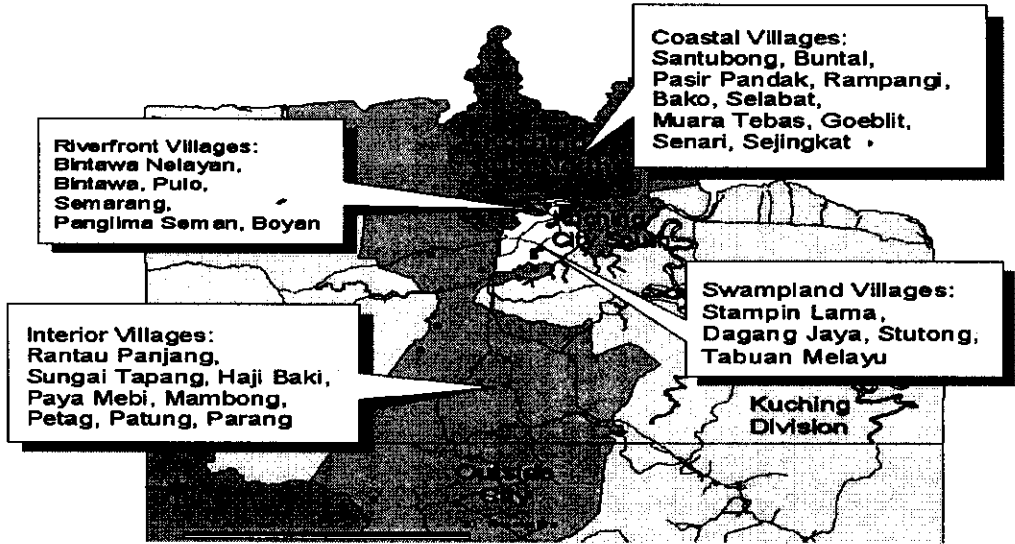


Fig. 3: The Twenty-eight Sampled Villages within Kuching District

Village	Population	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population Density	Distance from Kuching (km)	Access
Santubong	58,630	6,258	4,238	1,738	0.23
Buntal	47,875	7,432	3,625	1,625	1.28
Pasir Pandak	37,222	7,778	1,888	1,222	1.44
Rampangi	44,222	4,832	6,188	2,112	1.68
Bako	43,422	6,486	6,888	2,822	1.66
Selabat	42,125	5,568	3,758	1,728	1.88
Muara Tebas	42,246	6,272	3,182	1,888	1.64
Goebli	42,388	7,488	3,388	2,888	1.88
Senari	38,828	6,214	6,252	1,786	2.21
Sejingkat	38,875	6,812	7,928	2,122	2.86

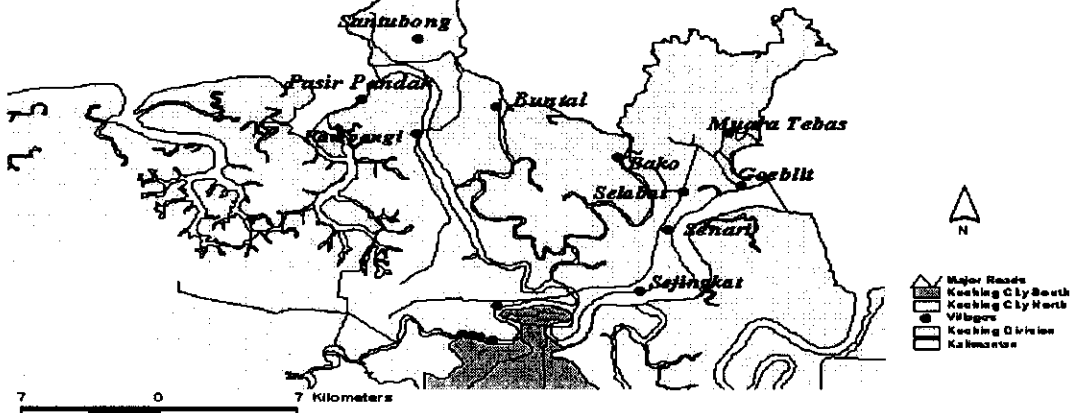


Fig. 4: Coastal Villages Socio-Economic Profile

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**Table 1: Employment and Job Types Among Villages**

Employment and Job (% from total in each village group)	Coastal Villages	Riverfront villages	Swampland Villages	Interior villages
Agriculture & fishing :	11.1	0.2	0	2.3
Fishermen, farmers, producing fishing and farming related products				
Manufacturing	3.0	1.4	0.5	0.7
Production worker				
Construction	1.6	0	1.1	1.8
Laborer				
Retail trade and business services	4.1	3.4	0.2	2.3
Petty trader, hawk, retailer, broker, cashier				
Government services	5.0	4.1	0.9	2.0
Clerical, technical, administrative				
Other services	12.7	10.0	5.5	4.3
Boat rider, driver, tailor, carpenter				
Unemployed	03.6	11.8	2.1	4.3
Welfare, Family support Pensioner				
HHH educational level				
Never attended school	11.4	08.4	3.9	7.7
Primary education (6 years schooling)	14.8	11.4	4.5	7.3
Lower secondary (9 years schooling)	07.0	06.6	1.8	1.6
Upper secondary (11 years schooling)	06.6	04.1	0.0	0.9
Post secondary (12 to 14 years of schooling)	01.4	00.4	0.0	0.2

**Table 2: Income Level and Income Sources of Self-Employed Villagers**

Employment & Income	Unemployed			Self employed						
	Sources of income			Sources of income (%)						
HHH income	welfare	family support	pension	farming related	fishing related	petty trader	shop keeper	Business	construction	general
No income		8.4								
RM 199 & less	4.8			0.5	0.4					0.4
RM200- RM399			4.3	1.8	5.9	2.5			2.9	3.0
RM400- RM599			2.3	0.2	3.6	1.6			1.6	1.1
RM600- RM799			1.1		0.9	1.1				1.2
RM800- RM999			0.7		0.3	0.5	0.2	0.4		0.2
RM1000-RM1199			0.2				1.4	0.7		0.2
RM1200-RM1399								0.2		
RM1400-RM1599								0.9		0.3
RM1600-RM1799										
RM1800 & more								0.5		
Sub-total	4.8	8.4	8.6	2.5	11.1	5.7	1.6	2.7	4.5	6.4
Total		21.8						34.5		

**Table 3: Income Level and Job Type of Employed Villagers**

Employment & Income	Employment Public and private Sector (%)						
	Laborer	General worker	Production worker	Clerical	Public service	Technical	Administrative & executive
No Income							
RM199 & less							
RM200- RM399							
RM400- RM599	0.5	1.6	0.7				
RM600- RM799	6.6	4.8	2.3	0.5	0.2		
RM800- RM999	2.9	3.9	1.6	0.9	0.3	0.2	
RM1000-RM1199	0.4	3.6	0.7	1.1	0.5		
RM1200-RM1399		1.4		0.7	0.2	0.2	
RM1400-RM1599		0.4	0.2	2.3	1.4	0.5	
RM1600-RM1799					0.2	0.7	0.9
RM1800 & more		0.2			0.4		0.3
Sub-total	10.4	15.9	5.5	5.5	3.2	1.6	1.2
Total				43.7			

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amenities problems have no effect on the opposite side of the Sarawak River, that is, the golden centre of Sarawak City. Geologically and topographically this golden area has similar land types and form as the poor area. Notwithstanding these depressing views, the prosperity of the prime has had direct economic benefit to the poor villages. The poor villages are physically separated from the prime area, but are not cut-off from it. Villagers could reach the prime area via five minutes boat ride that cost only twenty-five cents and via land route, which takes about 20 minutes.

Thus most riverfront salary earners reported working in Kuching City. However, the types of job associated with them are generally labor-related and clerical kinds. Like the coastal villagers, the riverfront villagers are also quite passive to changes and opportunities. About 90 percent have been living in their same village since birth and many show no inclination to move. And surprisingly, though, they are easily accessible to schools, many household heads are uneducated or has few years of education. The highest educational attainment level in these villages (1 percent of the total sampled households) is 12 to 14 years of schooling. All these people are employed in the public sector, working as lower level administrators and technicians. The illiterate, about 11 percent of sampled villagers, are generally petty traders and hawkers (selling cook foodstuffs and perishable groceries). Overall educational level reported from these villages are below urban standard and the trend is seen to be continuous because educational level among villagers' children are equally weak; about 50 percent of villagers children opt to stop schooling after 11 years. Career advancement in technical or on-hand skill that are generally taken up by urban school dropouts are also missing among these children, rather these dropouts have opted to be laborers or taking-up petty low-income jobs.

The Swampland villages Fig. 6 are visually unlike the other two former group of villages. Swampland villages depict the image of poverty at the front; physically their houses sit on a lot measuring about 400 to 500 sq. feet, partition by peat embankments measuring about 25 feet wide. These embankments surfaced in portion with planks, bricks and combination of sands and small gravel are used as dividers and as village roads. Houses or huts are built face-to-face and back-to-back. The side setback is between 1 to 2 meters wide and the space that make-up the setback is usually filled with piles of waste, natural and man-made. The rear setback is also an open pitch measuring about 3 to 4 meters wide and few meters deep and usually it is filled with waste of various kinds. Generally, planks are used as bridges to cross ditches. According to a local contractor it takes between 36 to 54 tons of sand to fill individual ditch. In term of cost, a budget of between RM200 to RM300 per ton excluding labor cost or between RM8000 -RM16000 is required to turn a house lot into hard surface land. Ironically, except for the very few, households that choose to settle on Swamplands are hopelessly poor. Some households lived on income of less than RM4.00 a day, a source of income usually comes from selling fish bait or worms which cost about RM2.00 a piece or

harvesting nipah plant which sells less than RM10 a bunch. The most fortunate among these poor lots are the occasional laborers, part-time maids and informal workers, such as tailors, baby-sitters, mat and basket weavers.

The type of jobs and level incomes reachable by these Swampland villages directly relates to their horrifying level of education. Only 1.8 percent of household heads completed 9 years of schooling and the majority is either illiterate or has less than 6 years of schooling. The high trend of illiteracy is not expected to change in the near future especially when the level of unschooled children (ages between 6 to 12 years old) are found to be high. One explanation that contributed to the appalling illiteracy level is newness to the area. About 90 percent of the Swampland villagers are resettled people from various remote areas in Sarawak and from the most appalled squatter settlements in Kuching. Swamp lot allocation is part of the Sarawak Government aims to improve the very poor standard of living. Thus far except for the very few, the ability to adjust and secure a better living has not happen. Their inadequate education and knowledge of urban opportunities have restricted their opportunities only to hardcore labouring jobs.

Finally, villages in the interior Fig. 7, its distribution is spread-out; the site of each village is well hidden by highlands and forests. Parang and some part of Petag, for example, are only partially accessible by vehicle. Physically, except for one village Haji Baki, appearances of other villages are haphazard and shabby. Villagers' sources of income are mixed. Villages that are located shorter distances to business centres and to a trunk road (namely, Haji Baki and Paya Mebi) are with the public and semi-Government employment. Remote villages, about 99 percent are subsistence farmers. Educational level of household heads (all male) is low with a mean of 3.56 years of schooling. Conversely, educational enrollment among the younger children (ages 6-12) is very high. The availability of primary schools within villages' compound explains the high enrollment. Similar convenience, however, is not provided to secondary school children and this has resulted high dropout at the secondary school level. However, rather interesting to finds that dropouts in these interior villages are adventurous; many migrated to other major centres in Sarawak and the Peninsular in seek for better living and skill training. This situation differentiates the mobility behavior of the interior villagers from that of the coastal and riverfront villagers or specifically between the Bidayuh and the Malays younger population. The Bidayuh younger generation is more selective and apprehensive to changes despite barriers in form of skill and education. Perhaps soon the differences in attitude that existed among the so-called marginalized group will add another level of inequity in the Malaysian society. For example, currently the known level of inequity is between the Chinese and other bumiputeras. Possibly in the near future Malaysia will have an inequity differences between the different types of bumiputeras. Broadly, three different type villages and villagers'

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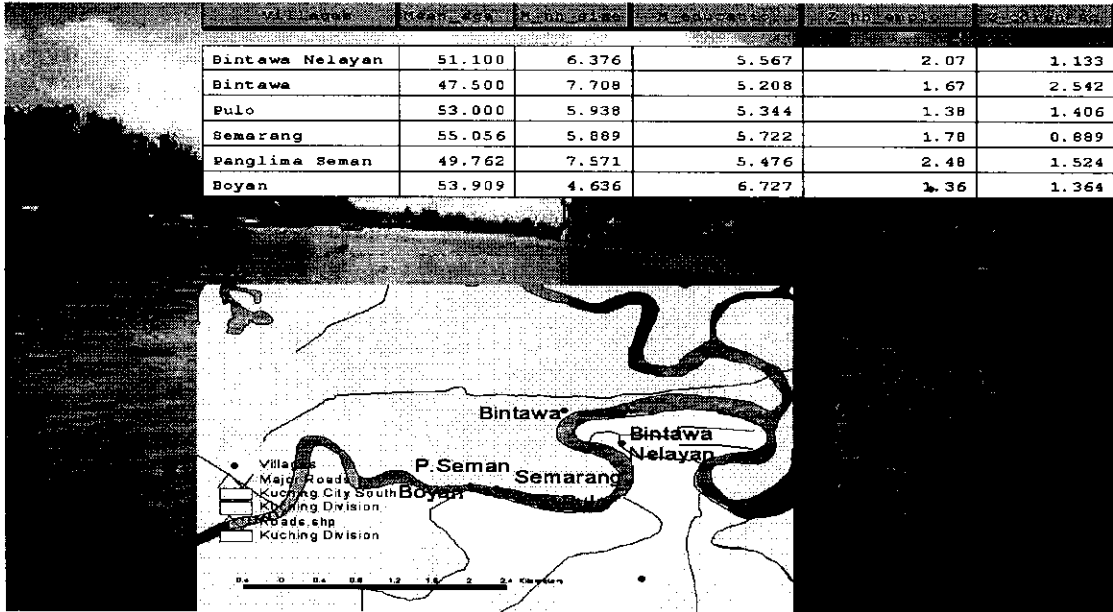


Fig. 5: Riverfront Villages Socio-Economic Profile

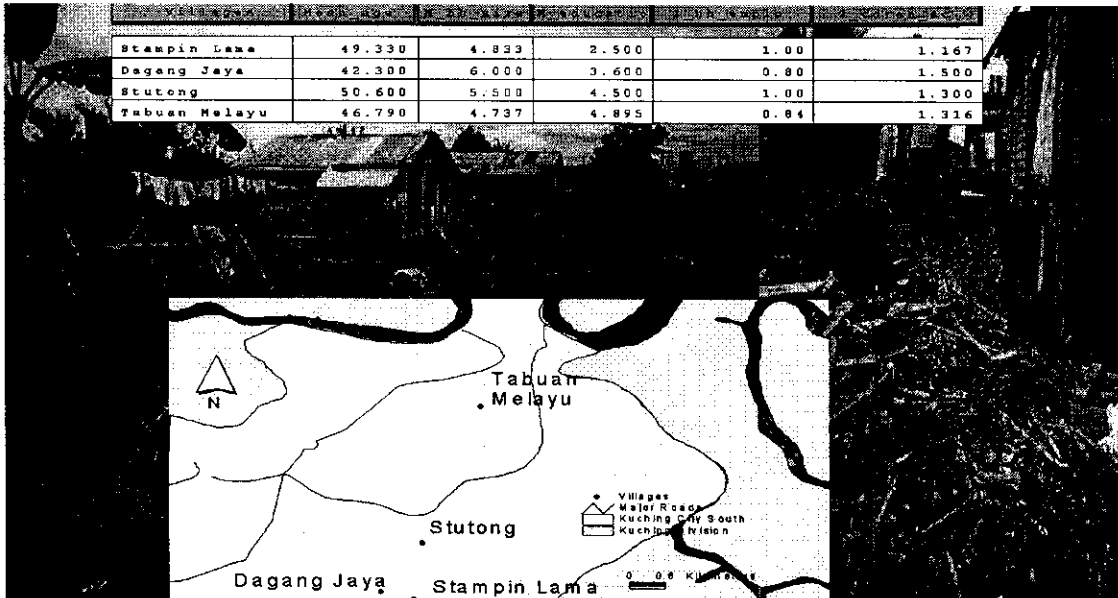


Fig.6: Swampland Villages Socio-Economic Profile

characteristics are found in the Kuching District. The coastal villagers treated life complacently, fearful and hesitant to changes. The riverfront villages have similar negative traits, in fact relatively less receptive to changes than the former. This is because the riverfront villagers though are physically separated from Kuching prime area but they are not cut-off from it. In other words, these villagers are directly exposed to Kuching urbanization progress and the prosperity surrounding the progress. Yet many contend themselves with trivial economic activities such as hawking and petty trading. The Swampland villagers are the most appalling group of villagers; rather difficult to predict their path towards improvement because most of these villagers apart from being illiterate are also ignorant about opportunities that could and should be available to them, such as welfare monies, free health advice and free primary education. Finally the interior villagers, to some extent they have highlighted that accessibility namely road and transportation can be a barrier to upward mobility. Yet at the same time they show that strong will and initiative to change will lessen and after time break those obstacles. The ability to adapt and innovate differentiates the poor and to some extent provides an answer on how the poor can move out of poverty or remain to be in poverty. The next section probe further into this concern by way of exploring villagers' incomes and expense patterns.

**Incomes and Expenses Patterns: Income.** Despite differences in location, accessibility to facilities, job types and income shares, households' income for all villages in this study differs only marginally. Riverfront villagers earning are relatively higher in comparison to the other three groups of villages, Fig 8. Their mean household head monthly income is RM622.21 and their mean monthly household income is RM869.09. The coastal villages have slightly lower earnings; mean household head monthly income is RM547.06 and their total mean household income is RM622.06. Household heads incomes among Swampland villages and the interior villagers are slightly lower than both the coastal and riverfront villagers. In fact, overall, the mean household income for both Swampland and interior villages fall below the state poverty line (which is RM543). The Swampland villages mean household income is RM424.00 while the interior villages mean total household income is RM538.00.

However through intra village comparison, five coastal villages - Santubong, Buntal, Pasir Pandak, Selabat, and Senari, are also included in this group. Subsequently among villages with poverty line income, Rantau Panjang and Petag (both belongs to the interior village group), are identified as the poorest poor villages or are living on half of the poverty line income - household income below RM271.50 per month.

Overall, the marginal differences in income among villages, directly relate with low level of education and the typical jobs that are associated with low education, (Table 2 and 3). In other words, the issue confronting the poor is embedded in education, which is interlinked and intertwined with opportunities, jobs and income.

An equally good approach to measure the intensity of poverty is through understanding the households' expense patterns (Eurostat, 1990). Specifically for this research

the approach seeks to understand where and how the poor spent their income.

**Expenses:** In this study, items included under expenditure list are foods, utilities, petrol, school expenses and miscellaneous (such as clothing, health and entertainment). When comparing these items, foods rank the highest, followed by utilities, school expenses and miscellaneous score last. Overall household expenses are strongly correlated to large household size. Consequently, level of income is also strongly correlated with expenditure; high-income correlates with high expenditure, Table 4. Through inter village group comparison, research finds that except for the Swampland villages, all other village groups are spending below their total mean monthly household income. However, through intra village comparison, Buntal, Pasir Pandak and Senari from the coastal village group, also reported spending well above their mean monthly household income.

Other than the identified overs-spending villages, this study finds overall the expenditure figures for all villages are only slightly below their household income (Table 5). Expenses on basic essentials consume most of households' income. On the average, all villages used more than 60 percent of their income on foods and utilities, and households with bigger members showing an even higher spending on these items. The very small balance left after spending on foods and utilities generally are rationed for equally important needs, such as schooling essentials, petrol, clothings and domestic essentials. Generally, households with larger number of children (or dependents) are left with lesser money for non-food items such as school needs. Conversely, households with larger number of working children fare better than households with smaller number or no working children. In short, large households that share household spending are better off than households that depend solely on the household head (Table 6). Nonetheless, the level of 'better-off', used here is with reservation, because contribution from income share only makes minimal changes to household income.

**Changes and Prospects :** As observed in the earlier part of this paper, low education and illiteracy are the main factors that pull the poor into deeper level of impoverishment. And, this situation will continue should level of school dropout remain unchecked. To curb or deter dropout in the context of the poor, nevertheless is complex because it is intertwined with parents and policy-makers behavior and culture. For example, there are households despite being their low earnings have managed to support all their children schooling expenses up to the highest level of education. Conversely, there are parents that are too complacent even to enroll their children in school. Of course, majority of poor parents are in between these two extremes. High school expenses is usually the key reason that forces parents to cut-short their children educational needs. And, children bad performances in school is also common reason used by parents to terminate children schooling.

Reasons for quitting school prematurely thus are quite subjective, is rather difficult to place it on a straightforward uniform educational agenda. Because a uniform poverty strategy will surely discriminate some



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**Table 4: Level of Expenses in Comparison with Socio-Economic Variables**

Variable: Independent * Dependent	Correlation
<b>HH total income:</b>	
➤ No. in school	0.269**
➤ HHH Income	0.818**
➤ Food bills	0.610**
➤ School expenses	0.438**
➤ HH total expenses	0.799**
➤ No. employed in household	0.339**
<b>HH total expenses:</b>	
➤ Children in school	0.410**
➤ HH total income	0.799**
➤ Food bills	0.823**
➤ Utility bills	0.845**
➤ School expenses	0.625**
➤ HH size	0.521**
<b>HHH source of income</b>	
➤ HHH educational level	0.483**
➤ No. employed in HH	0.163**
➤ No. of children schooling	0.271**
➤ HHH employed by	0.988**
➤ HHH income	0.586**
➤ Food expenses	0.059*
➤ Utility bills	0.124**
➤ School expenses	0.196**
➤ HH total expenditure	0.206**
<b>HHH educational level:</b>	
➤ HH size	0.109*
➤ No employed in household	0.157**
➤ No of children schooling	0.194**
➤ HHH employed by	0.460**
➤ HHH source of income	0.483**
➤ HHH income	0.639**
➤ Food bills	0.307**
➤ Utility bills	0.384**
➤ School expenses	0.190**
➤ HH total expenditure	0.427**

Notes: Correlation is \*\*significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed); \*significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

**Table 5: Villages Incomes and Expenses Pattern**

Kuching District	Mean total HH size	HHH Mean total income	HH total mean Income	HH total mean expenditure
Coastal villages				
Santubong	6.25	230.60	285.60	444.90
Buntal	7.44	508.13	539.38	542.94
Pasir Pandak	7.78	366.67	508.89	621.22
Rampangi	6.93	692.89	845.11	824.22
Bako	6.41	598.31	614.41	571.78
Selabat	5.50	516.25	541.25	498.13
Muara Tebas	6.27	557.18	637.18	471.09
Goebilt	7.40	435.00	565.00	578.50
Senari	6.21	510.00	535.00	450.57
Sejingkat	6.81	681.25	718.75	731.88
Riverfront villages				
Bintawa Nelayan	6.37	773.33	1130.00	721.67
Bintawa	7.71	729.17	816.67	727.58
Pulo	5.94	477.75	745.13	670.75
Semarang	5.89	543.78	741.56	725.28
Panglima Seman	7.57	430.14	771.76	763.33
Boyan	4.64	891.91	1014.64	866.18
Swampland villages				
Stampin Lama	4.83	380.00	430.00	410.00
Dagang Jaya	6.00	410.00	460.00	487.00
Stutong	5.50	439.00	607.50	529.90
Tabuan Melayu	4.74	437.37	478.68	460.16
Interior villages				
Rantau Panjang	3.10	190.00	247.00	217.50
Sungai Tapang	4.75	515.83	625.42	528.67
Haji Baki	5.32	715.26	903.95	709.74
Paya Mebi	4.30	438.00	443.00	441.00
Mambong	4.44	421.11	460.00	310.89
Petag	5.33	381.67	387.50	295.83
Patung	4.86	325.71	427.86	310.71
Parang	4.86	234.29	248.57	173.29

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Table 6: Villages Household Income, Expenditure Types and Income Shares

Kuching District	HH size	Number Employed	HHH total Income	HH total Income	HH Income share	Expenses					HH total expenditure
						Foods	Utilities	Petrol	School	Misc.	
Coastal Villages											
Santubong	6.25	0.85	230.60	285.60	55.00	286.50	67.40	17.00	61.50	12.50	444.90
Buntal	7.44	1.37	508.12	539.38	31.25	309.30	77.19	37.00	88.13	37.50	542.94
Pasir Pandak	7.78	1.44	366.66	508.89	142.22	368.80	71.22	77.78	47.78	55.56	621.22
Rampangi	6.93	1.60	692.88	845.11	152.22	353.30	151.78	107.10	129.30	82.67	824.22
Bako	6.41	1.65	598.31	614.41	16.09	283.10	106.81	85.28	66.88	29.69	571.78
Selabat	5.50	1.00	516.25	541.25	25.00	286.20	63.13	35.00	50.00	63.75	498.13
Muara Tebas	6.27	1.63	557.18	637.18	80.00	204.50	80.00	57.27	63.82	65.45	471.09
Goebliit	7.40	1.00	435.00	565.00	130.00	290.00	103.00	50.00	117.00	18.00	578.50
Senari	6.21	1.21	510.00	535.00	28.57	250.00	70.21	25.36	72.86	32.14	450.57
Sejingkat	6.81	2.06	681.25	718.75	37.50	418.70	140.63	74.38	91.88	06.25	731.88
Riverfront Villages											
Bintawa Nelayan	6.37	2.06	773.33	1130.00	356.66	338.00	138.33	109.60	82.33	53.33	721.67
Bintawa	7.71	1.66	729.16	816.67	75.00	320.80	148.42	66.04	126.88	65.42	727.58
Pulo	5.94	1.37	477.77	745.13	261.12	312.50	145.31	87.72	70.53	54.69	670.75
Semarang	5.89	1.77	543.77	741.56	197.77	333.30	151.67	119.10	87.22	33.89	725.28
Panglima	7.57	2.47	430.14	771.76	341.61	333.30	171.43	96.19	114.70	47.62	763.33
Boyan	4.64	1.36	891.90	1014.64	122.72	363.64	141.64	121.80	130.00	109.00	866.18
Swampland Villages											
Stampin Lama	4.83	1.00	380.00	430.00	50.00	208.30	45.00	55.00	43.33	58.33	410.00
Dagang Jaya	6.00	0.80	410.00	460.00	50.00	265.00	60.00	27.00	43.00	92.00	487.00
Stutong	5.50	1.00	439.00	607.50	168.50	290.00	68.90	50.00	51.00	70.00	529.90
Tabuan Melayu	4.74	0.84	437.36	478.68	41.31	258.90	75.95	28.42	54.74	42.11	460.16
Interior Villages											
Rantau Panjang	3.10	0.50	190.00	247.00	57.00	142.00	26.50	22.00	10.00	17.00	217.50
Sungai Tapang	4.75	1.00	515.83	625.42	109.58	318.30	64.92	57.08	50.83	37.50	528.67
Haji Baki	5.32	1.05	715.28	903.95	188.68	318.40	144.47	107.80	78.42	63.16	709.74
Paya Mebi	4.30	1.00	438.00	443.00	5.00	210.00	72.50	23.60	12.50	122.40	441.00
Mambong	4.44	0.44	421.11	460.00	38.88	194.40	37.00	32.22	36.11	11.11	310.89
Petag	5.33	0.50	381.66	387.50	5.83	183.30	36.67	31.67	44.17	00.00	295.83
Patung	4.86	0.42	325.71	427.86	102.14	178.50	37.86	32.86	32.86	28.57	310.71
Parang	4.86	0.28	234.28	248.57	14.28	91.43	03.29	21.43	34.29	22.86	173.29

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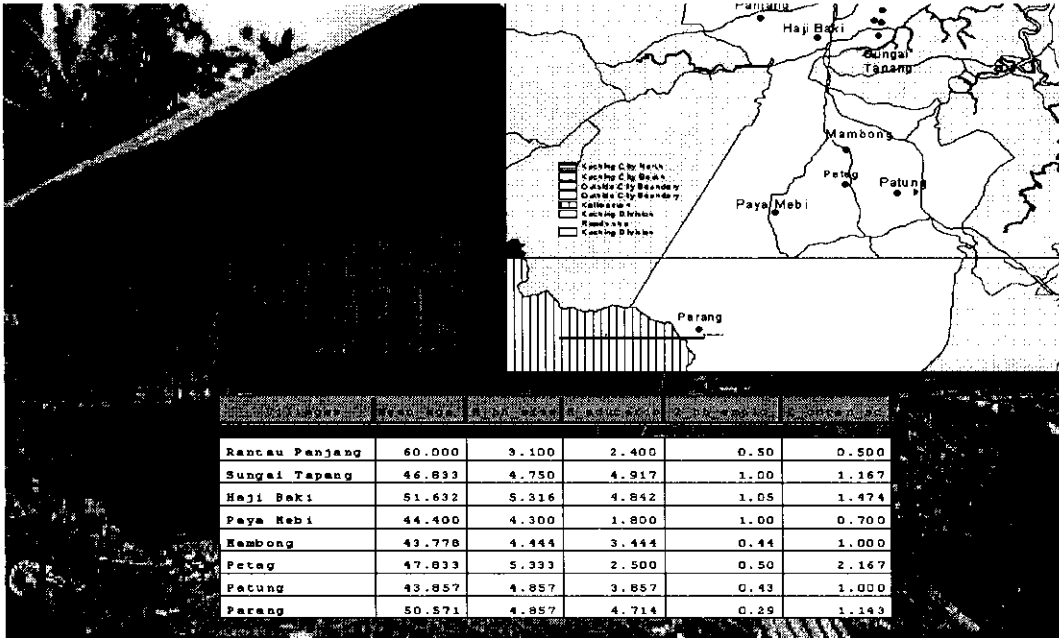


Fig. 7: Interior Villages Socio-Economic Profile

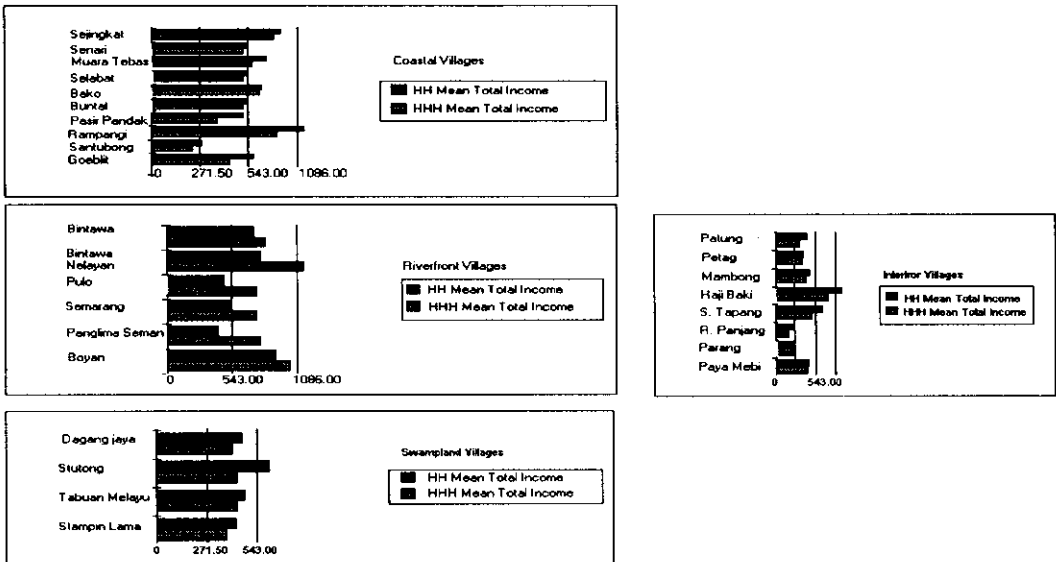


Fig. 8: Household and Household Heads Mean Monthly Income

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groups. The poor in the Swampland villages, for example, will not grab opportunities provided through mere policy guideline because most of them have not built the appreciation for things beyond the daily needs, which is food. For this level of poor, guidance has to start from ground zero and the offer for 'education' has to be all encompassing, that is compulsory education has to reach the children as well as parents. Conversely, the poor in the interior villages need not be guided as forcefully because most are already motivated to change, thus with convenience accessibility (roads and transportation) they will work their way out of poverty. Consequently, the solution provided to the interior villages may not work among coastal and riverfront villages. The type of motivation fitting for these villagers are blurred because their needs and demands are usually linked to sensitive cultural and political matters. Thus any development suggestion for these villagers has to be linked with political pressure or motivation.

Unquestionably, application of a national policy or appropriately a Peninsular Malaysia policy, will not work for this area because background of the people in the area specifically and Sarawak generally differs markedly from Peninsular Malaysians. In fact, equity difference is already acute within and between the Kuching District. An effective development strategy without doubt has to be guided by the equity differences that existed within the area.

The snapshot view of poverty as highlighted by this study exemplifies an approach that decision-makers can use to guide assessment in capturing and identifying true poverty cases or solvable poverty issues. The snapshot information highlights the concentration of different forms of poverty across the district. Correspondingly, these information are linked with information on the extent, depth and severity of poverty between the poor villages and within a poor village.

### Conclusion

This study reaffirmed the conclusion made by various sectors that poverty contains multifaceted issues (Nair, 2001, UNDP, 1997, Eurostat, 1990, Mokhzani, and Khoo, 1977). In this study, poverty is linked to both objective (namely income and education) and subjective

(namely culture and politics) issues. Further, within the context of subjectivity and objectivity, there are additional differentiation namely apparent segregation in living areas, type of dwelling structures and the condition of living environment. A situation of this nature demands a poverty strategy that is able to recognize these differences that existed between the poor areas and within the areas.

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