UTAR NEW VILLAGE COMMUNITY PROJECT
REPORT

NAME OF THE VILLAGE;
KAMPUNG BAHRU
PENANG

Project carried out by

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DATE OF COMPLETION
JULY 2015
HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE

Kampung Bahru new village is located in mainland Penang. It was established around 1945. According to Headmen, Mr Kang Hee Chai, as of July 2015 the village is listed as resettlement from 2008 where the resident is not original live at the current location. In the years before 1945, the village was located in Kampung Baru that in Bukit Mertajam District which is a few kilometers away from the current village.

Previously the village was built on land that did not belong to the villagers. Its residents had to relocate when the owner planned to develop the land. However, this more benefitted villagers in the long run because the area they vacated became a busy street. Nevertheless the shops and many business opportunities in this area have benefitted the villagers.

It’s a result of rapid development in nearby towns; Kampung Bahru’s socio-economic environment is different from that in many traditional new villagers. This village is full of shops and heavy traffic. Many traditional wooden houses have made way for modern houses. However, Kampung Bahru is not spared from the effect of out migration of its youths to urban areas to search for better job opportunities.
HOUSING, POPULATION AND TRANSPORTATION

Currently, there are approximately 120 households with around 400 villagers, 85% of whom are Chinese and 15% are Indian. Kampung Bahru’s population has declined over the past decade. Currently, 50% of its population is elderly people and about 40% are children. Young adults from a small minority in this village where there are 10% more women than men. This population structure is the result of the outmigration of young adults who seek better employment opportunities in urban areas.

Due to the need for land to cater for expansion of industries from nearby towns, some of the villagers have converted their houses into metal work factories, soya sauce factories, car workshops, etc. As a result, several families who were original settlers in this village have moved out, and several abandoned and dilapidated houses are found here. Some residents hope to sell off empty plots of land for the construction of factories.

Some traditional wooden houses dating back to 1945 are still standing in Kampung Bahru. These houses a built with high quality wood and they remain as solid structures. However, many traditional wooden houses are now replaced by concrete structures.

Cars provide the main mode of transport. Almost every household owns a car. Motorcycles are also a common sight in Kampung Bahru but these are used mainly for short distance travel. Unfortunately, there is no public bus service within the village and residents have to walk out of the village to the main road to catch a Rapid Penang bus.

There is a post office, a police station and five fire stations in the village. It can be said that the village has a high standard of public safety.

Free Wi-Fi is provided by the government, but this is not very stable. People often use their private mobile data networks.
Housing around Kampung Bahru

Housing around Kampung Bahru
Scenery around Kampung Bahru
ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

While many traditional new villages are surrounded by greenery, Kampung Bahru is surrounded by modern housing and shop lots. There is no land for economic activities like growing rubber trees and oil palm or fishing. In fact, Kampung Bahru’s economy relies mainly on its factories and shops. For example, there are two soya sauce factories in this village: Hup Seng and Song Guan. When we walk around the village, the strange smell from soy sauce production permeates the air. This smell is caused by the fermentation process which is crucial to soy sauce production. Both Soy Sauce factories are family run business. It is to be noted that Song Guan has operated in the village for many years. Both soy sauce producers distribute their good throughout Malaysia.

Besides that, there is one metal work factory which produces customized items for villagers and people in nearby areas. Its products include metal gates, metal racks, metal grills, etc.

Some villagers operate grocery shops which supply daily necessities, household items, etc. These shops are normally run by the older generation because the younger family members have moved to Penang Island to seek better employment opportunities.

Food stalls and restaurants in nearby are also operated by Kampung Bahru villagers. For example, some well known “curry mee” and “nasi lemak” outlets in Bukit Mertajam, a town close to Kampung Bahru, are run by villagers from Kampung Bahru.

The majority of young adults from Kampung Bahru work in Penang Island, Butterworth and Kulim because the village does not provide much work opportunity. Some of them work as professionals, some as technicians and mechanics, and others are entrepreneurs who run their own businesses such as telephone shops and restaurants.
Soya sauce factory
EDUCATION

Unfortunately there is no kindergarten, primary school, secondary school or university inside village boundaries. Children and teenagers need to go to schools which are located 5km away from the village. There are 7-8 kindergartens near the village where most village children are enrolled. There are a total of 6 primary schools (2 Chinese and 4 Malay schools) which are located within 5km of the village. For secondary schools, village children need to travel even further.

Village children travel to and from school by various means: the school bus, drop-off by parents who own cars, or motorcycles and cars driven by the older students.

All youngsters who wish to pursue tertiary education have to leave the village. Some of them will enroll in KTAR diploma-degree programmes which are offered at Batu Ferringi, Pulau Penang. Some of them study in UTAR Kampar or UTAR Sungai Long campuses. Some others proceed to other local universities. These students return to the village during their college/university holidays.
SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

90% of the villagers are Chinese while the remaining 10% are Indian. The Hokkien Chinese dialect is the language most widely used in Kampung Bahru. 80% of the populations are Buddhists, 10% are Christians, and the others are Hindus. Many villagers worship at a Chinese Temple built in 1950s. This temple is close to the village but not within its boundaries. There is no Hindu temple in the village either. Hindu residents travel to Bukit Mertajam for worship. Christian villagers need to travel 5km to their church in Bukit Mertajam every Sunday.

Older villagers often gather at local coffee shops to while away their free time among friends. Gardening also occupies the time of many locals who plant fruit trees and flowers in their gardens.
Fruit trees around Kampung Bahru houses
PROBLEMS

The major problem of the village is the aging labor force because most of its young adults have moved to Penang Island, Butterworth and Kulim. This is a common phenomenon in new villages in Malaysia. Better job opportunities have drawn many youths to the urban areas. There are nevertheless some young adults who live in the village and travel to nearby towns for work every day.

Another problem is environment cleanliness. One can see garbage strewn outside houses and in the drain. Some gardens are rather unkempt and the grass has not been cut for ages. Such places are ideal for pests to breed and are also a danger to public health.

Besides that, the roads inside the village are narrow and can barely allow 2 cars to pass. Irresponsible villagers who park their cars at the side of the road not only block the flow of traffic but also increase the likelihood of road accidents. If a truck parks along village roads, there is no room for other vehicles. Since there is a Soy sauce factory in the village, there is a truck which comes to Kampung Bahru often to collect cartons of soya sauce.

The government provides piped water and electricity to the village. There is no Postal Office, TNB Office, Police, etc. Residents need to travel to towns to pay their bills and access other services provided by government. The absence of a local police station poses a problem for crime prevention.

Many old houses are around 70 years old and made of wood. The danger of termites and structural problems in such old buildings need to be addressed.
Housing around Kampung Bahru
RECOMMENDATION

Leaders from the village need to collaborate with the authorities on ways of retaining the younger generation in Kampung Bahru. It should be noted that any development in Bukit Mertajam will have strong spillover effect on Kampung Bahru.

Government support for local industries in the form of subsidies, tax exemption, technical support, etc could attract Malaysian as well as foreign investors. Other incentives to encourage new investors may include low interest loans. All in all, new investments mean more job opportunities which in turn increase the likelihood of retaining the youths in this village.

Some campaign about environmental care should be carried out. The main reason the environment is not clean is because of poor awareness about the environment and public health issues. Activities in an environmental care campaign may include and proper methods of garbage disposal. Given the small population in this village, the establishment of the post office here may not be viable. A mobile kiosk from Pos Malaysia could be setup to benefit especially the elderly and those who do not know how to drive. This mobile kiosk may operate for limited hours but on specific days which is made known to villagers.

During the day, the younger villagers are away at school or at work. It is mainly the older generation who are around and they may not have the ability to defend themselves against criminals or to handle emergencies. A “pondok polis” in this village would be a great help to all residents.

The local authorities should set up a system for inspection of the older houses to ensure they are structurally safe. It defects are detected early, measure can be taken to correct them and to preserve the old buildings which have cultural and historical value.
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