BALING

BALING
from DEMONSTRATION to INDUSTRIALISATION
A Collection of Essays in Time Geography

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Preface

Baling is a place located in the northern frontier of Peninsular Malaysia. Most Malaysians know *where* it is. But, *what* is Baling?

Simply, Baling is remembered for shaping a part of Malaysia's post-Independence history. The place is synonymous with popular, grassroots uprising, something one does not expect for a well governed, sedate Malaysia. This is the place where hungry and angry smallholders and their compatriots staged the "Hunger March" in December 1974. They were among the 70 per cent or more of the poor in the district who wanted to tell the world that they had enough of being squeezed between rising costs of living and slumping rubber prices. There was virtually no development. That was Baling in Time Frame One.

Things changed thereafter although only slowly. By 1988, the smallholder poverty level slipped a little to around 70 per cent. That was still an unpleasant figure but there was more access to basic amenities like electricity, clean water and tarred local roads. Development had been initiated. That was Baling in Time Frame Two.

The pace of change quickened thereafter. By 1994, the smallholder poverty level slumped to around 45 per cent. That dramatic nearly thirty per cent drop signified the fruition of replanted rubber holdings and other development projects with long gestation, which were embarked upon since the mid Eighties. Development had delivered. This made for Baling in Time Frame Three.

Three contrasting phases of a place's life and time - Baling before, during and after development. This is how Baling became an inviting exercise in time-geography for me.

Time-geography is an approach to contextual theory originally developed by the Swedish geographer Torsten Hagerstrand and his associates at the University of Lund (the Lund School), which conceives of time and space as providers of 'room' for collateral processes. The latter term is of fundamental importance implying that time geography emphasizes the continuity and connectedness of sequences of events which necessarily take place in

situations bounded in time and space, and the outcomes of which are thereby mutually modified by their common localization (Hagerstrand 1976, 1984).

My Baling treatment, however, seeks to depart from the usual time-geography's illustrative and confined to the small-scale, short-term and essentially individual level. Rather it seeks to include a greater regard for the changing larger political-economy structures that have shaped Baling since then. So, what this book presents is more of a Baling 'choreography of existence' to borrow from Pred (1977) where the chapters register the significance of flows and encounters in Baling's socio-economic space for the subsequent constitution and construction of its life reality.

In other words, I was doing a contextualised time-geography with Baling. The ten chapters provide the varying contexts to understand the time-space settings and sequences of human activity of, and in, Baling which essentially were and are its own constitution. The Baling contextual explanations thus depend upon identifying relations of coexistence, connection or 'togetherness' there, which I did mainly through the life and time of its rubber smallholders. The chapters thus represent an attempt to recapture the flow of human agency as a series of situated events in Baling's time-space continuum, or rather prisms, of existence.

I have approached Baling as a 'pocket' of the world as it is found, with its mixed assortment of beings (Chapters 1, 2, 3), in contrast to other approaches which may remove the Baling folks from their habitats and place them in a theoretical or speculative abstraction. This is how, I feel, that a contextual approach serves the cause of modern geography. For, as Hagerstrand (1974) puts it, "Being a geographer basically means to appreciate that when events are seen located together in a block of space-time they inevitably expose relations which cannot be traced any more, once we have bunched them into classes and drawn them out of their place in the block".

Baling - From Demonstration to Industrialisation is, thereby, a reconstituted regional geography in which human activity quite literally takes place, and in which place itself becomes a process. It conceives of human activity in a region as a continuous discourse rooted in a staggered series of shared material situations that constantly arise out of one another in a dialectically linked distribution of opportunity and constraint (Chapters 2, 3).

In the heart of the mediation between individual and collectivity stands individuals' biographies or life stories in time and space (Chapters 4, 5). It is here that human practice and consciousness are connected with the temporal-spatial context through the notions of generation and locality (Chapters 6, 7). This is an important reminder that contextual approaches in the more

general sense defined above must be concerned with space as both context and creation: as both 'condition' and 'consequence' of human activity.

In treating Baling as a 'provider of room', or to take after Soja (1980; 1989), a part of the environment, a context for society - its container - rather than a structure created by society, the chapters depict some important features of Baling's socio-economic life that are inherently involved in its constitution as events unfolded further and further out from the initial situation of the 1974 (Chapters 8, 9). This way, the making of present day Baling is seen as a historically contingent process that emphasizes institutional and individual practices as well as the structural features with which those practices are interwoven.

To sum up, Baling is the 'actively passive' meeting place of social structure and human agency, substantive enough to be the generator and conductor of structure, but still intimate enough to ensure that the subjective aspects of human beings are not lost. Baling codifies the contextuality of its social life, its situated life story (Chapter 10).

The present book does not pretend to be a coherent piece. The ten essays are meant not to be the integral constituents of a single volume but rather an autonomous snapshots of time and life in Baling. They were the results of my three research undertakings on the area that spanned two decades inclusive of the first study in 1981 and the revisit studies in 1988 and 1994.

Presented as an anthology of essays the book does not pretend nor claim to have done justice to the whole phenomenology of Baling's transition from poverty to well being. Instead, what it portrays is snapshots of life events of Baling as a particular place at three different times frames.

It is my ardent hope that this collection of essays would benefit all, irrespective of whether they are academic or general users. However, I would like to emphasise that although the chapters stand independently some repetitions of information cannot be avoided for the sake of clarity of the issues and arguments posed.

I wish to acknowledge Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for sponsoring all the three studies and for granting me the necessary leaves to complete the work, first, as a Ph. D thesis (1981) and, subsequently, as separate sabbatical projects (1988, 1994).

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Chapter 1

Baling Demonstrates

"Student Demos: 1,169 Held"

The above headline was splashed across the front page of a local daily English newspaper, the *New Straits Times (Malaysia)* (NST) on Wednesday, December 4, 1974. The NST was non-committal on the actual issue that triggered the students' demonstration and in its 1057-word report commented that the disturbances were "...over problems of rural poverty and low rubber prices". Instead, the report became a general criticism of student behaviour.

But the students' demonstrations that erupted in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Ipoh were, in the words of the *Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER)*,

> ...aimed at highlighting problems of rural poverty, high prices, inflation and low prices for rubber, and follow hunger marches by smallholders in the towns of Baling, Sik, Selama and Changloon in northern Kedah during the past month. Smallholders, finding it difficult to earn a living from their modest rubber plots, marched on a district officer's headquarters in Baling and were given a *gantang* (about 8 lbs. or 3.6 kg) of rice. This was the starting gun for bigger demonstrations, which eventually saw a crowd of nearly 30 000[1] in a mass rally held in the town on December 1 (*FEER*, 13 Dec. 1974: 13).

The nation was unaware of what had been taking place in the north. The media's blackout of the situation in Kedah lulled officials into a false sense of security and when the demonstrations took place in Kuala Lumpur, during which traffic was disrupted for seven hours; it caught many people by surprise. The issue that sparked off the demonstrations on December 3 was:

> ...the student claims, repeatedly denied by the government, that at least three people died of starvation in Baling. Several ministers including Prime Minister say it is not possible for people to starve in Malaysia, but there is a growing feeling that while the Government's statement may be strictly accurate, some people may have died from eating poisonous roots... (*FEER*, 27 Dec. 1974).

It is clear that dissatisfaction exists among the rural villagers and smallholders who are caught in the squeeze of rising costs and low rubber prices. Even one senior official conceded that the low rubber prices have made life difficult for the peasants (*FEER*, 13 Dec. 1974).

It is in the spirit of discovering the nature of the plight of these villagers and smallholders that the present study is conducted. It is hoped that their condition will be better understood so that any policy to redress poverty and development projects for the area will be designed according to local needs.

Baling: from demonstration to industrialisation. The title of the present book may reflect several interpretations. It can mean a direction of change. It can also mean two different scenarios. In whatever dimension it is being interpreted, it has been the main aim of the book to focus on two aspects considered as crucial to be studied and analysed within the scope of a book of this size.

The two crucial aspects being zeroed in are the transformation of the economic and social structure of the population studied. Both aspects are equally important in the process of modern economic growth (Kuznets 1971). They are important because to enable a significant change in the economic structure of any society to take place, a corresponding change in the attitude, institution and ideology would also have to change. Examples of such significant social transformation include among others the urbanization process and acceptance of ideas, attitude and institution known as modernization, which is of multiple characteristics (Myrdal 1971).

Located almost 500 km to the northwest of Kuala Lumpur, the Federal Government administrative centre, the District of Baling is a remote district bordering the neighbouring country, Thailand (Figure 1.1). Although remotely located in the northern frontier of the country, Baling is famous. In fact, the place becomes a household name simply because of its propensity to stun the nation with its historic incidents every now and then. For one, Baling was the place that hosted the meeting in 1956 between Tengku Abdul Rahman Putra and the then-leader of the Communist Party of Malaya, Chin Peng. For another, it bore the bloody Memali tragedy of 1985. Thirdly, Baling is always remembered for the 'Hunger March' in 1974, staged there by local smallholders and their compatriots whose lives were squeezed between rising costs of living and low rubber prices.

What was clear from such development was that Baling had created an unprecedented social history in the country when the people took to the road and demonstrated against their own government in the months of November and December. Never before in the history of Malay peasantry had they risen

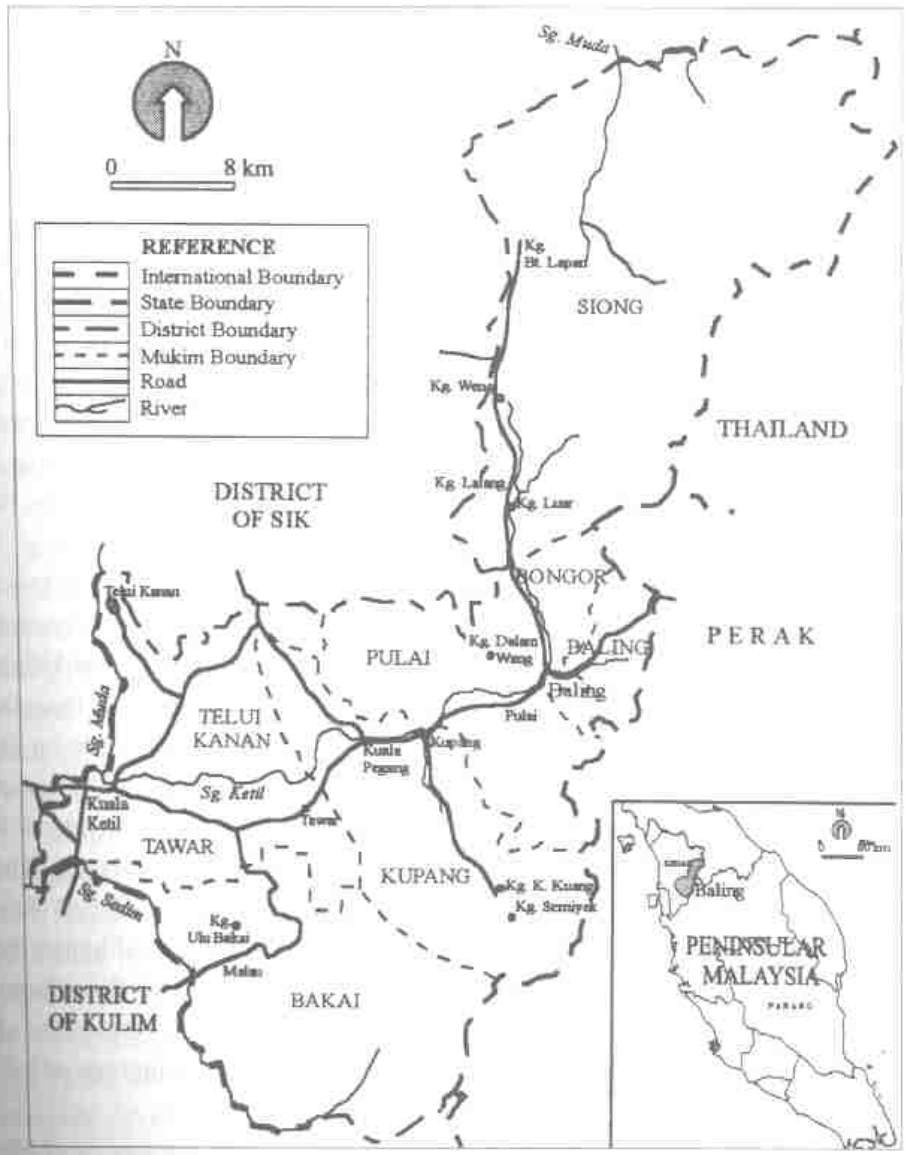


FIGURE 1.1 Location map of Baling and the study villages

to protest against the ruling class. This is because in traditional Malay society, peasants as the common subjects were very loyal to their leaders and often subservient to the ruling class.

The demonstrations or the hunger march incident in Baling as iterated above is but an indication of the crumbling feudal values and attitudes, weakening through time, mainly as a result of social friction, whereby frustration and destitute may trigger such reaction particularly at the most critical and challenging times. Such radical change in feudal values and attitude could easily spread and was observed to be increasingly vicious and militant

in nature as shown by the peasant demonstrations in the early 1970s. This was clearly shown in Alor Star when the State Secretariat Building was attacked with stones by the demonstrators in protest of the low padi price offered for their products. Other issues raised were increasing costs or prices of food items, low rubber prices and the problem of poverty. What this shows is an evidence of a case of integration between the rural peasant society in Malaysia with the national and international economic systems whereby world economic recession and rising trend of inflation would badly affect the peasants.

Besides staging historic events, Baling had a high incidence of poverty; the fifth poorest district in Malaysia and according to an official figure, with 65.6 per cent of its households considered poor in late 1970s (Sulaiman & Mohd. Zaki 1980). It was also one of the least developed areas in the peninsula, particularly in terms of infrastructure and other facilities.

The economic turmoil that had been going on in Baling had inspired the author to conduct a research in the area regarding the socio-economic characteristics of the locals in the early 1980s. In that first study, four Village Development and Security Committee or JKKK areas were selected from the eight *mukims* in the district. The choice of the villages was made on the basis of several criteria – spatial, such as the difference in terms of distance from the district centre, the degree of accessibility, the state of physical endowment, population size and the area size of respective villages. The criteria were used to ensure that the selected villages were of different characteristics, thus avoiding biasness in their selection process. Although the villages selected had different criteria, in the final analysis, all the villages studied demonstrated high levels of poverty, with more than 70 per cent of their household inhabitants making only a meagre monthly income of less than RM250.

The present book is written to put forward several dimension of life and poverty in Baling, which were discerned by the author in a research on the area that spanned two decades inclusive of the revisit studies in 1988 and 1994. The series of research was conducted to study the state of the socio-economic characteristics of the people in Baling from the post-demonstration era to the era of industrialisation. The aim was to trace the transformation that the Baling people had gone through within the span of two decades in the time when the nation was rapidly developing to when it experienced rapid economic development lately.

A major part of the findings from these three studies as presented in this book is written in the form of articles. They comprise writings on several

facets of the dimension of proverty in Baling. Some had been published both nationally and internationally, whilst several others had been presented in both national and international seminars and conferences. Such multiple and 'dispersed' channels, however, did not project a wholesome and holistic progress of an evolution of development as experienced by Baling, both as a spatial entity and a wholesome experience.

The book comprises six essays extracted from the first study conducted in 1981, highlighting several issues and dimension of proverty as experienced by Baling as well as the way of life, attitudes and values of its people. The rest zeroed in on the status of proverty and other socio-economic endeavours as experienced by Baling over time. The latter refer to the respective findings of the two subsequent studies conducted in 1988 and 1994.

Written and presented in the form of essays or articles, the book is only able to depict snapshots of life events as experienced by the Baling populace - a frontier society in transition - and of Baling as a particular place at three different times. This is the essence of time-geography, which analyses the space-time patterns and processes that result when space provides the means for them to take place within time, the duration for their transformation. Hence, time-geography conceives space and time as providers of 'room' for geographical patterns and processes to be realized.

In this respect, Baling was construed, first, as the populace that inhabited and interacted within a unique place, and secondly, as a social space which function was to support the processes at work that manoeuvre within and around its people in a particular time span through which a particular pattern would evolve. In this perspective, Baling in the first study signified the pre-development era within which proverty prevailed and pervaded the area. By the second round of study, Baling was found and observed to have undergone development processes, particularly physico-economic development that were crucial to uplift the social and economic well-being of the locals. Finally, the post-development era witnessed the fruits of the concerted development programmes that had been earmarked for the improvement of Baling. All thes processes of transformation took place within the interval of about seven years in between them.

Chapter 2

Poverty and the Baling Smallholders

Introduction

Baling has been identified as a poor district with more than 70 per cent of its population earning a monthly income of less than RM250[1]. The majority of the households in Baling are smallholders, i.e. rubber smallholders; thus the poverty experienced in Baling can be considered representative of the poverty among rubber smallholders. Before the nature of poverty in Baling and its causes is tabled out, it would be beneficial if the features and personal lives of the poor in Baling were known first.

Profile of the Baling Population

Population

The 1980 population census noted that the population of Baling stood at 108 926. This was a slight increase of 3.7 per cent from the 1970 census. This meant that the annual population increase was just 0.37 per cent, a slow increase (compared to the 2.6 per cent annual increase for Peninsular Malaysia and 1.5 per cent for Kedah). A major contributory factor to this slow increase was the out-migration of the people from the district (Asmah 1986). More than 75 per cent of the population of the Baling district were Malays, 10.8 percent Chinese, 10.5 per cent Indians and the rest made up of Others, notably of Thai descent.

The population distribution pattern shows a significant heavier density in the central and southern areas. The heaviest density was found in the Mukim of Baling (where the district center, Baling, is located) with a density rate of 288 per sq. km. The uninhabited mountainous area in the north accounts for its low density. The average density for the district was a low 74 per sq. km, lower in fact than the 1980 national density average of 88 per sq km.

Household and Population Structure

A total of 476 heads of households in the study villages (almost all Malays) were interviewed. Out of this figure, two-third consisted of between four and eight occupants giving an average household size of 5.5. The average household size of the villages studied however, differed with Kg. Luar Siong being the largest with 5.7 persons, while Kg. Dalam Wang had an average of 5.2 members.

The majority of the household heads were males, while the rest (11.3 per cent) were females. Almost two-third of the heads of households were below 50 years old. This shows that they were of a young generation of family head. This became more apparent when the age distribution in general was examined. The population structure shows that of a young population, with 43.8 per cent below the age of 15 years, 54 per cent between the ages of 15 and 64 years and the remainder in the over-65 age group. The population structure of Baling was younger than that of the Malay population in Peninsular Malaysia, which has a percentage breakdown of 41, 56 and three per cent respectively in 1980. This indicates a high dependency ratio i.e. 92 for every 100 employed persons. This is a high rate compared to the ratio of 78 for the Malay population in Peninsular Malaysia in 1980.

Education

Although 71 per cent of the population received formal education, it is apparent that they were educated up to primary level only. Ten per cent of the populations were educated up to lower secondary. However, there was a slight improvement in the level of education of the respondents' children at secondary level. There was a six-fold increase of what their parents had achieved (38 per cent compared to seven per cent). The rate of population who received secondary level education was low, considering the fact that automatic promotion to secondary level started in 1964. This shows a high dropout rate among the respondents' children.

Housing and Physical Environment

A striking feature of the housing in this area is the high percentage of incomplete houses. Out of 56.7 per cent of houses surveyed, the majority was without walls, often sometimes without floors. Only a small space, usually the bedroom, had the four walls and floors, while the kitchen area was usually a non-permanent structure.

This undesirable housing condition was closely related to the degree of congestion. The mean or average number of occupants of these uncompleted houses was 5.6 per household compared to 5.3 for the complete houses. Although the difference appeared to be slight, it did show that there was congestion, considering that the space that could be utilized for the sleeping area was limited.

It was observed that the houses in the study area, especially those found in Kg. Dalam Wang and Kg. Kuala Kuang were made of inferior quality building materials. Almost half of the houses had thatched roofs made of palm (*bertam* and *nipah*) and bamboo walls and floors. The houses in Kg. Luar Siong and Kg. Ulu Bakai were comparatively better as more than 80 per cent had zinc roofs and wooden walls and floors, although the size and level of completeness varied.

There was a lack of basic amenities. Only Kg. Luar Siong and Kg. Ulu Bakai had access to public water supply and proper toilet facilities (pour and flush) while two other villages used wells and the river as their source of water for drinking and washing. The river was also used as a sewerage facility. Such use of the river and the absence of proper toilet facilities involved more than 90 per cent of the population of Kg. Dalam Wang and Kg. Kuala Kuang. This could have endangered their health, as they were exposed to contagious diseases that are carried by food or water. As regards power supply, there was electricity supply only for Kg. Luar Siong and that too was not continuous, while the rest of the villages still relied on gasoline and kerosene lamps.

Although both the power and water supply programmes have been part of the rural development plans that the government started since 1966 to improve the health, welfare and living conditions of the rural population as well as to eradicate rural poverty, progress had been slow. It was only after an outbreak of diseases such as cholera and typhoid that attention was given to the importance and urgency of providing 'clean' water supply.

Occupations

More than three quarters of the Baling population were engaged in producing rubber or rice. Although rubber tapping was the occupation of most of the household heads, one-third of them worked part-time in the agricultural sector, especially rice planting. Only one-sixth were salaried workers and five per cent were engaged in retail business.

About 41 per cent of the household heads had members who were working, made up of adult children and wives. Nevertheless, only one per cent

was employed. All the respondents' wives who were employed were engaged in agricultural activities, i.e. rubber tapping. Almost none was salaried workers, while a small number of those involved in retail business traded at the weekend market, earned a low nett income of about RM15 per market day.

Most of the population aged 16 and above and living in the village were still in school, while those unemployed were girls who mainly helped at home until they were married. The majority of the boys who were earners were involved in agriculture - as rubber tappers or helping in the family smallholding or padi field. There was a decrease in the involvement in the agricultural sector only among boys who had moved out of the village - they had become salaried workers.

Income

Income of the farmers are usually in two forms i.e. in cash and kind. Cash income for those in the study came from their primary occupation, secondary occupation as well as from remittance. The last type mentioned was obtained from children or out-migrant husbands, pension, land rental and aid from the Welfare Department.

An analysis of cash income distribution from primary occupations shows that 90 per cent of household heads earned less than RM250 a month. The average cash income was RM150 a month. These were respondents who earned less than RM50 a month. However, when we take into account income in kind, the average income rose to RM197 a month and the number of respondents who earned less than RM250 a month fell to 76 per cent.

Income from primary occupation seemed to be the principal source of income for the household heads because only a handful (18.3 per cent) received a supplementary income. Nevertheless, more than half received a supplementary income from remittance, one-third from part-time employment and the rest from either of those sources, land rental or pension. For the majority of the household heads studied (except for Kg. Kuala Kuang), their only supplementary income was obtained from remittance. About 68 per cent received this form of income every month, amounting to between RM20 and RM200, or an average of RM50 a month. Most of them used this money for their families' daily expenses, and not for agricultural expansion and capital.

In general, the income of the respondents was not stable as it was subject to weather conditions. The income from rubber for the most part was dependent on the number of days they tapped rubber. This means that on rainy days, the farmers lost their source of income. Income from rubber may also be reduced during the leaf-shedding season.

Household Items

Information on household items was gathered to illustrate the degree of affluence enjoyed by the population. It is closely related to Engel's Law, which states that the higher the income, the bigger proportion of income is spent on luxury items. A list of household items owned by the respondents is given in Table 2.1. Compared to the conditions found in the rural area of Peninsular Malaysia in 1970, figures for only three items namely motorcycles, television and radio show an improvement in the living conditions compared to figures in 1970. As for the rest of the items, there are indications of lower ownership distribution. In general, the material well-being of the Baling population in the early 80's was much worse than that of the rural population in other parts of the peninsula in the 70's. In addition, the material well-being of the people of Baling was still low compared to the conditions in the rural areas of Malaysia in 1980.

TABLE 2.1 Percentage distribution of household by ownership of household items 1981 compared to the rural areas in Peninsular Malaysia (1970) and in Malaysia (1980)

Household Items	Baling	Rural areas P. Malaysia 1970	Rural areas Malaysia 1980
Motorcar	2.9	4.0	11.0
Motorcycle	29.4	10.9	32.0
Bicycle	50.4	64.2	-
Television set	11.3	4.9	40.0
Radio	52.5	43.4	68.0
Sewing machine	20.0	34.8	-
Refrigerator	0.6	3.2	16.0
Gas stove	1.1	2.9	-
Kerosene stove	9.5	10.9	-
Electric fan	1.9	5.1	24.0

Sources: i) Adapted from Asmah 1986,127.
ii) Adapted from Tables 8.25, 8.27, *General Report of Population Census 1970*, 477,479.
iii) Adapted from Table 8.13, *General Report of Population Census 1980*, Vol. 1, 149.

Food and Nutrition

In any discussion on the socio-economic conditions of a population, the nutrition aspect is important. This is because food sufficiency can determine

the effectiveness of life and work. This factor also has an impact on the foundation of the people's social and economic development. Haswell (1975), in a study on a village in Gambia, discovered that poor quality nutrition, together with low immunity against diseases had an adverse effect on the quality of work of some farmers. This is not surprising because an insufficient calorie intake often results in not only a high degree of avoidance of physical and mental energy, lack of interest and initiative, lethargy but also leads to low immunity against diseases (Morgan 1975).

Improper diet and poor state of health are usually perceived as a manifestation of chronic poverty. In Malaysia, the Malays are often said to have a more inferior diet compared to the Chinese and Indians (Hodder 1959; Snodgrass 1980). This is thought to be due to dietary habits and traditional beliefs and partly also due to poverty. Such dietary habits are believed to bring about obvious health problems, especially anemia, which is mainly caused by worm infection, and kwashiorkor, making Malay children appear lethargic and unenergetic. The state of health as defined by Burgess and Laidin (although not as serious as in most African countries and Asian regions) is rather bad, so much so that it leads to the speculation that it is not only caused by rural poverty but is also the main cause of poverty itself.

Observations on the study area showed the speculation to be a reality because two-fifth of the respondents who stated that part of their source of income were unstable were those who lost their income as a result of illness and inability to tap rubber. When a part of the income was lost due to seasonal changes and institutional factors, physical disability could also reduce the farmer's potential income.

A low level of health and energy due to undernourishment always brings about physical disability. A typical Malay diet consists of rice, a staple food that is low in calories, taken with curry or fried fish and vegetables. The people in the study area were on the whole overly dependent on rice - at least 36 per cent of them ate rice thrice a day. They usually ate rice with fresh or dried fish. They seldom ate protein-based food because it was expensive; they also seldom drank milk. A major portion of their income was spent on food items, especially rice; and the balance was used to purchase food items that contain protein (e.g. eggs, fish, meat), fat (cooking oil), sugar, salt and spices. The rate of rice consumption was high, about 263 kg per person annually[2]. This was 57.5 per cent higher than the average consumption in other areas in Peninsular Malaysia (Narkswasdi & Selvadurai 1968).

Analyses made on people's expenditure showed that on average, two-thirds of their incomes were spent just on food items. With an average house-

hold income of RM200 monthly, it was difficult for a farmer to buy balanced food that was sufficient for his family, especially when taking inflation into account. Table 2.2 shows the food intake pattern of the villagers in the study area.

From the table, it can be seen that the primary source of protein for the Baling villagers was fish. Only 50 per cent of the villagers ate fresh fish every day, while the rest ate dried fish with their rice. Freshwater fish obtained from padi fields and the river, which at one time was the primary source of protein for the villagers, has now lost its importance. The main reason for this was the extinction of freshwater life resulting from the increasing use of pesticides and weed killers. On the whole, it can be concluded that the people's diet was of poor quality and not balanced.

For farmers who were directly dependent on land, the returns depended on the farming system they practised. In this context, and from the perspective of the farming community of Baling, some of the causes of their persistent poverty were closely related with their productivity system and factor. Thus, it is imperative to examine poverty and explain it in order to understand its conditions that existed.

Causes of Poverty

In Baling, rubber was the principal source of income as well as supplementary income for investments in other agricultural activities. Rice growing was the second most important agricultural activity after rubber. Both activities were found to be an obstacle for farmers to progress and obtain high returns.

In the rubber-growing sector, some factors have been identified as obstacles to farmers in getting high returns. The main problems faced by farmers in Baling were similar to those experienced in other developing countries: they had no title deeds to the land and the size of the land was small. The study on Baling showed that 45 per cent of household heads did not own any land. Out of the 55 per cent of families who owned land, 89.5 per cent owned less than 10 *relong* (3 ha) (Table 2.3).

Based on Table 2.3, and the personal observation made by the writer, on average a rubber smallholder in Baling owned about 1.9 hectare of rubber land and thus a rubber smallholder in Baling should be able to overcome poverty[3]. In reality, however, this was not so. Most of the farmers did not own sufficient land because 50 per cent of them owned 1.4 hectare or less. Besides the small size of their rubber smallholdings, there were other

TABLE 2.2 Rate of food consumption in Baling

Food items	Percentage
1. Frequency of rice consumption (daily)	
Once	0.0
Twice	63.7
Thrice	36.3
	100.0
2. Frequency of egg consumption (monthly)	
Never	15.3
1-9 times	72.9
10-20 times	7.6
30 times (every day)	4.2
	100.0
3. Frequency of fish (fresh water) consumption monthly	
Never	73.1
1-9 times	24.6
10-20 times	2.1
30 times (every day)	0.2
	100.0
4. Frequency of fish (sea) consumption monthly	
Never	1.3
1-9 times	14.7
10-20 times	32.1
30 times (every day)	51.9
	100.0
5. Frequency of fish (dried) consumption	
Never	0.0
1-9 times	39.1
10-20 times	44.1
30 times (every day)	16.8
	100.0
6. Frequency of meat consumption	
2-3 times monthly	10.3
Once a month	26.7
Once every two months	4.6
Once every 3-4 months	37.6
Once in six months	1.7
Once in 12 months	1.9
Not at all	17.2
	100.0
7. Frequency of milk consumption monthly	
Fresh milk	0.0
Powered milk: 10 times	1.3
Condensed milk:	
Never	57.9
1-9 times	32.4
10-20 times	2.1
30 times (every day)	7.6
	100.0

Source: Field Data, 1981

TABLE 2.3 Distribution of land by size

Size		Percentage
Relong	Hectares	
0.0	0.0	45.0
0.1-3.5	0.1-0.9	11.1
3.6-6.9	1.0-1.9	22.1
7.0-10.0	2.0-2.9	11.3
10.1-13.5	3.0-3.9	2.7
13.6-17.0	4.0-4.9	3.4
17.1-20.5	5.0-5.9	2.9
20.6-24.0	6.0-6.9	0.4
>24	7+	1.9
Total		100.0

Source: Adapted from Asmah 1986, 190.

factors that affected the income of rubber smallholders in Baling. First, 45 per cent of the rubber trees were old and only 55 per cent were considered productive. The rest had been and were being replanted but yet to produce any yield.

The second factor can be related to the processing and marketing of the rubber produce. A total of 55 per cent of the farmers processed their latex to be made into rubber sheets, while the rest did not. Out of the latter, 85.6 per cent sold their rubber in scrap form, while the rest sold it as latex. The high percentage of the farmers not processing their rubber latex was due to their not having rubber processing machine, and the low yield. Rubber sold in scrap form usually gives lower returns compared to rubber sheets or latex. For example, an average monthly income obtained from selling latex was RM170, rubber sheets RM130 and rubber scraps RM100. This shows that the form of rubber sold by most smallholders was the least profitable. This accounts for more than three-fifths of rubber smallholders in Baling earning less than RM150 a month from selling rubber. The average monthly household income of the household studied was RM117.

Third, the quality of rubber produced by the rubber smallholders was poor. The rubber sheets they sold were not smoked. Smoked rubber meant for export which contained dirt and foreign matter that was so high than the rubber was graded as Ribbed Smoked Sheets Grade 3, compared to rubber sheets produced by estates which were graded RSS1. The difference in grade meant that the rubber graded RSS1 earned at least five sen more per kilogram

than RSS3. In addition, their income was reduced when their need for immediate cash forced them to sell rubber sheets in wet form. Consequently, they were charged a high depreciation rate.

Fourthly, their marketing methods were also not profitable. Almost two-thirds of the rubber smallholders sold their produce direct to individual buyers at the town nearest their village. About 37 per cent sold their produce, especially scrap rubber, to the village sundry shopkeepers who would then trade with rubber buyers or wholesalers. Such marketing methods would surely reduce the farmer's income, more so when the price of rubber is dependent on the volatile world market. Marketing via various middlemen caused the final price paid to the farmer to be a lot less than the original market price. Studies show that the final price paid to smallholders was more than two-fifths less than the official market price. For example, in 1980, the average price of RSS3 rubber was 300 sen per kilogram, but the price received by the smallholders was only176sen a kilogram or less.

To boost the average price received by the smallholders, the Rubber Industry Smallholder Development Authority (RISDA) started a Collective Marketing Programme, whereby rubber was sold once a fortnight; the price tender was opened to interested buyers. As the price offered by RISDA was the tender price, it was much higher than the average price offered by other rubber buyers in the open market. The additional price received by rubber smallholders usually varied between 5.8 and 11 sen per kilogram compared to the price received through daily retail sale. Bulk marketing can reduce the related marketing changes, thereby increasing the net returns of the smallholders. However, only 2.8 per cent of the smallholders were involved in the bulk sale because the services rendered by RISDA to the villages in the study were still limited. The need for instant cash by the villagers made small-scale selling more popular.

There are obstacles for rice, the second most important crop in Baling, to progress. However, only one-third of the farmers in Baling were engaged in padi planting, and that too as a supplementary crop. In Baling, on the whole padi was planted for subsistence. Ironically not all farmers were self-sufficient and in fact three-fifths of them had to buy rice to supplement their own needs.

One of the factors for their failure to become self-sufficient farmers was the small size of the padi field. Almost all of the existing padi fields were smaller than one hectare. This was smaller than the average padi field in Peninsular Malaysia, which was 1.3 hectares (Selvadurai 1972). Firth (in Buchanan 1967) said that under the padi field farming system, a farm household consisting of four to six members needed between one and two hectares

to be self-sufficient. The calculation showed that an owner-farmer could support 5.5 family members if they practised double cropping on a 0.7-hectare field, while a tenant farmer needed a one-hectare padi field. Although almost three-quarters of the padi fields in Baling were owner-farmed, the land they owned were too small – between 0.3 and 0.6 hectare only. Consequently, they failed to support their own families

The rice yield in Baling was also much lower than that of the national yield. The average rice yield in Baling in 1980 was 1,500 kg/ha (Asmah 1987) compared to the average national yield of 2,910 kg/ha in the same year (Bank Negara Malaysia 1980).

Among the factors for the low rice yield in Baling was the unsuitability of the land for growing padi. Topographic conditions also had limited the area suitable for farming. Most of the padi in Baling was grown on alluvial land, by the riverside. This type of land is sandy, light and infertile. Another factor for the low yield was the husbandry and pesticides. Padi was also not a cash crop and was only a supplementary activity; thus it was given scanty attention by the smallholders.

For the rubber smallholders, being able to grow padi should have helped them overcome poverty. Obviously this was a wrong assumption because, as explained earlier, their conditions and farming practices failed to make them self-sufficient. They failed to meet their own needs from rice and in fact had to supplement their income by selling rubber. Income from other sources such as remittance and pension were insignificant for most of them, except for the supplementary income they got during the fruit season. Most of them did not own fruits orchards, but on the whole admitted that their livelihood improved slightly during the fruit season.

Another cause for the poverty in Baling was the farmers not having titles to their land. This not only reduced the farmers' production and income, but it also made it impossible for them to improve production through re-planting. Two-fifths of the landowners in the study area did not have titles to their land. It involved 38 per cent of their entire land. The situation was further aggravated when their existing rubber trees were old and needed to be replanted. Without a legal title deed, the smallholders were not entitled to the rubber replanting subsidies from RISDA. If a smallholder did not have the means to carry out the replanting himself, then he was in a worse predicament because he did not have the capital and there was no young labour to carry out the task.

Bureaucracy has been identified as the main reason for the slow processing of land applications, but poverty was the root cause for the failure

to get a title deed. Most smallholders could not afford the premiums and other related charges because the premiums were usually large. Most of the smallholders had little money or inadequate funds and they were not able to obtain it in a short time if they wanted to fulfill the requirements for obtaining titles. RISDA had tried helping the farmers overcome their problems, especially those in Kg. Luar Siong and its neighbouring areas.

Land in Baling was also limited. The Kedah Forestry Department has stated that land available for farming was limited and most of it was in the catchment area, which is to remain as a permanent forest. The remaining land available was scattered throughout the district and located at the edge of the forest reserve. Land available for farming was further reduced by slopes, clearing of land and illegal farming. This shows that the chances to obtain land for the 45 per cent of villagers without land were indeed slim.

Solutions

The rubber smallholders in Baling who generally face problems earning a living and getting sufficient income have to overcome these problems through various methods and intermediaries. These intermediaries include themselves and government agencies. To overcome those problems, the smallholders must use their capabilities and abilities and also their response or reactions towards the opportunities offered.

The role of the smallholders in overcoming their problems is crucial. They should be constructive and open in their attitudes towards their problems and ways to overcome them. Up to now, experience has shown that the smallholders are always blamed for their failure in improving their living standards.

Most of the respondents were not passive. They were willing to try anything to improve their lives. What hampered them were the existing conditions and skills. There was a lack of opportunities for improvements; most of them were uneducated, lacked exposure and did not have the means to seize the opportunities to improve themselves. Thus their living conditions continued to remain as they were – they remained in the clutches of poverty.

The smallholders interviewed also said that if they got a stable and adequate income, they would be much better off than their current situation. Although "adequate income" is a relative term, what they suggested was a good and high income that could overcome their poverty. A high income could only be obtained if their productivity were high and the returns were

equally high. However, their socio-economic situation did not allow them to provide ways to overcome their own weaknesses. They needed access to intermediaries to help them become self-competent.

Among the measures suggested to improve income in the agricultural sector were increases in yield, quality of produce and marketing. Government agencies such as the Department of Agriculture, RISDA, FELCRA, and FAMA have been entrusted with the responsibility to implement them. Currently, the most active agency in Baling is RISDA. It has tried to overcome the weaknesses in the productivity, quality and marketing by providing excellent services through programmes such as providing credit and subsidies, replanting, collective replanting and new crops via mini estates and estates; establishing Smallholders' Development Centers; and collective marketing. Unfortunately, RISDA's influence was not found to be comprehensive, especially where smallholders did not have legal titles to their land.

RISDA's recent effort in alleviating the burden of the smallholders in their effort to obtain the land titles seem to be constructive. Smallholders were no longer bogged down by the problem of paying the premiums to obtain title deeds because RISDA had handed out advanced premiums to farmers who joined its mini estates programmes. Through these programmes, the entire organizing and managing were undertaken by RISDA. Smallholders were given a minimum subsistence every month to support them until their crops could be harvested. They were also given the opportunity to work as agricultural workers at the estates. They were able, through the programme, to enjoy many benefits such as becoming legal owners, having good jobs, and the management and marketing opportunities. It is hoped that these efforts will at least reduce, if not eradicate, poverty. With the implementation of the programme and other programmes such as these to improve the yield and quality of natural rubber, the future of smallholders is expected to be bright.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The government has duly acknowledged the poverty of rubber smallholders and they are in fact one of the target groups of the government's development programmes. Many short-term as well as long-term programmes have been implemented. Short-term programmes are exemplified by the like of cash subsidies and direct provisions, such as the village rehabilitation programme. Programmes such as these could improve the farmers' conditions but only slightly yet failing to overcome their basic problem. Thus, the long-term

programmes are necessary to provide the farmers with the foundation to improve their income and their lives.

Most of the programmes introduced in Baling were meant to improve the basic needs and living condition of the smallholders. Programmes such as the introduction of modern farming methods, better clones and collective farming were among those that were suitable for the agrarian community or the employment of the rural society that could bring them good returns. RISDA's efforts in encouraging replanting and providing infrastructures to improve the processing and marketing of the smallholders' produce were among the measures that should be singled out. However, the agency should widen its activities to cover the whole area so that every smallholder, and not only those with a high degree of accessibility could enjoy the allocation of those facilities.

Since the percentage of the landless was high and the availability of land in Baling was limited, measures to help the villagers affected should be considered. These measures include encouraging them to migrate, for example by joining land development schemes or by introducing land reforms. A more effective measure is to reorganize the current land distribution to a more equitable one. If all smallholders were to own land, a large part of the problem would be solved.

End Notes

1 Calculations on poverty line used in this study are as follows:
   i) The basis of calculation is household income per capita for Malaysia as used by Anand (1975), i.e. RM25 a month in 1970.
   ii) This basic income is then adjusted with changes in Malaysia's Consumer Price Index, which increased by 92 per cent between 1970 and 1981.
   iii) Income distribution is assumed stable during that period and the increase in the Consumer Price Index has produced the poverty line of RM48 per capita a month or household income of RM250 a month.

2 In this study, a family comprising five members consumed on average one *gantang* (3.5 kg) of rice. This means a person ate about 263 kg a year.

3 This estimate was made based entirely on income from rubber and at the average price for 1974 (when the price was low).

Chapter 3

Poverty Amidst Plenty: The Baling's Predicament

Introduction

Much has been discussed and written on Malaysia's economic performance since it achieved its independence in 1957 up to now. Malaysia's economy is said to grow at a fast rate. The Gross National Product (GNP) which was relatively high managed to be maintained at 5-7 per cent a year for the period between 1957-70 and eight per cent the following year to achieve the real income per capita of USD 400 in 1971, increasing to USD850 in 1980 (Peacock 1981; NST 1980; Ministry of Finance 1981:161-162) or USD 1 737 according to the current market price (Ministry of Finance 1982: iv). This last figure was far higher than income per capita for other Asian countries such as the Philippines (USD 723), Thailand (USD 705), Indonesia (USD 459), India (USD 208) and Myanmar (USD 155). The figure placed Malaysia the fourth highest in Asia after Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore.

The GDP can grow at a fast rate although there is no improvement in the criteria of development economics. In Peninsular Malaysia, a high growth rate was achieved simultaneously with the increased distribution of inequality and worsening cases of poverty. This was illustrated by the following figures; for 20 per cent of the rich, their income rose from 48.6 per cent in 1957 to 56 per cent in 1970 and a further 61.9 per cent in 1976. On the other hand, 40 per cent of the hard-core poor found that their income dropped from 15.9 per cent to 10.3 per cent during the same period (Peacock 1981:640; Ishak & Jomo 1984:12). This inequity, which was getting increasingly severe, could also be seen through an increase in the gini ratio from 0.412 to 0.567. The number of the poor also increased from 2.8 million in 1957 to 3.5 million in 1970 (Ministry of Finance 1974). But it was only in the 1970's that critics began to realize that the poverty situation in Malaysia was getting worse (Anand 1973; Lim 1974; Ministry of Finance 1974) in spite the New Economic Policy being launched in the Second Malaysia Plan 1971-75. It was

only after its Half Term Report was released that the Government Development Plan changed from acceleration of economic growth through investments in infrastructure, agriculture and rural development to equal growth though greater emphasis on the socio-economic needs of the poor and imbalance among the various ethnic groups.

The combination of deliberate policies and programmes to eradicate poverty with fast economic growth and the favourable world market price for Malaysia's main products (rubber, petroleum, palm oil and tin) managed to reduce the poverty rate from 49.3 per cent in 1970 to 29.2 per cent in 1980 (Malaysia Fourth Plan 1981:4). In terms of income distribution among the ethnic groups, the average monthly income of ethnic Malays (RM309) had increased, but it remained below the national average of RM459 in 1979, although the gap had narrowed from 34.8 per cent in 1970 to 32.7 per cent in 1979. Although progress had been made in the second half of the 70's, poverty was still a major problem among the ethnic Malays who remained to be the poorest ethnic group compared with the other ethnic groups.

The explanation above is an attempt at painting a rough picture of Malaysia's economic growth. Although it was clear that the economy of Malaysia had developed, it was not followed by an equitable distribution as shown by the situation in Baling, a district situated in southeast Kedah. The nature of activities that generated income among the villagers in the study as well as the farming structure and their lifestyle have to be understood before we begin to try to understand their poverty.

Mass Poverty in Baling?

Poverty is usually measured by income. Although there is no single way of measuring poverty, a low income is usually used as a primary measurement for poverty. Using a relative approach, the level of household income per capita for Malaysia that separated the 40 per cent of the lowest rung of the population from the rest of the population was about RM25 a month in 1970 (Anand 1975). Between 1970 and 1981 the consumer price index for Malaysia had increased by 92 per cent (Ministry of Finance 1981; Department of Statistics 1981). Assuming that the income distribution was constant during that period, such an increase in the consumer price index would have produced a poverty line of RM48 per capita a month or a household income of RM250 in 1981.

Using this figure, it was discovered that in 1981 about 76 per cent of the households in Baling lived in poverty (Table 3.1). This changed slightly

TABLE 3.1 Distribution of monthly household income in four villages in Baling, 1981

Income Group	No.	Cumulative %
<50	9	1.9
50-99	49	12.2
100-149	102	33.6
150-199	114	57.6
200-249	88	76.6
250-299	36	83.6
300-349	36	91.2
350-449	21	95.6
450-549	8	97.3
550+	13	100.0
Total	476	100.0

Source: Asmah 1983: 141. The nature of poverty in Peninsular Malaysia: a study of Baling District, in the state of Kedah, Ph. D thesis (unpublished).

when household income per capita was used, whereby only 73.9 per cent of the households in Baling earned a household income per capita of less than RM48 a month (Table 3.2). The reason for this difference was that not all the households, which earned below the household poverty line income of RM250 a month, were poor because some came from small households or vice versa.

TABLE 3.2 Household income per capita in four villages in Baling, 1981

Monthly income per capita (RM)	% Household earning less than recorded
25	27.9
48	73.9
73	90.9
120	98.5

Source: Asmah 1983, 141

Nevertheless, the difference was slight and the differences among the four villages studied were not obvious, which only showed that poverty was scattered fairly in these villages and a common face of poverty prevailed in the study area.

The mass poverty described above was also obvious when tested by Engel's Law. By using Engel's coefficients on the population's expenditure pattern, it was discovered that on average, the households in the study spent 71.6 per cent of their cash income on two basic necessities i.e. food and

clothing (Table 3.3). If the expenditure was on food alone, it would have exceeded the one-third level, which was said to denote poverty as suggested by Orsharnky (1965), Rosenthal (1969) and Drewnowksi (1977).

TABLE 3.3 Percentage distribution of the average consumption pattern of the population in Baling

Expenditure item	% of Average Income
Foods	65.3
Clothing	6.3
Children's schooling expenditure	18.7
Saving	1.8
Other	10.9
Total	100.0

Source: Asmah 1983, 143

This discovery was similar to that made by Burgess and Laidin (1950 in Snodgrass 1980) which studied the health, nutrition and lifestyles of three low income groups, namely Malay smallholders and fishermen and Indian estate workers. They noted that among the smallholders, food constituted 75-85 per cent of their total expenditure (including consumption of their own produce); among the fishermen food constituted two-thirds of their total income. In view of this, it was clear that there was little change in the consumption expenditure of the rural Malays in the 80's compared to three decades ago. This only shows that poverty among rural Malays had persisted over time.

The fact that little had changed in their lives and that it had not kept pace with that of the world was acknowledged by the villagers themselves (Table 3.4). The household heads were asked about the changes in their living

TABLE 3.4 Villagers' perception towards life before and after the 1974 demonstrations

Before	%	After	%
Difficult	81.7	No change	41.0
Better	0.9	Slightly better	39.1
Don't know	10.5	Don't know	10.9
No response	6.9	No response	9.0
Total	100.0	Total	100.0

Source: Asmah 1983, 146.

conditions after the 1974 demonstrations and were also asked to make comparisons before and after the event. Admittedly, their responses were subjective, but we cannot ignore their sentiment towards their own living conditions. What is clearly shown in Table 3.4 is that generally, they said that conditions before the event were difficult. The difficulties referred to the low income obtained from the low price of rubber and the prolonged rainy season and their interaction had caused them to lose their source of income. However, half of those who said that life before the demonstrations was difficult discovered that conditions did not change. Out of those who said that life was better, three-fifths were from Kg. Luar Siong. This was because out of the four villages studied, Kg. Luar Siong was the only village to be supplied with water and electricity, although Ulu Bakai later received its water supply.

The high poverty rate in Baling showed that almost all of the villagers were in the same predicament, i.e. they were equally poor. The villagers themselves reflected the feeling that they shared the same standard of living. A mere 2.4 per cent said that they enjoyed a better standard of living than the others; for 75.8 per cent it was the same, 18.1 per cent said worse and 3.7 per cent didn't know. These responses, however, were rather doubtful because they involved self-evaluation, the more so when we take into consideration characteristics such as humbleness and tendency to exaggerate. Nevertheless, by examining their income distribution, their declared evaluation was seen to be not much different from reality. Taking a household whose income was RM500 and more (and per capita income of RM100 and more) as representative of the well to do, it was discovered that the two groups were almost similar: the percentage of those observed was 2.7 (Table 3.1) compared to that of the declared evaluation which was 2.4. The same can be said of the 18.1 per cent who said that conditions were worse; there was only a slight difference from the 12.2 per cent of households, which earned less than RM100 a month. As for the rest, an identical lifestyle could have led to confusion among them, making them think that their conditions were similar to the others.

What was obvious is that the average household income in Baling was much lower than the average national income or the average income of the other ethnic groups, and the lowest compared to the peninsular Malays. For example, their monthly average household income of RM197 was only 38.4 per cent of the average income of the peninsular Malays (RM513) in 1979 (Fourth Malaysian Plan 1981: 56), 18 per cent of the ethnic Chinese, 25.4 per cent of Others and 2.8 per cent of the national average.

Nature of Poverty in Baling

In any study on poverty, the poverty profile has to be described so that we can get a clear picture of who the poor are. The poverty profile of Baling can be summarized in Table 3.5. There were clearly several striking features of poverty.

TABLE 3.5 The poverty profile of Baling according to characteristics of the selected households (HH), 1981

Selected characteristics of household heads	From % of all HH[a]	From % of poor HH[b]	% Rate of poverty
Gender			
Male	88.7	92.9	78.0
Female	11.3	7.1	46.3
	100.0	100.0	
Age			
<30 years	11.6	12.5	80.0
30-39 years	24.6	26.0	78.6
40-49 years	28.1	30.2	79.9
50-59 years	17.0	17.2	75.3
60+	18.7	14.1	56.3
	100.0	100.0	76.1
Marital status			
Married	87.2	91.0	77.6
Divorced	1.7	2.0	87.5
Widowed	9.5	5.6	44.4
Single	0.8	0.3	25.0
Married (>1 wife)	0.8	1.1	100.0
	100.0	100.0	
Occupation			
Rubber tapper	44.9	51.4	85.1
Padi farmer	13.8	9.3	50.0
R. tapper/ Padi farmer	18.6	19.3	78.7
Teacher/ Padi farmer	2.1	2.0	70.0
Clerk/ Govt. officer	2.1	0.0	0.0
Estate w. / labourer	4.5	5.9	100.0
Sundry shopkeeper	2.8	2.3	61.3
Self-employed	1.1	0.8	60.0
Driver	4.2	4.0	70.0
Unemployed/	5.9	4.5	57.1
Housewife	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 3.5 (*Continue*)

Education			
No schooling	29.2	27.1	69.1
Primary school	62.2	66.7	79.7
Lower Sec. School	2.5	2.8	83.3
Upper Sec. School	2.1	0.0	0.0
College/ Uni.	0.2	0.0	0.0
Arabic School	3.8	3.4	66.7
	100.0	100.0	
Other characteristics			
Household size			
1 member	2.1	0.6	20.0
2 members	5.7	1.7	22.2
3 members	10.7	6.2	43.1
4 members	14.7	13.5	68.6
5 members	16.0	18.4	85.5
6 members	15.3	16.7	80.8
7 members	12.3	13.5	81.4
8 members	9.5	11.9	97.7
9 and more	13.7	17.5	95.4
	100.0	100.0	
No. of members employed			
0 member	1.1	0.3	20.0
1 member	69.5	71.5	75.8
2 members	24.7	22.8	68.1
3 members	4.5	5.2	85.7
4 members	0.2	0.3	100.0
	100.0	100.0	
Size of land owned			
0 *relong*	45.0	49.0	81.3
1-4 *relong*	16.6	16.6	74.7
5-9 *relong*	28.4	28.2	74.1
10-14 *relong*	5.0	3.4	0.0
15 + *relong*	5.0	2.8	41.7
	100.0	100.0	
Remittance			
Received	12.8	8.8	50.8
Did not receive	87.7	91.2	77.4
	100.0	100.0	

Note: [a] N = 476, [b] N = 352.

Source: Asmah 1983, 150-151.

First, the incidence of poverty as a function of the Baling household composition showed these characteristics:

1. Households that were headed by women tended to be less poorer than those headed by men. This was in contrast with the normal finding (Orshamsky 1965; Anand 1978). One reason for this was that most of them had inherited property (usually in the form of land) from their late husbands and thus could support themselves or their families. They also received financial aid from their children or relatives (which shows that kinship ties are still strong in the rural areas).
2. The age profile shows poverty that is higher than average. However, it is lowest among those 60 years and older and highest among those 30 years and younger. This is closely related to the ownership function in which 16.9 per cent of the oldest age group did not own land compared to 98.3 per cent of the youngest age group.
3. Poverty incidence was highest in households headed by men who had more than one wife, and lowest in those headed by widows.
4. Poverty incidence increased with an increase in the household size of up to five members; beyond those there was no link although its rate was greater than the average rate and the highest rate was in households with more than eight members.
5. Contrary to expectations, the poverty rate according to the number of earners in a household did not decrease according to size or vice versa. This finding is linked to the marginal labour returns resulting from underemployment in households with multiple earners and the fact that they had collateral such as land in households that did not have members who were earners.

There were other features of poverty such as the following:

1. A feature that clearly contradicted the national pattern of poverty rate was the level of education of the household head. No poverty existed in households where the head was educated up to upper secondary or college, but poverty increased according to the level of education (69.1 per cent for the uneducated and 83.3 per cent for those who received education up to lower secondary). In areas where job opportunities were not an education factor, other factors such as land played a greater role in reducing poverty.
2. Poverty did not exist in households headed by those working in the service sector (government), but it was prevalent in households headed

by estate workers. Rubber tappers, rice farmers and those engaged in both activities showed a poverty rate of 77.2 per cent and involving 80.5 per cent of the poor.

3. Among those who were poor, the rate was higher for those who owned land than those who did not. However, the poverty rate of the latter varied according to the size of the land they owned, rather than the number of household members.
4. As expected, those who received remittance were relatively less poor, i.e. 50.8 per cent compared to 77.4 per cent who did not.

Poverty in Baling: What are the Causes?

The supposition that the income of the villagers had dropped requires an examination of their productive activities. It has often been said it is easier to explain rural poverty in terms of external factors such as land size, flexbility of commodity price, low technology input etc. In this context, besides the explanation on the poverty in Baling, other factors that played an important role were the system and factors of production. To have an understanding of persistent poverty in the area, it is essential to examine these factors.

An analysis of occupations showed that more than three-quarters (77.3 per cent) of the people in Baling depended directly on rubber and rice production as their principal source of income whether in cash or kind. The percentage increased (82 per cent) if it included estate workers and farm workers.

Features of the Farmers' Production System

Rubber

Rubber was the principal source of income and surplus income for investment purposes in agricultural activities for the majority of people in the rural areas. In Baling, a rubber smallholder had, on average, 4.8 acres (1.9 ha) of land. This finding was almost similar to the 4.9 acres (2 ha) made by the Kedah-Perlis Development Plan (SEPU 1979: 19). It had been estimated that the income from land as big as 7.5 acres (3 ha) was sufficient for a household with 5.5 members and would be above the poverty line (EPU 1975). In general, a five-acre smallholding was usually assumed to be sufficient. Thus, a smallholder in Baling would have been able to release himself from the clutches of poverty. But this was a false assumption, because most of the

smallholders here did not own land with a large acreage. In fact, 50 per cent of them owned land of about 3.5 acres (1.4 ha) or less each.

The size of the land was not the only reason for the poverty among the smallholders in Baling. The following aggravated its prolongation:

1. Old trees. Apart from age, quality of maintenance and tapping techniques are important in determining the productivity of rubber. Data analyses of rubber planting showed that 45 per cent of the rubber trees belonging to the smallholders were old and only 35 per cent considered productive. With two-thirds of the trees unproductive and untapped, the income of the smallholders would surely be reduced.
2. Form of rubber sold. The form of rubber could affect price. The sales of latex usually earned the highest income, followed by rubber sheets and finally scrap rubber. In Baling, the average monthly incomes obtained from the respective forms were RM170, RM130 and RM100. In terms of production proportion, 55 per cent of the farmers sold rubber as sheets, 40 per cent scrap and 5 per cent latex. Sale in scrap form was due to farmers not having processing machines and shortage of latex as well as low yield. More than three-fifths (62.3 per cent) of the smallholders in Baling earned less than RM150 a month from the sale of rubber. On average the monthly income from rubber for each household was RM117. This was almost similar to the finding of RM120 made by the Centre for Economic Policy (1979). As this study was made in 1981 when the price of rubber was high, a similar finding suggested that the farmers' income had dropped.
3. Market, grade and price. About 60 per cent of the farmers sold their rubber direct to individual buyers in small towns nearest their village who would then trade with bigger buyers. As the price of rubber was determined at the world market, by the time it reached the smallholder, he would only get the 'balance' after it had undergone the sale process through many middlemen. For example, in 1980 the average price of RSS3 rubber (the grade of the smallholders' smoked rubber meant for export) was RM3.00 per kilogram, but the smallholder only received RM1.76 or less per kilogram. This meant a reduction of two-fifths of the official price. This already low price would be lower still when the farmers in their desperate need for instant cash, were forced to sell rubber in wet form and thus charged a high depreciation rate. The bulk sale managed by RISDA involved a mere 2.8 per cent of farmers, as the services of RISDA in this area were still limited. Moreover, the frequent needs for cash caused the farmers to prefer selling to individual buyers.

Rice

Padi growing was the second-most important activity after rubber with 32.2 per cent of the farmers in Baling engaged in it. Out of this figure, 42.5 per cent were engaged solely in growing padi, while the rest combined both activities. Padi was grown for subsistence. However not all of them were able to be self-sufficient, as more than three-fifths had to buy rice from the market.

As in the case of rubber, padi growing was done on a small-scale basis. 91.7 per cent of the padi fields measured less than 3.5 *relong* (2.5 acres or 1 ha). This was indeed smaller than the average padi field in Peninsular Malaysia, which was 3.1 acres (1.3 ha) (Selvadurai 1972: 26). Their padi field was also smaller compared with the bigger-sized field of four acres (1.6 ha) in other areas in Kedah. This characteristic of their field was generally one of the reasons for their failure to be self-sufficient.

Under the padi growing system, a farmer's household, which consisted of 4-6 members, required between 2.5 and 5.0 acres (1-2 ha) of padi field to be self-sufficient (Firth 1964 in Buchanan 1967). The calculation showed that for a farmer's household of 5.5 members, self-sufficiency could be achieved by double cropping on 1.6 acres (0.7 ha) for owner-operator and 2.4 acres (1 ha) for farmers. Although almost three-quarters of the padi fields in Baling were owner-farmed, the land they worked on was too small with an average size of a mere 1-2 *relong* (0.3-0.6 ha), far smaller than the size that could support a family.

Apart from size, the rice yield in Baling was also low. The average rice yield in Malaysia had increased from 1 922 kg/ha in 1955 to 2,910 kg/ha in 1980, making it the highest in South-East Asia (Peacock 1981; Bank Negara Malaysia 1980). However, the rice yield in Baling varied between low and average with two-fifths obtaining a yield of less than 250 *gantang* per *relong* (less than 1 500 kg/ha). The rest produced a yield of between 250-300 *gantang* per *relong* (between 1 500-1 875 kg/ha). The average yield in Baling was 1 500 kg/ha. As a matter of comparison, this amount was much lower than the average 3 750 kg/ha yield of the nearby Muda area (SEPU 1979:18).

1. The infertile condition of the land. In Baling, padi was grown on alluvial soil by the riverside because there was a shortage of land suitable for padi. Alluvial soil, however, is not very fertile. Padi is said to grow well in heavy clay soil (impermeable) compared to light sandy soil (Grist 1975: 21). According to Ramiah (1954 in Grist 1975) variations in soil conditions and the extension of padi cultivation to unsuitable soils were the two main reasons for the differences in yield. How-

ever, opinions regarding the effects of the soil on yield were not constant because a satisfactory yield could still be achieved for padi that is grown on land that is less fertile, provided there is adequate irrigation and ploughing.

2. Husbandry. Husbandry may also affect yield. Among the methods that caused low production was the wide spacing between seedling clumps (12″ × 14″). The recommended spacing was 11″ × 11″. The wide spacing meant fewer seedlings for each unit, which could reduce yield.
3. Mature seedling. Due to some reasons, mature seedlings (more than 30 days) were used during transplanting. This could also affect yield.
4. Low input. The improper timing and low rates of fertilization commonly employed by the farmers could also reduce yield.
5. Attacks by pests. The padi plants in Baling were susceptible to attack by pests, especially *kesing* which could also reduce yield.
6. Non-uniformity in planting schedule. Planting times were also not done simultaneously. This could reduce yield, especially through concentration of losses and damage by the pests.

As padi was not a source of cash income for farmers, its low yield meant that farmers were less able to be self-sufficient. Even if padi were a cash crop, it would not have been a profitable crop (Yukon Huang 1972; Ho 1962 in Peacock 1981).

Features of Land in Baling

Apart from the nature of the farmers' system of production in Baling, which generated low income and yield, and problems pertaining to marketing and processing, land-related problems are thought to be the most important in our attempt to shed a light on their poverty. Among the issues faced are:

1. Ownership and size. Forty-five per cent of the household heads were found to be landless. Land, in terms of availability and size, was a problem in Baling. Although Malaysia is said to still have a high percentage of potential farming land, it is limited in Baling. About half of the land in the Baling District is still forest. The Kedah Forestry Department had declared that the land available for farming was limited and because most of it were situated in the catchment areas, it had to remain as forest reserve. Steep slopes and illegal farming activities aggravated the situation further (SEPU 1979). The shortage of land was reflected by the high percentage (55 per cent) of landowners whose land was less than five acres (2 ha). The largest land owned was 26

acres (10 ha), while the average land size of a household was three acres (1.2 ha). This last finding was similar to the findings of other studies (Malaysia 1960; Gibbons et al. 1980).

2. Acquisition. The small acreage of land that a farmer had was closely related to how land was acquired. Inheritance and applications for state land were two main ways of acquiring land in Baling (30 per cent and 24 per cent respectively). As inheritance was a significant way of acquiring land, (50 per cent of the villagers acquired land through inheritance or a combination with other ways) this showed that land would continuously be fragmented. This could lead to the land becoming smaller and uneconomical.
3. Fragmentation and distribution. Most of the land owned (inherited) were scattered in many places. It involved 47.5 per cent of the landowners. The distribution distance was between one and four miles (1.6-6 km) from the owner's house and between one plot and another. This feature is relevant to the discourse on poverty in Baling since it could restrict the farming activities to the extent of affecting production. Of those whose land was scattered, 34 per cent agreed that distance had adversely affected their farming activities. Forty-one per cent of them blamed it squarely on distance (far); 22 per cent referred to the inaccessibility factor for land that was far and remote; 24 per cent said it created transportation problems especially transporting their produce, while the rest found distance a barrier to good management.
4. Other features. Two other issues that were prevalent in Baling were idle land and land without title deeds. They not only reduced production and income but also made it quite impossible for farmers to improve production through replanting, especially for smallholders. As regards idle land, 21 per cent of the padi fields in the Baling District were without title. The data for rubber, however, was not available. However, in the study area, 21 per cent of the farmers were found to leave their rubber trees untapped, and this involving 13 per cent of the rubber land. One of the reasons was the absence of young labour. Assuming that the production of one unit was constant the decrease in rubber production due to non-availability of labour could reach up to at least 10 per cent.

As regards ownership, two-fifths of the landowners in the study area did not have legal title deeds to all the land they owned. In term of size, this involved 38 per cent of the total acreage of their land, which was opened between 4-42 years ago for the purpose of farming. The absence of title deeds

was felt when the existing rubber trees were old and needed to be replanted. Without a title deed a smallholder was not eligible to apply for rubber planting subsidies from RISDA. They could not do the replanting themselves because of factor such as old age, absence of labour and capital.

Bureaucracy was the main reason for the slow processing of land applications. However, poverty was the cause for the failure of farmers to obtain their title deeds because they could not afford the premiums and other charges. The premium amount involved hundreds and thousands of ringgit (depending on the period of time the land had been worked on and type of farming done) and had to be paid within 30 days. For example, rubber land that was about seven acres (3 ha) that had been worked on for 18 years was charged between RM1 500-RM2 000 depending on the condition of the trees and location of land. Most of the farmers did not have that much money, especially if they had to come up with a large amount within a short time. It is for this reason that the offer of notice was withdrawn and the whole process of applying and other bureaucracies must be repeated when a fresh application for the title deed was made. Thus, in areas where there were large areas of old trees and without titles such as in Kg. Luar Siong, RISDA had tried to advance the farmer's land premiums for those who had agreed to participate in their mini-estates.

Apart from land and its relationship with an unprofitable production system, labour and capital were two inputs that contributed to the reduction in productivity. Family labour was common in many farming activities in Baling. It was the largest input and cost besides labour. As the size of land was small, and the nature of the farming practice especially in padi farming and the form of rubber produced involved a short period of time, the presence of a large number of family labour had created underemployment. Capital as an input was also not used extensively in farming because of the limited sources of money. For example, the total sum spent on the purchase of seeds, pesticides and fertilizers for padi farming seldom exceeded RM50 an acre, unless tractors were used for ploughing. Thus, the material needed to increase production could not be realized according to the required proportion. The imbalanced combination of production factors would surely result in low production, and low production means income from commercial farming was also low, while subsistence farming required additional purchase of food. Not all farm families were engaged in both producing rubber for income and rice for self-sufficiency. Thus, with the low price of rubber, they had difficulty in getting cash for their basic need, which was food. So it could be said that the inter-relationship among the production factors used by the

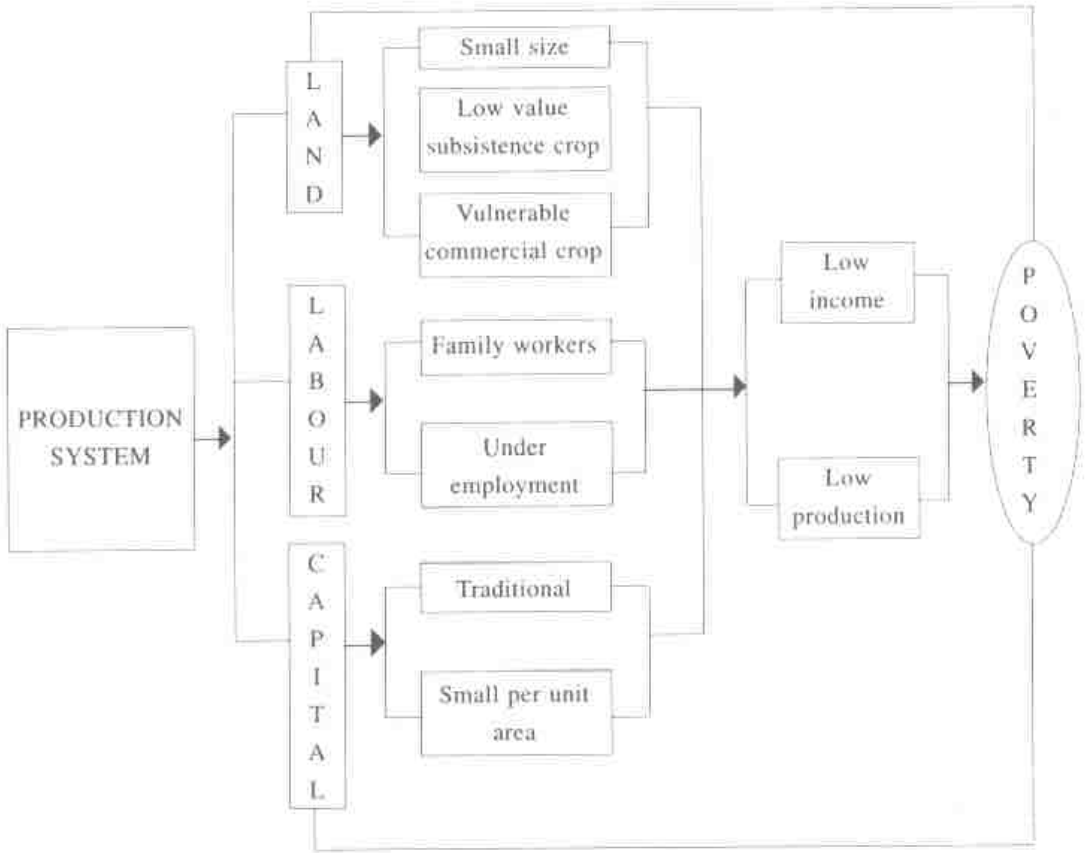


FIGURE 3.1 Production structure and poverty in Baling

farmers in Baling was similar to the vicious circle of poverty summed up in Figure 3.1.

Conclusion

What had been suggested above is a discourse on the main causes of poverty that could shed a light on the persistence of poverty in Baling. Nevertheless, they are not the only causes as the nature of poverty is such that it could involve a multitude of related causes such as the demographic and social aspects of the people, namely increases in population, attitudes, dietary habits and others. As the criteria for poverty are focused more on the economic lives of the people, the nature of their activities is thus highlighted.

The poverty rate in Baling (and other poor areas in Malaysia) has proven that we should not be merely proud of the nation's development and wealth as has often been declared without being aware of the suffering of certain parts of the population who are hidden from the general view. Their suffering ought to be reduced and eliminated so that there would be a more just and equitable development. Thus, for that purpose, there should be a strategy of slow development but one that would result in an equitable allocation or distribution. According to Adelman (1975) this could be done by "redistribute and teach now, develop later". Redistribution here refers to wealth and property especially land, while education refers to one that is more development-oriented.

In this context, and from the perspective of poverty, the implementation of policies towards the uneconomical size of land and non-ownership of land is to introduce land reforms. The most effective solution is to redistribute land. This may be a drastic step, but it is the only one that could assure equity. It is crucial that the historical repercussions of land distribution in Malaysia be revamped by reversing the accumulation effects that existed under the laissez-faire system.

As for education, greater emphasis should be on technical training and not qualifications as it would be more beneficial in the long run in moulding on more productive and industrial community. Thus, education should be more sensitive to the changing needs from time to time and be oriented towards these needs.

Chapter 4

Choice and the Baling Farmer

Introduction

Small-scale units have long been the major characteristic of rural Peninsular Malaysia. In the late 1960s, smallholdings formed 64 per cent of the total cultivated land in Peninsular Malaysia, of which 99.7 per cent was in parcels[1], of less than 10 hectares[2]. Malaysia has given greater emphasis to cash cropping than to food farming and this over reliance on cash crops is evidenced by 59.5 per cent of smallholding crop parcels being devoted to rubber alone, while food crops, mainly padi (the staple crop), only account for 22.6 per cent of the cultivated land.

Agriculture continues to play an important role in the Malaysian economy. Employing 35.9 per cent of the total workforce, it is the largest single employment sector of the economy and provides the highest single industry share at 23 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Ministry of Finance 1982). In rural areas, agriculture involves 58 -per cent of the labour force. But the incidence of poverty among agricultural households is also high; 46.1 per cent of such households in 1980, and 66.6 per cent of the total poor households (Fourth Malaysia Plan 1981-85: 34). With the twin characteristics of being important as an economic activity as well as synonymous with rural poverty, agriculture should be given high priority in any development plan. If 'development' is to take place and become self-sustaining in the developing economics, it will have to start in the rural areas in general and in the agricultural sector in particular (Todaro 1981:252).

The task of bringing development to the rural areas is hindered by a multitude of problems including widespread poverty, rapid population growth and rising unemployment. But in Malaysia the most pressing problem faced by the agricultural sector is the lack of manpower interested in undertaking agricultural work, a dearth that in its turn, is the cause of idle land.

This study is drawn from village studies conducted in 1981 in Baling, an identified poverty district. It has a total area of 1 502 square kilometres, and according to the 1980 census, a population of 107 926. Seventy-seven

per cent of the population are Malays who reside mainly in the villages. About two per cent of the population are of Thai descent. The remainder of the population is almost equally made up of the Chinese who dominate the built-up areas and the Indians who are mainly found in the estates.

The Baling Farmers

General Demographic Characteristics

The majority of the respondents were males; the 11 per cent of females being either widows or women whose husbands were out-migrants remitting to their families. Almost two-thirds of the heads of households were below the age of fifty, thus implying a relatively young generation of household heads. Nuclear families made up 94.7 per cent of the households, the rest being mainly extended families which, were accordingly, not significant in the area.

The households comprised 2609 persons, 43.8 per cent below the age of 15 years, 54 per cent between the ages of 15 and 64 years and the remainder is over the 65 age group. The structure of the population in the study area was young compared to the 1980 national population data showing respectively 40, 57 and 3 per cent in the three age groups respectively (Department of Statistics 1983:27).

Occupation

An overwhelming concentration of 77.3 per cent of the heads of the household were found to be engaged in either rubber or padi production despite the fact that 45 per cent of them were landless (Table 4.1). With a further 5.5

TABLE 4.1 Percentage distribution of household heads by occupation, 1981

Occupation	Per cent
Rubber Tapper	44.9
Padi Planter	13.8
Rubber Tapper& Padi Planter	18.6
Teacher/Religious Teacher	2.1
Clerks & Other (Government Jobs)	2.1
Estate worker/labourer	4.5
Retailer	2.8
Odd jobbers	1.1
Self-employed, taxi & bus drivers	4.2
Jobless/Housewife	5.9
Total	100.0

Source: Adapted from Asmah, 1983.

per cent of the population employed as estate workers, agricultural labourers[3] and those doing odd jobs[4] were also engaged in the agricultural sector, a total of 83 per cent of workers derived incomes from this traditional source.

About 40 per cent of the households had members, other than the head, who were working. These were mainly adult children and wives. Even so, only about one-fifth of each of the respondent's spouses and resident children aged 16 and above were employed. Wives were largely engaged in agricultural activities, mainly rubber tapping, with a small proportion involved in retailing in the weekly markets, an activity which only yielded an average of about RM15 per day, but which, in most cases, was a significant contribution to the household's weekly income.

Of the children, some were still attending secondary school, but the majority of those not working were girls who were expected to help at home until they were married. The majority of resident male children, on the other hand, were working either as rubber tappers or on the family farm. It was amongst migrated children, however, that a shift from farming to wage earning was most apparent. Migration had involved slightly more than one-third of the respondents' adult children, and more than half of this movement was said to be economically motivated. The out-migrants were mainly concentrated in three occupational groups: clerical and related works, labourers and factory workers, and in the Police and Armed Forces. The shift from farming in the occupational structure of the children had resulted, in part, from greater awareness and 'spatio-educational mobility' achieved by pursuing post-primary and post-secondary educations.

In Malaysia education and entry to the labour market are very qualification-oriented. Accordingly, many of the young qualified workforce migrated to urban areas in search of better opportunities commensurate with their qualifications. Thus arises a development dilemma. Educating the young is a social investment for the future, and necessary for the development process. At the same time, the young labour force needed to develop the rural sector is leaving the countryside. This premise may support Dore's (1972) argument that educational investment in qualification-producing institutions may hinder rather than promote economic growth, although, as shall be discussed later, out-migrants may still economically contribute to their poor rural-based families, mainly by remittances.

The Production System

The economic activities of the Malay villagers normally evolve around their holdings. There are three types of Malay holdings: the *kebun* (garden) usually

devoted to one crop of commercial and speculative importance, the *kampung* (village), land for permanent settlement with either padi fields or mixed cultivations or both, and the *dusun* (orchard) usually cultivated with fruit trees for both commercial and home consumption.

The Rubber Land

The Malay *kebun* is normally planted with rubber. It is, in most cases, the principal source of cash income and the generator of surplus income for investment in other agricultural activities. This is evidenced by the overwhelmingly high percentage of household heads who are rubber tappers by occupation, and by the fact that rubber occupies two-thirds of the agricultural land in the area.

On average, a rubber landowner owns 1.9 hectares of rubber land. A holding of 2 hectares is normally thought sufficient to maintain a household of 5.5 members just above poverty level, provided it has been planted with potentially high-yielding material and a reasonably good standard of husbandry has been followed. Thus an average smallholder should be in a position to emerge from poverty. In the study area many smallholders simply do not have a holding sufficiently large enough to attain a minimum income, especially since 50 per cent of them own 1.4 hectares or less of rubber land each.

Poverty arises not only from uneconomic farm size, but is aggravated by the senility of the trees, which affects rubber yields. Peak yields are normally achieved between the tenth and fifteenth years. Low yields are particularly associated with old trees of over 25 years[5] but can also be attributed to poor husbandry during the immature period and poor tapping techniques. About 45 per cent of the smallholders' rubber trees in Baling are old and only 35 percent can be considered fully productive. Thus smallholders' incomes from rubber are very much reduced compared with their potential.

Replanting with better clones should be one way of overcoming the problem of old trees of low productivity, but there are disincentives to the farmer to replace his old tree stock with new young stock. Lack of labour, mainly young labour, compels the smallholder to use contractors who often demand down payment to fell his holding, thus creating a financial problem. This may be overcome by using replanting assistance from RISDA. However, legal title to land is necessary before the owner can benefit from RISDA's replanting grant,[6] and two-fifths of the landowner, in the study area did not have legal title to all of their land.[7] While bureaucracy has often been the reason behind delays in processing land applications, the failure to secure

legal title is largely a result of poverty, and the inability to pay the land premium and other necessary costs incurred before title of ownership is awarded. These charges can amount to several hundred or thousand ringgit (RM) per parcel of land payable within thirty days from the date of notice, and are unobtainable amounts for most farmers. As a result, the offer of notice is withdrawn and the whole process of application must be repeated. In areas characterised by vast senile rubber lands without titles requiring redevelopment, RISDA has moved to overcome the problem by advancing the payment of land premiums to those who agree to participate in its estate programme.

The Padi Land

Padi is second only in importance to rubber with 32.2 per cent of households participating in its production. Of these, less than half grow padi, the rest being dual farmers producing both rubber and padi. Only one farmer produces a surplus for sale. The rest grow padi for subsistence, but not all are self-sufficient and more than three-fifths of the households supplement their needs by buying rice.

Although single-crop wetland and hill padi are still grown, 96 per cent of the cultivated padi land in the area is double-crop padi. Like the rubber planters, almost all the padi farmers in the area are smallholders, with 91.7 per cent of all padi farms being under one hectare. This compares with a countrywide average padi farm size of 1.3 hectares (Selvadurai 1972:26). Calculations reveal that for a peasant household of 5.5 persons, self-sufficiency may be achieved with padi double cropping of 0.7 and 1.0 hectares for owner-farmers and tenant farmers respectively. But, the owner-farmed lands were mostly very small in size averaging between 0.3 and 0.6 hectares each. Landowners with a bigger parcel of padi land, or having more than one parcel of small padi plots, were found either to rent out their plots or to arrange for someone to farm them in return for half the share of the yield. With such a situation, it is hardly surprising that these small farmers will never achieve self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, as well as having small plots, the farmers in the 1980 survey, had relatively poor crop yields. The average padi yield and in Peninsular Malaysia in 1980 was 2,910 kg/ha. The highest average yield in the study area is fairly low at 1,500 kg/ha, and compares unfavourably both with the national average and the average yield of 3,750 kg/ha produced in the neighbouring 'rice-bowl' area of the western coastal plains of Kedah (SEPU 1979:18).

Causes of poor yields of padi in the area range from infertile soil, improper husbandry and timing, and low rates of fertilisation to non-uniformity in planting schedule. Consequently, where padi lands lie relatively far from farming households, and there are other alternatives, the padi fields are often left untilled.

Padi is never a profitable crop. Yukon Huang (1972) in his study on the profitability of padi farming finds that, of all the possible crops that the Peninsular Malaysian smallholder could grow, padi, even with high yields, gives the lowest return per hectare (Table 4.2). In the light of this, the adherence to padi farming arises not only because it is the staple food for all Malaysians but also as a response to official policies of making the nation self-sufficient in rice.

TABLE 4.2 Profitability of padi and alternative crops[a] RM (per ha per crop): 1970

Crops	Total Costs[b] (RM)	Gross Revenue (RM)	Net Revenue (RM)
Padi	350.7	711.4	360.6
Groundnuts	716.3	1,235.0	518.7
Maize	444.6	1,185.6	741.0
Tobacco	1,156.0	2,223.0	1,067.0
Watermelon	419.9	3,087.5	2,667.6

Notes: [a] The chosen crops are those with a growing season short enough to enable double cropping to take place.

[b] Total expenses in cash and kind plus imputed cost of family labour.

Source: Adapted from Yukon Huang (1972).

The *Dusun* (Orchard) Land

Besides having a *kebun* (rubber land) and kampung land (sometimes incorporating padi land) a farmer may also have a *dusun* or orchard, devoted to mainly seasonal fruit trees like durian (*Durio Zibethinus*). As it is normally considered 'secondary' to the main cropland such as rubber or padi lands, fewer households have dusun land. Thus of the 262 sample landowners, while 92 per cent owned rubber land and 64.5 per cent owned padi land, only 15.7 per cent had dusun land. The size of the orchards was also small averaging 0.6 hectares, and fruits were grown mainly for home consumption. Only those who owned relatively bigger orchards sold their fruits but none of the sale returns exceeded RM300 per season (year).

The seasonal nature of fruit production makes investment in dusun land less attractive when compared with the regular return from rubber and the high demand for staple food crops like padi, and so only the bigger landowners own dusun land. Fruit was also poorly marketed. Most were sold at the farm gate direct to the consumers, but sometimes also to agents or middlemen who subsequently arranged transport and marketed the produce. When established local demand was exceeded by seasonal surpluses, farmers received low returns, such that sometimes they preferred to consume rather than sell their produce. Nevertheless, many fruit growers agreed that their livelihood improved slightly during the fruit seasons.

Labour Organisation and Utilisation

The traditional farming economy often lacks a highly organised division of labour as compared to the plantation economy. However, within the traditional framework, specific forms of labour organisation and utilization can be observed, ranging from the farmer's own labour through unpaid family labour to hired labour.

Once the trees become productive, rubber is a low labour-demand industry. Tree tapping is normally carried out on an average of twenty days in a month and takes half a day (six hours) of the tapper's time. Thus a rubber tapper only works for the equivalent of 185 days in a year, and is underemployed for 51 per cent of his available working time. Figure 4.1 shows the labour flows in the production of padi and rubber and also the correlation of the rainfall distribution with the production activities. A proportional relationship was observed in the case of padi production where the growing seasons coincided with the wetter months and the harvesting seasons with the drier months. Both involved a greater rate of activities as compared to the other months as shown Figures 4.1a and 4.1d. On the other hand, an inverse relationship is seen in the production of rubber where high rainfall corresponded with low tapping days and vice versa (Figures 4.1b and 4.1d). While the degree of underemployment in padi production is determined by the cultivation cycle of the crop, in rubber, it did not only vary from month to month but also according to the form of rubber produced. Underemployment is assumed to be least severe when rubber is produced in sheet form (as it takes longer time to process) and most severe when produced in scrap form. The latter is due to the fact that the production process is least elaborate and least time consuming.

Such underemployment would be lower if the operator concerned was also involved in producing padi (Figure 4.1c). Such 'dualism' in farming was,

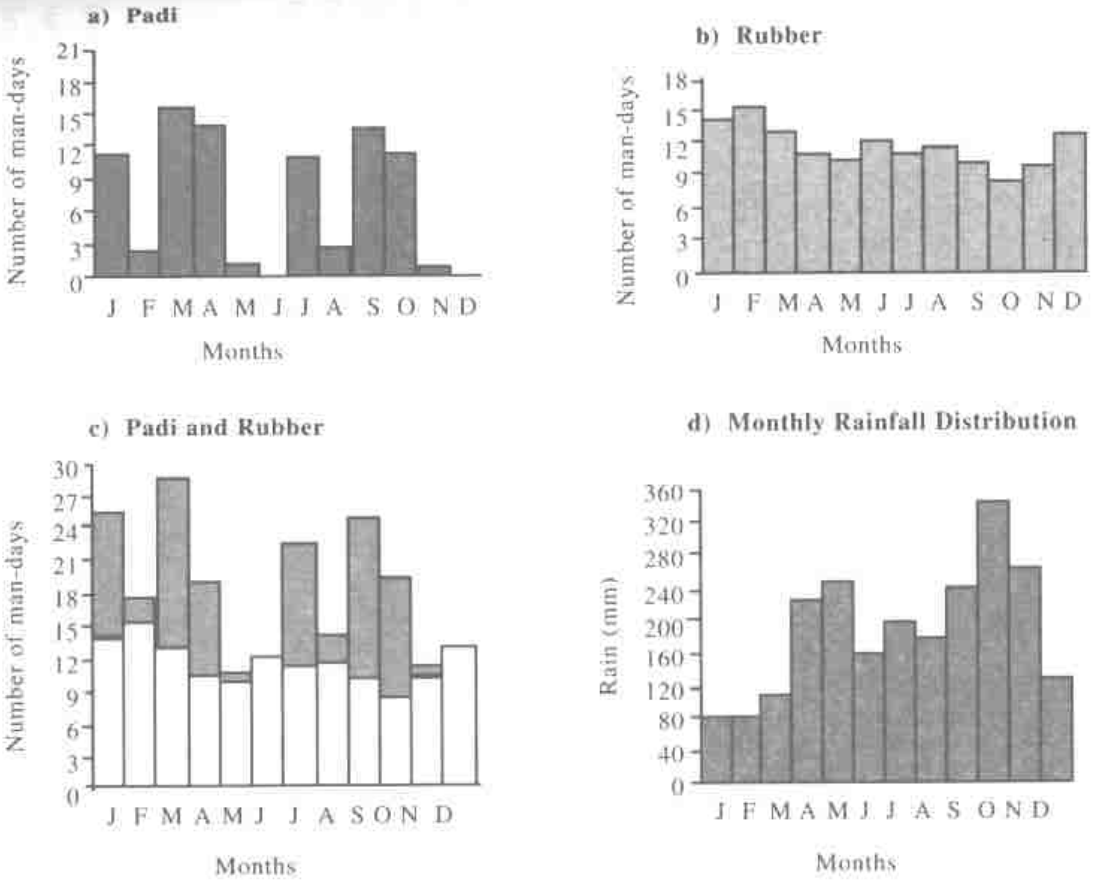


FIGURE 4.1 Labour flows and rainfall distribution in the production of padi and rubber in Baling

as found earlier, was relatively small (19 per cent), suggesting that underemployment is a serious problem. In the recent past, this underemployment has been aggravated by the high dependence on family labour where supply, rather than demand determined the amount of (family) labour to be allocated to a farm. Often the shortage of land and surplus family labour when combined will ensure underemployment of labour- resources. However, with greater literacy and wider exposure to alternative employment among the children, this situation has changed and many farmers are now finding it difficult to raise the family labour required on the farms, particularly young male labour who generally prefers wage employment.

Despite the fact that most farm families have traditionally been underemployed, a small proportion of the agricultural work has always been undertaken by hired labour, which, even under the situation of underemployment, was necessary, according to Narkswasdi and Selvadurai (1968:174), in order to complete such work as transplanting and harvesting within specified time constraints. Fujimoto (1976 cited in Fujimoto 1980:194-5), however, argued that such farming work was physically able to be completed by the available family labour alone. However, it was a customary practice (in particular, the division of labour by gender), which determined the inadequacy of family labour and therefore the need to employ hired labour. Furthermore, he found that the relatively better-off farmers felt obliged to assist poorer villagers by providing them with job/income opportunities.

In this study however, shortage of manpower was the main factor which led farmers to hire non-family labour. The average number of (otherwise unoccupied) family members for farm work was only 1.8 persons per household (including the female spouses of the heads of households who also had domestic responsibilities to meet). Consequently, farmers had to resort to non-family labour for part of their farming operations.

Out-migration and Job Preference

The labour bottlenecks inherent in the production of both rubber and padi arise not only on the life cycle of the members of the farm households but are also due to the loss of able-bodied manpower through out-migration and preference for non-farm employment. Migration appears to be a continuing process and will probably remain so for as long as there are imbalances in the country's social and economic development, that is, when there appears a positive differential in expected income between two places (Todaro 1969).

The Out-migrants

The bulk of out-migrants were adult members the households. Only 8 per cent of the household heads had left their villages at any time of their life, mainly in search of better job opportunities. By contrast, at least 30 per cent of their dependents aged 16 years and above, were at the time of the survey absent for various reasons but mainly in pursuit of economic betterment, marriage or study.

Students of Malaysian patterns of inequality are familiar with the pattern in the employment structure of its various ethnic groups. While, the Chinese are mainly engaged in the more modern industries such as mining, manufacturing and commerce, and the Indians in export agriculture (plantation workers), the Malays are over-represented in agriculture and the public service. In accordance with this general pattern, at least 60 per cent of the rural-urban migrants were employed in public administration and defence. But because access to employment is largely a function of education, and because of their relatively low educational attainment (only about 10 per cent completed their upper secondary schooling), a great majority of the in-migrants only worked in the lower-status, lower-entrance occupations of clerk, office boy, policeman and soldier. Thus the number of migrants in the high-level manpower category, that is, administrative/ managerial and technical professional workers was low because of the lack of necessary post-secondary education. Furthermore, of the thirteen in this category, eleven were teachers.

An important characteristic of the migrants' occupational structure is the high 31 per cent employed in industrial blue-collar work. Housing booms and the expansion of the manufacturing sector in urban areas have combined to permit a rise in the share of Malays among industrial workers. Consequently, the greater employment opportunities in urban areas and the depressed levels of agriculture incomes and village life have resulted in rural youth preferring paid urban jobs to rubber tapping and padi farming.

The rural-urban income differential has a significant influence on the decision to migrate. Income generated from rubber was found to be about RM117 per household per month. The minimum government wage is RM230 per month, and the average private sector income for unskilled workers is RM260 per month. It can be seen that an urban, manual worker earns twice as much as his rural counterpart for work of equal skill, a differential that is a major incentive for rural youth to seek job opportunities in towns.

Besides the income incentives to out-migrate to the urban areas, the education system also provides its own impetus towards out-migration by

both improving the opportunities for employment outside the village and also the failure to prepare the rural youth for rural employment. The typical school curriculum is structured in a preparatory format, that is, primary for secondary, secondary for college, etc. Most rural Malays, for a variety of social and economic reasons, never reach college-level education, and their pre-college training usually consists of recitation and drill learning in literacy, numeracy and foreign languages rather than training in the thinking and problem solving necessary for them to function efficiently in the rural environment. By this process, those children who are potentially the rural labour force are given a clerical-type education of little practical use in the village and which consequently encourages the seeking of wage-employment in urban areas.

This is not to say that when urban opportunities are perceived to be significantly better than rural opportunities that rural-urban migration will not persist if school curricula are changed to promote commitment to agriculture. The urban pull of strong income differentials will always be dominant whatever the schooling system.

Family aspirations for their children further exacerbate these trends. Most heads of the household did not wish their sons to follow in their footsteps into agriculture, preferring them to obtain a stable white-collar job, possibly with the government, which they saw as offering a good steady income when compared with the uncertainties of an agricultural income. Parents realized that more schooling and certificates improved their children's chances of obtaining more secure and better-paid employment, and clearly agreed that children must be educated to the greatest extent possible, for only with good qualifications would they be able to move from the traditional to the modern economy. At the same time, the parents had a generally low perception of their children's potential educational attainments, thereby helping to perpetuate a rural-urban migration essentially into the lower echelons of the urban economy.

Out-migration and its Economic Impact

When the available pool of productive labour in a rural economy is reduced as a result of out-migration, there results, arguably, a reduction in total agricultural output (or agricultural productivity) and a general deterioration of the local agricultural system (Skinner 1965; ILO 1960). In this study, the area of land left partially or fully idle as a result of labour shortage, is used as the gauge of reduced agricultural output. Not all idle lands could be ascribed to scarcity of labour, and, in fact, lack of water was the main cause cited for idle padi land. For rubber land, however, roughly one-eighth of the

more productive rubber land was idle, (and rubber production was thereby reduced accordingly) and three-quarters of this idleness was explained by lack of labour, especially young labour.

That shortage of manpower acts as a constraint on rising agricultural production and yield is also acknowledged by the landowners. About two-thirds (63.4 per cent) of them admitted that they face manpower problems in their effort to increase their agricultural productivity. To that extent, a deficient young labour force can become a major factor in perpetuating poverty among the villagers.

Out-migration is not without its advantage. In particular the remittances of money and resources sent by migrants to their respective home areas. These urban-to-rural financial flows have been widely studied by others, and their existence was apparent in this survey. At least RM36 000 in cash flowed into the area each year from remittances and accounted for not less than five percent of the area's yearly cash income. The value of the out-migrants' remittances would be more when support in kind is also included, for example, furniture and also irregular lump sum payments averaging about RM400 at a time for such undertakings as repairing of a house, building of wells and latrines etc. At least 37 per cent of the migrants provided some financial support to their families during the year, but half of them remitted less than RM500 per year.

The types of jobs acquired and the duration of absences affected the propensity for, and frequency of, remittances. Hence, migrants with higher-status, better-paying jobs were more likely to remit income than those in the lower occupational groups. All those holding high-ranking jobs sent money home regularly and in large amounts. The percentage of those sending money home was then found to decline proportionally with occupational status. This suggested that remittances represent not only a financial ability to impart a fraction of earned income but also as repayment of the social debt incurred in obtaining education. That the lower occupational groups also remit implies the strength of kinship obligations towards parents. The literature is contradictory as to whether these financial flows lead to improved productivity through investment (Stark 1976) or merely increase consumption (Lipton 1976).

The present study shows that very little of the remittances is used directly as investment for rural development. Instead they are seen to serve as a means of maintaining rural-based families, or as a repayment of social debt arising from past assistance received from the families. Given that recipients are primarily parents and village elders, it is not surprising that

most of the money remitted is used for increased consumption, education and better housing. But while little is used to increase agricultural productivity, without question, particular rural families derive substantial benefit from remittances received. Unintentionally, it has created a new type of wealth, which is given a very high respect in the society. Successful children not only boost family prestige but also bring to the village a blend of outside money, knowledge, exposure and attitudes.

Conclusion

What choice or choices are then left to the small farmers? Their crops are of low remunerative capacities. Rice, their staple food, is known to be a low output-value crop. Rubber, on the other hand, can be very productive, but as a smallholding production it lacks estate or plantation-type of efficiency both in production and marketing. The farmers are price-takers in a distant market and, because of this, rubber proves to be very vulnerable as a cash crop.

In conclusion, it is felt that should 'rural opportunities' remain scarce, family labour must partly be invested off-farm, irrespective of the educational background of the children. By doing this, such labour will cease to be a liability at home but become a welcoming asset instead. Agriculture will continue to be the main livelihood of the rural population and policies should be implemented to divert the job preferences of young people more towards agriculture. This can only partially be achieved by the changes in the emphasis of education, but also requires changes in agricultural practices to make the industry more attractive both to the young people themselves and also to their parents.

End Notes

1 A crop parcel represents a contiguous piece of land with a lot, having an identifiable single cropping pattern or land use irrespective of ownership or operation. It is surrounded by fields having a distinctively different cropping pattern, vacant land, swamps, etc.

2 Although the figure is somewhat out of date, it still reflects the existing pattern, up to now, if the new land development schemes are excluded. This is because, although the total area of cultivated land has increased to 3.5 million hectares in 1983, the increase is mainly in the form of new land schemes developed by quasi-government agencies such as FELDA's (Federal Land Development Authority) and RISDA's (Rubber Industry Smallholder Develop-

ment Authority) block-plantings. Those organisations are necessarily distinct from those of estates and smallholdings. In the former, managements run along estates' organization but ownerships follow that of smallholdings.

3 Estate Workers and 'agricultural labourers, are differentiated in the study to highlight that they were paid wages for the work they did while traditional farmers earned money from selling their own agricultural produce.

4 Odd jobbers are those workers who undertake some form of agricultural work such as clearing of undergrowth or cutting down trees for a fee. Their incomes thus fluctuate depending on the availability of jobs or requests made by land or property owners.

5 A full life cycle of rubber trees is 32 years but is normally unobtainable by smallholders due to their maintenance and tapping method.

6 RISDA provides a replanting grant of RM2963/hectare and an alternative subsidy scheme providing subsidies for agricultural inputs like fertilizers, stimulants and recommended inter crop seedlings, assistance for the development of smallholders' development centres and their associated infrastructures especially in improving processing of rubber.

7 Land without titles normally originated from *tanah usaha* or illegal opening up of land gazetted under Reserves. These lands were 'developed' between 4 and 42 years ago for agricultural purposes either for rubber, *padi*, *dusun* or settlement.

8 Yields per hectare in Malaysia are estimated on the basis of the area planted while in some countries yields are reckoned on area harvested.

Chapter 5

The Baling Farmer on Life

Introduction

Development projects designed according to expert ideas of what people should want were often said to be well-meaning but often ill-conceived and hence exacerbating social irritation. In order to avoid this, it is best to find out how the local situation is perceived by the populace (Stagner 1970). This is because any plan for development which fails to include some data on the perceptions held, and the level of satisfaction indicated by citizens will encounter trouble. However, this indicator of the level of satisfaction does not necessarily eliminate social conflict. At best it is useful only in helping us to understand and cope with these conflicts, rather than blundering in the dark.

It follows logically here that our main task at this stage is to establish what this level of satisfaction involves. A state of their satiation or non-satiation or happiness or non- happiness bores down to the question of human well-being or the quality of life. Interestingly, there appears to be several ways of determining criteria of human well-being or quality of life in the literature. One of the ways is to derive them from theory in psychology or sociology such as the theory of needs and wants (Lasswell & Kaplan 1950; Maslow 1954; Fletcher 1965). While needs implies reference to some standards external to the desire of the individuals, wants, on the other hand, refers to acquisitive desire. The most basic human needs are those relating to physical survival i.e. man's physiological needs comprising food, drink, clothing, shelter and the like. Accordingly, it was argued that higher needs emerged successively as lower ones were satisfied. Failures of need satisfaction in the modern world are normally attributed to a 'revolution of rising expectations'. Unless a system generating rising expectation has the capacity to provide the necessary needs, people end up worse off in a real sense (Smith 1977). Consequentially, they may then move from aspiration to frustration and aggression, expressed in revolution or other forms of social violence (Stagner 1970). However, despite the similarities in the various

theories of needs and wants, there is no generally accepted social theory setting out the precise conditions unambiguously defining human well-being. This problem has been frequently recognized in the literature on social indicators (Smith 1973).

Another way of determining the criteria of human well-being is to ask the people how they view their own state of well-being, satisfaction or happiness in order to discover what this state is dependent on (Stagner 1970; Abrams 1973). Although this type of subjective inquiry has not yet reached the stage at which it would form a basis for definitive lists of criteria at aggregate level, it is useful in finding the way ordinary people perceive, think and feel.

Yet another approach combining both elements stated above is to refer to 'expert opinion' or the judgment of scientists or professionals and representatives of public views. However, a danger is posed here in the form that these people may not truly represent the concern of the population at large. There is a probability that experts will express elitist views instead of the accurate scientific knowledge of the way ordinary people think and feel.

Given the various advantages and shortcomings of the above methods, it is felt that the second method or subjective inquiry is the best for the purpose of this paper for even though every fact is relative to an observer according to Einstein, it is realistic especially in exploring and finding out how the common people perceive and think about things around and concerning them.

In the light of the above scenario, this short paper is written as an illustration of an empirical finding of subjective questioning which can lead to indicate resident's perceptions and attitudes in an already identified poverty area i.e. Baling, which the author has some field knowledge. It is hoped that the findings would be able to throw some lights on the perceptions and attitudes of the prevailing society and hence has policy ramifications for programmes of poverty amelioration and community development.

Poverty in Baling

Baling has already been officially identified as poor and ranks fifth out of the 68 districts by the overall District Ranking in Peninsular Malaysia, based on the number of households reported to have household income of not more than RM250 per month (EPU 1980). Seemingly, it was found that the four villages studied were characterized by mass-poverty in which 76.1 per cent of the households studied were found to be in poverty in 1981 (Asmah 1983;

1984). It was also found and proved that the extent of poverty in the area had increased during the span of the three-year period between the EPU's study in 1978 and hers. It is in the latter's study of Baling in 1981 that subjective questions on certain aspects of the villagers' life were asked. The sections that follow hereafter deal with the findings and implications of the answers given.

Farmers' Perceptions and Attitudes

Both questions on perceptions and attitudes of the villagers were asked. As the questionnaire was directed to the heads of the households, the answers given were necessarily those of the heads'. However, since the heads of the households were taken as those acknowledged by the family members to be the chief decision-makers, their voices could be taken to represent the popular opinions of the villagers.

In the study, two aspects of the villager's perceptions of their living conditions were asked; first how they perceived it before and after the 1974 Demonstrations and second, how they judged themselves compared with the prevailing standard of living of their village. In the first instance, in order to find out how they had fared since the time of the 1974 demonstrations, the respondents were asked to 'differentiate' their conditions of living before and after the event. Although this is a highly subjective opinion by those affected, nevertheless, their 'declared satisfaction' or 'non-satisfaction' about their own condition of living cannot be totally ignored. Table 5.1 shows the answers. As can be seen, there was a consensus opinion among the villagers that life before the demonstrations was very difficult due to low rubber prices. The difficult condition was not only due to low rubber prices but also

TABLE 5.1 Villager's perception of living condition before and after the 1974 demonstrations

Before	%	After	%
Difficult	81.7	No difference	41.0
Better	0.9	Slightly better	39.1
Don't know	10.5	Don't know	10.9
No answer	6.9	No answer	9.0
Total	100.0		100.0

Source: Asmah 1983.

to the prolonged rainy season, which caused great loss of earnings to the villagers. However, about half of those who said that life was difficult before, found that it had not brought any difference since. Of those who said that living conditions were slightly better, three-fifths of them were from one village. This was because, of the four villages only one was being provided with both community water and electricity. However another village was also provided with water later in 1980.

In the second instance, the respondents were asked how they compared themselves with the rest of the villagers. It was found that 75.8 per cent of them considered themselves to be at par. As poverty was their main feature, this implied that they were equally poor. Here again, one can be skeptical over this type of self-evaluation especially when elements such as modesty and exaggeration being involved were possible. Yet a closer look at their income distribution showed us that their declared evaluation did not deviate much from reality. Taking those households with an income of RM550 or more to signify the well off, it was found that they were almost similar, the observed percentage being 2.7 as against the declared percentage of 2.4 (Asmah 1983).

Similarly, the 18.1 per cent of those who declared that they were poorer did not differ much from those whose household incomes were below RM100 per month. For the rest the uniformity in their style of living could have caused some ambiguity among the villagers and hence the declaration that everybody was at par. In addition to the above two questions, the villagers were also asked several other related questions (Table 5.2).

As can be seen from the responses to the first question, there was a clear indication that the villagers (67.7 per cent) were unhappy with their living condition. Although insufficient income appeared to be the main reasons, other related factors such as inflation and landlessness were also mentioned and together they accounted for 95 per cent of the causes of unhappiness among the villagers. Of the other one-third who felt happy with their life, one-half of them were happy with whatever acquired. Literally the answer they gave in Bahasa or Malay was *'memadai dengan apa yang ada'*. This attitude can be said to be similar to those of satisfiers.

The fact that the majority was willing to work (find job, open up state land and carrying out cash-cropping) showed that they were not passive; given the opportunities they will strive to better themselves. The percentage of those who indicate dependence on external help particularly from charitable organizations is low (3.8 per cent) reflecting that they are not without motivation and do not prefer to subsist on handouts or patronage from rela-

TABLE 5.2 Villager's perceptions and attitudes towards their state of well-being: responses to specific questions

Questions	Responses	No.	Adj.%
1. Generally, are you happy with your present life (living condition)?	a) Very happy	0	0.0
	b) Happy	143	32.3
	c) Unhappy	300	67.7
	d) Very unhappy	0	0.0
			100.0
2. What is the reason for you saying happy?	a) Satisfied with whatever acquired	65	50.9
	b) Better-off than before	37	28.9
	c) Receive development projects	23	18.0
	d) Children able to get good education and job	3	2.2
			100.0
3. What is the reason for you saying unhappy?		208	73.5
	a) Insufficient income and many dependents	19	6.7
	b) Price of essential goods high relative to income	9	3.1
	c) No permanent job, landless	14	5.0
	d) Development projects not complete	33	11.7
	e) All a to c		100.0
4. If you think you are worse off than the rest of the villagers, have you made any attempt to overcome your condition of living?		80	95.2
	a) Yes	4	4.8
	b) No		100.0
5. If yes, how do you attempt to overcome your condition of living?	a) By trying to find job (better, permanent, various, part-time)	67	84.8
	b) By seeking help from organization	3	3.8
	c) By giving children education	4	5.0
	d) Open up state land	4	5.0
	e) Carry out cash cropping	1	1.4
			100.0

TABLE 5.2 (*Continue*)

Questions	Responses	No.	Adj.%
6. If no, why don't you attempt to overcome your condition of living?	a) Too old	4	100.0
	b) Don't know	0	0.0
			100.0
7. Do you ever think of what are best for you and for your village?	a) Yes	355	92.0
	b) No	31	8.0
			100.0
8. If yes to own self, how?	a) Improved knowledge	23	26.7
	b) To own land	1	1.2
	c) To have regular and sufficient income	32	37.2
	d) To get assistance	3	3.5
	e) Don't know	27	31.4
			100.0
9. If yes to village, how?	a) Get projects which are still needed	255	81.2
	b) Government gives full attention to eradicate poverty	29	9.2
	c) Increase agricultural projects	2	0.6
	d) Have good village head	24	7.7
	e) Don't know	4	1.3
			100.0
10. If no to own self and village, why?	a) Already have permanent job	2	14.3
	b) Too old	5	35.7
	c) Satisfied	5	35.7
	d) Don't know	2	14.3
			100.0

Source: Asmah 1983, 164-165.

tives or the government as has been commonly assumed. Only when the scale of improvement is beyond their capabilities (at village level) do they call in the government to provide the necessary infrastructure needed.

Similarly, for their future betterment, many foresee that by having fixed and sufficient income they would be better off than what they are now. To these 37 per cent of the villagers, that would be the best future for them. This

is understandable for in a situation where low, irregular amount and insufficient income have been the characteristics of their earnings, fixed and sufficient income are seen to be one way of overcoming their predicament.

Besides the nature of income earned, about one-quarter thought that by improving their knowledge they could also better themselves. This is rather ambiguous. Among others, it could imply two things. First, it could mean that they would like to be more learned and informed so that they could be more aware of what are happening around them. Also by being more learned they would be more prone to rational thinking and hence able to become active participants in community affairs and development.

Second, it could also mean that they would like to improve their state of present knowledge through education. It has been proved time and again that education is able to raise significantly the chances to escape from poverty by providing access to non-agricultural employment. This would provide them a possible access to the elite group thus mobilising their social vertical mobility. However, as most of the respondents were already past the prime age of undergoing formal education, this alternative implication appears far too distant for them. Nevertheless, it could also mean that improvement of knowledge through education need not necessarily be for them, as they could aspire it for the family at large i.e. through their children. This brought us to another aspect of the population's attitude particularly towards education.

The education system in the country whose typical school curriculum is structured on a preparatory type of education; i.e. primary for secondary, secondary for collage and so on, is of little practical use in the villages. The system has, with time, changed the aspiration of the masses. Parents have realized that in an era of scarce skilled man-power, the more schooling and certificates their children can accumulate, the better will be their chances of getting secure and well-paid jobs. For the poor especially, more years of schooling have been perceived to be the only avenue of hope for their children to escape from poverty. When questions on desires and ambitions towards children's education and occupation were asked, there was a clear agreement among the heads of households that their children must be educated as long as possible (Table 5.3). Only with good qualification can their children be able to get out of the traditional economy.

With regards to occupation, hardly any of the farmer heads of households wished their sons to follow their footsteps. Only one case would like his son to be involved in agriculture but working in the Agricultural Department. The type of occupation preferred is mainly white-collar job. However, very few mentioned high-skilled professional jobs due not only to lack of

TABLE 5.3 Parental attitudes and desires towards children's education and occupation: responses to specific questions

Questions	Responses	No.	Adj.%
1. Nowadays, how much education do you think your children need to get along well in Malaysia?	a) No education	0	0.0
	b) Primary education	0	0.0
	c) Secondary education	24	6.3
	d) Tertiary other than university	3	0.8
	e) University education	329	86.4
2. How much chance do you think your children have to complete secondary school?	a) Very good	3	0.8
	b) Good	107	28.1
	c) Average	220	57.7
	d) Poor	3	0.8
	e) Very poor	7	1.8
3. If your children complete secondary school, what would you prefer them to do?	a) Further study	187	49.1
	b) Get a job	27	7.1
	c) Does not matter one or the other	133	34.9
4. How much chance do you think your children have to obtain university education?	a) Very good	4	1.1
	b) Good	32	8.4
	c) Average	171	44.9
	d) Poor	19	5.0
	e) Very poor	9	2.4
	f) Don't know	97	25.5
5. Suppose your child ask your advice on what would be the best occupation to aim for, which one occupation would you advise him/ her to aim for?	a) Work with Government	111	29.2
	b) Teacher (specific)	30	7.8
	c) Good job in modern sector	27	7.1
	d) Businessman	4	1.1
	e) Doctor	2	0.5
	f) Engineer	1	0.3
	g) Self-employed	3	0.8
	h) Not sure (depend on child's success)	160	42.0
	i) Don't know	7	1.8

Source: Asmah 1983, 244.

information but also the relatively low occupational ambition they have for their children. Their outlook for improvement can again be said to be similar to those of satisfiers. To them a relatively good steady income from a stable white-collar job is sufficiently preferable to the highly flexible agricultural income. The popularity of the Government sector as a secure employer is also apparent. There was a high percentage of reservation among the household heads, when 42 per cent of them were 'not sure' what they would like their children to be. This is mainly the result of their low perception on the capacity of their children's educational abilities. Only 29 per cent of them rated the chances of their children passing secondary school examination as above average.

The immediate preceding discussions had highlighted the perceptions and attitudes of the villagers regarding two of the ways and means of overcoming their condition of living. The opinions given above were expressed by two-thirds of the population. However, the other one-third simply did not know what were best for them. This was the group that could be said to be apathetic to their own as well as the general situation in the village. They may be aware of their own inadequacies but did not know how to overcome them or they could also be the ones who prefer to be non-committal. This is the group that is usually prone to be on the receiving end, which does not openly express its dependence on external assistance but will make do with whatever being provided for them.

Some Implication and Policy Considerations

With regard to the findings of our subjective inquiry particularly in terms of perceptions towards poverty, there was no doubt that the villagers' perception though, subjective was relatively reliable (as shown earlier by the close percentages or proportions between the observed and the declared patterns). What this finding tells us is that among the simple folks sincerity in answers and opinions is not uncommon. This is the virtue that is fast disappearing among the more sophisticated society. Given such a situation it can be quite safe to conclude that where a quick run down of a local situation is required the general opinion of the population can be taken as fairly reliable. At least it can be used as a rough guide to what the general situation in a particular locality is like so that any programme whether social or economic mooted for the area should have taken into consideration the local needs accordingly.

With respect to the finding regarding education and vocation, policy implication that arises is thought to be mainly in the form of education

policies. Although it is agreed that education can provide access to the elite group, thus mobilizing social vertical mobility, it is not unlimited in its capacity. Judging from the emphasis that agriculture is to remain the mainstay of the livelihood of the rural people, the present emphasis on qualification-oriented should be reconsidered and a shift to technical-oriented education would be more profitable in the long run, as a mean to create a more productive and efficient agriculture. This is because where urban opportunities are perceived to be significantly better than rural opportunities - given a certain level of education rural-urban migration will persist. No change in school curricula will inculcate a commitment to agriculture.

Conclusion

What is shown in the preceding discussion is but an exercise of empirical research on local perception and attitudes based on subjective questioning. It is far from being perfect as the criteria being used are still arbitrary depending on the motives of the study. Given that some of the findings are encouraging more efforts should be placed towards further researches, which could culminate in the formulation of definitive criteria, which can be used on a nationwide scale as indicators of underlying social problems. Filtered information of this kind maybe expressed as strategies for future activity.

Chapter 6

The Baling Folks Have Gone

Introduction

Students of Malaysian pattern of modern population growth are familiar with the different factors contributing to it. The growth history involves two phases. The first, which terminated with World War II, was characterized by large-scale foreign immigration. The second, from 1947 to the present, is one in which growth has been due almost entirely to natural increase (Department of Statistics 1976:3).

Natural growth may differ from real growth due to movement or mobility over space. The difference involves either an addition or a subtraction of the existing population. This state of affair is apparent in any area which experiences dynamic population turnover as a result of unbalanced growth and development. The 1980 census of Malaysia has identified the differential rates of the intercensal population growth among the different states, between urban and rural areas and also among the different ethnic groups (Department of Statistics 1983:15-17). What is concealed in these aggregate patterns is the influence of conditions at micro level. An aspect of this influence i.e. the impact of out-migration on village differential growth is particularly apparent in Baling, which is highlighted hereafter.

Differential Growth in Kedah

Between 1970-79, Kedah had been experiencing a relatively low rate of natural increase compared to Peninsular Malaysia as a whole, with an average rate of 23.4 persons per 1000 populations as against 25.4 persons per 1000 populations respectively (Dept. of Statistics 1977:14). In addition, by the end of the decade, Kedah was found to have experienced a net out-migration of its population by 10.5 per cent (Department of Statistics 1983:64-65). Although low natural increase seems to have been the trend, differential growth is observed to have taken place at district levels. Districts with high intercensal growth rates are Padang Terap, Kuala Muda, Pulau Langkawi and

Kota Star which registered above 20 per cent growth in 10 years at an average rate of 2.6 per cent per year, while those with low growth (less than 10 per cent in 10 years) are Yan, Kulim and Baling; Bandar Baru is the only one to have seen and experienced a negative growth (Table 6.1).

TABLE 6.1 Intercensal population change by district Kedah, 1970-80

District	Population		Change	
	1970	1980	No.	%
Baling	104 142	107 927	+ 3 785	+ 3.6
Bandar Baru	33 257	31 760	- 1 497	- 4.5
Kota Setar*	301 213	364 658	+ 63 445	+ 21.1
Kuala Muda	59 831	196 282	+ 3 645	+ 22.8
Kubang Pasu	117 451	132 337	+ 14 886	+ 12.7
Kulim	88 346	94 591	+ 6 245	+ 7.1
P. Langkawi	23 788	29 084	+ 5 296	+ 22.3
Padang Terap	30 363	41 702	+ 11 339	+ 37.3
Sik	39 027	44 117	+ 5 090	+ 13.0
Yan	55 003	60 181	+ 5 178	+ 9.4
Kedah	952 421	1 102 639	+ 117 412	+ 1.2

* In 1980, Kota Star was split into two when Pendang came out as an independent district by itself. However, for the purpose of this analysis, the 1970 status is assumed.

Source: Department of Statistics 1975, 1983.

Population Change in Baling

The confluence of low natural increase at the aggregate (state) level with differential growth rates at the district levels points to the role played by the population dynamics the analysis of which, it is thought, may be best pursued to its village roots. The study of the villages of Baling - Kg. Luar, Kg. Dalam Wang, Kg. Kuala Kuang and Kg. Ulu Bakai - has therefore provided us with the necessary data.

Prior to 1970, Baling was experiencing a pattern of high population increase. There was no record of Baling's population prior to 1911, however, but since 1911, the district population has increased from 25 521 (Nathan 1922) to 104 142 persons, an increase of 2.6 per cent per year. Much of this growth especially in the early years, was the result of extension in rubber cultivation which by 1921, saw the establishment of 20 estates in Baling as compared to 33 and 30 in the two main rubber districts of Kuala Muda and Kulim respectively. In later years, however, much of the increase was due

to natural factors but more as a result of a fall in the death rate than that of a rise in the birth rate. This decrease in the death rate was due mainly to the control of tropical diseases (*Annual Report, Kedah* 1921).

The high rate of population increase before 1970, however, was followed in the post 1970s by a marked decline in the rate of growth. In 1980, for example, the District's population increased to 107 937 persons only, an increase of 3.7 per cent over the 1970 figure. This meant an annual increase of 0.37 per cent only and thus portraying a very slow growth.[1] This is paradoxical since the crude rate of natural increase for Baling was considered to be higher than the state or national rates. For example, in 1977 Baling's rate was 28.6 per 1000 compared to state and national rates of 22.6 and 24.4 per 1000 respectively. But then a lot has happened since then in terms of rapid spatial reorganization in the country as a whole so that the low growth of Baling's population is explained mainly by the extensive out-migration of its people to other developed areas in the country. For instance, in 1970 alone there was an out-migration of 13 420 persons from Baling although statistically it was then a net migration-gaining District by 8252 persons (Department of Statistics 1977)[2]. Now, if we were to estimate on the basis of an average crude natural increase at 29.6 per 1000 (the figure for Baling between 1970 and 1980) we will find that the population of Baling would have increase to 139 927 persons in 1980 from natural increase alone. But since the previous enumeration gave Baling a population of 107 937, our estimates reveal that Baling had experienced a net loss (out-migration) of 32 000 persons. On the other hand, if we stick to the pattern of population growth of the pre-1970, in 1980 Baling would have a population of 134 586 persons. This means that the District is still short of 26 660 persons in 1980, indicating that there had been an exodus instead of influx of population. In other words, the slow rate of population growth in Baling between 1970 and 1980 was brought about by a net out-migration of at least 26 000 persons.

Growth at Village Level

Fertility

The above pattern was also true when the village data were analysed. The villages studied were found to have had high fertility rate. We do not have data for direct measurement of fertility *per se*, but various data on fertility in our study indicates the high level of fertility experienced by the villages.

Altogether, 476 heads of households were interviewed during the field survey, giving us a population of 2609 persons. About 51 per cent of them was females. When the age structure of the women in the child-bearing ages was analysed, it was found that nearly one-half (48.4 per cent) of the women in the study area were in the child-bearing age groups of 15 to 49 years. It was higher than the percentage for Peninsula rural Malay women of the same age groups in 1980, which was 46.9 per cent (Department of Statistics 1983:208-210). Subsequently, of the women aged 15-49 years in the study area, about one-third (30.9 per cent) were aged 20-29 years and more than one-half (57.5 per cent) were aged between 15 and 29 years. The corresponding figures for Peninsular Malay women of the respective age groups in 1970 were 32.3 ad 56.8 per cent (Department of Statistics 1977:387). Comparing the two age structures of women in childbearing ages, it was found that the age structure of the study area was almost similar to that of Peninsular Malay women in 1970. In Malaysia, these are age groups that are found to have high age-specific fertility rates. This is an indicator of an age structure favorable to high fertility level, which was found to be true in the case of our study area.

The nature of our survey questions on fertility, mainly regarding the number of children ever born, enabled us to measure and study cumulative fertility. It is the total number of children a woman has given birth to, in her life cycle. An analysis of the number of children ever born (parity) to female heads of households and female spouses showed that 45 per cent of them had between 1 and 5 children each and another 46.2 per cent had between 6 and 10 children each (Table 6.2). The mean number of children ever born per ever-married women was 5.9, while the mode was 6. This is higher than the mean number of children born to Peninsula ever-married rural women in 1980, which were 3.7 (Dept. of Statistics 1988:50). Although Kg. Luar Siong has by far the highest mean number of children ever born, the figure is not significant as the village has a higher percentage of older ever-married women who presumably must have completed their fertility cycle. Since the older age groups have a longer period of exposure to the childbearing risk, the average number of children ever born to them would be higher.

In 1980, the average cumulative fertility per 1 000 ever-married Peninsular Malay women was 4580 children (Department of Statistics 1983:48). The average cumulative fertility of the study area was found to be 5897 children per 1 000 every married women. This shows that the cumulative fertility for the study area was higher than the corresponding Peninsular Malay fer-

TABLE 6.2 Number of children ever born by the number of ever-married females according to villages, 1981

No. of children ever born	Cumulative %				
	KLS	KDLW	KKKU	KUB	Total
0	3.2	2.9	0.7	1.8	2.1
1	7.1	4.3	4.3	5.4	5.5
2	12.3	18.6	5.8	19.7	16.0
3	20.7	31.5	26.9	34.0	26.9
4	25.2	45.8	37.0	42.0	35.5
5	35.5	47.2	50.7	59.0	47.1
6	52.9	54.3	60.8	69.7	59.3
7	62.6	64.3	73.6	74.2	68.5
8	73.6	77.2	84.4	83.1	79.2
9	82.0	92.5	90.2	90.2	87.4
10	91.0	94.4	96.0	93.8	93.3
11	94.9	95.8	98.2	95.6	95.8
12	99.4	98.7	98.8	97.4	98.3
13	100.0	98.7	100.0	97.4	99.1
14	100.0	98.7	100.0	99.2	99.5
15	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.2	99.8
16	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean	6.4	5.8	5.7	5.4	5.9
Mode	6.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	6.0

Source: Asmah 1983, 55.

tility level. Considering that the age structures of the two populations, as mentioned earlier, were almost similar, the difference in cumulative fertility reflects a situation of high fertility in the study area.

The above finding was true when the crude birth rate (CBR, the number of live births in a year as a ratio of the average population alive during that year in units of parts per thousand) was computed. As we did not have the number of live births by the year of occurrence, the total number of live births at the end of the period was used instead and was further divided by the average number of years spent by the respondents in matrimony in order to produce the average annual rate. The result was that the CBR for the study villages was found to 41 per 1 000 populations[3], which was high compared to the CBR of 32.5 per 1000 for Baling in 1980.

Mortality

As in fertility, direct computation of mortality rates for the study area is not possible, as particulars gathered do not relate to the year of occurrence. However, since the information covered the number of the overall deaths experienced by each household, relationship of the dead members to the heads, their sexes, ages and causes of death, analysis could be done to give us a general picture of the mortality levels experienced by the area.

When data on the number of deaths ever occurring were analysed it was found that 86 per cent of them were children 12.7 per cent were married respondents' spouses and 1.3 per cent were 'others' such as respondents' parents or sons/daughter-in-law who had lived in the same household. They totaled up to 509 deaths. Applying similar rules as in calculating the CBR the crude death rate (CDR) of the study area could now be obtained. It worked out to be 8.9 per 1000 persons.

The findings pointed to a condition of high fertility and a relatively low mortality, giving rise to a high rate of crude natural increase of 32.1 per 1 000 persons (as opposed to 29.6 per 1000 for Baling as mentioned earlier). Utilizing all the informations that we have, particularly those pertaining to the total number of live births (2357), heads of households and spouses (898), number of other members in the households (184) and the number of deaths ever-occurring (509), we estimate that if the study villages were closed communities their total population should work out to 2930 persons instead of 2609 persons as found by the present study, indicating a shortage of 321 persons or a loss of 12.3 per cent of the population. The question now arises: where have the village folks gone to?

Where Have the Baling Folks Gone to?

A discussion of absentee population involves an understanding of the migration process. As a process, migration is selective, affecting individuals with certain economic, demographic, social and educational characteristics (Lee 1966; Grigg 1977). The factors influencing the decision of individuals to migrate are also varied and complex. Many have agreed that the major factors behind rural-urban migrations are the inability of the place of origin (especially traditional rural sector), to absorb its population effectively and productively, and the attractions and promises of city life (Herberl 1983; Bogue & Zachariah 1962; Todaro 1969). While this 'pull-push' theory

may hold true, there may be still other factors that abet the movement from rural to urban areas in developing countries. One such factor is the legacy of colonial education systems, which emphasized on clerical learning rather than on the technical training needed to create a competent peasantry.

In Malaysia, the drift of rural dwellers to urban areas especially big towns and cities has been on the increase. From the ethnic viewpoints, more Malays have come to big urban areas. This was more pronounced after the evolution of the New Economic Policy in 1971 (Zainal 1975). Its second 'two-pronged strategy' that is to reduce and eliminate the identification of race with geographical location, saw the deliberate policy of the government in encouraging the migration of rural Malays to urban areas. The move, that is, urbanizing the Malays is conceived to be a means of correcting the racial imbalance so often seen in Malaysian towns. Of the latter, Kuala Lumpur stands out as the most attractive choice, being the primate city of the country, the political and administrative capital as well as the economic, commercial and cultural center. It not only attracts rural dwellers but people from the other small and large towns alike. Kuala Lumpur has thus become one of the fastest growing cities in the world with a growth rate of 7.8 per cent per annum. Out of this, 5 per cent of its growth rate is found to be due to external factors viz. rural migration alone (Zainal 1975).

The attraction of Kuala Lumpur does not escape even the remotest villages such as those in the Baling District. Our village study shows that the emigration of adult members of households in the study area was prominent. About 34 per cent of the 476 households surveyed had at least one member absent from the village migrating elsewhere. Some (i.e. slightly more than one third) had three or more emigrants each (Table 6.3).

All in all, 321 members of households were found to have migrated out of the villages, involving 31.4 per cent of those aged 16 years and above. Of these 58.9 per cent were males. Economic motives appeared to be the single most important factor behind the migration of male adults. About 80 per cent of them were found to have migrated either because of work or looking for work or by becoming settlers in new land development schemes (Table 6.4). The economic factor was, on the other, hand, less significant in the migration of female adults. This may be because rural girls are rather passive, not only due perhaps to traditional values that hold the kitchen as the proper place for girls but also to the fact that they, especially the older ones are less educated. Thus the scope of mobility among females was limited except when moving to their husbands' places after marriage. However, time is changing and so

TABLE 6.3 Information on the migration of adults from the four villages, their numbers by households, 1981

Households/Migrated children	Per cent
With	34.4
Without	63.7
Missing information	1.9
Total	100.0
Number of migrated children/Household	
1 child	32.3
2 children	33.6
3 children	21.7
4 children	8.7
5+ children	3.7
Total	100.0

Source: Asmah 1983, 99.

TABLE 6.4 Migration of household members by reason and gender

Reason	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Working	140	74.1	30	19.7	170	53.0
Looking for work	4	2.1	2	1.6	6	1.9
Studying	11	5.8	8	6.3	19	5.9
Marriage	26	13.8	92	72.4	118	36.7
FELDA's settler	8	4.2	0	0.0	8	2.5
Total	189	100.0	132	100.0	321	100.0

Source: Asmah 1983, 237.

are the females' literacy levels. Indeed, economic motivation is fast becoming a factor of importance in migration among females. It is second only to marriage.

The destinations of the outflow of people from Baling were varied. Pulled by the same attractions of urban employment opportunities approximately 80 per cent of the economically motivated migration were found to end up mainly in large towns and metropolitan areas. Among the destinations, Kuala Lumpur is the single largest recipient of all migrants from Baling,

accounting for at least one-quarter of them (Figure 6.1). Nonetheless, the job seekers did spread out to wherever employment opportunities were created. Thus when two major construction projects (the Temenggor Dam and East-West Highway) began in Grik (a northern town/District in the neighbouring state of Perak) they too became popular destination points among the Baling migrants. About one-quarter of those who had migrated to other states were found to be concentrated in Grik alone while the rest were scattered in smaller numbers in various other states.

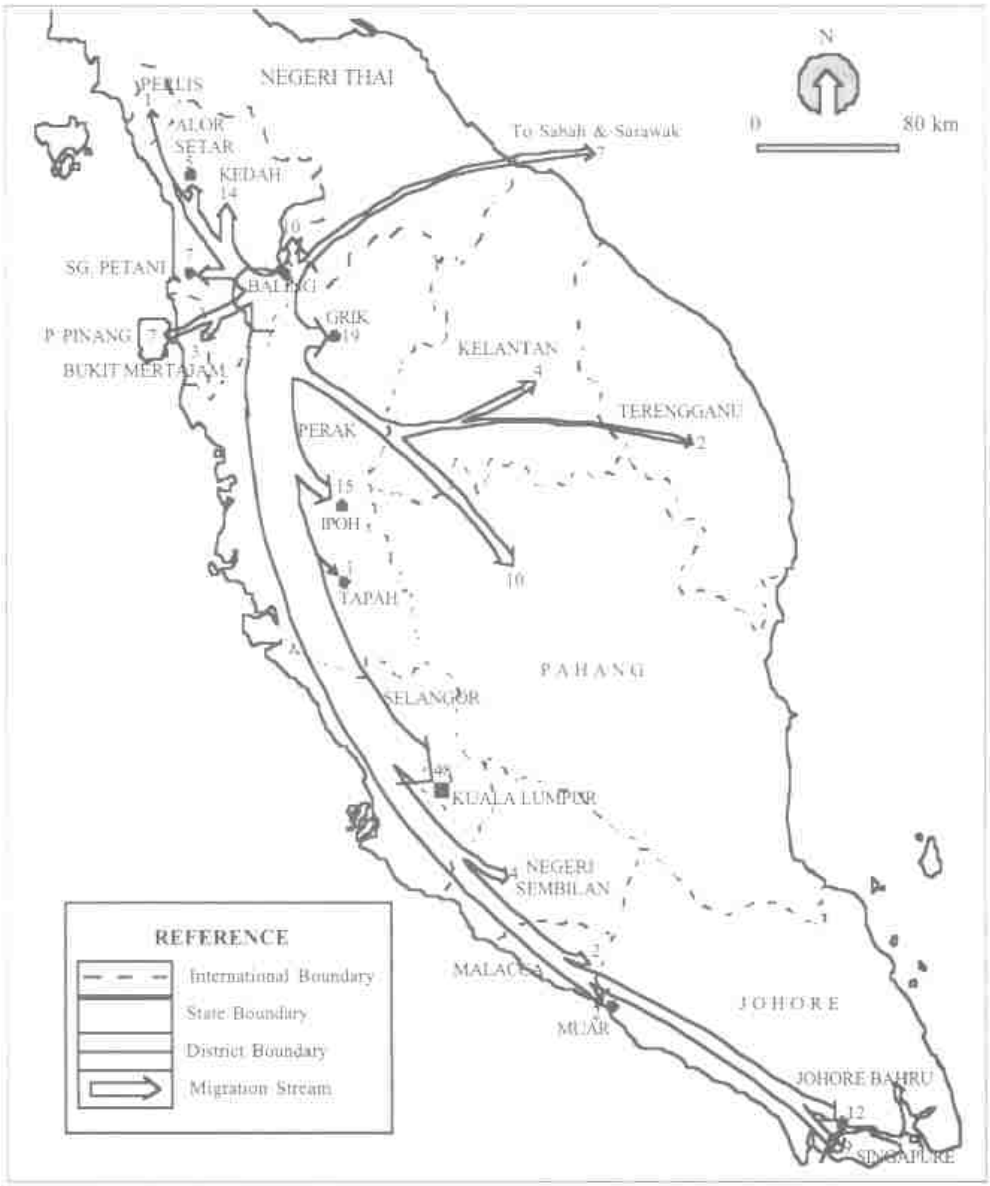


FIGURE 6.1 Destination of migrants from Baling, 1981

Although the overall migration pattern of the study area was characterized by short moves, purposeful and self-motivated migrants were found to have moved over long distances. Figure 6.2 shows the peaks and troughs in the migration graph of these purposeful moves. Two of the peaks are

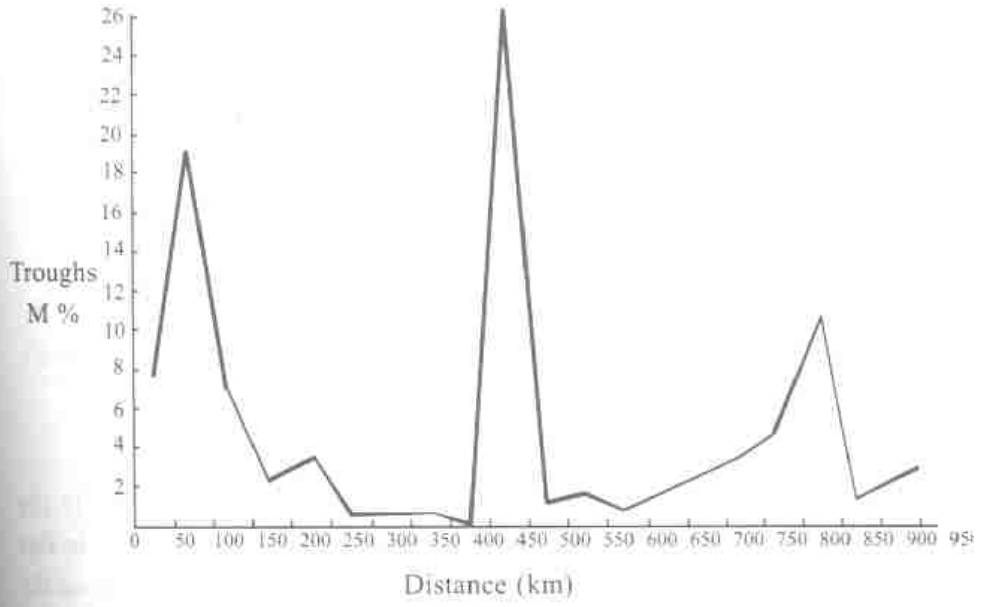


FIGURE 6.2 Migration graph

located at more than 450 km from Baling. They involve maximizer-migrants who preferred the largest industrial and commercial cities such as Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. The aim apparently was to optimize the chances of securing a job. While this may be the case of the better-educated white-collar and the less-educated blue-collar job seekers, many of those who ventured beyond may have been 'induced' by the benefits of job transfers. This seems especially common among members of the Security Forces who were sent to serve at border areas.

It would be of interest to look at the time factor involved in the migration of these youths out of Baling. When data on the timing of migration were analyzed, it was found that the surge had already begun as early as 1974, and for a good reason (Table 6.5).

In that particular year, Baling had shocked the nation by staging unprecedented 'hunger marches' against their own Malay government to demonstrate the dissatisfaction of village peasants with the prevailing low rubber prices and general poverty in the villages[4]. In the light of this incident, it is hard to resist speculation that the economic hardship of 1974 had created

TABLE 6.5 Timing of migration of adult members of household by sex and other characteristics, 1981

Duration by 1981	Percentage Distribution				
	Total Mig. N=321	Male N=195	Female N=126	Working Male N=152	Working Female N=30
< 1 year	9.7	10.3	8.7	11.8	20.0
1 – 4 yrs.	52.3	59.0	42.1	61.2	56.7
5 – 7 yrs.	16.2	16.9	15.1	18.4	13.3
8 – 10 yrs.	6.0	4.6	7.3	4.6	6.7
11–14 yrs.	7.4	4.1	13.3	2.0	0.0
15+ yrs.	8.4	5.1	13.5	2.0	3.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Asmah 1983, 100.

the impetus for subsequent drains of the Baling folks, especially the more adventurous, more aspiring and less culturally rooted youths. In fact since that historic year, the volume of Baling's out-migration has been on the increase.

This is shown by the fact that whereas out-migration during the period 5 to 8 years before our survey only slightly more than doubled the 4 year period prior to it, out-migration after 1974 had escalated by 220 per cent. Massive movement from Baling then was a relatively recent phenomenon. It is thus not surprising that Baling was experiencing a very low population increase in the last census year even though its crude rate of natural increase tells us otherwise.

Conclusion

What we have portrayed thus far is but an example of how real growth falls short of natural growth. In an era of spatially unbalanced growth and development, which in Peninsular Malaysia tend to favour the already developed zones such as the Klang Valley, internal reorganization of population is bound to take place. This spatial redistribution of population if left unchecked will lead to serious repercussions.

The movement en masse of a group of people from the community has dramatic effects not only on the demographic characteristics of those left

behind but also on the social and economic growth of the source area. Out-migration does not only involve the relatively young population but also comprise the better-educated section.[5] Their out-bound movement thus resulted in a brain-drain for the society left behind making any hope for a more educated, modern and productive farming society evermore difficult to materialize. It seems that the source society will not only remain static in outlook but will also be further incapacitated with ageing problems.

Notes

1 The population of Baling continued to increase at a slow but slightly higher than the previous rate. Its population in the subsequent Population Censuses of 1991 and 2000 was 114 485 and 124 947 persons respectively, increasing at an annual rate of 0.8 per cent and 0.97 per cent.

2 This excess of in-migration over out-migration was presumably attributable to illegal occupation and cultivation of agricultural land (*Kedah-Perlis Development Study* 1978). However, this process has now stopped as virtually all cultivable and has been occupied. This in-migration, nonetheless, may reverse as and when population pressure on the cultivated area increases.

3 i.e. $\frac{2357}{2609} \times \frac{1000}{22\,\text{year}}$. This is an unusual way of calculating CBR and is by no means perfect. However, due to limitation of data it was felt that at least it could be used as a rough measure of CBR.

4 The 'Baling incident' as it is better known, has received support from students who staged further demonstrations in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Ipoh. Some of the write-ups and reports on the Baling incident includes the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December issues, 1974; Wan Hashim, 1978. *Malay Peasants Community in Upper Perak*. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

5 Our study shows that about 75 per cent of the out-migrants have at least a lower secondary education. None of the tertiary educated, with the exception of a few in the teaching profession, stays back.

Chapter 7

Rural-Urban Migration: The Nagging Baling Issue

Introduction

Since independence in 1957, the Malaysian Government has instituted a rigorous social and economic development programme. At the very beginning, rural development was emphasized with the aim of increasing the income earning capacity and quality to life of the rural poor. The major programmes included agricultural development by means of improved organization, co-operation and provision of infrastructure especially rural roads and irrigation; the latter to enable double-cropping of padi as well as the improvement of social and community services in the rural areas. Although the rural development strategy was firmly rooted in the subsistence padi economy that aimed at eventual self-sufficiency, what was clearly augmented was output and not planters' income. In the face of rising world production and falling rice prices, Malaysian rice industry suffered in which by mid 1960s Malaysian padi output managed to satisfy only about 60 per cent of domestic consumption (Rudner 1975:82). Hence up to 1965, Malaysian rural development strategy did not succeed in generating substantial improvement in the rural subsistence economy.

A shift in emphasis was detected in the First Malaysia Plan (FMP) (1966-70) whereby producers' income and not merely sectoral output became the object of rural policy. Likewise a shift was also made towards concentrating on crops yielding the highest marginal revenue product, notably rubber. Besides efforts were also concentrated in building agricultural education and research, rubber replanting and new land development (FMP 1966-70:105). This resulted in a fairly satisfactory rate of economic development in terms of production and income. The gross domestic product grew at an average rate of 6 per cent per annum in real terms, which was above the targeted rate of 4.9 per cent. However, the problems of poverty, unemploy-

ment and economic imbalance among the ethnic groups still remained unsolved which the 1969 riots brought yet another shift in the government development policy with the inception of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-75). The former is a socio-economic policy designed to achieve national unity through the two-pronged objectives of poverty eradication and restructuring of society. The NEP was conceived to stretch over a period of 20 years. It is the outcome of the second strategy that is going to be the focus of the present paper.

In Peninsular Malaysia, rural to rural migration has been the major form of migration pattern since mid-1960s which accounted for nearly 45 per cent of the total internal migration during the intercensal period of 1970-80 (Department of Statistics 1983:77). This was in part due to rural development and the development of land schemes in the various states, particularly Pahang. Although the drift of rural dwellers to urban areas only constituted 16 per cent of all migration over the same period of time, such drift to big towns and cities was seen to be on the increase. Katiman (1982) has shown that towns with 75 000 persons and above had experienced an increase in population by 28.1 per cent in 1980 over that of the 1970 figure. Out of this growth, 51.7 per cent were from net in-migration.

That big towns (with population of 100 000 and above) are experiencing a rapid growth is also shown by the increase in their numbers from 2 in 1947 to 11 in 1980 with an increase in terms of inhabitants from 365 000 persons to 2.9 millions; an increase of 724 per cent over a span of 33 years (Katiman 1983:7, 10). From the ethnic viewpoints, more Malays have come to big urban areas. This is more pronounced after the evolution of the NEP in 1971. Its second 'two-pronged strategy', that is reducing and eliminating the identification of race with geographical location, saw the deliberate policy of the government in encouraging the migration of rural Malays to urban areas. The move, that is, urbanizing the Malays is seen to be means of correcting the racial imbalance one so often sees in Malaysian towns. This pattern of mobility (mainly labour mobility) from rural to urban areas has become a quandary in itself. Migration is encouraged on the one hand, in order to restructure society but on the other hand, it created strings of repercussions in the sending areas although not without its rewards.

In the light of the above background, this paper is written with the aim of highlighting the effects of rural-urban migration, both social and economic, on the out-migrants but more particularly on the sending areas and the rural-based families left behind. The question of whether or not migration challenges rural development will then be discussed.

The Out-migrants

This study is drawn from part of the village studies conducted by the author in 1981, in an identified poverty district, Baling, in the northwest of Peninsular Malaysia. The majority of the populations are Malays comprising 77 per cent and residing mainly in the villages. About 2 per cent of the populations are 'Others' who are mainly of Thai descents. The Chinese and the Indians made up almost equally the rest of the population.

For the purpose of the study, out-migrants are taken as those individuals who are absent from their respective villages at the time of the survey. However, in order to differentiate between the recent and the 'older' movers, they were grouped according to the length of their absence from the village. By doing this it was found that only 10 per cent of them had moved less than a year, 50 per cent between 1 and 4 years and the rest for a much longer period.

There is also a need to differentiate the migration experience of heads of households from that of their dependents. Migration of the former has occurred sometimes in the past and among some may reoccur in the future. Migration of household heads' children, on the other hand, has been, is and will be taking place. It appears to be an on-going process and will probably remain so for as long as there is imbalance in the country's social and economic development. Migration will be generated when the place utility of an alternative area is deemed better off (Wolpert 1965) or when there appears a positive differential in expected income between two places (Todaro 1969).

Out-migration of Baling Folks

Adult members of households were found to form the bulk of the out-migrants, accounting for 99 per cent, while the rest was made up of female heads' spouses. Only 8 per cent of the household heads used to leave their villages before, mainly in search of better job opportunities outside. In contrast, at least 30 per cent of their dependents aged 16 years and above were absent at the time of the survey for various reasons mainly in pursuit of economic betterment, (80 per cent among the males and 21.3 per cent among the females) with marriage coming second in importance (13.8 per cent among the males and 72.4 per cent among the females) and studying third (about 6 per cent each).

Out-migration: Features and Characteristics

Characteristics of Migrants

The regularity in the pattern of migration differentials does appear to exist in the study area. Migration of adult members of households was found to be highly selective of sex and age with an over-whelming majority being male in the 21 to 30 years age bracket (Figure 7.1a). Female migrants appear to be younger than male migrants (Figure 7.1b). Seventy-two per cent of female adults who had migrated were below 26 years old as compared to 50 per cent in case of male adults. They, however, shared a common feature, in that, the absence of age group 21-25 years was highest in both cases.

That migration is characteristically more pronounced among individuals with certain educational background is also apparent here. Those with more years of schooling were found to be more migratory than those with fewer. The secondary school leavers were found to constitute a high proportion (65 per cent) of the migration stream as compared to those with only primary education. Almost all those with tertiary education mainly from technical colleges and universities were found working in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city. While the upper secondary school leavers formed a slight majority among the male migrants, the female migrants were mainly characterized by those with lower secondary education (Figure 7.1c). One of the reasons for this was that, most of the girls who went for secondary schooling did not manage to proceed to O-Level after their Form 3 examination. Both social and economic factors (such as lack of motivation, big family and financial difficulty) were among the reasons for the high rate of failure and drop out.

Social background of migrating adults is also found to show a distinct pattern. For this purpose, social background is seen in the form of family size arising from the number of siblings that a migrant has. A family is taken to be small when it comprises between 1-3 children; medium-sized when it is between 4-6 children and large when it has 7 or more children. Analysis showed that the migrant were mostly from a large family background with more than half of them having a family of 7 or more. Besides other personal reasons, the desire to break away from familial and economic constraints of a large family triggers the movement among the more adventurous. The desire to break away from hardship and to help support the family had resulted in the migration of female adults. This was particularly apparent when 68 per cent of migrating female adults were found to be from the large and the very large family background (Figure 7.1d). Many of these girls

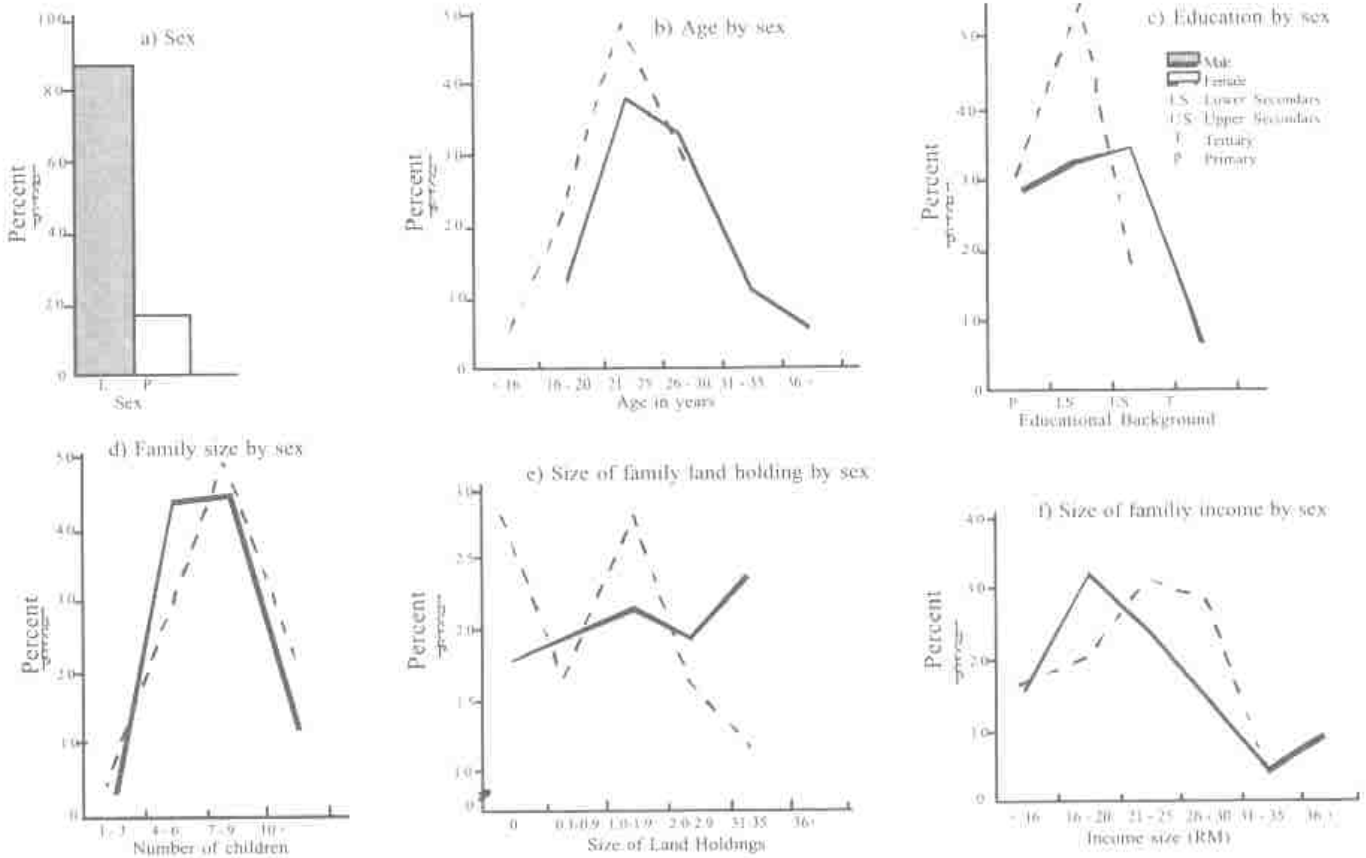


FIGURE 7.1 Background characteristics of migrants from Baling, 1981

either worked in factories or offered themselves as domestic helpers or maids.

Analysis of economic backgrounds of migrants in terms of family income size and size of land owned by the parents revealed that they were generally poor and almost landless. About three-quarters of them were from families whose income were below RM250 per month, that is below the poverty line household income of RM250 per month in 1981 used in the study. Three-fifths of them were also from families whose land assets were less than 2 ha each. Out of this, one-third was landless or at least one-fifth of all the migrants were from landless background. That female migrant was from among the relatively poorer group and with relatively limited land assets were clearly shown again in the findings (Figures 7.1e and 7.1f). Females are generally less migratory than males. However, circumstances of hard living in the village coupled with virtually non-existent rural opportunities made it such that those with education had to find job opportunities outside in order to help alleviate the hardship of the family. The parents whose daughters were working outside the village admitted the fact that financial aids from town help relieved family budgets. While female migrants featured a generally difficult economic background, among the males, however, there was a tendency of increasing migration with increasing size of family land and income (Figures 7.1e and 7.1f). The importance of this observation reflects that individuals with large financial resources would tend to be more migratory as they can survive longer while searching for the elusive urban jobs (Todaro 1981). On the whole, they seem to come from all socio-economic strata with the majority being poor in common with most rural inhabitants.

Destinations

Migration streams in developing countries more often than not are biased in nature as a result of unbalanced job opportunities available between rural and urban areas. Such regularity could also be observed in the study when about 80 per cent of the economically motivated migration were found to end up mainly in large towns and metropolitan areas. Among the destinations, Kuala Lumpur is the single largest recipient of all migrants from Baling, accounting for at least one-quarter of them. As the hub of the country, the main industrial, commercial and administrative activities are concentrated in Kuala Lumpur. These factors have thus attracted aspiring youths to seek the relatively greater job opportunities in the city. Nonetheless, job seekers are

found wherever employment opportunities are created. Thus when two major construction projects, that is, the western link of the East-West Highway and the Temenggor Dam, were opened up in Grik (a northern town/District in the neighbouring State of Perak) it had become a popular destination among the migrants. About one-quarter of those who had migrated to other states were found to be concentrated in Grik while the rest were scattered in smaller numbers in various other states.

Out-migration Effects

The effects of out-migration are many and varied. To the migrants, as rational men, it is the avenue to acquire better economic returns and among the more successful (with high income) an upward mobility in the socioeconomic class stratification. To the less fortunate, living in urban areas may sometimes mean a substandard existence. As this survey had been restricted to the heads of households at the rural end, it is not possible to elaborate on the actual state of being of migrants at the urban end. Observations in construction sites, however, normally reveal that living condition and space in the living quarters provided by the contractors are normally appalling and cramped. For many, these are tolerated in anticipation of the monetary returns, and in the hope of finding a better job alternative in the future. This is similar to the amended Harris-Todaro model (1970). In essence, it points that migration will still take place even if the migrant anticipates a relatively low probability of finding regular employment in the initial period for he expects this probability to increase over time as he is able to broaden his urban contacts. Among the Malays, it is usual for the urban in-migrant to treat working in the urban informal sector as a temporary measure. This is done in waiting for the availability of a more permanent job through their urban contacts who are mainly relatives and family friends already working in the city holding some influential positions. As McGee (1971) notices, Malaysia's cities tend to attract a specialized work force of Malays who knew the urban administrators and federal employers. While it is interesting to look at the urban end of the migration stream, what's left of the origin and the families left behind are of prime interest by the nature of this study.

The movement en masse of a group of people from the rural source has dramatic effects on the demographic characteristics of those left behind. The movement also influences the social and economic growth of the origin. The extent to which this movement will affect the rural community will be examined using original data.

Demographic Consequences

Since rural-urban migration is selective of certain characteristics, it affects the composition of the population in both sending and receiving areas. Generally, out-migration areas lose a disproportionate percentage of the younger and better-educated population. Our data supports this observation too, as discussed in earlier section. At least 95 per cent of the migrants were below the age of 36 years. This reduces their proportion in the total population as shown by the marked middle indention to the population pyramid as shown in Figure 7.2a as compared to the more even slope of Figure 7.2b. As migration is more pronounced among males than females, it has also affected the sex ratio of the population concerned. The sex ratio (number of males per 100 females) for the age group 15-39 was found to be 84 as compared to 97 for Peninsular Malaysia in 1980. The respective sex ratio for the whole population were 97 and 100.

This age-specific out-migration tends to reduce the population growth rate in the area. The disproportionate removal of the population of family-formation ages can directly reduce the number of births. As can be seen from Figure 7.2, the base of pyramid (a) for Baling is narrower than the broad base of pyramid (b) for Peninsular Malaysia as a whole. Analysis of the mortality rates among children aged 0-4 years from 1977-80 in Baling showed a decreasing trend for the various child mortality rates.[1] Considering the number of children below the age of 5 who died during the last 5 years was relatively small, the reduction of the population aged 0-4 was thus mainly the result of falling birthrate. Assuming that the population is stable, the declining birthrate is found to have reduced the number of births by 15 per cent in the last 5 years.

Out-migration can also affect the socio-demographic characteristics of the rural areas. For instance, the relatively young out-migrants also comprise the better-educated section of the population. About 75 per cent of them were found to have at least a lower secondary education. None of the tertiary educated, with the exception of a few in the teaching profession, stayed back. Their out-bound movement thus resulted in a brain drain for the society left behind. Any hope for a more educated, modern and productive farming society would not materialize. The remaining society would remain very much the same in outlook and would be further incapacitated with ageing.

This brings us to the issue of dependency ratio (ratio of persons 0-14 and over 60 to those of 15-59 age group). The loss of a disproportionate percentage of the younger population can result in an increase in the proportion of the total population economically dependent as the relative share of

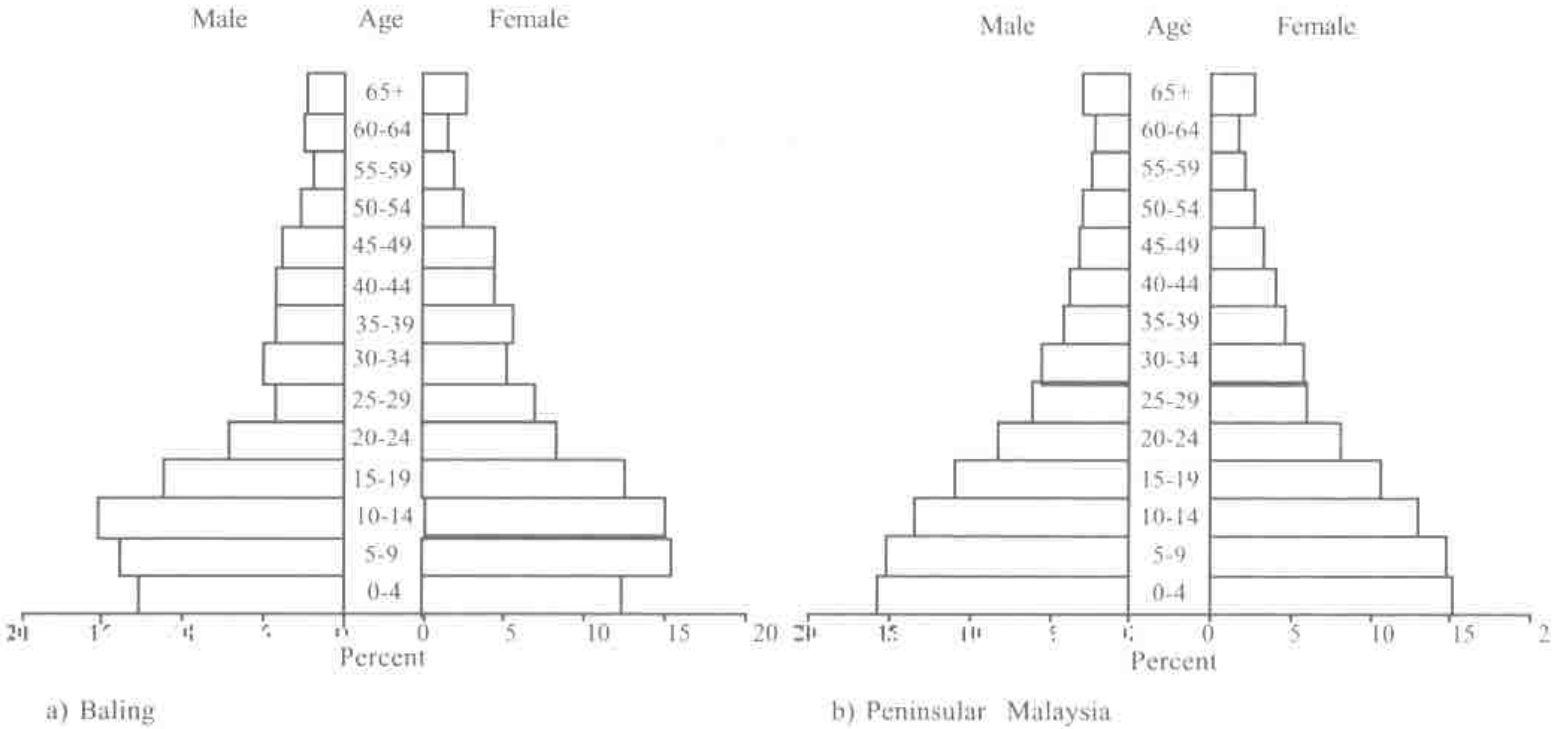


FIGURE 7.2 Local post-migration population pyramid

the productive workers is reduced. In order to measure effect of out-migration, the ratios for the periods 'before' and 'after' migration had taken place were calculated. The result showed that the dependency ratio had increased slightly from 0.73 to 0.92 after migration. As not all the adults were economically active and fully employed, especially in the 15-19 age group (for a majority of them was still schooling and looking for jobs), and if they were taken as dependents, the dependency ratio was seen to increase from 0.92 to 1.5.

Economic Consequences

The reduction in the share of productive workers can also affect the amount of labour required to work in the fields and farms. A frequently made claim is that the loss of able-bodied men from the rural areas results in the reduction of the total agricultural productivity and in a general deterioration of the local agricultural system (ILO 1960; Skinner 1965). In these studies, the authors have noted a decline in agricultural productivity in rural areas experiencing heavy out-migration. In our study, the reduction in total agricultural products is measured in terms of the area of land left either partially or fully unutilized as a result of labour shortage. It was found that at least 54 ha of padi land in the study area were left idle. Although the main reason cited for this idleness was lack of water, shortage of young labourers to work in the padi fields due to out-migration was also mentioned. With regard to the rubber land, 48 ha were being left idle involving 12.8 per cent of the relatively more productive rubber land (with matured and old trees). Out of those who had idle rubber land 96.5 per cent ascribed its cause to lack of manpower especially young labour. Most of these landowners were in the older age groups of 55 years and above and hence require younger men to help undertake the more rigorous nature of rubber tapping. Out-migration of the young labour stock had reduced total rubber output by 13 per cent (assuming output per unit area is constant) and that of rice output by a smaller fraction.

That shortage of manpower acts as a constraint to increase in agricultural production and yield was also acknowledged by the landowners. About two-third of them admitted that they face manpower problems in their effort to increase their agricultural productivity. Out of these, about 45 per cent ranked its priority as the third most important after land and capital. Other rankings were, Priority 1(13.9 per cent); Priority 2 (21.7 per cent); Priority 4 (13.9 per cent) and Priority 5 (7.2 per cent). The deficient number of young

labour force can become one of the contributory factors in perpetuating poverty among the villagers.

Although out-migration of young men can affect the productivity levels of agriculture, the rural-urban linkage created is not without advantages. One of the economic benefits of out-migration is the return of money and resources by the migrants to their respective home areas. Literature on this urban-to-rural remittances and its related aspects are exhaustive."[2] They cover about the extent of these remittances, the determinants of such financial flows and the use made in the rural areas of the money received. The flows normally involved not less than 10 per cent and some as high as 69 per cent of the income earned by the migrants.

The existence of monetary flows from migrants to their rural home areas is also evident in our survey. It was found that out of the 18 per cent of the household heads with side incomes 57 per cent received them in the form of remittances sent by their children from outside. About 68 per cent of them received these remittances monthly; the amount varied from RM50 to RM200 with an average of RM50 per month. At least RM36 000 in cash per year flowed into the area accounting for not less than 5 per cent of the area's yearly cash income. The value of the out-migrants' remittances would be more considering that among the relatively well paid; contributions to parents sometimes take the form of buying conspicuous goods viz furniture etc. There were also known cases that contributed a lump sum averaging about RM400 at a time for such undertakings as repairing of house, construction of wells and latrines etc. At least 37 per cent of the migrants sent money home or gave to their parents on their occasional visits home. However, half of them remitted less than RM500 per year.

It is not the intention of this paper to dwell on the determinants of the flows. It is suffice to mention that from the study it was found that the nature of the job secured or acquired, the amount of pay that goes with it and the extent of personal commitment that determine the extent, frequency and regularity of financial flows from migration receiving to migration sending areas. What is more important here is the question of what then are the income generating effects of these remittances to the rural recipients? Stark (1976) claims that remittances represent a significant means for removing supply constraints to improved productivity in agriculture. Lipton (1976), from his survey of available literature, lists in order of importance four priorities that appear to govern rural use of remittances. These priorities are:

1. Pay of debts and provide education for sons.
2. Purchase of consumption goods to meet everyday needs.
3. Education of younger siblings.
4. Investment.

He estimates the second priority absorbs about 90 per cent of remittances received. Also, some of the investment takes the form of capital transfer rather than capital formation.

The use of the remittances as an addition to purchase consumer goods to meet everyday needs is also significant in our survey; at least two-third of the recipients used the money for purchasing daily consumption (Table 7.1). Other additional uses were to finance the children's schooling and savings. Almost half of the saving was, however, made with the intention of

TABLE 7.1 Utilisation of remittances made by the rural recipients (M=61)

Type of Use	%	
Basic consumption	68.9	
Consumption & Children Schooling	13.1	
Consumption & Saving	18.0	
1. Repair of housing		(27.3)
2. Journey for pilgrimage		(45.5)
3. Payment for hired labour		(18.2)
4. 'Aid agriculture'		(9.0)
Total	100.0	

Figures in parentheses show the ultimate use of savings made by the recipients.

financing the pilgrimage to Mecca. Among the Malays, especially in a traditional society, performing the haj has become a life-long ambition as only with its performance will the five tenets of Islam fulfilled. A person who has become a 'Haj' (having performed the pilgrimage) is also highly respected in the traditional society. With limited funds, saving represents a means to achieving the spiritual goal. Savings were also used in repairing and completing of houses. This is almost similar to what was found by Visaria (1986) in India, when cash remittances reduced the need for farmers to sell all small surpluses and enabled them to generate saving. However, the saving was invested, not in agriculture, but in better housing which seemed to be a more immediate need. Only about a quarter of the savings was directly used to finance agriculture, mainly for payment of hired labour in padi farming. To

some, part of the remittances was used to promote agriculture generally such as the purchase of implements, seeds, fertilizer and weedicides. But their proportion was small.

Although not mentioned in the responses, we have found that the relatively bigger savers often act as 'capital' source for the needy. In times when a farmer needs to raise a large amount of cash immediately, he will normally go to the better-off retired farmers (often those with considerable remittances from children) to sell his land or 'offer' his padi land for hire as payment to the money loaned. The amount of the loan will depreciate about RM173 per hectare per crop cultivated. The agreement will terminate until such time when the entire loan is paid either by way of depreciation or when he is able to raise the cash to settle the balance. Normally the farmer-debtor will try to settle the loan as quickly as possible but the creditor is assured of at least one crop. Indirectly, this can be considered as an involuntary or unconscious way of capital formation on the part of the creditor but a capital transfer for the debtor.

Out-migration Issues

So far we have seen the various aspects of rural-urban migration *vis-a-vis* its features and impacts, the latter pertaining to the rural end. We now come to the crucial issue, that is, how does rural-urban linkages through migration challenge rural development? Development in its final analysis can be equated as positive change. But change itself can work both ways. The preceding discussion saw how a planned strategy ended up in a paradoxical dilemma.

It cannot be denied that migration tends to bring some positive changes to certain rural families especially those affected and in receipt of remittances. It was noted from the survey that remittances had brought about certain physical changes in the villages especially in terms of better housing and the improvement of the general well-being of the family left behind. Besides, migration has also affected the social set-up of the rural-based families. In the villages, the religious and the wealthy are normally those who are highly respected by the villagers. With modernization, a new type of wealth has been given respect in the society. An individual is highly respected by the number of successful children he has.

Successful children do not only boost family prestige, they also bring to the village a blend of outside money, knowledge and attitudes. In their study of two centres in Nigeria, Orubulaye and Caldwell (as cited in

Caldwell, 1976) found that almost solely educated children working in distant places had provided wells and latrines for individual houses. Such similarity was also found in the study area. Knowledge of the area has shown us that the building of individual 'pour and flush' toilet system in two of the villages before the introduction of compulsory building of toilet facilities with the provision of 'community' gravity-feed water supply was mainly the initiation of educated and working children. The children through their monetary contribution also provided wells built in their houses compounds. They were also the ones who were responsible to the improvement of their parents' house. As most of them maintained close link with their villages by making at least two visits a year to their respective families, ideas of modernization can be transmitted to the village through them. On the other hand, benefits received by the particular families tend to reinforce their social structure and hence perpetuate inequalities amongst households in the villages.

As a whole our data shows that very little of the remittances are used directly as investment for rural development. This is similar to some of the findings by other authors. From a review of a large number of village studies, Connell et al. (1976), found that remittances have little potential for generating change in the village. Similarly, Amin (1974) also emphasized that remittances are too small a sum to have any positive impact on the village. Due to this, the area of out-migration will continue to be poor and without modern facilities. Samad (1982) in the survey of three villages in Negeri Sembilan also found that wealth flows from the destination, in some respect, benefit the village and in another, do not bring much change to the village condition.

In our study, remittances are seen to serve as a means of maintaining the rural-based families or as a repayment of a social debt arising from past assistance received from the families. The magnitude of the social debt is determined by the degree of poverty of the rural-based families, the amount of money invested by the family in the migrant and the amount of the income earned by the family. Given that recipients are primarily parents and village elders, it is not surprising that most of the money remitted is used for increased consumption, education and better housing.

The fact that very little of the remittances is used to increase agricultural productivity (Table 7.1) negates the notion that the loss of young labour from the rural areas can be compensated or replaced by the monetary flows from them to be used in hiring other labour in their stead. The latter would also be difficult to materialize. One reason is that not only is there are other more immediate needs, such as physical survival to take care of; other labour, on the other hand, are also hard to come by. Although the 'pull-push' theory

may still hold true in explaining out-migration, other abetting factor that can promote the chain of movement is the legacy of colonial education system, which emphasized on a clerical-type learning rather than technical training needed to create an efficient peasantry. This has led to the preference for non-farm jobs to toiling the soil among the young.

In another part of the same study it was shown that the income of the population in the area had worsened over the years (Asmah 1983). Despite using the same total household income of RM250 per month as used by the Identification and Coordination Unit (ICU) of the Prime Minister's Department in 1978 and by including the non-cash income to ours, it was found that the ICU's figures, 65.5 per cent incidence of poverty for Baling was comparatively lower than our finding of 76.1 per cent. This could imply two things, either our villages are in the relatively poorer area in the District, or that the extent of poverty has increased during the span of the three year period between the two studies. However our sampling method for the study villages, personal observation and knowledge of the area had shown that our choice was not biased thus eliminating the first implication leaving us to verify the second.

To imply that the income of the villagers had deteriorated called for an examination of their income-generating activities particularly among the peasants who were subjected to external market fluctuations. More than three-quarters of the villagers were found to have relied directly on the production of the rubber and padi as their main source of income (in cash and in kind) with a major proportion of the rest relying on monthly wages and salaries. While the incomes of the latter were more stable and tended to increase with time (through annual increment), peasants' incomes on the other hand, relied heavily on the prices of commodities, which were highly flexible. Commodity prices for both padi and rubber over the period were seen to be favourable. The increase in price subsidy for padi, however, did not affect the peasants in our study area as they only grew padi for subsistence. The average price of smallholder rubber (non-smoked sheet Grade 3) also improved from RM1.35 per kg in 1978 to RM1.76 per kg in 1980. If this were the case, one would aspect that peasants' rubber incomes would improve simultaneously. But they did not.

One particular reason for the failure of rising commodity prices to improve farmers' incomes was the reduction in the total rubber output or productivity brought about by a general deterioration of the local agricultural system. It was found that 65 per cent of the rubber land in the area were either old, hence of low productivity or still immature and unproductive. As such peasants' rubber output had been reduced by at least one-half due to old

and unproductive trees. A complementary factor leading to the general low agricultural output produced by the peasants is the phenomenon of land being left 'idle'. One of the reasons behind the idleness of land in the area was the lack of able-bodied manpower as a result of out-migration as discussed in the earlier section. As a consequence, peasants' total rubber output was further reduced by at least one-tenth.

Lack of young labour, besides age and capital, was also found to be a deterrent factor to such undertakings as personal replanting of old rubber plots. The financial problem faced by rubber smallholders in undertaking replanting was often related to the labour problem since lack of labour compelled the small holders to use contractors to fell their holdings; and in many cases contractors demanded a down-payment. They could overcome this problem by applying for replanting assistance from the Rubber Industry Smallholders' Development Authority (RISDA). Unfortunately the majority could not benefit from either RISDA's replanting grant or subsidy scheme because their land had no legal titles which were necessary before aids could be given, as they originated from illegal opening up of land gazetted under Reserves.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that rural-urban linkages through out-migration of rural youth and urban remittances have brought about unbalanced effect to the village. While urban remittances are beneficial to certain rural household, their existence does not lead to an increase in the agricultural productivity of the origin. In fact, the rural area was seen to shoulder greater responsibility and being faced with more problems, demographically, socially and economically.

The encouragement of migration to urban areas as a measure of overcoming a certain problem as deemed necessary by the policymakers may appear viable, but the possibility that it may inflict a far-reaching effect should not be dismissed. This is especially so when development is biased towards the more advanced, urban sectors while trusting in backwash effects to convey development into the rural economy, the latter would also be faced with other intricate problems.

Notes

1 Decrease in mortality rates among children aged 0-4 years in Baling from 1977-80 were as follows:

i) Neo-natal mortality rate - from 34.0 to 23.8 deaths per 1000 live births
ii) Infant mortality rate - from 30.9 to 30.8 deaths per 1000 live births
iii) Toddler mortality rate - from 4.3 to 3.5 deaths per 1000 population aged 1-4 years.

2 Among the list are Caldwell 1969; Anderson 1972, 1974; Mohammad, Butcher & Gotsch 1973; Johnson & Whitelaw 1974; Stark 1976; Rampel & Lobdell 1978 to name a few.

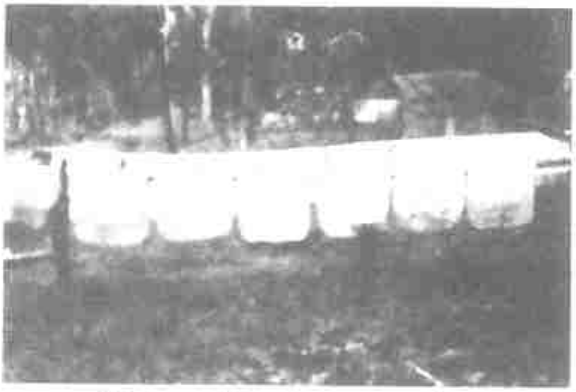
Tapping a young rubber tree

Coagulating latex

Mangling rubber into sheet

A group-processing centre

PLATE 1a The production of rubber



Drying rubber sheets on poles

Weighing of sheet rubber

Weighing of scrap rubber

PLATE 1b The production of rubber

Transplanting seedlings

Harvesting by sickle

Threshing padi

Winnowing padi

PLATE 2a The production of padi

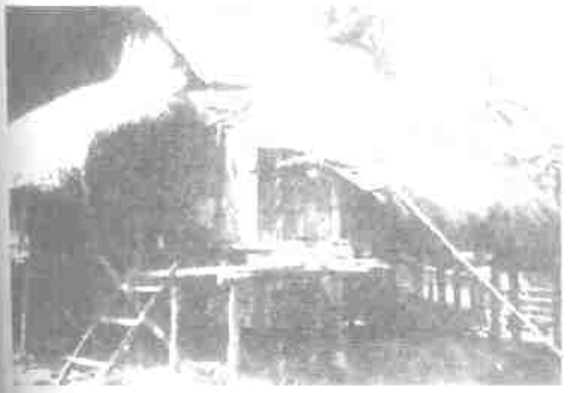
A wet padi nursery

Land prepaeration by using a hoe

Ploughing with buffalo

A padestrian tractor in use

PLATE 2b The production of padi



A dwelling before rehabilitation

After rehabilitation

A village convenient store

A village shop/eatery

A sign of affluence

A low cost housing in Kupang

PLATE 3 Local housing and village stores

Kg. Lalang: 1981

Kg. Lalang: 1994

A weekly market at Kupang: 1981

Kupang Saturday market - new site: 1994

PLATE 4 Scenes of local built-up areas

Baling Old Town in 1994

Baling Old Town in 2002

West end of Baling's new main thoroughfare: 1994

The same section in 2002

Middle part of Baling's new main thoroughfare: 1994

The scene in 2002

PLATE 5 Baling Town: Old and new
Scenes of local built-up areas

A supermarket: 1994

Supermarket under new management: 2002

Modern banking

Fast-food chain outlet

PLATE 6 Modern facilities

Chapter 8
Baling: Thirty Years After Independence

Introduction

There has been a substantial amount of debate and writings on the performance of Malaysian economic development since it achieved Independence in 1957. Malaysia's economy grew at a high rate that was sustained at between 5-7 per cent annually for many years, and a higher rate at 8 per cent and more since 1971. Even during the recent recession, the Malaysian economic performance did not fare very badly, culminating in a speedy recovery from the recession. However, this achievement was not followed with improvement in the distribution of inequality and poverty. Since mid-1970s, the Government Development Plans have been changed from accelerating economic growth to equitable distribution through emphasis on the socio-economic condition of the poor and ethnic imbalance. This effort was said to have brought about significant improvements in the patterns of income distribution and decreased the poverty rate, although poverty remains a Malay problem.

Official portrayal of achievements in poverty eradication has been remarkable. The overall incidence of poverty for Peninsular Malaysia has declined substantially from 49.3 per cent in 1970 to 15 per cent in 1990. Likewise the decline for rural poverty is even greater from 58.7 per cent to 19.3 per cent over the same period of time (Fifth Malaysia Plan 1986:101; Sixth Malaysia Plan 1991:32). However, in terms of regional balance, disparities still exist whereby the lesser-developed states remain experiencing greater than average poverty. One case in point is Kedah whose mean monthly household income of RM860 is the third lowest after Kelantan and Perlis, with a ratio of 0.69 to the national average (Sixth Malaysia Plan 1991:38). Yet again such an aggregate situation is not necessarily reflective of conditions at the micro level. To this end, this paper attempts to highlight a case of greater than average poverty as is experienced by Baling, a district in the southeast of Kedah that has been identified as poor - among the five poorest districts in the country.

Poverty Level in Baling: Experiences from Two Studies

Two poverty studies have been carried out in Baling, first in 1981 and second, a revisit study, in 1988 - 30 years after Independence. These studies are far from being historical but are longitudinal in nature.

The 1981-study attempts to gauge the life of the Baling population seven years after the hunger march. On August 31, 1987, Malaysia celebrated its 30th year of independence. It was then felt that there was a need for an assessment of its developmental achievements after three decades either at national or micro levels. For the purpose of the latter, a revisit study was carried out in 1988, on the same villages as in the first study. In this way, it was hoped that whatever development or otherwise experienced by Baling could be traced. Basically, the studies adopted the village studies approach whereby a questionnaire survey was conducted on all household heads.

Results of the second study on Baling in Time Frame Two showed several changes. Table 8.1 shows clearly that the population size had increased within the seven years between the two studies. Hence, the number of household heads interviewed subsequently increased as the study adopted the 100 per cent survey technique.

TABLE 8.1 The characteristics of the selected Village Development and Security Committee Areas (JKKK), 1981 and 1988

JKKK	Dist. from Baling (km)	Population size		Area (ha)	No. of Household Heads	
		1981	1988		1981	1988
Kg. Dlm. Wang	8.1	580	650	427	70	122
Kg. Luar Siong	12.9	1200	1350	61	155	175
Kg. K. Kuang	24.2	695	800	324	139	150
Kg. Ulu Bakai	54.7	1000	1100	206	112	123
Total		3475	3900	1008	476	570

Source: Field Data, 1981, 1988.

A total of 476 household heads were interviewed in 1981, whereas the total was 570 in 1988. Table 8.2 summarises some of the characteristics of these household heads. As can be seen, the percentage of female heads of household increased by 2.3 per cent from the previous survey. Most of them were widows. However, the age structure of the household head, in the second study, was found to be older than the first. This may be due to either

TABLE 8.2 Selected characteristics of the household heads in Baling, 1981, 1988

Characteristics	1981	1988
Gender		
Male	88.7	86.4
Female	11.3	13.6
Total	100.0	100.0
Age		
< 30 years	11.6	7.9
30-39 years	24.6	24.9
40-49 years	28.1	25.4
50-59 years	17.0	19.2
60+	18.7	22.6
Total	100.0	100.0
Marital Status		
Married	88.0	82.1
Divorced	1.7	3.0
Widowed	9.5	12.2
Single	0.8	2.7
Total	100.0	100.0
Educational Achievement		
None	29.2	20.3
Primary	62.2	50.7
Lower secondary	2.5	3.5
Upper secondary	2.1	9.4
College or higher	0.2	4.3
Arabic	3.8	11.8
Total	100.0	100.0
Occupation		
Rubber tapper	44.9	73.8
Paddy planter	13.8	5.0
Rubber tapper & paddy planter	18.6	4.3
Teacher/Religious teacher	2.1	1.7
Clerical & other government jobs	2.1	3.7
Estate workers	4.5	11.4
Retailers	2.8	-
Self-employed	5.3	-
Jobless	5.9	-
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Data 1981, 1988.

a result of the normal process of ageing or the absence of the young population due to out-migration.

The percentage of household heads being widowed had also increased over the period. Both the educational and the occupational structures also differed slightly. The percentage of household heads getting higher than primary education had improved. In terms of occupation, although agriculture remained the main economic pursuit of the people, the importance of rubber had increased while the interest in padi had declined. However, the percentage of wage earners had doubled from 8.7 per cent in 1981 to 16.8 per cent in 1988. These differences could be due to the changing age structure of the respondents whereby the inclusion of the new below 30 year age group would bring with it new social and economic traits.

Poverty in Baling

Poverty Status in 1981

The poverty experiences of Baling, its extent, characteristics and causes were outlined in the early part of the book - depicting the experiences in Time Frame One. In that first study, a poverty line income of RM250 per month was used to measure poverty. A detailed argument of the choice of poverty line income used was also tabled in the same paper. Accordingly, 76.1 per cent of the households in Baling were found to have earned less than RM250 per month (Table 8.3). Differences in income among the villages

TABLE 8.3 Percentage distribution of household income per month in Baling, 1981

Income Group (RM)	Cumulative %
< 50	1.9
50-99	12.2
100-149	33.6
150-199	57.6
200-249	76.1
250-299	83.6
300-349	91.2
350-449	95.6
450-549	97.3
550+	100.0

Source: Asmah 1988.

studied were found to be small and insignificant showing that poverty was equally distributed among the villages and a situation of mass poverty was said to exist in Baling. The poverty rate was especially high when compared to the rate of poverty as experienced by the state and rural Peninsular Malaysia in 1976 that was, 61 per cent and 47.8 per cent respectively (Fifth Malaysia Plan 1986). This is not surprising, as it is known that many intrinsic characteristics would be over-shadowed by aggregate data.

Their expenditure pattern further reinforced their state of poverty. On the average, about 72 per cent of the household cash income was spent on two basic needs i.e., food and clothing. If the expenditure was taken to cover food alone, it already exceeded the one-third level, which was said to be equivalent to poverty (Orshansky 1965; Rosenthal 1969; Drewnowski 1977). This is similar to Burgess and Laidin's findings (Snodgrass 1980) in their study on the health, nutrition and living conditions among three low income groups namely Malay smallholders and fishermen as well as Indian estate workers. They found that both the Malay smallholders and fishermen spent about 75-85 per cent and two-thirds of their income respectively on food alone. Judging from the rural Malay's expenditure pattern that has not changed much compared to the situation three decades before the 1981 study, it can be concluded that poverty among rural Malays has persisted over time.

Baling became a household name overnight in 1974 when students staged demonstrations in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Ipoh, in support of the hunger marches held by smallholders in Baling, Sik, Selama and Changloon in northern Kedah over the issues of low rubber prices, inflationary prices of goods and the general problem of rural poverty. The hardship faced in 1974 was used as a yardstick to measure the change in living conditions of the villagers over time. When asked how they rated and compared their living conditions before and after the 1974 demonstration, 82 per cent were of the opinion that life before the demonstrations was harder (Table 8.4). This hardship generally referred to the low income earned due to low prices of rubber and prolonged rainy seasons that deprived them of their livelihood.

Nevertheless, half of those who said life before the demonstration was harder also found that life had not improved much after that. The majority of those who found that life had improved slightly came from one of the villages that had been supplied with community water and electricity.

TABLE 8.4 Villagers' perception towards living conditions in Baling before and after the 1974 demonstrations

Before	Study 1	Study 2	After	Study 1	Study 2
Hard life	81.7	95.7	No difference	41.0	-
Better	0.9	0.5	Slightly better	39.1	98.2
Don't know	10.5	3.8	Don't know	10.9	1.8
No answer	6.9	-	No answer	9.0	-
Total	100.0	100.0	Total	100.0	100.0

Source: 1) Asmah 1988.
2) Field data 1988.

Poverty Status in 1988

In the revisit study carried out in 1988, the poverty line income used was RM300 per month. This figure was used, to be in line with the official household poverty line income used then, which was, RM300 per month for rural and RM400 per month for urban areas. It was found that although the percentage of those living in poverty had declined, the decrease was small. It showed that 70.3 per cent still lived in poverty (Table 8.5). Such a percentage was still high considering the national rate of poverty had decreased

TABLE 8.5 Percentage distribution of the monthly household income in Baling, 1988

Income group (RM)	Cumulative %
0-50	1.1
51-100	9.0
101-150	22.3
150-200	41.6
201-250	52.6
251-300	70.3
301-350	75.0
351-450	84.9
451-550	92.4
551-1000	99.0
1001+	100.0

Source: Field Data 1988.

remarkably as discussed earlier, or the poverty rate was officially being stated at 36.6 per cent for Kedah and 24.7 per cent for rural Peninsular Malaysia in 1984 (Fifth Malaysia Plan 1986). The fact that a high proportion of the Baling population under study still remained in poverty showed that poverty in Baling was still widespread.

An analysis made of the population's expenditure pattern did not point to a substantial change over the 1981 pattern. Slightly more than two-thirds of the population spent between RMI00-RM200 for food. This consumption was found to utilize about 63 per cent of their average monthly income.

To be consistent with the earlier study, the revisit study also asked the respondents their opinion on the difference in living condition before and after the 1974 demonstration. About 96 per cent of the respondents agreed that life prior 1974 was difficult and 98 per cent felt that life after that was better. The difference in opinion between the 7 years of the two studies showed that the opinion expressed in the latter study was consensus and positive in nature.

The villagers' assessment of their living conditions which had improved a lot was contradictory to the actual level of living as found in terms of their low income. This was not surprising because although there was still a large proportion that were poor in terms of cash income, the living conditions and the physical development surrounding them in terms of basic facilities, amenities and infrastructure which they had enjoyed since 1985 made them felt 'better-off'. The accessibility of the Baling folks to their basic facilities had improved tremendously. For example, 79 per cent of the population in Baling had access to clean water compared to 62 per cent for the other rural population in Malaysia (Economic Report 1990/91:237). Besides, 67 per cent enjoyed electricity supply. Hence, development had been initiated for Baling.

Poverty and Development in Baling

The preceding discussion had shown that poverty, in its narrow sense i.e. in monetary terms, had not changed much in Baling. But to say that Baling had not changed at all after 30 years of independence was also untrue. As implied in the preceding paragraphs, Baling had enjoyed, albeit only relatively recently, transformations of its physical environment. As such, income alone is insufficient to highlight the different facets of poverty as a process (Wilson & Woods 1982). Other measures are needed to show the different aspects of poverty, which are not directly evident from te monetary measures (Chandler 1969).

Non-monetary measures inherent in the concepts of standards and levels of living are relatively well defined and provide an ideal foundation for the development of informative spatial (territorial) social indicators. The concepts have long been regarded as convenient frameworks for the analysis of a large number of interrelated elements of social and economic well-being (Knox 1975:23). Whilst the concept of standard of living relates to the aspiration levels of the people in question, level of living refers to the actual condition of life or the actual degree of satisfaction of the needs and wants of the people themselves.

The pros-and-cons of income and level of living indicators as a measure of development or poverty is the subject of extensive debate. Those in favour of income argued that the socioeconomic indicator approach raises serious problems of definition, concepts and objectivity and that as a consequence the strictly economic concept of income is to be preferred. Proponents of the socioeconomic indicator approach reject this argument on the grounds that in large measure the same defects apply to income concepts too (Seers 1974). Some of the prominent statistical difficulties involved in using low per capita income as an index of poverty are the problems of aggregation, especially in a dual economy, the arbitrary valuation of non-market activities and the inadequacy of national income statistics at official exchange rates (Kuznets 1959 in Meier 1972; Myrdal 1968).

It is not the intention of this paper to pursue this polemic further. It suffices to say that we believe that income alone is unable to reflect the multi-faceted character of poverty and hence we seek to understand poverty as a process through socioeconomic indicators. Besides, other additional factors, such as demography and the environment are directly relevant as they can affect the levels of the socioeconomic well-being of the population. We thus seek to discuss socioeconomic and demographic characteristics as indicators of poverty and inequality. However, only a few selected indicators are used here in order to gauge the levels of living and change as experienced by Baling. Nevertheless, they should not be taken conclusively as a measure of poverty but rather as a proxy to indicate poverty.

Demographic Indicators

Size of household is directly related to the demographic variable, fertility. Socio-economic status is said to have an inverse relationship with fertility (Davis 1965), that is, low status is associated with high fertility and vice versa.Translating low socioeconomic status as poverty, a direct relationship

is established instead. Table 8.6 summarises the demographic variables of the study area as compared to the district, state and national levels.

TABLE 8.6 Demographic characteristics of Baling, Kedah and Peninsular Malaysia

Selected rate	M'sia	Kedah	Baling		Study Area	
	1986	1981	1986	1981	1986	1981
CBR	31.0	31.0	29.6	31.8	32.3	41.0
CDR	4.8	5.6	5.5	5.8	5.4	6.9
IMR	15.6	25.1	20.9	41.8	24.9	-
TMR	1.6	2.2	1.4	3.6	2.2	-
NIR	26.2	25.3	24.1	26.1	26.9	32.1

CBR-Crude Birth Rate
CDR-Crude Death Rate
IMR-Infant Mortality Rate
TMR-Toddler Mortality Rate
NIR-Natural Increase Rate

Source: 1) Department of Statistics. 1989. *State/District Data Bank, Kedah/Perlis 1981-86*. Kuala Lumpur.
2) Asmah 1985.

The Crude Birth Rate (CBR) for the study area was seen to be higher than that of the Baling, Kedah and National rates. Surprisingly, its Crude Death Rate (CDR) was relatively low resulting in a high rate of natural increase. It was in fact higher than the natural increase rate (NIR) of the District, State and even National levels. High growth rates will incur not only high dependency ratios but also stress on existing resources, which may result in poverty.

We have seen that although the CDR for the study area is higher than the other aggregate rates, it is relatively low. Rodgers (1979) had noted that the determinants of change in mortality in underdeveloped countries were difficult to unravel. They include improvements in health technology and its availability, education, sanitation, clean water supply, and other environmental variables. In addition, health programmes are often more intensive in the least healthy places, which tend to confuse the observed relationship. Hence, CDR by itself tends to be less informative on the actual state of well-being of the population. A decomposition of CDR into various mortality rates among the infants will be more meaningful. This is because the infant (0-1 year old) is the most vulnerable group of the population due to its susceptibility to diseases and as such most death among them would have occurred during the first half year of life. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) hence, has been one

of the well-known indicators of poverty (though this reflects, in particular, the effectiveness of health services as well as diet, housing, etc.).

In contrast to a low CDR, IMR for Malaysia as a whole is high and more than double that of the developed countries. As we have no data for the study area, the IMR and TMR figures for Baling will be used. The IMR for Baling was highest in 1981 but had declined drastically by 1986. The implication of improvements in medical and health services in Baling is only too clear in reducing infant mortality. This is exemplified by the reduction of the facility-population ratio. Prior to 1963, Baling could only boast of a modest District Hospital. With the construction of one health centre and 12 rural clinics in 1963 it provided a facility-population ratio of 1:8 803 and this was further improved to 1:4 317 in 1973. The introduction of community nurses to provide the total range of maternal and child health care has also improved the situation tremendously. The relationship between poverty and infant mortality is thus unclear due to the role played by the government in providing greater rural health services to the area.

Toddler Mortality Rate (TMR) can also measure poverty. Unlike the infants, children who have survived the age of one are less likely to die. A high TMR for Baling compared to the State and National levels is indicative of factors relating to poverty. Low income or poverty is likely to influence mortality through its effects on the rate of consumption of items affecting health, such as food, housing, sanitation and education (Preston 1975).

Nutrition

A discussion on nutrition is imperative because nutritional adequacy or inadequacy determines the effectiveness of living and work, hence affecting the level of social and economic development. The problems of malnutrition and poor health are also often seen to be the serious manifestations of poverty. In Malaysia, the Malays are often said to have a comparatively inferior diet compared to the Chinese or Indians (Hodder 1959; Snodgrass 1980). The inferiority of the Malay diet as ascribed by them was partly due to traditional food practices and beliefs and partly to poverty.

Physical disability is often the result of low levels of health and energy from inadequate diet. The Malay diet mainly consists of rice, the staple food, which is known to be low in calorific value; fried or curried fish or meat, and some vegetables. While such a diet is good by Asian standards it is the quality and the quantity that differentiates the level of nutrition achieved. The diet of the villagers in Baling is seen to be, on average, highly dependent on rice. It is normally taken with fish curry or fried fish either fresh or salted.

Dried or salted fish is greatly consumed by the villagers for although it has low protein content; it is highly relished with rice. Animal protein is rarely consumed for it is expensive and milk is hardly consumed at all.

Most of the food items consumed by the villagers have to be bought, where a major part of the expenditure incurred is on rice, leaving a smaller proportion to be spent on protein, fat, sugar etc. For the villagers, the bulk of the energy requirements of the body have to be made up by eating a large amount in weight of food, particularly rice. This has led to a high consumption rate of rice by the villagers, that is, 263kg per person per year (Asmah 1983) that is 57.5 per cent higher than the average consumption found elsewhere in Peninsular Malaysia (Narkswasdi & Selvadurai 1968). The main reason for their deficient nutrition is poverty. Table 8.7 shows the food consumption pattern of villagers in the area.

What Table 8.7 shows is that besides rice, the other main source of villagers' protein is fish. The percentage of those who consume fish daily had increased from 52 per cent to 91.3 per cent. As a whole it can be said that the quality of food in the area, which in 1981 was low and unbalanced, had improved slowly since then as shown by the increased consumption of protein from sources such as fish and eggs.

TABLE 8.7 The rate of consumption of food items (in per cent) in Baling, 1981 and 1988

Food items	1981	1988
1. Frequency of rice consumption per day:		
Once	0.0	0.0
Twice	63.7	60.7
Thrice	36.2	39.3
	100.00	100.0
2. Frequency of egg consumption per month:		
Nil	15.3	0.0
1-9 times	72.9	61.4
10-20 times	7.6	9.0
30 times (daily)	4.2	29.6
	100.0	100.0
3. Frequency of freshwater fish consumption per month:		
Occasionally	73.1	72.6
1-9 times	24.6	5.0
10-20 times	2.1	4.2
30 times (daily)	0.2	18.2
	100.0	100.0

TABLE 8.7 (*Continue*)

4.	Frequency of fish (sea) consumption per month:		
	Occasionally	1.3	6.4
	1-9 times	14.7	0.4
	10-20 times	32.1	1.9
	30 times (daily)	51.9	91.3
		100.0	100.0
5.	Frequency of fish (salted) consumption per month:		
	Occasionally	0.0	19.0
	1-9 times	39.1	6.1
	10-20 times	44.1	4.9
	30 times (daily)	16.8	70.0
		100.0	100.0
6.	Frequency of meat (beef and chicken) consumption per month:		
	2-3 times	10.3	21.3
	Continued once a month	26.7	29.7
	Once in 2-4 months	42.1	46.3
	Once in every 6 months	1.7	2.3
	Once in every 12 months	1.9	0.4
	Not at all	17.2	0.0
		100.0	100.0
7.	Consumption of milk per month		
	Fresh milk	0.0	0.0
	Powdered milk: 10 times	1.3	2.5
	Condensed milk: 0 time	57.9	56.5
	1-9 times	32.4	21.6
	10-20 times	2.1	4.7
	30 times (daily)	7.6	14.7
		100.0	100.0

Source: 1. Asmah 1983.
2. *Field Data* 1988.

Household Items

Household items have been used as a substitute for data on income and as an index of wealth. This is closely related to Engel's Law which implies that the greater the income the more it will be spent on conspicuous consumption.

Table 8.8 shows the list of household items owned by the villagers. Among the items that are comparable to 1970, only three items - motorcycle, television and radio, show a situation that is better than the 1970 figure. For

TABLE 8.8 Percentage distribution of households according to ownership of household items, 1981 and 1988 compared to rural Peninsular Malaysia 1970 and rural Malaysia 1980

Vehicles/Household items	Baling		Rural P.M'sia	Rural M'sia
	1981	1988	1970	1980
Motorcar	2.9	3.1	4.0	11.0
Motorcycle	29.4	31.2	10.9	32.0
Bicycle	50.4	55.4	65.2	-
Television set	11.3	50.0	4.9	40.0
Radio	52.5	30.4	43.4	68.0
Sewing machine	20.0	27.7	34.8	-
Refrigerator	0.6	20.5	3.2	16.0
Gas stove	1.1	8.4	2.9	-
Kerosene stove	9.5	14.2	10.9	-
Electric fan	1.9	6.0	5.1	24.0

Sources: 1. Asmah 1983.
2. Adjusted from Table 8.25, 8.27, *1970 Population Census Report*, 477, 479.
3. Adjusted from Table 8.13, *1980 Population Census Report*, 1 149.
4. *Field data* 1988.

other items, the situation showed a lower ownership distribution, which pointed to a generally lower material well-being of Baling's population than the Peninsula's rural population a decade ago. Besides, the material well-being of the Baling population was found to be still low if compared to the situation found in rural Malaysia in 1980. Nevertheless, the situation changed in 1988 whereby the percentage of those with household items and vehicles increased particularly in terms of ownership of television sets, refrigerators and gas stoves. Although one may argue that the degree of improved ownership does not necessarily portray the villagers' affordability but may be due to gifts from children who have out-migrated and worked elsewhere, one may counter-argue that the villagers must have some degree of financial strength in order to commit themselves to conspicuous consumption.

The preceding discussion has tried to argue that besides income, other indicators are useful in gauging and giving a greater insight into the development experience of an area. The local income may be low or the demographic variables may be pointing to a state of near poverty but while one refers to the quantitative aspect of life, the other speaks of its quality. As development is concerned with improving both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of life; both aspects of the latter cannot be ignored. Their

knowledge is pertinent in understanding poverty and development. In the light of the above it can be said that although in terms of income Baling falls within the realm of poverty, in socio-physical terms Baling's quality of life has improved greatly.

Conclusion

One remarkable outcome of the Baling hunger marches of 1974 was that it made Baling the focus of many government development projects particularly infrastructure and economic projects capable of uplifting the socio-economic standing of the local people. Provision of infrastructure is seen in the form of greater road network and accessibility in the form of agricultural and village roads. Other basic needs such as clean water and electricity supplies are also provided resulting in improving, to some extent, the physical quality of life for at least two-thirds of the population.

Agricultural development in the form of mini-estates and estates under RISDA has overcome the problem of land without titles. It provided employment opportunities to the young and active population. It is also a source of income to the landowners, although very much discounted, as a repayment to the development costs involved.

Of late, industrial development has also come to Baling, offering employment opportunities for the young. Together with industrial development in Kulim and Sg. Petani and their subsequent manpower needs, outmigration has been curbed and together with unemployment has become a feature of the recent past.

To conclude, since 1974, both physical and socio-economic developments have been poured into Baling. The outcome after 30 years of independence is seen more in the form of the positive effects physical development has brought to Baling. The socioeconomic development has also begun to show results but not enough to release a major portion of the population from the grip of poverty. Probably it would take a few more years before all the outputs of economic development in Baling can be fully enjoyed by the people and hence improve their living condition to the utmost.

Chapter 9

Post-Development Baling

Introduction

Official figures showing Malaysia's success in eradicating poverty are indeed impressive. The national poverty rate had been reduced from 49.3 per cent in 1970 to 15.0 per cent in 1990 and 13.5 per cent in 1993. Meanwhile, the poverty rate for the rural areas had been successfully reduced from 58.7 per cent to 19.3 per cent and 18.6 per cent during the same period (Fifth Malaysia Plan 1986:101; Six Malaysia Plan 1991:32; Economic Report 1994/95:232). This achievement was recognized at the World Summit Meeting for Social Development in Copenhagen, Denmark which took place from 6-12 March 1995. Malaysia was among a small group of nations, which has successfully reduced poverty to a low level.

Although Malaysia has generally managed to widely reduce the poverty rate, in terms of regional balance, differences can still be seen; poverty is more prevalent in the less-developed areas where it is higher than the average poverty level. A sample case is Baling in Kedah, an area that has long been identified as one of the poorest districts in Malaysia.

Nevertheless, in an economic era when Malaysia was expecting a rapid growth and able to maintain the Gross National Product (GDP) at the rate of eight per cent for the last two decades (8.0 in 1971 and 8.5 in 1994), the growth was expected to spill over to the remote areas. Thus, in an era in which the country was experiencing a rapid growth, the status of poverty in Baling would be affected.

Poverty Situations in Baling

Three studies on poverty in Baling were made in 1981, 1988 and 1994. The first one was to gauge the living conditions in Baling seven years after its residents held a demonstration to protest against poverty in the area and the low price of rubber. At that time, it was undergoing a process of overcoming poverty through various development projects.

The 1988 study was made a year after Malaysia celebrated its thirtieth year of independence in the hope that the development projects brought to Baling would have produced results. Nevertheless, what was discovered was that most of the agricultural development projects there were still at the implementation or gestation stage; thus, they had not shown much result.

The third study, which was made in 1994, was a follow-up on the latest development of the poverty situation in Baling. Although emphasis was on the latest development, it cannot be appreciated without comparing it with the two previous experiences.

The research methodology used in the three studies was the village studies in which questionnaries were used for all household heads in the four villages studies. As the approach used was the interview technique of 100 per cent of the household heads, the number of household heads had inevitably increased over time - from 476 in 1981 to 570 in 1988 and 639 in 1994, in line with the growth process and the life cycles of the villagers.

Table 9.1 shows some characteristics of the household heads in 1981, 1988 and 1994. The trend of some characteristics of the household heads during the three study periods showed some positive implications in the demographic, social as well as economic aspects. In brief, not only was there an increase in the number of respondents, but the percentage of female household heads had also increased as a result of an increased ageing structure of the age of the household heads and the greater longevity of woman

TABLE 9.1 Some characteristics of the heads of households in Baling, 1981, 1988 and 1994

Characteric	Percentage		
	1981	1988	1994
Gender			
Male	88.7	86.4	85.4
Female	11.3	13.6	14.6
	100.0	100.0	100.0
Age			
<30 years	11.6	7.9	4.7
30-39 years	24.6	24.9	20.3
40-49 years	28.1	25.4	26.6
50-59 years	17.0	19.2	24.1
60+	18.7	22.6	24.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0

TABLE 9.1 (*Continue*)

Marital status			
Married	88.0	82.1	83.5
Divorced	1.7	3.0	1.2
Widow/Widower	9.5	12.2	14.2
Single	0.8	2.7	1.1
	100.0	100.0	100.0
Educational Achievements			
No formal education	29.2	20.3	21.8
Primary school	62.2	50.7	58.6
Lower secondary	2.5	3.5	10.1
Upper secondary	2.1	9.4	5.0
College/University	0.2	4.3	0.9
Arabic school	3.8	11.8	3.6
	100.0	100.0	100.0
Occupations			
Rubber tapper	44.9	73.9	51.3
Padi farmer	13.8	5.0	3.8
Rubber Tapper & Padi farmer	18.6	4.3	11.3
Teacher/Religious School Teacher	2.1	1.7	8.3
Clerk & Govt. employee	2.1	3.7	8.3
Estate workers	4.5	11.4	-
Unemployed	5.9	-	0.2
Others	8.1	0.0	33.4
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: 1. Asmah 1994. "Baling: 30 years after independence' in Jamilah Ariffin (ed.). Poverty amidst plenty. Pelanduk Publication, Kuala Lumpur.
2. Field Data 1994.

over men as illustrated by the increasing percentage of widows in response to the marital status in the questionnaire.

The education trend also showed discrepancies. In terms of educational achievement, there was an increase in the percentage of household heads who had received secondary and tertiary education from 4.8 per cent in 1981 to 17.2 per cent in 1988. However, there was a slight decrease in the percentage in 1994 (about 16 per cent only). This was due to the research methodology used, which studied the same respondents, more or less. The changes in their educational achievement found in the second study were due to the presence of newcomers who were probably married children of the household heads or outsiders who had permanently resided in Baling (whether because of

work or because they had married locals). The drop in the percentage of those with secondary or tertiary education in the third study was probably due to the migration of the relatively higher educated to seek better and greater economic opportunities.

The job structure had also changed. Although farming remained the main economic activity of about 57 per cent of the people, the importance of the padi growing sector had declined. In 1994 only 3.8 per cent were engaged in full-time padi farming, compared to 13.8 per cent in 1981. On the other hand, there was an increase in the percentage of salaried workers, whether in the government or private sector (as shown in the 'Others' category). This change was not only the result of the entry of newcomers who were relatively young and with new social and economic background but due also to wage-paying job opportunities offered by the RISDA and FELCRA plantation sector.

Poverty Level

The poverty experience of Baling during the duration of the two studies had been explained in the previous chapters (see also Asmah 1987; 1994). It is sufficed to look back at the level of poverty faced by Baling during those two periods and compare it with the third study.

In the first study (1981), the poverty line income of RM250 a month was used to measure poverty. About 72 per cent of the households in Baling were found to be earning less than RM250 a month. The conclusion can be drawn that Baling was facing mass poverty with a high poverty rate distribution in all the villages studies. The poverty rate was very high, especially compared with poverty in Kedah and Peninsular Malaysia in 1976, which had a rate of 61 per cent and 47 per cent respectively (Fifth Malaysia Plan 1986).

In the second study (1988), the poverty line income used was RM300 a mongh. The percentage of those still living in poverty had dropped slightly by 5.8 percentage points, thus making the poor 70.3 per cent of the population. This figure was still high, considering that the average rate of poverty has been drastically reduce, i.e. 36.6 per cent in Kedah and 24.7 per cent in rural Peninsular Malaysia in 1984 (Fifth Malaysia Plan 1986). This showed that poverty was still prevalent in Baling.

A revisit study in 1994 found that the poverty rate in Baling had dropped by 24.1 percentage points making it 45.2 per cent. This was observed when the percentage of households who were not poor and earning more than RM400 a month had reached more than half, i.e. 54.8 per cent (Table 9.2). The rate of poverty did not only decrease, a comparative analy-

TABLE 9.2 Distribution of monthly household income of Baling in 1994

Income Group	Percentage
<RM250	28.6
RM 250 - RM 399	16.6
RM 400 - RM 599	18.5
RM 600 - RM 799	15.0
RM 800 - RM 999	9.2
RM 1000 - RM 1499	6.6
RM 1500 - RM 1999	2.5
RM 2000+	3.0
Total	100.0

Source: Field study 1994

sis of the income data among the three studies showed the distribution of those earning above the poverty line income were more varied (Table 9.3). For example, not only was there a decrease in the number of low-income earners, but the percentage of those earning four figures had increased, an observation first made in 1988.

The fact that living conditions had improved was deduced from the respondents' perception when they were asked to compare their living condi-

TABLE 9.3 Comparison between the household income distribution in Baling, 1981, 1988 and 1994 (%)

Income Group	1981	1988	1994
<RM250	76.1	52.5	28.6
RM 250 - RM 399	15.1	22.5	16.6
RM 400 - RM 599	6.1	17.4	18.5
RM 600 - RM 799	2.7	4.0	15.0
RM 800 - RM 999		2.6	9.2
RM 1000 - RM 1499		1.0	6.6
RM 1500 - RM 1999		-	2.5
RM 2000+		-	3.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: 1. Asmah 1987.
2. Asmah 1994.
3. Field Data 1994.

tions before and after the 1974 demonstrations. They were unanimous in saying that the conditions before were difficult while after were better (Table 9.4).

TABLE 9.4 Perception of the people of Baling regarding living condition before and after the 1974 demonstration

Perception	1981	1988	1994
Before			
Difficult	81.7	95.7	100.0
Better	0.9	0.5	-
Don't know	10.5	3.8	-
No response	6.9	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
After			
No difference	41.0	-	-
Slightly better	39.1	98.2	100.0
Don't know	10.9	1.8	-
No response	9.0	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: 1. Asmah 1994.
2. Field Data 1994.

The present living conditions, which have improved, have made the villagers unanimous in their opinion that they were very hard-pressed before 1974. This was gauged from their responses such as life was difficult (53 per cent), fall in rubber price (35 per cent), inflation (3.1 per cent), food was scarce (1.6 per cent), lack of job opportunities (1.1 per cent), low income (1.6 per cent), not peaceful (1.2 per cent) and subject to many illness (0.8 per cent).

On the other hand, life after the hunder march of 1974 was said to be easier (46 per cent), improvement in the economy (21 per cent), high price of rubber (12.6 per cent), more amenities (7 per cent), many job opportunities (4.3 per cent), food was abundant (2.9 per cent), high income (2.2 per cent) and many others. The differences in income that were relatively large and their perception that life was better were based on several structural changes that took place among the people of Baling and its locality.

Poverty, Social Well-Being and Development in Baling

In the previous discussion, poverty measured in terms of monetary value alone showed a sharp fall. This means that more people could afford to meet their basic needs for food and shelter and still had extra income for other uses. However, income alone was not sufficient to explain the multifaceted poverty as a process (Wilson & Woods 1982). Thus, a non-monetary measuring tool in necessary to show the different facets of poverty, which could not be articulated or described by measurements in monetary form. The measurements could be traced from the actual living conditions of the population or the actual degree of satisfaction towards the needs and wants of the population itself. The living conditions and degree of satisfaction are included in the concept of level of living. As a concept, it has long been regarded as a potential simple frame to analyze a large number of interrelated aspects on economic and social well-being (Pipping 1953 in Knox 1975:23).

There are many socio-economic indicators that could be used to explain the people's level of socio-economic well-being. However, only a few selected indicators will be used to measure the level of the living and changes in Baling. The indices are those related to health, shelter and materials.

Health Indicators

The health level of a society is important to its social well-being. On the other hand, diseases on their own are a function of several aspects of social well-being such as poverty, inadequacy of, and inaccessibility to, medical facilities. Thus, health indicators are also indicators of social well-being. For example, mortality rates such as crude mortality and infant mortality can reflect all the physical, social and medical influences that have to be borne by an individual. A broad definition of health has to include the provision of medical services and care needed to prevent and cure diseases. The contribution of health to social well-being not only depends on the quantity and quality of the facilities available but also on the degree of their physical accessibility.

In this context, two health indicators were used to illustrate the trend of change in Baling, namely the infant mortality rate and the number of doctors per 100 000 populations. The differences in the respective indiced from 1981 to 1992 can be seen in Table 9.5. What the table shows that is the trend for the infant mortality rate has declined while the doctor-population ratio has increased.

TABLE 9.5 Comparison of some health indices among Baling, Kedah and Peninsular Malaysia, 1981, 1989 and 1992

Areas	Infant mortality rate			Doctor/100 000 persons	
	1981	1989	1992	1989	1992
Baling	41.8	20.7	14.3	9.1	12.3
Kedah	25.1	15.7	12.6	22.9	24.5
Malaysia	19.7	13.2	12.2	39.7	41.5

Source: A few issues of Vital Statistics of Malaysia, State/District Data Bank and Social Bulletins.

The above shows that improvements in the health sector are not only due to improvements in the health services but also due to the population's capabilities in terms of health care through better diet and use of the basic amenities. There was a drastic cut of about 66 per cent in the infant mortality rate for Baling in 1981-92 compared to 50 per cent for Kedah and 38 per cent for Malaysia. Although the relationship between poverty and infant mortality is not very clear because of the government's role in improving health services for the rural areas, what is clear is that the drop in infant mortality means the health of the population has improved and reflects an improvement in their social well-being.

Shelter Indicators

Shelter is one of the basic necessities of man, and what are important to the social well-being in terms of shelter is the housing condition as well as accessibility to clean water and proper toilet facilities.

In her first study on Baling, Asmah (1988) had put forward several socio-economic features of the people, between which were housing and their physical environment. About 57 per cent of the houses there were found to be in incomplete form and there was also congestion in the sleeping area. A large proportion of the people also did not have accessibility to clean water, proper toilet and electricity supply.

There had been many changes in the housing conditions and availability of basic amenities in Baling, as shown in Table 9.6. The physical environment had clearly shown much improvement with greater accessibility to water and electricity supply of more than 90 per cent. It was the same as regards proper toilet facilities. For comparison, water supply to the rural areas in Malaysia was 42.9 per cent in 1984, increasing to 74 per cent in

TABLE 9.6 Housing conditions and availability of basic amenities in Baling in 1981 and 1994 (%)

Features	1981	1994
Housing		
Complete	43.3	59.7
Half-complete	56.7	42.3
	100.0	100.0
Water supply		
Piped water	0.1	18.0
Communal water	45.0	73.4
Others	54.9	8.6
	100.00	100.0
Toilet Facilities		
Flush toilets	0.1	3.8
Pour and flush toilets	45.0	86.9
Others	54.9	9.3
	100.0	100.0
Power supply		
Electricity	22.5	92.0
Kerosene lamps and others	77.5	8.0
	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Data 1981, 1994.

1993; while electricity supply rose from 60 per cent to 89.6 per cent during the same periods. The higher percentage of accessibility to water supply for the population of Baling compared to the people in other rural areas in Malaysia was due to the communal water that was chanelled from upstream to their house through gravitational pressure. The water was relatively cleaner compaed to downstream (once a source of water to the people) which could already have been polluted.

The availability of basic amenities, especially water and proper toilet facilities were interrelated with the fall in infant mortality rate. A clean environment reduced the exposure of babies to potentially fatal infectious diseases.

Material Well-Being Indicators

Material well-being can be indicated by household items which were once used as a substitute for income data as well as a wealth index. Affordability

to buy household items is usually interrelated with extra income after the basic needs for food, clothing and shelter have been fulfilled.

Data analysis for the 1994 study showed ownership of household items for the Baling population was much higher than the previous years (Table

TABLE 9.7 Comparison of distribution of material well-being between the population of Baling in 1981, 1988, 1994, and the rural population of Malaysia in 1970, 1980, 1991.

Household Items	Baling			Rural Areas		
				P. M'sia	M'sia	
	1981	1988	1994	1970	1980	1991
Motorcar	2.9	3.1	12.4	4.0	11.0	18.0
Motorcycle	29.4	31.2	66.7	10.9	32.0	50.0
Bicycle	50.4	55.4	43.9	65.2	–	39.0
Television	11.3	50.0	72.3	4.9	40.0	69.0
Radio	52.5	30.4	64.6	43.3	68.0	70.0
Sewing machine	20.0	27.7	32.3	34.8	–	–
Refrigerator	0.6	20.5	39.6	3.2	16.0	42.0
Gas stove	1.1	8.4	80.7	2.9	–	–
Kerosene stove	9.5	14.2	12.9	10.9	–	–
Electric fan	1.9	6.0	27.9	5.1	24.0	–

Source: 1. Asmah 1994.
2. Field Data 1994.
3. Dept of Statistics Malaysia 1995, General Population Census Report, Vol. 1, 173.

9.7). The ownership percentage for some particular vehicle and furnishings such as motorcycles and television exceeded that of the rural population of Malaysia in 1991.

The trend of possessions as shown by the figures above pointing to one whereby the material well-being of Baling in 1981 was on the whole lower than that of rural Peninsular Malaysia a decade earlier. The high increase or the doubling in the attainment and improvement in the years following that show that the pople of Baling were capable of improving their material and social well-being. This clearly shows that they were not only no longer hard-pressed by poverty but also their poverty was followed simultaneously by positive changes towards social, economic and physical well-being. Using an analogy, which usually links development with improvement in the quantity and quality of life, the experience of development in the case of Baling

shows the interrelationship between poverty and development. High poverty is characterized by low quality of life while low poverty occurs when there is an increase in the quantity and quality of the economic and social conditions or development.

Poverty in Post-Development Baling

Discussions on the level of poverty of an area will inevitably touch on the processes that created it. Poverty is often linked to backwardness and underdevelopment. Progress and improvement on the other hand, can be linked to development, especially when it causes structural changes and reallocation of resources in society in order to increase the level of human well-being on the whole. In concurrence with the view of Schumpter (1934 in Brookfield 1975:88), development involves qualitative changes from situation of balance based solely on demand. Thus, development can be attained by carrying out several combinations of new products, including introduction of new products, new production methods, opening of new markets and conducting new industrial organizations or having innovation and structural changes. Development also has implications on the changes in focus in the economy such as changes in the labour distribution among various types of economic activities. Experts in their discourse on development have put many other arguments forward. The general conclusion is that it is a pattern of change having a historical, diverse, complex and contradictory form. In the context of the development in Baling, therefore, explanation will be focussed on the structural changes in the people's economic activities.

Agricultural Mode of Production

The agricultural production system, especially that of rubber in Baling is characterised by smallholdings with unproductive trees (65 per cent), small-sized agriculture (1.2 ha), fragmented and scattered with some parts idle (21 per cent) and without land titles (40 per cent) (Asmah, 1987, 1988). These aspects had all resulted in low agricultural production in Baling, low income, low well-being and widespread poverty.

An unprofitable agricultural production system and land features that impeded development began to be changed into a more modern agricultural mode, namely modern management in the estate mode. Although these modernization agents were government agencies such as RISDA and FELCRA - whether estate or mini-estate programmes or merging and rehabilitation programmes - and not the villagers themselves, as a renewal it has increased

the farmer's production efficiency. Most of the agricultural projects in the estate mode were still in the implementation and gestation stage and the result had yet to be seen when the second study was being done in 1988 - resulting in a poverty rate that was still high. Nevertheless, during the third study in 1994 they had been producing yield for a number of years which had changed the income pattern of the villagers who not only have the opportunity to get a gratuity as landowners or shareholders but also as workers if they worked in that particular estate.

The mini-estate programme in Baling was launched from 1979 to 1989 involving 40 mini-estates. Almost 93 per cent of them were planted with rubber and the rest with oil palm. On the whole, the programme had involved 1,926 participants with a total acreage of 3,114 ha (RISDA office Baling 1994). Only four projects had produced yield before 1990, the earliest being in 1987. A smaller proportion - about twelve projects - had produced yield from 1990-1993, while the rest were expected to produce at the end of 1994 and mid-1995.

Job Opportunities and Structure

The implementation of FELCRA'S mini-estate and development projects has generated job opportunities to locals such as clearing work, planting, fertilizing and others. These opportunities were not only opened to men from the rural areas, but also to women, who had been all this while unpaid family workers. This had changed the job structure of the villagers from working on their own land or rented land to working for wages. As poverty had always been associated with a low income rate, with this new element - money economics – the source of income for the villagers had increased, freeing some of them from the shackles of poverty (as shown in Table 9.2 and 9.3).

Industrial Development

One of the most visible effects of development resulting in prosperity and power as seen in the developed nations is the manufacturing industry. Thus, it is of no surprise if developed countries adopt it as a solution to their problems which include supplying jobs to their increasing population, raising their standard of living by increasing the income per capita and usually to improve their balance of payment (Mountjoy 1975). Malaysia, too, is not far behind in introducing the industrial sector and strengthening its position in the country's economic sector. This was clearly seen in several of the

changes in the government's industrial plans from the policy of import substitution in the 1960's to the export-oriented activities in the 1970's and 1980's. These were all done to achieve higher growth in terms of output and employment.

Baling, too, felt the effects of industrialisation. Although it did not have specific industrial estates, there were nevertheless some industrial activities in Baling such as the textile and handicraft industries, etc. However, what was more effective was the establishment of industrial estates nearby such as in Sg. Petani, Kulim, Seberang Prai and Alor Star, which resulted from the government's decentralization policy, which saw the spreading of industries outside the traditional zone of concentration in and around Kuala Lumpur. The areas mentioned provided jobs to a large proportion of household members in Baling who commuted to the factories that employed them.

Asmah (1995) has shown that 46.8 per cent of the households in Baling had at least one working member other than the household head, especially their children. About 53 per cent of them worked in the private sector, especially factories. The fact that there was more than one worker in each household was one of the reasons for the increase in the household income and the reduction in poverty. What Baling has been experiencing lately is the process of changes generated from efforts to develop and dismantle their backward condition, which they had inherited several decades ago. The New Economic Policy or NEP (later the National Development Policy) and Directions of the New Ways in the Development of Villages and Rural Areas (Rural Development Policy or RDP) were the channels for them to realize these changes.

The question now is whether these changes and the relative poverty in Baling are the effects of post-development. The use of this terminology might be misleading. However, what is clear is that development is not an unavoidable process or something that should occur, but it should be created or developed consciously and earnestly. Developing coordinated measures to overcome social pressures and the pressures of a free economy can do this. An aggressive economic development policy can overcome the features of backwardness and static development in most of the developing countries by introducing investment measures, innovation, planned support and control. Thus, the current thinking is that economic development can be encouraged of course with objectives determined by the government, which is entrusted with the coordination and planning of the necessary measures to meet the objectives. The NEP/NDP and RDP are deliberate measures to change the lives of the people.

The Baling experience in weathering the development era as described here is nothing more than a description of 'reaping the harvest' or the outcome of development or post-development. To see it as an outcome of post-development in the context of what we understand as 'post-industrialization' is indeed erroneous. Seen in terms of its poverty, Baling can be said to be lagging behind by about three decades.

Conclusion

A striking outcome of the 1974 demonstrations against hunger in Baling is that they got the attention of the decision and policy makers and has become the focus of the government development projects. Economic projects and infrastructure have been implemented to improve the economic conditions and social well-being of the people. As a result, Baling has now undergone a face-lift. Infrastructure and basic amenities have improved. So has the quality of life of the villagers, in terms of the health level, housing and material well-being and other comfort. These are all a result of their increased purchasing power generated from an abundance of micro and macro development.

Chapter 10

Baling: From Demonstration to Industrialisation

Introduction

Baling: from demonstration to industrialisation can be interpreted from several perspectives. As stated earlier, it can be viewed as a direction of change or as two different scenarios. However, the book only concentrates on two aspects that warrant elaboration, namely the transformation of the economic and social structure, two significant aspects in the process of modern economic growth. They are significant because in order to enable a change in an economic structure, which takes place in every society, there should also be changes in attitude, institution and ideology.

In the context of the introduction above, as a conclusion, a reflection of the transformation process and experience of a frontier society will be given. In spite of being a remote and backward district in the north of Peninsular Malaysia, and unlike other frontier districts, Baling is well-known and has gained public attention due to some shocking incidents which have become a footnote in the history of the country's social upheavals.

Baling clearly made social history when its population held a mass demonstration against its own government in November and December 1974. The demonstration in Baling showed that feudal values and attitudes were slowly being eroded by time and that frustration and destitute could break out at critical and difficult times. The radical changes in feudal values and attitudes were easily spread and getting to be more violent (for example, throwing stones at government buildings) as shown by the farmers' demonstrations in the early 1970's in Alor Star. The demonstrators had protested against the low price of padi. Other issues that surfaced were the rising price of food, the falling price of rubber and poverty. These incidents are an example of integration between rural peasant society in Malaysia and the national and international economic systems whereby the world's economic recession and rising inflation trends would badly affect the peasants.

Baling: Seven Years After the Demonstrations

The pressures of life that pressed hard on the people and which led to the 1974 demonstrations had only lessened slightly. This could be gauged from the villagers themselves when they were asked to compare their living conditions before and after the 1974 incident. Almost 82 per cent said life before the demonstrations was difficult while half said it was about the same. Their subjective perceptions of their lives were debatable. Nevertheless, these subjective evaluations were strengthened by the distribution of their opinions, which was an objective measurement.

Data analyses of the respondents' income showed that more than three-quarters of the Baling population earned less than RM250 and a majority of the rest earned between RM250 and RM399 only. This finding means that the majority of the people in Baling lived in poverty as measured by their income level, which was below the then poverty line of RM250. Their poverty rate of 76 per cent in 1981 was higher than that of Kedah and Peninsular Malaysia five years before (1976) which was 61 per cent and 39.6 per cent respectively (Fifth Malaysia Plan 1986).

The acute poverty in Baling was interrelated with the economic activities of the population. An analysis of the employment structure of the people showed that 77.3 per cent of the population depended directly on rubber and rice production as their principal source of income, whether in cash or kind. The percentage would have been higher (82 per cent) if estate workers and farm labourers had been included.

In the studies undertaken, several causes of the poverty in Baling were noted, a large proportion of which were linked to the farmers' agricultural production system, whether for rubber or padi which was overwhelmed by compounding problems. Among these problems were uneconomic land size, old or unproductive rubber trees, the form of rubber sold, marketing, infertile land for padi growing, inefficient planting practices and also problem of pest control. Land-related problems such as ownership, fragmentation, distribution, idle land and land without titles had also affected the production efficiency of the farmers, which in turn led to low yield and subsequently low income.

Besides land, two other factors of production - labour and capital further compounded the problem of productivity. Family labour was intensively utilized in agricultural work in Baling. It was the second highest input and cost after land. As the number of workers did not commensurate with the size of land, most of the labour ended up being under-employed. Moreover, not much capital was used in production because of the limited

source of money. Thus, the input needed to increase production could not be met, resulting in low productivity - low income - low subsistence - low output - low productivity, which could be liken to a vicious circle and which would continue unless measures are taken to break the cycle.

The economic structure of Baling as described above was abetted by the social condition of its population who were either uneducated or received little education. A data analysis on the educational background of the household heads showed that 91.4 per cent of them either never went to school (29.2 per cent) or attended primary school only (62.2 per cent).

Without suitable qualification or education, it was difficult for the Baling people to escape from the clutches of poverty through non-agriculture job opportunities. Education can trigger social mobility to enhance one's social status. Being lowly educated, remotely located and with poor communication, a lot of the Baling folks lost the opportunity to get a job with steady income. The latter was perceived as a way of overcoming their poverty.

Nevertheless, despite their low educational status, the people of Baling also had certain perceptions or attitudes towards life and their social well-being. Their responses to specific questions on their lives clearly showed that two-thirds of them were unhappy with their lives. Although inadequate income was the main reason, they also mentioned other factors such as inflation and non-ownership of land. These constituted 95 per cent of the reasons for their unhappiness. From among the one-third who said they were happy with their living conditions, half of them were in fact happy with what they had acquired. The response "satisfied with what is available" could actually be interpreted as an attitude of those who were too easily contented.

The fact that the majority of them said that they were willing to work (look for work, open up government land, plant cash crops) showed that they were not passive; given the opportunity they would make an effort to improve themselves. The low percentage (3.8 per cent) that depended on outside help, especially charitable organizations, proved that respondents were motivated and did not rely on charity, a common assumption people made about them. It was only when the scale of improvement was beyond them (for example at the community level) did they hope for government aid to provide the infrastructure they needed.

Most of the villagers assumed that a regular and adequate income would ensure them a better life. To this 37 per cent of the population, a regular income would ensure the best future for them. This was indeed not surprising because in situations where the features of their income were inadequate, irregular and low, a regular and adequate income was seen as a solution to their problem.

About a quarter of them said that besides having a regular income, they could also improve themselves by broadening their knowledge. This indicated two things. First, that the respondents would like to be educated and knowledgeable so that they would be sensitive to and aware of what is happening around them. It was also possible that this characteristic made them to be more inclined towards rational thinking, thus enabling them to be active participants in social and development activities. Secondly, it could mean that the respondents would like to broaden their knowledge through education since a high educational achievement would facilitate social mobility. As they were past their time for a formal education, the opportunity to get a salaried job was not in question. Nevertheless, their desire to broaden their knowledge did not have to be for themselves, but probably for their family through their children. This brings us to another aspect of the villagers, especially education. When they were asked about their hopes and aspiration for their children's education and careers, more than 80 per cent of the respondents indicated that they wished their children would attain the highest level of education (Table 10.1). They were of the view that only with high education could their children be able to get a job easily or get a good

TABLE 10.1 Attitudes and aspiration of the villages for their children's education and occupations

Attitudes/Aspirations	%
Children's education	
No education	0.0
Primary school	0.0
Secondary school	6.3
Higher education other than university	6.8
University	86.0
Children's Occupations	
Civil servant	29.2
Teacher (Specific)	7.8
Working with modern sector	7.1
Businessmen	1.1
Doctor/Engineers	0.8
Self-employed	0.8
Not sure (depending on children qualification)	42.0
Don't know	1.8

Source: Field Data 1981

job with a high salary. This was the only way for their children to escape from the clutches of a traditional economy and poverty.

As regards occupations, not one of the family heads wanted their children to follow in their footsteps. Only one respondent hoped for his children to be engaged in farming, and that too with the Department of Agriculture. The type of occupation they preferred was non-agriculture. There were not many who wished for professional jobs due to lack of information and the low career they aspired for their children. The respondents' views on life improvements can be considered similar to those who are easily contented. To them, a steady income from a stable white-collar job was better than a flexible income from farming. Quite a number were unsure about the type of job that they wished for their children. This was due to their low confidence in their children's potential for higher education. Only 29 per cent expressed confidence in their children's passing the secondary school examination.

The views of the respondents discussed above were the views of only two-thirds of them. The rest were unsure about what was best for them. This group could be categorized as one which was unconcerned about their own conditions, less so about conditions of their village. They could be aware of their deficiencies or weaknesses but did not know how to overcome them. Or they purposely chose to remain silent. This group was just willing to take; they did not want to show their dependency on outside help, but would utilize anything provided or prepared for them.

Baling: During the Development Era

A striking feature of the aftermath of the 1974 Baling demonstrations was the attention it received from the government via its development projects. Economic projects and infrastructure were implemented to improve the economic condition and social well-being of the local population.

Among the bigger projects carried out were RISDA's mini-estates (to solve the problem of land without titles), FELCRA's rehabilitation and management of smallholdings in the estate mode, Integrated Agricultural Development Projects or IADP's supplies of irrigation to the padi growing areas and agricultural infrastructure such as farm roads and others, and KEDA's new approach in development through relocation and other supporting economic activities such as cash cropping, poultry breeding and others.

In 1998, when the development in Baling was reviewed, signs of physical changes were beginning to be discerned. Physical development such as farm road and village mini-tarred road projects, rural electrification, water

supply for houses and the like had had positive effects on the villagers. There was a higher degree of accessibility with many remote areas open to communication, villagers finding it easy to market their produce and better living conditions due to the supply of basic needs such as electricity and water, especially the latter. Previously, the villagers had to depend on rain, wells and the river for their water supply and spent a lot of time on fetching water (Table 10.2).

TABLE 10.2 Availability of basic amenities in Baling in 1981 and 1994 (%)

Features	1981	1994
Water supply		
Piped water	0.1	18.8
Communal water	45.0	73.4
Others	54.9	8.6
	100.0	100.0
Toilet Facilities		
Flush toilet	0.1	3.8
Pour and flush toilet	45.0	86.9
Others	54.9	9.3
	100.0	100.0
Power supply		
Electricity	22.5	92.5
Kerosene lamp and other	77.5	8.0
	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Data 1981, 1994

As for their economic situation, the villagers' achievement level of development had not shown any sharp changes as observed during a data analysis of their income. Using the poverty line income of RM300 a month as a measurement, 70.3 per cent of the population of Baling were found to be below the line and thus still living in poverty. This new rate was a reduction of a mere 5.8 per cent from the rate seven years previously which was the year the first study was made, i.e. 1981. The achievement was a slow one, considering that the average poverty rate had fallen sharply i.e. 36.6 per cent for Kedah and 24.7 per cent for rural Peninsular Malaysia in 1984 (Fifth Malaysia Plan, 1986). This showed that the economic development in Baling was still low.

Although the economic condition of the villagers had not changed much, their social conditions had shown a positive trend. The percentage of household heads that had completed secondary and tertiary education had increased from 4.8 per cent to 17.2 per cent between 1981 and 1988. This was a relatively high achievement. Nevertheless, an overall evaluation showed that the attainment of development performance in Baling around the end of the 1980's was still low.

Baling: Two Decades After the Demonstrations - Performance in the Industrialisation Era

Two decades after the 1974 demonstrations, another study was made to observe the latest development in Baling. The poverty rate in Baling was found to have fallen sharply in terms of income. Using the poverty line income of RM400 a month, only 45.2 per cent of 21.5 per cent from the 1988 rate. Not only was there a reduction in poverty, but the percentage of households earning a four-figure income had also risen from one per cent in 1988 to 12.1 per cent in 1994.

The increase in the income of the Baling population was mainly due to the agricultural development projects implemented in the 1980's, which had yielded results. The people of Baling gained not only financially from the RISDA and FELCRA projects whether as shareholders or landowners, or as both, but those without land were also given job opportunities. Most of the village labour force who were formerly family labour could work for wages and had their own source of income. This additional source of income had, in turn, increased the family income and thus freeing a great number of them from the clutches of poverty.

In recent years, the macro economic development of Malaysia showed an inclination towards the industrial sector. The industrialisation policy of the Malaysian government, which had shifted from import-substitution to export-oriented, had resulted in higher growth in terms of output and employment.

These effects of industrialisation had spread to Baling. Besides the setting up industrial activities in Baling such as in textile, handicraft and others, the effects of industrial estates development in neighboring areas such as in Sg.Petani, Kulim, Alor Star, Seberang Perai, Pulau Pinang had spilled over, providing jobs to a large number of household members in Baling. The employment of a large number of household members, especially children, had increased the family's source of income. Almost 47 per cent of the

Baling households had more than one member working. Most of them were employed in the private sector, especially in factories. This had changed the job structure of the population from family labour to wage earners and from the agricultural sector to non-agricultural sector.

When they were asked to compare the conditions before and after the 1974 demonstrations, 100 per cent of the people of Baling said the present living conditions were a lot better. When they were asked to specify the reasons, they said that their lives had improved (46 per cent), the economy had recovered (21.1 per cent), the price of rubber had risen (12.6 per cent), while the rest said better amenities and job opportunities, abundant food, high income, etc.

Besides their economic achievement discussed above, the respondents were also asked about their living conditions at that time and previously. Almost 15 per cent said very good, 74 per cent good, four per cent no change and seven per cent said don't know. Among the reasons given were life was comfortable, many changes, rapid economic development, good roads, many amenities and peaceful. It was clear that institutional development and amenities had increased which was necessary not only for the development of economic well-being but for social well-being as well.

As for the children's careers, the percentage of those who left it up to the children was high, which was 43.2 per cent. The percentage of those who hopes their children would work with the government was also high, i.e. 45.9 per cent. Thus, in terms of certain attitudes, there had been little change in the original perception of the Baling villagers. There was, however, a slight change whereby parents hoped their children would work in the private sector albeit only one per cent. In addition, the percentage of those who wanted their children to be self-employed increased from 0.8 to 3.1 per cent.

In terms of migration, almost half (46.8 per cent) of the households had at least one member each as a wage earner besides the head. Most of them were children of the villagers. About 53 per cent worked in the private sector, especially in the industrial sector.

Unlike the earlier pattern of long-distance movement that was observed at the beginning of the first study, the factory workers in Baling were found to move over relatively shorter distance, mainly to the nearby industrial estates (Table 10.3). It was apparent that Seberang Perai had managed to attract 40.2 per cent of the workers from Baling. Although it is relatively far (about 90 km), the wages offered are higher. The relatively high percentage of factory workers working in Baling was due to the presence of a few industrial concerns established in the last few years particularly textile industry.

TABLE 10.3 Percentage distribution of factory workers from Baling working in the neighbouring industrial estates, 1994

Places	Percentage
Baling	21.7
Kulim	13.3
Sungai Petani	16.3
Seberang Perai	40.2
Others	8.5
Total	100.0

Source: Field Data 1994

An interesting fact about this movement of labour is that a majority of the workers commute to their workplace. Analysis of the data on the mode of transport to work reveals that 83.6 per cent use factory buses or other transport mainly vans to go to work. The use of the latter is on the increase in the area as they provide relatively efficient services in terms of time-distance compared to the ordinary factory buses. As such, it was observed that the presence of private vans (being contracted by respective factories) to transport factory workers in Baling is on the increase. This is because the opportunity of securing the transport contract would provide an income-generating opportunity for the van owners. With the provision of transport facilities to workplace, whereby workers were picked up at various pick-up points in the villages, most youth irrespective of being males or females, were found working once they have left school. Hence, the level of unemployment in the villages is found to be almost zero.

The commuting service as provided by the factory - management is seen as a way out for the management to overcome the labour problem. Notwithstanding that, the resulting pattern of migration created has taken a different form. What is emerging spatially at micro level is that, circulation is becoming more apparent. The factory workers from Baling can no longer be considered as migrants, but are commuters instead, although their commuting trips often involve inter-district and inter-state boundaries.

The preceding discussion has shown how an industrial development has created multiple patterns of movement of industrial workers over space. However, industrialisation is also seen as not without its social and cultural repercussions which has been shown by various authors writing on Malaysian factory workers. Such a situation has led to the reluctance of parents especially Malay parents in allowing their daughters to work in factories. Being

cornered by social sanction and the tight labour market, factory management have no choice but to come up with the best solution to pacify the fear of the Malay parents, at the same time meeting their production targets. The provision of the transport facilities is seen as the saviour to the problem. By providing transport right to the doorstep, or by bringing industry to the doorstep, the needs to overcome the labour shortage, on the part of the management; the desire to be gainfully-employed and earning a living, on the part of the female workers; and the appeasing of the parental socio-psychological well-being, on the part of the parents; can be concurrently be fulfilled.

Baling: A Transformation

The transformation of Baling during the two decades after the 1974 demonstrations as has been discussed earlier has shown various directions of change, from slow to relatively fast. What is obvious is that poverty has been reduced and is followed by multiple changes in the economic and social structure of the population.

Baling has undergone profound changes both physically and socially. Besides physical transformation, the ambience social environment has also transformed tremendously. Its streets are no longer quiet. The busy traffic does not only show that the people are more mobile (therefore are more exposed to outside influences - no longer looking inwards) but also their greater purchasing power as a result of higher income. The increase in income is evident in the changing economic structure of the Baling population particularly that of the increased involvement of female workforce in modern agriculture and industries.

Epilogue
Baling – Here and Now

...Baling, Kedah Darul Aman
akhirnya dikau bangun dari mimpi silam
aku bangga dengan identitimu;
jujuh bermusim durian di dusun
ranum langsat, manggis dan bacang
kini dokong jadi satu wawasan
kelak memikat dagang bertandang melabur

(Baling - Secarik Catatan Peta Sejarah, Antologi QALHA. 14 Mei, 1991)

The Good

The lines quoted above were written on-line a decade ago by a Baling youth to express his sense of pride as to how far his birthplace, Baling, has made it since the dark days of 1974. That, in essence, provides a recap of Baling after Timeframe Three or the post-development period, which I attempted to capture in my last 1994 study of the place. I know what the youth meant. For my annual subsequent frequenting of the district since then seem to have verified the notion that Baling has forged forward and had never looked back.

As depicted in the photos taken during those visits, gone is the old Baling way of life. By the turn of this new millennium smallholding is no longer the norm of farm operation there. Tilling the padi fields, tending to the weeds and 'merry-making' during harvesting seasons are but rare glimpses nowadays. In their stead, there is the more efficient estate-style management of the holdings run by development agencies, raising the question of what's next? Vacant, abandoned and idle land is also the rule of the day in the Baling countryside as padi fields dry up unattended due to ageing population, cheaper alternatives, changing life styles and the non-farm job preferences of the Baling's young. Some of these plots are converted to more

productive uses such as cash cropping with tobacco (*New Straits Times*, 4 January 2000), banana and sweet corn, all of which require the least of husbandry.

Some are converted to more lucrative non-agricultural uses like housing and commerce. Needless to say all these properties are located in the more urban segments of the district. Do you know that in 1999, Baling's property sector already had a total of 36 housing estates comprising 3154 residential units and 243 commercial premises? (http://members.tripod.com/mdbaling). The latest in the news is that Darulaman Realty Sdn Bhd has launched the sales of its 186 units of low cost brick terrace houses at Kuala Ketil (*Utusan Express*, 23 November 2002). How time has changed the look of Baling housing - traditional wooden houses are no longer in vogue. Derelict huts are no more in sight. The gaps in incomplete housing, too, which had characterized the state of housing in the 1970s and 1980s have long been patched and sealed, thanks to the increased earning capacities of the residents, the remittances from off springs who tap the greener pastures in the more prosperous areas and towns of the country, and the contributions of household members who remain in the district and work in the small and medium industries and the like which had sprung in the major surrounding towns as a result of the government industrialisation programme.

Globalisation, too, has a hand in revolutionizing the urban scene of Baling's central business district (CBD). Of late, modern banking facilities, super and mini-markets, fast-food chain outlets such as Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) and Marrybrown have invaded its old and new CBDs. The increased consumerism in lieu of increased purchasing power of its people as evidenced materially from improved housing to improved physical mobility manifested in the increased number of motorcars and motorcycles owned by the locals are testimony to the eradication of poverty which used to bedevil them before.

All in all, Baling has undergone a transformation, quite beyond recognition from the sleepy hollow it once was, to a busy, thriving gateway to the east and west of the Peninsula. The first phase of the RM100 million East-West Highway project from Gerik to Butterworth that commenced in 1995 (*BT-ST*, 12 January 1995) had involved the construction of a 45 km road from Gerik to Kupang near Baling. This new Grik-Baling express road was completed two years later (*Bernama*, 30 August 1997) and has since helped reduced travelling time between the Peninsular east and west coasts. Several stretches of federal roads in the district had also been upgraded in 1999, costing some RM4 671 800 (http://kedah.jkr.gov.my/gendirec).

Baling's new image also comes from the construction of a new Baling District and Land Office in 1985, worth RM2 000 000. As for the administration of the Baling District Council, a computerized information system had been installed in early 2000. Another newcomer is the new building for the handicapped costing RM660 000 that was duly completed in 1996. In the same year the Education Ministry announced its plan to build a hostel complex costing RM17 million in Baling. The complex, the first of its kind in the country, would house high achieving standard four, five and six pupils from primary and secondary schools in rural areas to enable them to concentrate on their studies (*Bernama*, 14 May 1996). The hostel was scheduled to start operation in early 1999 with a maiden intake of 530 students (*Utusan Malaysia*, 5 June 1998).

Writing in 1995, Rashid Yusof, the journalist, professed that Baling had mushroomed under BN stewardship (*NST*, 4 June 1995). The State Government was planning to develop the country's largest agricultural park in Ulu Legong, about 20 km from Baling town. The area was suitable for the park as it had rolling hills, a hot water spring and was rich in scenic beauty. The state government would not take over people's land for the purpose but would instead work with them to develop their areas (*Bernama*, 28 June 1996)

Another journalist, Azman Md Noor, reiterated the conspicuous progress of Baling four years later. Azman noted how 20 years had changed the face of Baling. Recreation and tourism have come to fore as a main Baling plus point. He attributed it to the foresight of the Baling District Council (MDB) and the state Economic Planning Unit (UPEN) for taking the bold step to invest RM1.3 million in the rehabilitation of the Ulu Legong hot spring thus turning it into a major recreational attraction for the district. So, if K.L. can boast of its Sunway Lagoon, Baling too may speak of its Sunway Legong (Azman 1999).

"Baling moves on", wrote the seasoned journalist Joceline Tan in 1996. She was referring to how the sense of well-being so perceptible in Baling was due, in no small way, to wages remitted home to families in remote kampungs. The children now brought home the bulk of the household income in many families. And of course there were all those trickle-down effects that came with industrialisation. That year there were six private clinics in Baling town while Ramli Motor, a car dealership on the outskirts of town was doing better than expected, selling up to 20 cars a month. People's lives had improved greatly, the condition of their homes being the best indicator (*New Straits Times*, 20 August 1996).

Perhaps, what has been happening to and in Baling since our post-development Timeframe Three may be summed up as a reflection of the

general experience of the State of Kedah. As the statistics in Table 1 illustrate, within the 15 years from 1985 to 2000, the state has managed to raise its per capita GDP by 200 per cent, reduce its official poverty rate by more than 60 per cent, and improve on almost all the normally acceptable living standard indicators (Table 11.1).

TABLE 11.1 Kedah: Quality of life indicators

Income & Quality of Life	Year						
	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Per capita GDP (1978 price)	2612	3791					
(Current price) (RM m)	n.a	5618	6187	6777	6285	6536	6803
Incidence of poverty (%)	30.0	12.2	n.a	11.5	11.5[a]	n.a	n.a
Av. Household income (RM/month)	748	1295	n.a	1590	1590[a]	n.a	n.a
Unemployment rate (%)	n.a	2.2	n.a	n.a	2.7	3.0	n.a
Population per Doctor	4277	2829	n.a	n.a	1884	1786	n.a
Infant Mortality Rate[b]	14.8	10.0	n.a	n.a	6.01	n.a	n.a
% With piped water	72.4	85.4	n.a	n.a	94.1	n.a	n.a
% With electricity	88.5	100.0	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Registered Motorcars	n.a	6437	n.a	n.a	4124	5921	n.a
Registered Motorcycles	n.a	16670	n.a	n.a	15872	16409	n.a

[a] 1997 figures
[b] per 1000 live births
Sources: 1. "http://www.kedah.gov.my/webkedah/kedah.htm".
2. http://www.kedah.gov.my/webkedah/kedah.htm
3. "http://www.kedah.gov.my/bi/statisticnew1.htm.
4. http://www.kedah.gov.my/bi/statisticnew1.htm

With roughly one out of 12 people in Kedah living in Baling today, thus making the district the second largest in the Kedah state, even water revenue for Baling has increased from RM0.79 million in 1991 to RM9.91 million in 2001, an increase of about 92 per cent over ten years (http://kedah.jkr.gov.my/bekair/water.htm).

The Bad

Progress in Baling, like it is everywhere else, has its bad sides. For one, Baling is still prone to certain disease outbreak such as the dengue. Although the Malaysian Medical Association had organised a medical camp at the Tun

Abdul Razak Hall in Baling in November 1996 (*NST-LTIMES*, 14 November 1996), there were 14 cases of dengue fever recorded in Baling just 9 months after that, although, it must be stressed that the Baling's figure was the lowest compared to those scored by other districts (Kota Setar 51, Sik 43, Kubang Pasu 19, and Kuala Muda 15) from the whole 160 cases of dengue fever recorded in Kedah that year (*NST-LTIMES*, 15 August 1997).

For another, Baling has been scourged with environmental disasters – floods, mudslides and the like. At the end of 1996, eleven families from two villages were evacuated when floods hit Baling town, Mukim Siong, Bongor and Kupang on December 6th. The affected families had to be evacuated after a six-hour downpour (*New Straits Times*, 7 December 1996).

Then, towards the end of 1998, a total of 487 residents from five villages in Baling district were evacuated on November 1st, after their homes were flooded following heavy rain the night before. The affected villages were Kampung Seberang Pekan Baling (341 evacuees), Kampung Sungai Batu (81), Kampung Banggol Drum (14), Kampung Haji Abas (45) and Kampung Dusun Ghani (6). The heavy rain caused the water to rise to between 0.5 m and 1m. While the victims were evacuated to community halls, clinics and mosques in their respective villages, and the water level was subsiding, that at the Pulai pumphouse was still at the dangerous level of 50.1 m as at 10 am that day (*Utusan Express*, 2 November 1998).

The next year, the same disaster hit Baling. The number of people evacuated from flood-hit villages in Baling district rose from 86 in the morning of August 23rd to 519 in the evening. As of 6 pm today the eight flood-hit villages in Baling district were Kampung Paya Banggol, Kampung Haji Abas, Kampung Bukit Sebelah, Kampung Seberang Pekan, Kampung Banggol Drum, Kampung Bawah Gunung, Kampung Cemerai and Kampung Pandai (*Utusan Express*, 24 August 1999).

Three months later, a mudslide caused by a downpour in Kupang destroyed three wooden houses and damaged another four in five villages on November 6th. Five makeshift bridges were also swept away in the incident, which occurred at Kampung Seniyek, Kemangi, Padang Lengkuas Pak Bong, Carok Kangar, and Kuala Kuang at 6 p.m. that day (*New Straits Times*, 17 November 1999).

Why has progress been accompanied with environmental deterioration in Baling? Could it be due to rather indiscriminate opening of land that was tolerated or even condoned because it was all in the name of development? Baling's forests were safe when the district was decreed a "black area" during the Malayan emergency era four to five decades ago. However, by the end

of 2000, more than 10 700 ha of the Kedah state land had been illegally cleared in several districts, large tracts of which could be found around Lengkuas in Baling (*New Straits Times*, 4 December 2000).

The Ironical

It is ironical that while there seemed to have been a scrambling for land for 'development purposes' in Baling, sizeable tracts of land there were neglected and rendered unproductive. The obverse side of the coin to the change in Baling is that more and more parcels of padi field are going idle, and rubber estates and oil palm plantations in the district have to turn to foreign labour. Agriculture no longer has the grip it once had over the populace. There has been a major shift among the Malays away from agriculture into sectors like manufacturing, services and retailing. According to the District Office, 81 per cent of Baling's Malays were in agriculture in 1980 but by 1993, the proportion had dipped to barely 40 per cent (*NST-LTIMES*, 20 August 1996). Currently, the Ministry of Agriculture estimates, conservatively, that there are still a total of 192 hectares of idle farmland in the whole of Baling district, which distribute as in Table 11.2.

TABLE 11.2 Distribution of idleland in Baling

Area	Mukim	Ha	Area	Mukim	Ha
Kg Tembak A	Teloi Kanan	15	Kg Kuala Kuang	Kupang	30
Kg Guar Tinggi	Teloi Kanan	20	Kg Padang Dan	Kupang	12
Kg Belida	Teloi Kanan	11	Kg Charok Kapas	Kupang	32
Kg Sg Tembak	Teloi Kanan	20	Kg Ketemba	Kupang	18
Kg Bukit Hitam	Pulai	10	Kg Charok Rambai	Kupang	24
			Total Hectarage: 192		

Source: http://agrolink.moa.my/doa/BI/IDLELAND/kedah.html

But the greatest irony of all was the victory of opposition candidates during the last general elections of 1999. Baling's current Member of Parliament and the State Assemblyman for Kupang come from the opposition Pan-Islamic Party (PAS), lending a great credibility blow to the BN which had ruled the district throughout the development and post-development years.

Indeed, locals in Baling will tell you that their BN MP, (the late) Datuk Raja Ariffin Raja Sulaiman (they call him Datuk Raja), brought in the roads, TV, and electricity for everybody. They also associate the new town, devel-

oped immediately next to the old, colonial-structured town, with Raja Ariffin. He must have been instrumental in getting in a RM20 000 cheque from the National Welfare Foundation which paved the way for a fund to help Madrasah Misbah Al Falah, popularly known as pondok Lanai which was gutted in a fire in March 1996 destroying 347 religious pondoks which housed 511 male students (*New Straits Times*, 15 March 1996).

After all, Baling did enjoy certain perks and privileges that other rural areas in similar straits do not. Immediately after the 1974 hunger march, the Government proceeded to buy rubber direct from the smallholders. And since then, Baling had enjoyed that little extra attention from the Government of the day. For instance, Baling-born got special consideration for permits to operate vans (it seemed a van operator could reap a net profit of up to RM1000 monthly if he runs it himself) and even lorries as a way to compensate for the limited opportunities in the locality.

The perplexity of the matter seems to mirror that of the Prime Minister's four years earlier. The premier was visiting Baling to open the new Pekan Kampung Lalang, a township that had gone through major changes over the years and was being dubbed the new growth centre for Baling district (*New Straits Times*, 30 March 1995). He could not understand why PAS shied away from giving credit to the Government in developing the country when many developed and developing countries have credited Malaysia's progress to sound policies and prudent management, elements which they said they would want to have in their countries' administration (*New Straits Times*, 31 March 1995).

That should include his government achievement in the rural sector. After all, according to the Farmers Census Report, 1990 published by the Agriculture Department, nearly 70 per cent of farmers in Peninsular Malaysia obtained their main income from agricultural activities and to the tune of RM5890 per year (Answer No.8, Parliamentary Session on 4.7.95 by the Minister of Agriculture).

So, what went wrong in and with Baling?

One answer is that poverty has actually reared its ugly head in grassroots Baling again. Right on the general election day, 1999, Utusan Malaysia reported the establishment of a special cabinet committee to deal with the deteriorating income of about 400 000 rubber smallholders in Malaysia who were reeling from severe downfalls in the world rubber prices, which made local rubber smallholders the worst lot in Malaysia. The available statistics showed that the average smallholder income was only RM3000 per year (or USD 65.78 per month), a figure too meager for the smallholder family

to subsist on given the ever-rising costs of living. In the Kedah's districts of Baling and Sik, about 80 percent of the total 50,000 population were dependent on rubber growing and whether they tapped their own four-to-ten relongs of holdings or somebody else's, they still suffered. The Utusan survey found that there were smallholder households in Baling and Sik who could not even afford to buy a gantang of rice from a day's tapping. The National Association of Rubber Smallholders (PKPKM) requested that the government increase the price subsidy by 50 sen for every kilogramme of wet and dry scrap rubber, as at the prevailing prices of 73 sen per kilogramme of wet scrap rubber and RM1.46 per kilogramme of dry scrap rubber the smallholders could not make ends meet.

Typically a smallholder tapping the trees with his wife would work for 20 days in a month. Their combined output from four relongs would be around 25-30 kilogrammes of scrap rubber, giving them a total earning of RM150-RM200 per month. To this could be added some RM50-RM100 from remitting children; even so the smallholder would still have to do side jobs such as selling support sticks for some vegetable creepers. In another scenario, a share-cropper would also end up with a monthly income of around RM150-RM200 from rubber tapping, hence the imperative of doing side jobs such as growing bananas, tapioca, beans and brinjals. Problems compounded because apart from the already low rubber prices there were middlemen who took the advantage of buying up smallholder rubber at less than the officially stipulated prices. One such agent professed doing this at 60 sen per kilogramme because the local wholesaler he dealt with would only buy his rubber for 67 sen per kilogramme. The 400-500 smallholders in the village and around it usually were in arrears with the middleman for all those provision loans that they took from him during the days when there was no tapping. So they were left with no choice but to dispose of their rubber through the same middleman. Something about this middlemen operation would need looking into; for, increasing the price ceilings of smallholder rubber would almost always end up with the middlemen gaining the most from it. In similar vein, the Kedah's branch of the National Association of Rubber Smallholders was of the opinion that the existing assistance in the form of rubber replanting grants were of little use to local smallholders as the majority of them owned less than 10 relongs of rubber land to qualify for the grants.

The effects of the smallholder poverty intruded into their children's education. Even though as parents they were acutely concerned about providing the best for their children's educational performance, with such levels of income, there was next to nothing that they could spare in the way of

tuition fees. The local schools noted the peculiarly high absence rates of the smallholder children on rainy days. On such days their parents could not tap the trees so there was no money for their bus ride to the schools. Sympathetic of the smallholder plight, the local schools would help by extending the pupils' fees payment period, and by ensuring that all of them got to get a share of the schools' Additional Food Programme although the supply normally could only cater to 70 per cent of the school pupil population (*Utusan Malaysia*, 30 November 1999).

To be sure, rural poverty reappears in Baling because time has been bad since the Asian Economic Crisis hit Malaysia in mid-1997. The rubber and palm oil prices fell below their production costs. At the same time, the glut in the rice market due to the dumping of imported rice had eroded farmers' incomes. In fact, if we were to read between the lines carefully, that Baling was already experiencing economic hardship could be seen from the fact that its population total in 1998 (133 000) was 500 lower than the year before, a sign of out-migration of locals in search of opportunities outside.

There and Back Again

Now is the year 2002, our Final Timeframe for Baling. And guess what? We have come full circle with Baling poverty. There was a fresh write-up (*Bernama*, 27 August 2002) on the current state of poverty among rubber smallholders in Sik, Baling's next-door neighbour, which I reproduce below:

Even though Fatimah Ahmad is 74 she still has to do heavy work for a bowl of rice for herself and her 99-year-old husband. Fatimah and her husband Ahmad Demali, of Kampung Kubang, Belantek in the Sik District, usually eat only rice and salted fish. Weather permitting, she taps rubber and earns RM5 a day and the money will have to be spread over several days for if it rains she cannot tap rubber. "I work for a rubber smallholder and am paid between RM4 and RM5 per day. If it rains there is no tapping and there is no money for me. The money is enough to buy some rice." "I do not have money for fish and if someone sends over the fish I can have a taste of it," said Fatimah wetting her lips and tongue while speaking to Bernama during a recent interview. They have three children; all three have their own families and their own problems and are not in a position to ease the sufferings of their aged parents. Apart from tapping, Fatimah also does other work such as cutting grass, planting rubber trees and doing odd jobs in the village to buy food for herself and her husband. Over the last 10 years, she kept a ringgit or two asides to buy planks that they have now used to erect a hut for them-

selves. "The roof leaks whenever it rains," she said. On any form of assistance being rendered to her, she said,"Yes, they came before Hari Raya last year and provided zakat aid and apart from that there has been none."

Mansor Awang Dol, 25, of Kampung Lintang, Belantek, who is married with two girls aged 2 and 9 also lives in poverty. He dropped out when he was in Form Two and then joined in the family tradition of tapping rubber and earns an income that is enough for his family's subsistence. His house where he lives with his wife and children is more like a transit pondok. Mansor said he once received RM450 in zakat assistance and also applied for a house under the project for those in abject poverty (PPRT) but has not received any reply. Ahmad Mat Lazim, 64, of Kampung Carok Pong, has been more fortunate; his life has not been very hard as that of Fatimah and Mansor though he is poor. He earns about RM10 to RM20 daily from tapping rubber and is enough for him to buy food for his wife and five children. "It is indeed a hard life being a tapper but I have not come to the situation where we starve," he said. All his children have completed primary school and then have turned to rubber tapping. "I have not received any help from anyone. However I hope that if any aid is forthcoming it will reach the target group," he said.

A member of the Kampung Carok Pong Development and Security Committee, Yusof Kasim said rubber tappers like other residents of Sik faced hardship and poverty. "Many of the rubber tappers' children have dropped out of school and are working in factories elsewhere like in Sungai Petani, Kulim and Penang while others have chosen to stay on in the kampung and tap rubber," he said. However efforts to reduce the poverty rate in the Sik District received a boost several months ago when a local company launched a scheme to activate abandoned and idle rubber smallholdings and increase the farmers' income.

The whole thing sounds so familiar all over again. I reproduce it because it describes Baling here and now. For, according to the executive vice president of Bukit Saudara Sdn Bhd, Hwang Teng Hooi, so far, 6 000 smallholders in Sik and Baling districts had joined the scheme, which would guarantee them better income compared to their present one. Hwang said since the scheme was launched in April this year, 280 hectares of rubber smallholdings had been tapped consistently and produced good yields and each tapper was guaranteed about RM500 or even RM1000 a month if another family member also tapped in the same smallholding. Bukit Saudara has also recruited about 200 people as tappers or general workers with a monthly income of RM500 and was also making contributions to the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) and Social Security Organisation (Socso).

Baling has changed. Or has it?

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