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## Living Conditions in Orang Asli Resettlement Project (PROSDET) of Pantos, Pahang, Malaysia

Jamalunlaili Abdullah<sup>a\*</sup>, Nazura Mohamed Sayuti<sup>b</sup>, Afiza Azura Mohamad  
Arshad<sup>b</sup>, Mohd Ruzed Embong<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Malaysia,

<sup>b</sup>Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam, Malaysia,

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### Abstract

This paper examines the living conditions of 183 Orang Asli (aborigines) of six villages who were resettled at *Program Bersepadu Daerah Terpencil (PROSDET)*, Pantos in Kuala Medang, Pahang, Malaysia. The research aims to analyze the resettlement project and to determine if it has improved affected Orang Asli’s livelihood and quality of life. Household survey, descriptive analysis, observations and physical analysis of the settlements were used in this research. The findings disclosed dissatisfactions among Orang Asli for reasons which mainly related to their livelihood, traditional lifestyle and culture. The paper provides recommendations to ensure better future resettlement programs for Orang Asli.

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**Keywords:** Orang asli; quality of life; resettlement; prosdet pantos

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### 1. Introduction

Orang Asli are the aborigines of the Malay Peninsula who are believed to have settled in as early as 11,000 BC (Bellwood, 1997). However, they are a very small minority of the population, accounting for

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\* Corresponding Author. Tel.: +6-019-262-7100 ; fax: +6-03-5544-4353.

E-mail address: [jamal858@salam.uitm.edu.my](mailto:jamal858@salam.uitm.edu.my)

149,723 of the total population of 30 million people in Malaysia (JHEOA, 2006 cited by Jamalunlaili, 2015). The three main groups of Orang Asli (Aboriginal) in Malaysia are Negrito, Senoi and Malay Proto which comprises of 18 tribes. They tend to live in the interior of the peninsular, shying away from the rest of the population.

The existence of Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954 (Act 134) under the Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance No 3, 1954, which was amended in 1974, stipulating terms and eligibility to be regarded as indigenous communities have been described in detail. Aboriginal or Orang Asli is defined as follows:

- i. any of which his father was a member of the ethnic group of indigenous people, who speak the language of Aboriginal and ordinarily follow the way of life of indigenous peoples and traditional Aboriginal beliefs , and includes a descent through the male
- ii. any person of any race were adopted by Aboriginal and who was brought up as an Aboriginal , habitually speaks the language of indigenous people, according to the way of life of indigenous peoples and traditional Aboriginal beliefs , and become members of a indigenous peoples; or
- iii. children of any union between an Aboriginal woman with a man of another race , provided the child was habitually speaks the language of Aboriginal and Aboriginal beliefs and still be a member of an Aboriginal community .

Lack of infrastructure in villages, poverty, education and mindset change of Orang Asli has become a key issue given attention by community leaders and government agencies. Therefore, efforts to enhance the well-being and empowerment of human capital among the Orang Asli have become a major focus of Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) through its Socio-Economic Development Division (PSE). It aims to achieve the goal of eradicating poverty and improving the mindset change among this community. In addition PSE continuously administers and develop infrastructure for Orang Asli settlements with the purpose of developing and providing comfort to the Orang Asli .

This paper investigates the living conditions of resettled Orang Asli. It is based on the socio-economic survey of Orang Asli from six affected villages namely Kampung Kuala Suar, Lanai Baru, Perangkap, Tisut, Nyentil and Harong, upstream of Telom River, who had been resettled under Integrated Program for Remote Areas - *Program Bersepadu Daerah Terpencil* (PROSDET) Pantos at Kuala Medang, Pahang, Malaysia by JAKOA in 2012. The purpose of the resettlement is to provide better integrated services to the Orang Asli who lived in remote villages accessible only through the river.

This paper aims to achieve the following objectives:

- i. to evaluate the current demography and socio-economic conditions of Orang Asli at PROSDET Pantos, Kuala Medang
- ii. to ascertain the satisfaction level of Orang Asli towards the new resettlement program
- iii. to determine reasons for dissatisfaction towards the new resettlement area

## 2. Literature review

The Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954 (Act 134) has provided the provision under S6 and S7 for any state authority to gazette any area on the state land to be declared as Aboriginal Areas or Aboriginal Reserves for the occupancy of aboriginal peoples. In addition, under S8 the state authority may also grant rights of occupancy of any state land for the aboriginal peoples, but only as a tenant at will. Cited from Ismail (2010), settlement areas for aboriginal people in Malaysia covers about 50,563 hectares of land throughout Malaysia. From that area, about 19,7013 hectares are gazetted under the Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954 (Act 134) and another 30,489 hectares were already approved by the State Government as the settlement area but not yet gazetted under Act 134. On the aspect of ownership, only 0.03% of the lands were owned individually by the aboriginal people. Most of the lands were occupied without proper

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