

## **Sustainable Livelihood among Aquaculture Entrepreneurs: The Case of Cambodian Migrants in Malaysia**

<sup>1</sup>Sulaiman Md. Yassin, <sup>1</sup>Hayrol Azril Mohamed Shaffril and <sup>2</sup>Mohd Shahwahid Othman

<sup>1</sup>Institute for Social Science Studies,

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Economics and Management, Universiti Putra Malaysia,  
43400 Serdang, Selangor, Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

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**Abstract:** This study attempts to discover the sustainable livelihood among the Cambodian migrants who operate the aquaculture industry in Pekan, Pahang. This study is qualitative in nature, based on a focus group discussion conducted among selected Cambodian migrants in Pulau Keladi Baru village in Pekan. The questions included within the interview protocol were largely based on the Pentagon developed by the department for international development. The Pentagon is a framework for sustainable livelihood based on five main capitals, namely human capital, social capital, financial capital, natural capital and physical capital. The data obtained were later transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis.

**Key words:** Cambodian migrant, aquaculture industry, community empowerment, sustainable livelihood, Malaysia

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### **INTRODUCTION**

**What is sustainable livelihood?** Sustainable livelihood is a concept that has been practised all over the world to improve community life, particularly for the poor. It was first introduced by the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development. By 1992, the concept of sustainable livelihood had become widely recognised as one of the effective ways to combat poverty. Scholars all around the world have developed a number of established definitions of sustainable livelihood and among these is the one created by the Department for International Development (DFID, 1999):

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future while not undermining the natural resource base

To achieve sustainable livelihood, a complete set of livelihood resources is needed. Livelihood resources refer to the basic material and social, tangible and intangible assets needed by the community to build their livelihood. Typically, there are four capitals which are seen as crucial in building a perfect livelihood for the community, namely; natural, financial capital, human and social capital. Human

capital consists of the individual skills, knowledge, ability to work and good health that assist people to apply different livelihood strategies and fulfil their livelihood goals. At a household level, human capital is influenced by household size, skill levels, leadership potential, health status and other factors. The strength of individual human capital derives from the individual himself. Attending trainings, seminars and courses, for example, can enhance individual skill levels and leadership potential while having an annual medical check-up can protect that individual against developing chronic disease.

Natural capital refers to the natural and environmental resources that can be used by the community in their daily life. Natural capital covers a number of resources including intangible public goods such as the atmosphere and biodiversity or divisible assets used directly for production (rivers, sea, land, etc.). Economic or financial capital refers to the financial resources people need and utilise to achieve sustainable livelihoods. According to DFID, there are two types of financial capital-available stocks and regular inflows of income. Available stock refers to savings, such as cash, bank deposits and liquid assets, while regular inflows of income denotes sources such as pensions, other transfers from the state and remittances.

Social capital denotes the resources which people depend on to fulfil their livelihood objectives. To construct a good social capital, there are three necessary

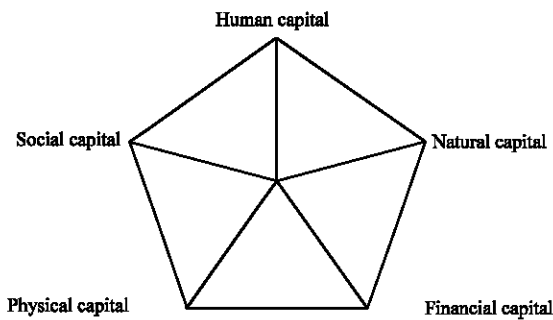


Fig. 1: The asset Pentagon (DFID, 1999)

conditions: Network and connectedness; membership of more formalised groups and relationships of trust, reciprocity and exchange. These are all interrelated. For example, membership of associations provides opportunities for people to access and influence those groups or associations. Similarly, joining such associations will develop a sense of trust between people who are connected through those associations.

**The asset Pentagon:** In addition to what has been suggested by SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency), the sustainable livelihood framework developed by DFID added one more capital-physical capital. The sustainable livelihood framework has since been known as the asset Pentagon (Fig. 1). Strengthening the physical capital of a community requires basic infrastructure and services, such as affordable transport, secure shelter and buildings, sufficient water supply and sanitation, clean and affordable energy and access to information. All of these are needed to support livelihoods. The framework has heavily emphasised the relation between the capitals. Furthermore within the scope of this framework, a capital need not be restricted to benefits within its scope; it can generate multiple benefits which can strengthen the other capitals. For example if an individual has access to a river (natural capital), he may have the opportunity to develop his freshwater fish culture skills (human capital) and it may also generate his social capital (prestige and connectedness) within the community.

**Cambodian migrants in Malaysia:** Minorities have always played an integral part in development reality (Fu *et al.*, 2011). The Cambodian migrant is one of the minority groups in Malaysia that has played an important part in the nation's development. Previously, Cambodia had experienced civil conflict, political instability and widespread killings under the Khmer Rouge regime of the 1970s. As a result, many thousands took refuge in a

number of foreign countries. Under the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) refugees program, Cambodian refugees were sent to a number of selected countries, such as America, Australia, France and Malaysia. The majority of Cambodian migrants, particularly muslims, chose Malaysia as their new home, mainly because Malaysia is an Islamic country. In Malaysia, Cambodians have settled in areas, such as Pahang, Perak and Selangor. Under the UNCHR refugees program, the Cambodian community came to Pahang in 1976; now Cambodian migrants can be found in a number of villages located in Pekan, such as Sekukuh and Kemahang village. Pulau Keladi Baru is another village settled by Cambodians. Initially, only 50 families settled there. Invariably, things have changed and now there are 116 recorded Cambodian families, consisting of >1,000 people in Pulau Keladi Baru village. The Cambodian migrants have engaged in a number of sectors as their main income sources, such as business and agriculture and now-a-days a number, particularly the second generation have chosen to be professionals in government services. Apart from this, the majority of them still rely on nature, especially the Pahang river as their main source of income generation. At this time, a total of 46 families in Pulau Keladi Baru village are recorded as being involved in the aquaculture industry.

**Aquaculture industry in Malaysia:** The aquaculture sector in Malaysia has proven to be an essential source of animal protein, particularly as an effective alternative to marine fish. Moreover, the contribution of this industry to the country's current economic achievement is acknowledged. In addition, this sector is able to help solve the unemployment problem, particularly among young people. In 2010, for example, there were 19,946 aquaculture entrepreneurs across the country and numbers are expected to rise. The contribution of this industry can be classified in three ways: A source of foreign exchange in trade; a source of affordable and reliable animal protein and income generation.

In Malaysia, the aquaculture industry is forecast to develop further. An important branch of this industry is freshwater cage culture. In 2010, there were a total of 23,677 freshwater cages under culture, covering an area of 472,466.50 m<sup>2</sup>. States such as Pahang, Terengganu, Sarawak and Perak are the leading states in this industry, probably due to the availability and suitability of the culturing area. Certainly, Pahang, Terengganu, Rajang and Perak river are the main sites within these states. Of these, Pahang has the highest number of cages and the largest area being farmed (Table 1). It is not surprising as Pahang river is a site that is fit for almost any kind of fish

Table 1: Estimated number and area of fresh water cages

States	No.	Area size (m <sup>2</sup> )
Perlis	89	2,225.06
Kedah	880	9,184.00
P. Pinang	702	11,722.00
Perak	1886	31,500.00
Selangor	96	8,400.00
Negeri sembilan	515	6,888.10
Melaka	65	1,170.00
Johor	286	2,799.00
Pahang	7105	155,800.00
Terengganu	5411	164,421.15
Kelantan	2041	36,749.32
Sarawak	4265	38,385.00
Sabah	356	3,152.97
Total	23,677	472,466.50

Table 2: Estimated freshwater cage culture production by state (ton) and wholesale value (RM million)

States	Total production
Perlis	6.17
Kedah	30.41
P. Pinang	3.04
Perak	2,947.38
Selangor	16.89
Negeri Sembilan	142.73
Melaka	3.88
Johor	84.21
Pahang	3,317.62
Terengganu	2,446.88
Kelantan	271.41
Sarawak	512.75
Sabah	45.24
Total	9,828.61

farming. Pahang is very well known for the patin species a major attraction to food lovers both inside and outside the country.

In line with its status as the state with the highest number of freshwater cages and the largest area being farmed, Pahang has been confirmed as the most productive state. A total of 33.8% of the overall production was harvested in Pahang. Perak has the second highest productivity (30.0%), followed by Terengganu (24.9%). It is good to know that in addition to adequate marine sources within the country, states such as Pahang, Terengganu and Perak are able to offer an affordable alternative supply to marine sources through freshwater supply. Statistics show that states such as Perlis, P. Pinang and Malacca have low freshwater cage culture productivity, probably due to the smaller size of these states (Table 2).

Table 3 shows the production of freshwater cage culture according to species, along with its wholesale and retail values. Among the main freshwater species cultured by local entrepreneurs are red tilapia and river catfish (Patin). Several criteria are considered by the local entrepreneurs before they choose a species; good price, high demand, marketability, low risk and minimum investment are among the main criteria. To farm red tilapia, for example, is not as complicated as for some other

Table 3: Estimated freshwater cages culture production by species (ton)

Species	Total	Wholesale value	Retail value
<i>Javanese carp</i>	26.99	0.202	0.260
<i>Black tilapia</i>	25.86	0.259	0.282
<i>Red tilapia</i>	5,664.42	36.380	54.140
River carp	9.34	109.800	0.149
Freshwater catfish	379.64	1.457	2.311
Goby	2.25	0.091	0.115
River catfish (Patin)	2,990.05	32.870	44.570
River catfish (Baung)	528.11	6.203	7.858
Others	201.95	1.603	2.287
Total	92,833.45	79.180	111.970

Table 4: Number of freshwater cages culture entrepreneurs by state and race

States	Bumiputera	Chinese	Indian	Cambodian migrants
Perlis	12	-	-	-
Kedah	21	-	-	5
P. Pinang	15	-	-	-
Perak	71	8	-	7
Selangor	35	-	-	1
Negeri Sembilan	3	1	-	-
Melaka	3	-	-	-
Johor	4	1	-	11
Pahang	524	7	-	161
Terengganu	325	4	-	-
Kelantan	159	-	-	-
Sarawak	237	27	-	-
Sabah	96	-	-	-
Total	1,505	48	-	185

species, explaining why it is one of the most popular choices for local entrepreneurs. Patin (mentioned before) is the main attraction for tourists, both local and international. It is in high demand and is readily marketable. Interestingly, prices for such species increase significantly during festive seasons such as Chinese new year and school holidays due to an increase in demand on such occasions.

Overall in 2010, there were 1,738 entrepreneurs engaged in freshwater cage culture. This number constitutes 8.7% of all freshwater entrepreneurs. Bumiputeras were the majority group involved in freshwater culture, nonetheless. In Pahang, particularly in Pekan, the Cambodian migrants, albeit few in number are very well known for their hard work and skills in farming patin fish. Consistent with the highest number of cages and largest culturing areas, Pahang also has the highest number of aquaculture entrepreneurs. Interestingly, 23.3% of these are other races including Cambodian migrants. As shown, states located in the east coast zone of Peninsular Malaysia (Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan) are dominant in this industry (Table 4). A total of 67.8% of freshwater cage culture entrepreneurs can be found in this zone.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is qualitative in nature. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted in Pulau Keladi Baru

village at Pekan, Pahang, Malaysia with seven aquaculture entrepreneurs, all of whom were Cambodian migrants. Using a qualitative phenomenology approach allowed the researchers to identify the realistic experiences of the Cambodian migrants in understanding their sustainable livelihoods (Creswell, 2007; Marshall and Rossman, 2011). Apart from this, it also allowed a rich and deep phenomenological description of the phenomenon being investigated in a particular context.

The number of respondents was determined according to the quality of the data and findings as is the case in most qualitative methodologies. The researchers continued to conduct interviews until they believed they had reached saturation. This is understood as the moment when a researcher has gained a full understanding of the experience that will not be altered through further discussion with participants (Laverty, 2003).

The respondents in the FGD are Cambodian migrants who operate aquaculture activities in Pekan, Pahang, Malaysia. The FGD was conducted for 1 h and 16 min. The FGD began slowly with a small conversation in order to learn the backgrounds of the participants and later progressed into deeper discussion concerning the issues. The FGD was guided by the interview protocol which was designed to keep to a standard interview procedure and maintain the flow of conversation. The questions included within the interview protocol were mainly based on the asset Pentagon developed by DFID. The Pentagon is a framework for sustainable livelihoods, based on five main capitals human capital, social capital, financial capital, natural capital and physical capital. Questions included in the interview protocol were prepared with the aim of identifying sustainable livelihoods among Cambodian migrants in Malaysia. The questions served as a guide, allowing respondents freedom and flexibility in their answers. Questions pertaining to human capital took longest to be answered. The data obtained were later transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis.

## RESULTS

**Human capital:** While other local entrepreneurs enjoy and depend on a number of government subsidies and assistance, things are very different for the Cambodian migrants. Migrant status has excluded them from government subsidies and assistance. Nonetheless, this exclusion has made them stronger, independent and skilful entrepreneurs. The respondents proved that one of their keys to success was not to depend on government assistance and subsidy. A number of respondents emphatically clarified this fact:

When we invest RM1,000, 2,000 or even 10,000 if we reap it is out of our own sweat, our own, we do not care that we make a loss. When we do not care for the money, you do not keep watch, you shall fail. Where to find more money? Not easy to say, what we are saying the local people's behaviour with ourselves here, others we are not aware. Our people's behaviour we are not so sure. But, if we have food of rice and soy sauce, the villagers here, we did not taste meat or chicken... nothing (Respondent G)

That's the way, with a lot of money, it still did not work out. But, others with just one cage they succeed all of us faced difficulties before, if we were given money, we could have survived better. We do understand when we talk about money. I look for RM10 a day, 1 day first, now I want to use 100 thousand, 200 thousand we want to use, we remember before how difficult to find money so we are careful, if not... 10 thousand, 20 thousand, once out, shall be finished. One more I wish to say, the local people and our people, when there is financial assistance, it is not our own money, when it is not from our pocket, we just spend, so when we do that, we are not careful (Respondent A)

When we were earning a living with RM1, got one cage, with the gift of God, it has risen high. But, local people just need assistance (Respondent F)

We have become Malaysian citizens here and thank Allah that is enough. We are free to find a living, there are opportunities, where there is work, we work after that we perform our religious duties. We here never asked for any assistance if any, even fish, we have never asked (Respondent B)

It is clear that the respondents have relied on trial and error to develop their aquaculture skills and learn new things. According to Faiz *et al.* (2010), to produce something based on trial and error can be considered an effective learning skill. This approach will enable the entrepreneurs to investigate what should and should not be done. According again to Faiz *et al.* (2010), trial and error will build strong self-confidence among the entrepreneurs. Apart from this, it will enable the entrepreneurs to learn and improve their new fish farming skills and will strengthen their human capital. Several of the respondents indicated their learning process in developing their cages:

We use the net for 2 years (For the cage), we tried it for 2 years, after that we examined the net and it was damaged. Then we tried jarring and it was ok, nothing happened to that jarring. We also cannot use wood (Respondent D)

The prawns have to be on the ground, when we bore holes, have to be careful. If they do not survive in the cages, why is it so? What do they eat, those that change shells, some do not change yet shall all be eaten (Respondent E)

Well... nets can last... the smaller nets... after that we look for steel wires, we tie it up with steel wires... so they last longer. At the start we used a different method... once we know how...we began to make changes bit by bit... so now it is well and okay... we are better off (Respondent C)

Hard work is the key to success and it will aid the community to develop their maximum potential and strive for excellence. In line with this, most of the respondents agreed that hard work is the key to their success. It develops their focus, skills, enables them to gain new knowledge and expands their experience. A number of respondents informed the researchers of their determination to keep on with their fish farming, despite difficulties:

But if we ask, do not feel bad. This we had seen. When we were poor, when we were netting for prawns, one prawn, two prawns, used to get one fish and placed in the cage... once, twice... we made one cage and added on until it rose. We know how difficult it had been (Respondent C)

In rearing fish, not all can succeed, not all who rear fish can become, not all can rear, it requires 100%. Often we try to put in 20,000 of the fries, sometimes all die, sometimes one fry costs RM1, if 20,000 imagine how much, after that we have to try again, if not we lose just like that. Invest little by little to begin again, that's why here they go and net fries, the baung fish, try a little by little, get the harvest, get a bit of capital and find some more (Respondent A)

They look after but they lack focus. When it is time to feed, they give a bit, whether the fish have eaten full or not they do not really look closely (Respondent D)

We have to be really patient, here we rear fish we have to depend on our luck, not all of us put in 10,000 become 10,000, not at all, sometimes just 2000 survived, if we have a bit of good luck it is okay, we get half (Respondent D)

Developing individual economic wellbeing is an integral part of today's life. Nonetheless, according to Keller and Helfenbein (2008), individual economic wellbeing must be in line with the spiritual, mental, physical and social wellbeing of that individual. Wealth and income are essential to a sustainable livelihood but they should be balanced with the spiritual life. A study conducted by Lillard and Ogaki (2005) confirmed that spirituality is related to an individual's economic behaviour. Focusing too much on economic aspects to the exclusion of religiosity should be avoided because people need to constantly connect to their God through their prayers. In line with the importance of spirituality, the Cambodian migrants stressed the connection between performing their prayers and their success in fish farming:

Look at Ustaz, he has two or three cages in a week no rest, morning with the children, at night with the adults but his rezki is quite good. He could perform the Haj. In this village things are good, stay at home and look after the home, the women look after the children, just look after the home. They do not work. We do not ask our wives to work, although there is work outside but not here. If you are industrious, go to the surau, the men work for a living. During maghrib prayer time or isya', I see that the surau is full because by that time, people have come home from work but during noon prayers, people are busy at work. That is the way of the grace of Allah for us here in Pulau Keladi (Respondent A)

At worse, 20-30 people involved. Quite many... but if we go to another surau, we honestly say not that less okay... sometimes when we observe praying at the surau... less... maybe they are busy, one more about our people here, our houses, one-by-one are quite distant... there is no village like ours. Others are far, 1 km, 2 km one house... we in this one village is quite convenient. That is the least about 20-30 in one session, if maghrib or isya' quite many

Number one, believe in God. If one do not trust, do not believe it cannot work. If we have 2 millions it still cannot work. It is true that when we think of when we were poor but we believed. We asked for

'rezki' from Allah fully, the sky, the earth, we put out our hands and ask, like this... we put in our effort. Maybe, at last like that, not all people are rich, not all people are poor, not so. It must be that God's will but have to put in the effort not to say but local people get assistance so if we are not careful in 2 to 3 years, we do not have any more capital our money is gone (Respondent G)

**Social capital:** Respondents stressed their gratitude for having been given the opportunity to live in Malaysia. Here according to them, they are given the chance to seek a good job and build a strong and good relationship with their colleagues and local people. Although, the majority of them are not that financially well-off, they nevertheless have a strong relationship with each other, they practise mutual help and are willing to help their colleagues physically, particularly on things related to the fish farming.

It is true for those who have come here... and received their identification card... surely they do not want to return. We in Malaysia, we live in abundance... but sometimes we often forget ourselves... here there are a lot of opportunities... yes a lot of job opportunities... many... there are factories... It is just that we may not wish to (Respondent B)

We just help like that, use our efforts. Like here there are one or two have become towkays (refers to local language for successful businessman), they like to be towkays let them be. They give loans on loan, after that once our fish have grown we pay back, if they die, just wait. There is also they give the loan but fishes die so they continue to owe (Respondent D)

How we help is like how we moved (the cage), if a spot that we choose cannot work, water is poisonous, we help to move (the cage) (Respondent F)

For the mosque, if there is no money, we give fish, up to 100 kg, now we give 50 kg, after we collect, we sell. Those with cash can give money (Respondent A)

Once, they tried to establish their own cooperative, but it failed due to lack of capital. Despite the failure, the establishment of a cooperative is considered important as it will provide financial assistance to those who need it. One of the respondents said:

We did organise a cooperative but it could not be managed well. We did not have capital, we wanted to hold back the fish from being sold, those with not enough money, had to sell. Anyway if the cooperative did not have funds, it is okay, we just provide the loan to those in need (Respondent A)

The women within the Cambodian migrant community were focusing mainly on their role as housewives. They were not encouraged to work or be involved in any associations. All types of work and involvement in associations were undertaken by the men:

No there is no association... here all the womenfolk stay at home and do not form groups, not at all. Mostly, the men play those roles (Respondent A)

**Natural capital:** The respondents were identified as having high dependency on nature, particularly the Pahang river. In the early days of their migration, the respondents had taken advantage of being given land near to the river by exploring the economic opportunities that it provides. Consequently, a large majority of them rely on the river as a source of protein and economic activity, particularly through fish farming:

In the beginning, we see the river as ok because when we were there we lived near the river too. We are familiar with the river, all looking for fish. So when here, once we had seen the river, we just came near... one after another (Respondent A)

Previously, lower pollution in the Pahang river made it possible for the aquaculture entrepreneurs and their families to rely on the river for their water supply and also for maximum productivity from their cages. Today, although they have low dependency on the river for water and protein, they still need it as source of income. However, things have changed and the Pahang river now experiences a number of pollution problems, giving the respondents cause for concern. One respondent confirmed the bad condition of Pahang river, stating:

Now-a-days many fishes just die... it is because of muddy water. Waste water due to logging... like they fell trees... use ropes to pull... so the poisons all go to river. When it rains, they all come down here... if they flow upstream, it is ok. The river level rises when it rains... it will push upwards but it will come down the river (Respondent A)

**Physical capital:** In terms of physical development, things have changed a lot. Compared to the early days of their migration, the migrants no longer depend on the Pahang river for basics like water. Electricity and an adequate supply of clean water have been provided. In terms of the internet and telecommunications, respondents say that both are good, although not many of them actually use the internet. Almost all of the households own mobile phones.

There are bus and taxi services to take the villagers to the nearest city, Pekan. However, almost all the villagers have their own transportation (at least a motorcycle), so they do not rely heavily on public transport. It is only 6 km to Pekan so it is easy for the villagers to get all the basics they need there. The road is well maintained and provides comfortable access to the city. In addition, the villagers built a secure shelter for the community. Interestingly, in the early days of their migration to Pekan, they worked together to construct their homes. Even so, living near the Pahang river exposed them to the threat of natural disasters, particularly floods. There is a hospital and rural clinic nearby which enable them to access the health services provided.

**Financial capital:** The good relationships between villagers are restricted to physical assistance only. When it comes to financial assistance, most say that they cannot afford to provide such assistance. Nonetheless, one or two of the villagers were financially stable and willing to provide financial assistance to their colleagues:

Not true... if with enough money get one cage... just make one first... after that if one gets extra money, if one wishes to add another cage then one can add another (Respondent G)

Festive seasons and natural disasters significantly affect their income. In a festive season such as Chinese new year, the demand for fish significantly increases. Change in demand during the festive season can affect the market price by up to RM25 kg<sup>-1</sup> (the typically normal price is RM22). An increase in market prices means more money for the villagers. On the other hand, a recent flood caused big losses. Most of their cages were destroyed by flood and a lot of the fish died due to oxygen level falls in the river as a result of the flood. A couple of the respondents described the effects of festive seasons and natural disasters on their income:

The flood has caused death to our rearing, the big fish, 1-2 kg, all died (Respondent A). The fish, the price will leap during the festive season. If we have a good stock during Chinese new year, the price is ok and we can make more money (Respondent C)

## DISCUSSION

Bartle (2007) identified factors of poverty known as The Big Five. The Big Five refers to five main causes of poverty, namely; disease, apathy, ignorance, dishonesty and dependency. Bartle (2007) concluded that dependency would cultivate negative beliefs, feelings and attitudes of helplessness, resulting in high dependency on continuous external assistance.

There are quite a number of important lessons that can be gained from this study, with respect to the factors that made the Cambodian migrant community remain intact, happy, contented and enjoying a sustainable livelihood. These factors impinge upon those that have been examined in the poverty and entrepreneurship literature. The researchers would like to highlight four of the most obvious aspects: Non-dependency, close-knit networking, locus of control and tacit knowledge.

As alluded to by Bartle mentioned before, dependency is one of the Big Five factors of poverty. As revealed in this study, the Cambodian migrant community were more self-reliant. They did not depend upon any government help. They experienced hardship in starting their enterprises and surmounted several challenges posed by intermittent outbreaks of disease in the fish and the impact of natural disasters.

Locus of control was also significant in the success of the Cambodian migrant livelihoods. It became very clear to the researchers that as the migrants became more empowered to solve their own problems and overcome the various challenges they faced, such as costly feed, fry mortality and even periodic theft, the community did not waver in terms of making the right decisions that were within their control and did not infringe upon others outside the community.

Another significant and positive factor for the Cambodian community was the closely-knit network that they had amongst themselves. They tended to work with and help each other in developing the cage culture, in keeping watch and in marketing their harvests.

Last but not least is the tacit knowledge that had developed and then become entrenched within the community about cage culture and practices. No doubt, the migrants had some experience of rearing fish in Cambodia and for this reason decided to settle near the river when they came to Pahang. Initially, they constructed cages made out of planks of timber but these did not last long when soaked in the river. As the years went by, the migrants acquired considerable knowledge about the whole process of fish cage culture which to this day has become their reliable and sustainable means of livelihood.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, it can be founded that the Cambodians have adequate access to all of the capitals studied. The main findings to be highlighted here are that their non-dependency, close-knit networking, locus of control and tacit knowledge have been the main key to their success in the aquaculture industry.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It can be surmised that, a small study such as this can further add to the collection of knowledge and lessons in the fields of community development and poverty alleviation. In this regard, some policy implications can be derived from this study.

Firstly, it is imperative that in community development and poverty alleviation, at the outset of project planning, the whole picture of intended beneficiaries and their physical and social environment needs to be carefully understood. This has to start from the gathering of hard-to-reach and heart-held information, experiences, opinions and especially feelings that could be easily ignored if not thoroughly examined through face-to-face and grounded interviews and group discussions. Inevitably, macro policy considerations has to be fine-tuned with micro-level grounded data and reality-based opinions, experiences and deep-seated feelings.

Secondly, the empowerment approach is often found to be a more viable strategy in developing and enhancing the participation of beneficiaries that can finally lead to they helping themselves. In the context of poor beneficiaries, this approach is crucial if the dependency syndrome amongst beneficiaries is to be overcome.

Thirdly, it should be an important policy consideration that some level of tacit knowledge must be possessed by beneficiaries to eventually become sustainable in their enterprise. It can be considered as the bastion of their resolve and motivation to pursue their continued involvement in the project when faced with downturns and challenges. Should it be that the level of tacit knowledge is absent or low, more effort has to be planned for and implemented first so that potential beneficiaries have acquired the adequate knowledge level for a project to be viable.

Last but not least, to be fully successful in a policy to reduce or eliminate poverty, frontline development agents must be prepared to go the last mile in ensuring that all pockets of beneficiaries are reached, irrespective whether they had been migrants or not. This is an important consideration for a country like Malaysia and others that are determined and have the capacity to reduce or eliminate poverty. Non-government organizations that have a longer reach at the ground level can also be co-opted to compliment this approach.

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