

## LOCAL AGENDA 21: ACTION PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-CASE STUDY OF SHAH ALAM

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### ABSTRACT

*Sustainable development, which has been defined as a means to meet the needs of the present without compromising on the ability of future generations to meet their needs, is not a new term these days. One of the initiatives that have been taken by the government of Malaysia in realizing the idea of sustainable development is through the implementation of Local Agenda 21 (LA21). LA21 is a global action plan or blueprint for sustainable development at local level, which was adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. LA21 is a reflection of a common consensus and political commitment of countries globally on sustaining development and environment cooperation. As such, this paper explains the role of LA21 as one of the efforts by the Malaysian government in achieving sustainable development. The objective of this paper is to describe the implementation of LA21 programs and activities carried out and planned by the local authority, community and private sector towards achieving sustainable development. A descriptive analysis was used to describe the Shah Alam's LA21 projects in promoting sustainable development. The outcomes illustrated the significance of LA21 projects in facilitating Malaysia to achieve sustainable development.*

**Keywords:** Local Agenda 21, sustainable development, action plan, Shah Alam

### INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is a catchword frequently used to address the huge environmental, social and economic problems that we are faced with in the world today (Pearce et al., 1993). The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, 1972 marked as the beginning of the global interest towards the environment and man's role in it. The conference identified that some aspects of human development had indeed caused damage to the environment which necessarily need the global attention and action. In 1983, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) was set up to study the balance between human development and the environment. In 1987, the report entitled "Our Common Future" (Brundtland et al., 1987) has been released which tried to reconcile economic development with environmental protection. The term of sustainable development which carries the meaning as "development that satisfies present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their needs" also started to widely known at this point. In other words, Pearce et al. (1993) has described sustainable development as the conditions necessary for equal access to the natural and built environment resources for each generation. In order to achieve a balanced

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development, an initiative called Local Agenda 21 (LA21) was proposed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 (Tonami and Mori, 2007). Nakaguchi (2004) has described LA21 as an agenda which sets tasks and a vision in order to promote sustainable development at the local level and shows the menu of action. It is an attempt to set development agendas at the local level for a better “quality of life” and “liveability” (Selman, 2000). Therefore, this paper examines the role of LA21 as one of the efforts by the Malaysian government in achieving sustainable development. Throughout this paper, the implementation of LA21 programs in the case study area, Shah Alam City, will be assessed in order to identify the role of LA21 programs in achieving sustainable development.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW/PROJECT REVIEWS**

### **Sustainable development**

Sustainable development is about caring for the environment not only for human being but also to other living organism and for the future generation. It conveys the concept of redistribution of riches on a global scale in order to achieve a quality of life for all. According to Baker (2006), this environmental development model is aimed not just at protecting nature, but at creating an ecological society, social progress as well as environmental protection. Baker (2006) further explained that in sustainable development model, the promotion of human well-being does not have to depend upon the used of nature and natural environment. The model seeks to reconcile the ecological, social and economic dimensions of development, now and into the future, and to adopt a global perspective in achieving the task. It aims at promoting a balance form of activities that promote development within the ecological carrying capacity of the planet, which is socially just and economically inclusive. It focuses not upon individual advancement but upon protecting the common future of mankind and other living organism.

Sustainable development comprises of three pillars which are social, economy and ecological which also has known as environment (Ekins, 2000). The three elements must be integrated to achieve sustainable development. As a matter of fact, the main focus of sustainable development is on society, and its aim is to include environmental considerations in the steering of societal change, especially through changes to the way in which the economy functions. In other words, the essence of sustainable development is all about balancing the needs, demands and well-being of the natural environment with social equity and economic development (Baker, 2006). Consequently, sustainable can only be achieved when the social development, economic development and environmental improvement are integrated.

### **Local Agenda 21**

Agenda 21 is one of the significant outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), later to be known as the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It is a comprehensive universal strategy for global action on sustainable development, dealing with today’s problems and trying to set the framework within which the problems of tomorrow can also be addressed (Koch and Grubb,

1993). Agenda 21 proposed that local government should play a central role in implementing sustainable development via the development of individual LA21 programs for local areas (Fowke and Prasad, 1996). As such, the formulation of LA21 stresses on the preparation of action plans or programs to address complex local problems existing mostly in urbanized area. It presents a framework for local authorities to plan together with the residents and local organization in the design and provision of services to the community (ICLEI, 1997). According to Niss (2002), developing the LA21 is supposed to be the continuing process needed to achieve local sustainable development, integrating local economic, social and ecological perspectives. LA21 is intended to translate sustainable development principles and objectives into practical action at the local level. Therefore, the aims of LA21 also should correlate with sustainable development.

### **Characteristics of LA21 Program**

Since LA21 is claimed as a sustainable development program, the characteristics of LA21 program must reflect the concept of sustainable development. LA21 programs should address economic, social and ecological needs consensually, include a common vision for a sustainable future, establish a stakeholders group to oversee the process and contain an action plan with concrete long-term targets. Apart from this, LA21 programs must also have a monitoring and reporting framework, indicators to monitor progress as well as tangible activities and programs to actualize its action plans.

### **LA21 Process**

There is no single 'correct' way to engage in sustainable development planning (ICLEI, 1997). Therefore, the process of LA21 can be interpreted in many ways as long as the concept remains the same – the involvement of community participation and multi-sector strategic planning elements. In Malaysia, Ministry of Housing and Local Government (2002) has described LA21 process into six stages:

i. Stage 1: Community vision

The local authority will start the process by approaching the community and private sector to jointly work together to formulate the community vision. The vision is usually achieved through workshops and discussions with the stakeholders where the idea of LA21 and sustainable development concepts were introduced.

ii. Stage 2: Partnership

Partnerships are perceived as arrangements that can further drive for sustainable development (Glasbergen, Biermann and Mol, 2007). At this stage, partnership will be established between all stakeholders during the formulation of community vision and identification of issues within the area.

iii. Stage 3: Community-based issue analysis

The interaction between different sectors, between technical knowledge and community wisdom is called community based issue analysis. The process involves the community in the analysis of local development, service and sustainability issues. All issues must be addressed to ensure community vision can be achieved.

iv. Stage 4: Action plans

LA21 Action Plan is a document which consists of a list of actions agreed by all stakeholders to undertake for the achievement of sustainable development. It serves as an instrument to achieve the community vision as well as to meet the objectives of integrated issues namely social, economic and environmental.

v. Stage 5: Implementation and monitoring

Once the action plan is endorsed by the stakeholders, it is then ready for implementation. The action plans are implemented through the creation of new programs and the reformulation of existing ones. Monitoring process starts once the program or project is implemented. All implementation activities and their impacts should be monitored and documented continuously for the evaluation process later on. Besides, it is to ensure progress and that obstacles are overcome.

vi. Stage 6: Evaluation and feedback

Evaluation and feedback are to celebrate successes and to seek opportunities for improvement, to review objectives, strategies and actions as necessary. This process provides an opportunity for the stakeholders to assess and give recognition about their involvement and contribution to the process. In addition, this process also used to inform the general public about progress in meeting specific targets, and to signal when the action plan must be altered.

### **Action Plan**

Action plan has been described as a sequence of steps that must be taken or activities that must be performed well, for a strategy to succeed (Materialism, n.d.). In LA21, action plan is one of the significant elements since the preparation of action plan is the central elements in sustainable development planning (ICLEI, 1997). A strategic action plan should address problems and needs at a systematic level and with a long-term perspective. According to ICLEI (1997), in order to promote sustainable development, there are several aspects should be addressed and enhanced in the preparation of LA21 Action Plans. They are:

- i. the community's natural resources
- ii. the local ecosystem and ability of the environment to support the town's needs
- iii. the aesthetic and cultural qualities of the town and community
- iv. the community's human assets such as health, education and natural abilities
- v. the community's social assets such as cooperation and integration between neighbours, social groups, businesses, governments and their ability to work together
- vi. the community's built assets such as infrastructure, parks and buildings

- vii. social interaction, economic vibrancy and care for environment
- viii. equity in the present community as well as towards future generations
- ix. mutually beneficial relationships between social, economic and environmental needs of the community and town

### **Sustainable development in Selangor**

Selangor's Commitment to Sustainable Development underpinned the project on Strategies for Sustainable Development and Agenda 21 Selangor, which was initiated in 1998 (Pereira, Ibrahim Komoo, Nordin Hasan and Halimaton Hashim, 2005). The main objective of this project was to formulate strategies and action plans for sustainable development, in line with the government's aspiration to achieve developed status by the year 2005. One of the documents that have resulted from that project is Agenda 21 Selangor which defined as a strategic action plan to develop the state based on a holistic approach and the concept of sustainability (Government of Selangor, 2003). Over 700 strategic actions have been identified based on the strategies for sustainable development. As such, two local authorities were selected for the pilot study of the implementation of Agenda 21 Selangor which were Shah Alam City Council and Kuala Selangor District Council.

### **Malaysian Urban Indicator Network (MURNINet)**

MURNINet has been developed by the Federal Town and Country Planning Department (TCPD) to assess the sustainability of urban areas. It aims to develop a set of urban indicators to assess the development of urban area towards sustainable development (Saadatian et. al, 2011). The achievement of towns and cities are evaluated by 11 broad criteria, namely demographic, housing, urban economic, utility and infrastructure, public facilities and recreation, environment, sociology and social impact, land use, tourism and heritage, transportation and accessibility, and finance and management sectors (Joseph, Pilcher and Taplin, 2009; Saadatian et. al, 2011). Basically, some of the purposes of MURNINet include identifying and proposing solution for urban quality and problems, improving the level of services and facilities for local community as well as providing sources to solve the local community problem (MURNINet, n.d.). For this study purpose, the result from MURNINet has been used to evaluate the effectiveness of LA21 programs in assisting Shah Alam City Council to achieve sustainable development.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Throughout the research, information was gathered through a descriptive and explanatory research to achieve the research objectives. The primary research of this topic was extensively relied on the library research and document analyses related to the principles of Local Agenda 21 and its practices had been conducted. Documents and survey produced either by the local authorities and Ministry were also analyzed. In order to obtain the required information to fulfill the research objectives, a case study on Shah Alam City Council (SACC) was carried out. The data gathered were analyzed in the next section. Finally, the various elements of the study

including the conclusions and recommendations will be discussed at the final stage. As such, that is the overall research process and methods undertaken.

## RESULT ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

SACC has been chosen for the case study since it is one of the pilot projects of Agenda 21 Selangor which representing the local authority in urban area (SACC, 2012). Accordingly, the council has inculcated the values of sustainable development in every implementation of social, economy and physical development. A balanced development of those three elements is vital in ensuring the development activities in the future will not leave the adverse implications for the future generations. Hence, SACC has outlined some strategic planning in order to strengthen the implementation of LA21 in Shah Alam:

- i. Adopting the concept and principles of Agenda 21 at all levels of management and community
- ii. Executing a permanent structure and implementation mechanisms
- iii. Embracing the process of ‘capacity building’ to change the thinking minds and build the capacity of councilors, staff and the community

This section analyzes the LA21 Action Plan and programs of Shah Alam which contribute to the achievement of the city as the most sustainable city in Selangor in year 2010 (MURNINet, n.d.).

### Shah Alam LA21 Action Plan

According to Shah Alam City Council (2012), the LA21 action plan in Shah Alam is divided into three sections, which reflects the three elements of sustainable development; social, environment and economy. Thus, the LA21 programs have been arranged according to the three divisions as well. Table 1 shows the list of Shah Alam LA21 programs that was identified and implemented in year 2011:

**Table 1:** Shah Alam LA21 Programs in 2011

No.	Action Plan	Program
<b>Social</b>		
1	Smart Community	Shah Alam Residents' Representative Council Seminar 2011
2		Shah Alam Smart Community Competition
3	Environmental Awareness Campaign	Workshop on Preparation of Shah Alam LA21 Blue Print
4		Publication of “Adam Cares For The Earth Series” book sources and activities
5	Disabled people	Disability Access Audit
6		Workshop Program for Disabled
7	Safe City	Safety Campaign : Preventing Street and Property Crime
8		MBSA CCTV Launching
9	Preservation of Urban Forest Park	2011 World Environment Day @ Shah Alam
<b>Environment</b>		
10	Preservation of Urban Forest	Urban Forest Park program
11		Green Pilot Program
12	Love Our River Campaign	Tree Planting Program with NGOs – River & Trees for Life 2011
13		Clean-Drain Campaign
14		IPTA River Rangers Mini-Carnival
15	Recycle Campaign	Recycling Campaign 2011
16		Kitchen Waste Recycling Campaign

17		Wisma MBSA Recycling Competition
18		City Centre Buildings Recycling Competition (Seksyen 14)
19	Smart Community	Community Orchard
<b>Economic</b>		
20	Urban Kiosk	Urban Kiosk – Woven bag distribution
21	Shah Alam as a Tourist Destination	Weekend Bazaar
22		Anggerik Exhibition
23	Poverty Eradication	Poverty Eradication Program: Job Opportunities in Shah Alam
24		Selangor Entrepreneurial Empowerment Seminar

*Source: Shah Alam City Council (2012)*

From the data above, it can be analyzed that Shah Alam Action Plan is in line with the LA21 Action Plan which has been stated in Agenda 21 guidelines that has been agreed in Earth Summit 1992. In terms of social programs, Shah Alam LA21 Action Plan addresses the aspects of education, public amenity, public health and social integration. Meanwhile, the aspects of aesthetic, cultural qualities and utilities have been addressed in the field of environment. In terms of economy, the aspects of vibrant economy and poverty eradication have been enhanced by the council in the action plan.

#### i. Social

Basically, for social division, the council aims to enhance the condition of the society through improving education on environment among the local community, upgrading the infrastructure and public facilities for the convenience of people and strengthening the neighbourhoods among the residents. Apart from that, SACC also wants to improve the social welfare through empowering the disabled facilities, creating Shah Alam as safe and barrier-free city as well as strengthening the collaboration between stakeholders under the concept of smart partnerships. In order to achieve this aims, there were five action plans produced in year 2011 which covered under social division. They were smart community, environmental awareness and responsibility campaign, disabled people, safe city and preservation of urban forest parks. These action plans have improved the social amenity. The effectiveness of these social programs has contributed in the achievement of Shah Alam as the sustainable city.

#### ii. Environment

For environmental division, SACC plans to overcome the environmental issues through conserving the environment, enhancing the quality of drainage system and upgrading solid waste management system. Four action plans were produced in 2011 to assist Shah Alam in improving environment of the city which include the program of forest parks preservation, 'Love Our Rivers', recycling, and also smart community.

#### iii. Economy

Meanwhile, for economic division, the council aims to improve the economy of Shah Alam through developing an economic city which are dynamic and competitive, eradicating poverty and upgrading tourism industry in Shah Alam. The action plans which covered under this division in 2011 were Urban Kiosk, Shah Alam as a Tourism Destination and poverty eradication.

## Successful programs

Two LA21 programs have been evaluated to demonstrate the role of LA21 as one of the efforts by the government in achieving sustainable development.

### i. Safe City

Safe City is one of the action plans which covered under social division. According to Berita Harian (26<sup>th</sup> October 2004), safe city defined as a city which is free from any physical, social and mental harm. Besides, the people are always in the most secure, prosperous, healthy, happy and live with confidence. The implementation of Safe City concept has been one of the main agenda in the development in Shah Alam. The program has started the program implementation in 2010. Without the safety aspects in city life, it is difficult for the people to attain well-being. Shah Alam has implemented 14 out of 15 steps in Safe City program. Table 2 shows the crime statistics in SACC from 2004 to 2011.

Under the Safe City project, SACC worked closely with the Royal Malaysian Police as well as residents associations to prevent crime. Besides, SACC also works closely with the Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation, a non-governmental organization (NGO), towards a low crime index in the city. The city council's partnership with the authorities and NGO's has resulted in the identification of hotspot areas in Shah Alam. It has more than three dozen closed-circuit television cameras (CCTVs) installed in hotspot areas to monitor crime and safety. Councilors and the police work closely to target crime in SACC's respective zones. Pedestrian areas with snatch-theft cases have been upgraded with barriers and bollards. SACC has also installed flood lighting at car parks, tunnels and other locations to facilitate surveillance (Selangor Times, 2011).

**Table 2:** Crime statistics in Shah Alam City

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Case total</b>	5,290	4,879	4,935	5,325	4,827	6,988	6,315	5,419

*Source: Shah Alam City Council (2012)*

Since the Safe City program implemented in 2010, the case total has decreased 7.64% from 6,315 in 2010 to 5,419 in 2011. This data shows the success of Safe City program which contribute in the decreasing of crime statistics in Shah Alam.

### ii. Shah Alam Trees for Life

SACC claims that one of the most successful programs that have been organized in the city is 'Shah Alam Trees for Life'. This program has been started since September 2010 and still in progress until now. This program has been organized through stages. Until December 2011, the outcome of the program as follows:

**Table 3:** The Outcome of Shah Alam Trees for Life Program

No.	Items	2010	2011	TOTAL
1	Number of volunteers involved	1,214	2,805	4,019
2	Number of trees planted	6,714	12,903	19,617



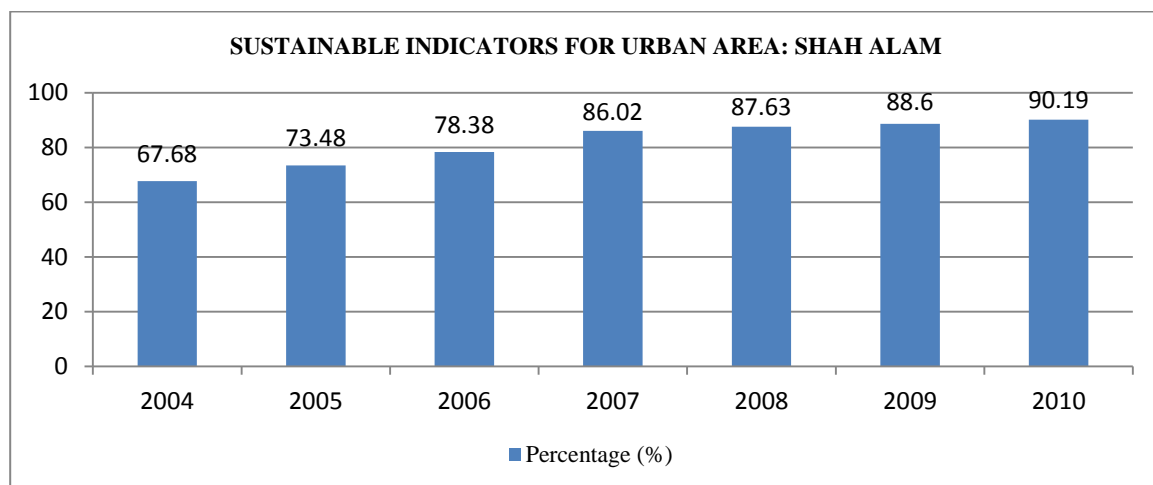
3	Number of programs organized	4 programs	8 programs	12 programs
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*Source: Shah Alam City Council (2012)*

This program does not only contribute to the improvement of the environment, but the social integration as well. The number of volunteers which is increasing from 1,214 in 2010 to 2,805 in 2011 definitely showed the success of the program in improving the involvement of the residence on environmental program. The program succeeds in attracting various groups of stakeholders such as private sector, local authority, local community and corporate bodies to participate. Some of the NGOs and corporate agencies who have involved in this program since 2010, namely Eco Warriors, Yayasan Satu Malaysia, Xyratex Ltd, Alam Sekitar Sdn Bhd and Sime Darby (Basyar Mustapha, 2012). Sustainable development as was stated by MHLG (2002) can only be brought about by cooperation and partnership between all social and economic groups and interests. Shah Alam Trees for Life is one of the examples of programs which can be considered success in achieving sustainable development.

### **Sustainable indicator for Shah Alam City Council**

The case study of Shah Alam City Council had successfully demonstrates the role of LA21 program in assisting the council to achieve sustainable development. The impact of LA21 programs in Shah Alam can be illustrated through the level of sustainability in MURNInet (*Figure 1*).



**Figure 1:** Sustainable Indicators for Urban Area: Shah Alam  
*Source: MURNINet (n.d.) and Shah Alam City Council (2012)*

The result from MURNInet shows that the sustainability level of Shah Alam is increasing every year. Year 2010 showed the highest percentage that has been achieved by the council with 90.19% mark, which was also the first among cities in Selangor. In addition, in national level, SACC has been awarded as the Sustainable City for three years running, from 2008 to 2010 (Shah Alam City Council, 2012). This achievement showed the efforts of the council in ensuring LA21 programs to be continuously done with the collaboration of other stakeholders in the city. The partnership between the stakeholders has been successfully formed to help Shah Alam to achieve sustainable development.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, this study was about assessing the implementation of LA21 programs in Shah Alam City. From the findings and analysis, it proves LA21 Action Plan has assisted the Shah Alam City in achieving sustainable development. The award of sustainable city for three years running shows the effectiveness of the programs implemented. One of the vital aspects in the success of LA21 Action Plan is the participation from the stakeholders. The programs which have been organized by SACC such as Safe City program and Shah Alam Trees for Life succeed with the commitment and involvement from the stakeholders. These programs had shown the importance of forging a partnership between the local authority and stakeholders in order for sustainable development to be accomplished. Thus, the preparation of LA21 Action Plan which includes environments, social and economic programs should be done together with all stakeholders in order to maintain and improve the sustainability level of Shah Alam City. In summary, LA21 Action Plan is indeed one of the tools to achieve sustainable development which should be implemented not only by Shah Alam City Council, but other local authorities as well.

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