

FSSH

Research Review



**“Bridging Communities,
Research and Policy”**

SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF MARRIAGE MIGRANTS IN SARAWAK (F06/SGS/1786/2018)

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Historically, migration across the national borders was viewed through the economic lens. When migrants leave their countries, it is assumed that the primary motivation is always economic in nature. This research takes on a different approach by examining the status of migrants who left their countries for the purpose of marriage. In this research, we look at international marriage migrants who marry Sarawakians and reside in Sarawak.

In 2015, the Department of Immigration Malaysia revealed that about 30% of foreign marriages were from East Malaysia. Nothing much has been written about it. Perhaps there is a low interest about this issue despite some mention in the newspapers that intermarriages are common in Sarawak.

This research project involves rural and urban-based marriage migrants from at least eight countries who are living in Serian, Sibu and Miri. A qualitative approach is adopted in this research project to examine the social conditions i.e. access to employment, property, legal residence etc. within the context of a geographically dispersed and ethnically heterogeneous Sarawak. A cursory observation of this issue demonstrates the existence of social and legal forms of precarity that marriage migrants encounter consequent to ambiguous governance on marriage migration.

Apart from the issues initially highlighted in the research project, we observed there are children of Sarawakian parentage who are still undocumented or stateless. On that score, there is need to relook at Malaysia's nationality law as being undocumented seems to be also a homegrown phenomenon.



Interviewing an elderly marriage migrant, May 2019.



At a longhouse, April 2019

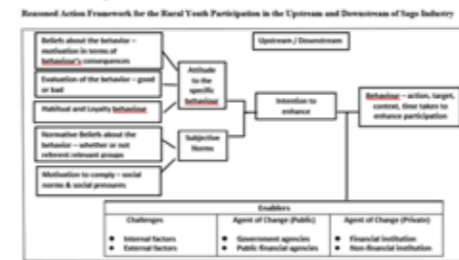


With informants and Social Work students in Kampung Mongkos, May 2019.

ENHANCING RURAL YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE UPSTREAM AND DOWNSTREAM OF THE SAGO INDUSTRY IN SARAWAK (F06/TOC/1752/2018)

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Sago palm or its scientific name *Metroxylon sagu* is considered as the 'starch crop of the 21st century.' Based on the Department of Agriculture Sarawak, the Mukah Division is the main producer of sago with 179,349.1 tonnes produced and 49,243 hectares of land planted with sago in 2014. The Sarawak government realized the potential of sago palm and has been trying to develop the sago industry by encouraging the sago smallholders to join Land Custody and Development Authority (LCDA)/SSSED, to open up large scale sago commercial plantation and to set up Sago Board in 2019. The agriculture sector is a labour intensive industry and sago industry relies on the sustainable labour force participation. Therefore, apart from relying on foreign workers, the government and private sectors need to attract and tap the reluctant rural youth to consider employment in the sago industry. Demographic data from a survey done in Mukah in 2017 revealed that 65.9 percent of the sago farmers are 55 years old and above. This scenario implies the need for rural youth to take over their parents' works in the upstream and downstream of sago industry. Since the sago industry is moving towards commercial plantation, there is also a need to encourage the rural youth to actively participate in the industry.



The objectives of this research are (i) to identify the main reasons for rural youth attracting or avoiding working in the upstream and downstream of the sago industry (ii) to analyse the strategies and actions taken by the government and private sectors to encourage the rural youth to seek employment in the sago industry and (iii) to examine the prospect and challenges in terms of sustaining and increasing labour participation for the future development of sago industry. This research engages a mixed method (survey, in-depth interviews & focus group discussion as data collection) and utilizes the theory of Reasoned Action. The locations of the research are at four districts namely Dalat, Mukah, Matu and Daro in the Mukah Division of Sarawak.

This research provides novelty through the uniqueness and peculiarity of the Reasoned Action Framework for the rural youth participation in labour force in the upstream and downstream of sago industry by incorporating (1) the additional new components of habitual and loyalty. Habitual refers to the habit that the youth wants to follow continuously due to the personal liking or disliking influence by the process of socialization. Loyalty refers to the youth's choice to uphold or stick to something like youth's belief or brand that satisfy them. Another contribution to the Reason Action Framework is (2) the additional three enablers namely challenges, agent of change (public) and agent of change (private) that are acting as moderators for the final behaviour of the youth.

The impact of this research is to increase the participation of rural youth in upstream and downstream of sago industry. The findings of this research can be used to recommend improvement in the strategy and action of the government and employer to attract and encourage the rural youth to be involved in the sago industry. This will reduce the unemployment rate among rural youth and expand the development of sago industry. Moreover, this research develops training modules that motivate, providing skills and opportunity to the rural youth on the aspects of sago industry. At the InTEX19 Expo 2019, this research was awarded a silver medal.