

BOTTOM TO UP APPROACH PRACTICED BY LOCAL GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

Bottom to up approach means involving the communities at the various levels of the development programme and covers the definition phase, implementation, evaluation and the revision of the programme. The participation can be either directly or through those bodies represented local people with collective interests such as the professional organisations, women's groups, cultural associations and residence association. At the local level, the approach is known as local agenda 21 (LA21) which involved local public participation in the local government activities. LA21 is a Global Action Plan towards Sustainable Development for the first 21st century introduced in the Earth Summit Conference held in Rio de Janeiro emphasized on the cooperation of Local Authority and participation from the public. The LA21 was adopted by Alor Gajah Municipal Council (MPAG) in 2006. Sungai Pengkalan, Melaka was selected as the first pilot site for the LA21 implementation. The study focused on the participatory aspects of the LA21 program based on the bottom to up approach practiced by MPAG and issues associated. This study attempts to obtain the feedback on the implementation of LA21 at MPAG. A total of 72 sets of questionnaire-based responses were obtained for the final analysis. The finding shows that the program has successfully attracted all relevant stakeholders following the inclusive principle. It is also found that the respondents viewed the implementation of LA21 at Alor Gajah very positively. Besides, the respondents also expressed strong support for future LA21 program, especially those involving environmental protection. In spite of that, some members viewed that the promotional strategies on LA21 should be covering a wider spectrum of the society in the district.

Keywords: Bottom to up approach, Local agenda 21, Local authority, public participation

INTRODUCTION

According to Isidiho & Mohammad Shatar (2016), a lot of work have been done on bottom - top approach, otherwise referred as people's participation or democratic process in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) with one main objective and that is to encourage local community and local players to express their views in defining the development course for their area in line with their own views, expectations, plans and their sociocultural life style. Bottom - top community action approach, tends to be locally focused attempts by groups to achieve change in policy and practice and such collective community action consists of relatively small-scale local attempts to negotiate with power holders and initiate projects and programmes they felt would be of great benefit to the communities and enhance their wellbeing. In this case the community tends to be more responsive and active in participation and completion of the projects.

Local government become the best medium for the implementation of bottom to up approach as its covering the small scale programs conducted with the local people at the local level. The implementation of Local Agenda 21 (LA21) is considered under bottom to up approach practice for local governance. LA21 was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 1992 (<http://www.kpkt.gov.my>). It is a global partnership and a comprehensive blueprint for the global actions for sustainable development that sets out actions that contribute to global sustainable in the 21st century (Husnaini, 1997). Agenda 21 calls on countries, organizations and non-governmental organizations to involve in developing and use suitable indicators of sustainable development. Over 178 country representatives around the world including Malaysia accepted the calls and become the signatory of this Global Action Plan (Agenda 21) which took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil during the Earth Summit and introducing the Local Agenda 21 Pilot Project in year 1999. The plan targeted, that all local authorities should have their own Local Agenda 21 action plan by the year 1996.

According to MHLG Report (2005), Local Agenda 21 Pilot Project in Malaysia is an initiative implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHLG) with the support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and in co-operation with the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) of the Prime Minister's Department.

In the mid-1999, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government invited applications from all local authorities to participate in the LA21 Pilot Project. The applications were scrutinized based upon each local authority's capacity and interest shown. The local authorities selected in the project were Miri Municipal Council, Petaling Jaya Municipal Council (now Petaling Jaya City Council), Kerian District Council and Kuantan Municipal Council (MHLG, 2002).

In the process on LA21, the local authorities are to work in partnership with all sectors of the local community started in the stage of planning as well as involved in the whole process of implementing appropriate programmes and projects that address the priorities and concerns of the residents in a sustainable manner. This will also provide an avenue for local communities to monitor and channel feedback on the activities carried out as well as to take control of development in their area. As the communities will have a sense of involvement of development projects, it will motivate them to provide greater support for effective implementation of the programme.

According to Suzei et all (2015), implementing LA21 programs involves the community from the very initial planning stage till the final process. The key to successful elements of the

Agenda 21 implementation activities are full support and participation by local community, continuous assessment of current conditions to predict the needs of the future, setting targets for achieving targeted specific goals, followed up by a good monitoring and finally by giving a full report on the activities held.

Through the implementation of LA21 programme, local communities will, together with their local authority, identify and analyse local sustainable development issues, and then formulate and implement action plans to address them. LA21 adopts a “bottom up” approach (<http://kpkt.gov.my>). That is to say the local community themselves are involved from the very initial planning stage together with the local authority in making any decision related with their daily life.

While in Malaysia, the efforts to implement sustainable development include the adoption of Total Planning Doctrine, National Physical Plan and developing Urban Indicators by the Town and Country Planning Department (Kamariah and Dolbani 2006). Some of the local authorities in Malaysia have been actively implementing Local Agenda 21 that focuses on community as the main stakeholder for their respective area. Selangor is leading the other states by launching of Sustainable Development Strategy for the state. In addition, Quality of life Program for Malaysian Cities was also promoted by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government to become the indicator of the Local Agenda 21 implementation.

Malaysia started officially with the pilot project in 2002, all local government are involved and some are selected based on their good proposal and represented each region (Afifah). In Malaysia, it is solely based on each local authority on how they accept the concept of LA21. Some see it as value added to them, whereby some see it as a good opportunity for their council especially for their councillor become more close to the public and may encourage public participation in very initial stage of action taken by the council to achieve sustainable development. Yet, many of local authorities still didn't want to get involve due to they regard as LA21 programmes as more burdens to their existing daily work.

The MHLG are responsible in giving advice to the local authorities purposely to build some interest among them to get involve and implement LA21 programme and thus enjoy the benefits offered by the programmes. The MHLG also allocate some allocation to those local authorities which interested to start LA21 in their area. To enhance the capacity of Local Authorities in implementing the LA21, the Ministry through Department of Local Government has allocated RM 1.8 million under RMK8 and RM5 million under RMK9 for Local Authorities to run their LA21 programme. Besides that, there are also some monitoring done by the ministry to identify the stages and progress of the programme implementation.

Nowadays, there are many of local government has implemented LA21 programs, the local authorities that successfully involved in LA21 programmes are Shah Alam, Johor Bahru, Sepang, Kuantan, Nilai, Subang Jaya, Petaling Jaya, Kerian, and Miri. Petaling Jaya is the most active local authorities in implementing LA21 and become the best practice among other local authorities in Malaysia. The local authorities involved focused on public awareness and mutual communication among the stakeholder of their programmes. Petaling Jaya always gets good involvement from local community, private sector and NGO in implementing any LA21 activities in the area. The acknowledge world best practices in implementing LA21 are Africa and Philippines.

Every local government have their own way in implementing the programmes as Ministry giving the freedom to them as long as they are involved in the LA21 process and implementing the activities. There is no enforcement from the MHLG but it is totally depending to each local authority to grab the deal of LA21 benefits offered. Some of the local authorities will request by themselves to MHLG in getting more information regarding LA21 and thus the MHLG will sent their officer go to that particular local authority to conduct LA21 talk especially to the Yang di Pertua of the council and to the full council together with the department related.

LA21 is the best platform for the local authorities especially for their councillor to get close with the local authorities and involved in the activities held together with them as they are not selected by them but appointed by the respective state government. Thus, this is the best chance for them mixed around with the local community by together implementing the LA21 programme.

The stages of implementation of LA21 in local authorities in Malaysia started in year 2002 focusing on city council, 2005 on municipal council and 2007 started on district council. LA21 enhance on bottom up approach whereby it encourages joint venture among the stakeholder involved and focused on good cooperation among them.

Sungai Pengkalan, Melaka was selected as the first pilot site for the implementation of the LA21 in the Alor Gajah district (Eidieleena Zakariah). The reasons for the selection of Sungai Pengkalan Melaka, are because of the Council is concerns with the rate of water quality that be affected by the flow of water waste from the drains near the housing area. As the River is the source of water supply for Melaka, so it is important to take care the sources from now before it is destroyed.

Besides that, the River corridor is also increasingly neglected with lack of recreational areas in the surrounding area and lack of oversight and enforcement in the affected areas. In addition, there was also low civic consciousness among the residents nearby and the area and the area is often affected by floods. The River also chosen based on the location is suitable for tourism development, as known Malacca main focused is tourism.

There are continuous meeting regarding with LA21 programme, conducting Gotong royong activity in conjunction with the township day of MPAG, Gotong royong at Sungai Melaka Pangkalan and awareness campaign which involved some of the primary school in Alor Gajah District.

Activities held under LA21 programme by MPAG are such as Gotong royong programme LA21that focused at Sungai Pengkalan Melaka, Awareness campaign on LA21 conducted to spread the awareness to the community and Road Tour MPAG to the district under Alor Gajah area to disseminate information about LA21 to the public and other related parties. In the nutshell, MPAG has implemented LA21 programme for 13 years. The council has shown some encouraging efforts by putting the aim of conducting at least one activity for each month and will expand the LA21 implementation to other district of Alor Gajah. Hopefully, the council will continue in implementing LA21 programme in future and getting good improvement especially in practicing bottom to up approach which become the priority in implementing LA21 programme.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To determine the level of Local Agenda 21 implementation in the local authority's activities.

2. To evaluate the issues related with the implementation of Local Agenda 21 activities.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Also applicable might be the problems of full participation and control of the projects in larger communities if the bottom- top approach is adopted. This is because it may have to take longer time for the larger communities to assemble. Debate and consensus on certain features, procedures and sharing of the programs considering the fact that each participating unit would want to have preferential and greater influences in the location and operational modalities of the projects. Such may lead to serious conflict which at the end may lead to distrust, violence, inter and intra personality conflicts. The externalities impact and reflections of some bottom-top projects may become difficult for the communities to internalize hence may be a hindrance to its adoption in some developmental communities. Such big infrastructural projects like roads, water, electricity, airports may need to undergo top-bottom approaches since they involve much technicalities and external supports. Hence the adoption of bottom-top approaches depends on the projects involved and the strength of the local communities and their sponsors. The application of bottom-top approach is not a complete turnaround on the top-bottom but a way of making amends and increasing the gains of people's active participation in the affairs of their life and well-being. Thus Participatory approach enables local people to acquire the skills needed to implement and coordinate the management of development projects themselves and thus reap more returns and be able to sustain such goals and gains making it transferrable to generations to come (Isidiho & Mohammad Shatar, 2016) .

Local Agenda 21 has been introduced in Malaysia since 1999 and nowadays, for local authorities in Malaysia are still in the process of implementation. But even though it is already more than 20 years, Malaysia is still lagging behind in its implementation. According to a Ministry Officer Puan Afifah, in year 2009, only 103 local authorities were involved out of 147 in Malaysia. The officer also commented that the implementation of LA21 activities in Malaysia is quite low due to lack of push from higher level of authority and it is totally dependent on each local authority to be involved in the process. Some local authorities regard it as a burden even though some look it as a good opportunity in getting closer to the public and can encourage more public participation among the local community at the area. Usually, the local government involved in one off project only and there is no continuation.

In order to implement Local Agenda 21 projects, the local authorities face several challenges due to the main requirement of Agenda 21 which is the involvement of the community and other stakeholders in the program. It is not easy to attract the local community to participate in the project and difficult for local authority to the program. The commitment of an organization is first and foremost necessary in order to ensure the program's success (MHLG 2002). It is very important the leadership and the top management of the local authority understand the kind of commitment LA21 will require and changes it may bring to the particular local authority.

Together with the mutual commitment among the leadership and the top management, there are also calls for the local authority to lead the process of public consultation in ensuring the success of implementing LA21, which itself is not a simple process. The council should act as an intermediary between the parties involved in the LA21 programs such as the local communities, NGOS's government agencies and also private organizations that are to be involved in the LA21 programs from the beginning until the final stage of its implementation. Therefore, there is a need

to examine the implementation of local agenda 21 activities, challenge faced by the local authorities and issues related with the main stakeholder of the agenda 21 programs.

METHODOLOGY

The study was to identify the implementation of Local Agenda 21 at Alor Gajah Municipal Council Melaka. The data gathered from the questionnaire distributed to the respondents in the road tour programme conducted by MPAG. There are 100 questionnaires distributed to the participants of the programme but only 72 respondents responded to the questionnaires representing 72 percent success rate.

The data gathered in the study relies on Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to process and analysed the data that have been collected in order to meets the objectives of the study.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The researcher distributed 100 questionnaires to the respondents and only 72 questionnaires were returned after completion, representing 72% of total targeted sample size. Despite the smaller size, the analysis which follows in this study is still representative of the overall population. The analysis made include the demographic background and examination of the other finding of the field study.

In general, regarding with the awareness on Local Agenda 21 concept, 68.1 percent of the respondents know about the LA21 and the rest 31.9 percent didn't have the idea. Instead of high level of awareness, only 22.2 percent of respondents highly understood, while 2.8 percent just understood. The remaining 43.1 percent did not understand much on the concept of LA21.

For the sources of LA21 available, the respondents respond various ranks of sources available in getting the LA21 information. The newspaper is seen as the dominant source to become the main preference chosen by the respondents with 43.1 percent and closely followed by MPAG itself, as the second source chosen with 34.7 percent. MPAG should strives hard in influencing the community through their efforts in disseminate LA21 information as they are the closest to the local community.

From the sources available listed, the study reveals that the most effective sources are the television, chosen by the respondents with 38.9 percent, while newspaper become the second choice with 36.1 percent and closely followed by radio with 33.3 percent. The result shows that these three channels chosen should considered by MPAG and be used to disseminate any useful information related with LA21 as it always become the main preferences among the public.

From 49 respondents, 63.9 percent stated that they are aware that the public participation has become the main focus of LA21 programme and 55.6 percent joining the LA21 programme held by MPAG. In term of frequencies attending the programme, the highest rank comes from 1-2 times with 31.9 percent and almost all of the respondents giving a favourable response in their interest for more LA21 information (66.7%). The result shows that the implementation of LA21 at Alor Gajah area has a bright future based on the positive reaction from the community.

From the respondents, there are 78 percent of male and 100 percent of female who agree that the impact of LA21 programme led them to understand the LA21 concept more. In relation of getting the benefits from the programme, 88 percent of male and 95.5 percent of female agree on positive impact. In addition, 86 percent of the male and 95.5 percent of female admitted that they

are involved in the LA21 programme from the early stage. This positive reaction should be considered by MPAG to implement more programme of LA21 in future.

The participants also mostly agree on the involvement of other sectors in the programme (male, 86% and female, 95.4%). Besides that, 88 percent of male and 95.4 percent of female giving support on the LA21 programme should be widened. Lastly, almost all of the respondents show their interest to join more LA21 programme (male, 90% and female 100%). The positive reaction result shows the programme effectiveness.

The analysis on the relationship between the future LA21 programme with the respondent's gender are shows in the Table 5.8. Among the various programmes listed for future LA21 activities, environmental protection chosen at the highest rank with 92 percent by male and 100 percent by female chooses the programme as their first choice. It is closely followed by the healthy and safe city programme which is opted by 80 percent by male and 95.5 percent by female by each programme.

Regarding with the main issues related with the LA21 programmes implemented by MPAG, the highest score of issue selected by 80 percent of male and 77.3 percent of female is the information related with LA21 programme did not reach the targeted community and also closely related with poor advertisement done by MPAG which chosen by 64 percent of male and 54.5 percent of female. Those two reasons highlighted as the main issues that should become the major attention of MPAG in ensuring the smoothness of the LA21 programme in the future.

In supporting the issues highlighted above, there are 88 percent of the respondents saying that the information regarding LA21 activities held by MPAG are reaching some part of the community only. So MPAG need to scrutinize their dissemination channels to improve the situation. As it is essential to ensure all of the community are well exposed with the related information in ensuring extensive involvement from the community.

Lastly, based on analysis on the relationship between respondent's knowledge regarding with LA21, with the respondent's demographic background, there are 63.46 percent of the respondents at the age 31 and above having knowledge on LA21. While based on the respondent's gender, male have more knowledge compare to woman (74%), others under occupation become the dominant participants in the programme such as NGO members, students, housewife and retiree which contribute 100 percent, Secondary level qualification such as PMR, SPM and STPM range at the highest education level for the respondents (66.67%).

CONCLUSION & FUTURE DIRECTION

MPAG has practiced bottom to up approach by implementing LA21 since 2006. The management started with some introductory programme like gotong royong and awareness campaign which purposely to raise awareness among other stakeholder of LA21 especially local communities. But MPAG has made good effort by doing some study and asking from others local authorities to come and share their experience in implementing LA21 at their area. As a result, MPAG has chosen Sungai Pengkalan, Melaka as their first pilot site.

The findings show that the respondents viewed the implementation of LA21 at Alor Gajah very positively by given good respond in answering the questionnaires. Those current LA21 activities conducted by MPAG are well received by the participants and that this is a good sign that people want to participate in more activities involving them.

The participatory techniques introduced by the MPAG also getting some responses but not that successful to invite participation of the local community due to some issues related. But at the same time, the programme has bring good impact to majority of the participants which they also expressed strong support for future LA21 programme at Alor Gajah. In spite of that, some member's views that the promotional strategies on LA21 should be covering a wider spectrum of the society in the district.

Based on the findings, it can be witnessed that MPAG only focuses on the social activity that emphasis on joint partnership with the public in the LA21 activity held not truly focuses on bottom-up approach. Whereby, the main requirement of LA21 is practicing bottom-up approach which is rarely practiced by local authorities in Malaysia. Real LA21 practice is about bottom-up approach in a wider aspect of city management, including decision-making on required physical development. MPAG should now draw programmes to move into this mode in the immediate future.

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