Social Determinants of Children Malnutrition:
Case Study of Kampung Chueh II, Royal Belum Perak

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Kampung Chueh II
Location of study

• Kampung Chueh II - Royal Belum Forest (Lower Belum) – sits in the Banding Lake
• Kampung Chueh II, a remote inland Orang Asli village, has a gentle slope of an L-shape area. Facing the lake water at one side and the thick jungle at the other. Surrounded by clear water and thick forest.
• Mostly Jahai tribe
Background of Kampung Chueh II

- **Authentic Orang Asli Village**
- Tok batin/village headman – Pak Rumba bin Adi
- 9 Jahai families (originally 11 families)
  - ~ 90 people - ~ 30 children
- The village has been established for the last 16 years
- Majority young men and young women
- Most of the men & women had no formal education or had attended partial primary school only.
- About less than an hour by speed boat to the jetty of Pulau Banding
School Education

• Initiated by Horlicks (~ 2 Years) – operated in one of the Orang Asli Hut in the village
  – one Orang Asli teacher from other village conducts classes (learning-through-play programmes) for children till 12 years old
  – paid by Horlicks

• Children after 12 years old are advised to attend school outside Royal Belum (e.g. Sekolah Banun & Sekolah Kheman)
  – Due to financial limitation and ignorant attitude of the parents and elders, particularly village head, most children did not continue their education
SCHOOL AT KAMPUNG CHUEH
Economic activities

Most of the adults are self-employed and involved in activities such as:

• Making attap using Bertam leaves - for sale to outside people

• Fishing using buah ara as baits plus fishing nets on different locations not too far from the village
  – the lake has a rich source of freshwater fish like kelah, tenggalan, toman, sebarau, etc

• Farming on a plot of empty land near to the village
  – tapioca, sugarcane, sweet corn, green vegetables, etc

Young adult males engaged in the following activities:

• find honey, kayu garharu, rottan from the forest, etc
Objectives of the study

1. To explore OA young mothers’ perceptions of a healthy child and healthy food

2. To examine the social factors that influences the malnutrition amongst Orang Asli children
Methods

• Qualitative data collection techniques:
  - Non-participant observation (mothers & children)
  - In-depth interview (9 young women & their children)
  - Small group discussion (2 groups comprised of 4 & 3 young mothers each group)
  - Key informant – Village Headman
• Qualitative data analysis – transcripts - thematic
FINDINGS & ANALYSIS
1. General Health Status of OA Children (OA parents’ perspectives)

• The topics discussed were on:
  – a. the women's perceptions of a healthy child;
  – b. the women's perceptions of healthy (nutritious) and unhealthy (less nutritious) foods
1. OA Mothers’ Responses:

• a. A healthy child is able to play, talk, eat and sleep well and seems energetic and cheerful, while an unhealthy child were perceived as having illness and not able to run and jump like usual.

• b. Healthy and unhealthy foods were defined mostly in relation to chicken, duck, fish, fruits and vegetables from own village verses snacks brought in by the tourists.
2. Social Determinants of Children Malnutrition
1. Penetration of tourist markets into remote inland OA community

- Tourists brought in unhealthy snack – when no supply from tourist, as children change their taste buds – refuse home cook food – high risk of nutrient deficiencies – just to fill their stomach......

- challenge: 1. Go back to conventional food 2. Balance food 3. Shift the mindset of the adults and kids (rich value of goodness – local knowledge – balance diet from the village)
2. Social change lead to parenting issues

- difficult to control kids’ consumption of snack and normal meals.

- Lack of awareness of healthy food as main contributing food to children’s health and development
3. Ignorant attitude of village headman & elderly

- The village headman and several elderly men in the village do not have adequate knowledge of healthy versus unhealthy food in relation to children’s health and development.
- The Orang Asli diet is adequate if they utilise their rich food resources that are available in their traditional habitat.
4. Depressed economic situation

• Their children’s malnutrition status is directly linked to their socio-economic situation.
• The Orang Asli's access to land has been quite severely restricted by the political and economic developments around them which have displaced Orang Asli from their earlier pieces of lands.
• This community has not adapted to the modern farming and agricultural practices. As such, they are marginalised. They are not able to produce surplus for sale.
• There is a tendency for this particular community to seek for monetary assistance from close outsiders – dependency syndrome
Discussion

• 1. The tourists market has impacted the community in direct & indirect ways:
  • Direct – children
  • Indirect – parents/elders unable to manage children’s healthy food intake
• 2. Root cause: tour guide’s responsibility in providing information to tourists on dos and don’ts
• 3. Tourists’ awareness of the subjects they are visiting
• 4. Unprepared attitude and adaptability skills of OA to response positively and avoid negative impact on their children
Recommendations

• 1. An all encompassing responsible tourism programme
  – Training for tour guides
  – Information for tourist visiting OA community (dos & donts)

2. Awareness programme for OA parents in outsiders’ influence and awareness of nutritional values for children’s health & development

• 3. Support the emergence of a genuine Orang Asli leadership that can articulate the needs of their children’s health & development

• 4. Assistance from outside village are needed to help them to generate income for themselves to overcome depressed economic situation
Conclusion

• The qualitative data analysis would contribute to better understanding of Orang Asli parents’ perceptions and knowledge regarding child health and nutrition, which could then be utilised in the development of appropriate health and nutrition strategies to address child health and nutrition problems in the Orang Asli community, particularly those staying in remote inland areas.

• Implication of this study is the inter-dependent of modern snack intake & children’s health and wellbeing – children become victims of commoditization in tourism
Thank You