

# The Built Environment Selected Writings

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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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### SQUATTERS RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME IN KUALA LUMPUR

Mariana Mohamed Osman and Nurul Zahrin Maksom

#### INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted that urbanization is an inevitable phenomenon for the developing countries. Despite the economic benefits, the rapid rates of urbanization and unplanned expansion of cities have resulted in several negative consequences. Among the common problems of urbanization is the spread of squatter settlements. In Malaysia, the issue of squatters has become one of the main subjects of government focus. In Kuala Lumpur, the main factor influencing the establishment of these settlements is the inadequate supply of affordable housing. At present, Malaysia is working towards realizing the vision of becoming a developed country by the year 2020. The challenges in achieving this target are to ensure all people from every income level can afford a house, to improve the living standards of the people, to ensure balanced development and to create good image of the country. Furthermore, in the recent Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020, the vision of the city is to become a world class city by the year 2020. One of the key principles is to achieve world class living environment which promises good quality housing facilitated with adequate and high quality community facilities. In the Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020, squatter settlements were described as having unacceptable environmental condition, high risk of fire, and lack of hygiene. Furthermore, the settlements are commonly located close to or along strategic routes or beside rivers. Thus, this situation damages the image of the city and causes river pollution. Therefore, there is an urgent need to solve the issue of squatters.

#### THE PROBLEMS OF SQUATTER RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

The government of Malaysia has taken many actions to relocate hundreds of squatter families to better homes. However, after years of serious effort, the issue of squatters is still rampant in Selangor, Penang and Federal territory of Kuala Lumpur. Zero Squatter Policy was established with the aim to achieve the status of 'Zero Squatter Development' by the year 2005. Since the establishment of the policy, the City Hall of Kuala Lumpur (CHKL) has also taken numerous efforts which include granting Temporary Occupation License (TOL) and compensation, provision of public housing programs, consideration to delay resettlement process and finally by imposing forced eviction. In most resettlement cases, it is difficult to achieve mutual agreement by both parties. Most cases involved squatters claiming for propriety rights over the land and mostly involve court cases. Although compensation and public housing units are provided, squatters still refuse to resettle. The Federal Government had also had allocated a sum of RM568 million to build adequate public housing units for the resettlement of squatters. Although a lot of time, effort and capital have been spent, CHKL has yet to achieve the aim of the program. What causes the situation to occur?