Abstract

In the last ten years vast areas of land in Singapore, most of them were situated in the outskirts of the urban area, have been required for the construction of low cost housing estates, industrial estates and other infrastructures for social and economic development. This land was mainly occupied by farmers or people leading a rural way of life. For the purpose of relocation or resettlement of this displaced farming and rural settlers, the Resettlement Department since 1956 had designated large areas of available suitable land in the rural districts and has been developing them into what is known as Resettlement Areas.

This study is concerned with the investigation into the population structure and socio-economic living conditions of the two resettlement areas in Singapore, namely the 53B, Chinese farming Resettlement Area and the 74, Malay Resettlement Area. The fieldwork for this study was carried out in Oct.-Nov. 1971. Information from the completed questionnaires were calculated by the Lee Computer Centre of Nanyang University.

The two study areas did show some difference on the age-structure of the population. The Malay Resettlement Area showed a slightly higher proportion of younger population aged 20 and less and a smaller proportion of older population.

As it is generally expected, the Malay and Chinese population in these areas differed substantially in their educational attainment. The population in the Malay Resettlement Area had fairly low levels of educational attainment, considering the fact that a large proportion of them (65%) had never attended school.

Economically, the difference between Malay and Chinese did exist. The average monthly income in the 74, Resettlement Area was $200 per household, but it was notably higher in the 53B, Resettlement Area approximately $400 per household. In the 74, Malay Resettlement Area nearly all of the population was engaged in non-agricultural activities, while 50% of the total population in the 53B, Resettlement Area was engaged in agricultural activities.

In planning the resettlement of large numbers of people
into new areas, the government was well aware that there would arise immense social, cultural and psychological upheaval among those families resettled. Socio-economic problems like low income, large proportion of unemployed population, malnutrition, lack of schools and clinics, etc. still remain to be solved. It is also necessary to find ways and means of encouraging the development of the resettlement areas to keep pace with the rate of population increase there.