



**THE LOCAL AGENDA 21 (LA21) IMPLEMENTATION  
IN MIRI CITY COUNCIL**

**BY**

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for  
the degree of Master of Science in Accounting**

**Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Sustainability development is an important aspect in present globalization era. There are three elements relating to sustainability development; which are economic, social, and environment. Local Agenda 21 (LA21) is a framework without binding for action to accomplish sustainable development outputs from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The LA21 had been implemented in Malaysia since the year 2000. Four local authorities are involved in the pilot project. The local authorities are Petaling Jaya City Council (MPPJ), Kerian District Council, Kuantan Municipal Council, and Miri City Council (MCC). This study is carried out in the MCC as a case study for the implementation of LA21 which represents Malaysia local authority. The purpose of this study is to document the implementation of LA21 in Miri. The studies also looks at the activities carried out by the MCC, to find out the challenges relating to the implementation of LA21 in Miri, and to evaluate which stakeholder group that are given the priority in the LA21 implementation activities in Miri and also the attributes of the stakeholders empowerment. The data are collected through interviews and document analysis. It is found that in Miri, the activities for the LA21 implementation are more focus on the environmental activities. The research findings reveals that there are four challenges relating to LA21 implementation in Miri which are the lack of the participation and support from the community, funding or financial resource, the lack of local authority management support, and human resource policies. The finding also reveals that there is certain stakeholder prioritization, empowerment, and attributes involved in the LA21 implementation in Miri.

## خلاصة البحث

تمثل التنمية المستدامة جانباً أساسياً من الجوانب المهمة في عصر العولمة الحديث، وهناك ثلاثة مجالات تتعلق بالتنمية المستدامة، وهي: المجال الاقتصادي، والمجال الاجتماعي، وكذلك المجال البيئي. ويعتبر جدول الأعمال المحلية الحادي والعشرون (LA21) بمثابة إطار غير ملزم للعمل؛ يهدف إلى تحقيق مخرجات التنمية المستدامة المنبثقة من مؤتمر الأمم المتحدة للبيئة والتنمية لعام ١٩٩٢م. وقد تمّ تنفيذ جدول الأعمال المحلية الحادي والعشرين في ماليزيا منذ عام ٢٠٠٠م، بالتعاون مع أربع جهات محلية معنية بالمشروع التجريبي، والتي تمثلت في: مجلس مدينة بيتالانج جايا (MPPJ)، ومجلس منطقة كريان، والمجلس البلدي لكوانتان، ومجلس مدينة ميرى (MCC). وقد أجريت هذه الدراسة في مجلس مدينة ميرى، باعتبارها دراسة حالة لتنفيذ جدول الأعمال المحلية الحادي والعشرين، والذي يمثل السلطة المحلية الماليزية. إنَّ الغرض من هذه الدراسة يتمثل في تنفيذ جدول الأعمال المحلية الحادي والعشرين في مدينة ميرى، والمتعلق بالأنشطة التي يقوم بها مجلس المدينة، من أجل تحقيق التحديات التي تتعلق بتنفيذ جدول الأعمال المحلية الحادي والعشرين في مدينة ميرى، ولتقييم أي الأنشطة التي تحظى غالباً باهتمام أكبر من لدن الطائفة ذات المصالح عند تنفيذ أنشطة جدول الأعمال المحلية الحادي والعشرين في مدينة ميرى. وقد تمّ جمع البيانات باستخدام المنهج الكيفي، اعتماداً على إجراء المقابلات وتحليل الوثائق. وقد وُجد أنَّ أنشطة تنفيذ جدول الأعمال المحلية الحادي والعشرين في مدينة ميرى يركّز بصورة أكبر على الأنشطة البيئية. وكشفت نتائج البحث أنَّ هناك أربعة تحديات تتعلق بتنفيذ جدول الأعمال المحلية الحادي والعشرين في مدينة ميرى، وهي: قلة المشاركة وانعدام الدعم المجتمعي، وعدم توفر منح أو موارد مالية، بالإضافة إلى عدم وجود دعم لإدارة لدى السلطة المحلية، وكذا سياسات الموارد البشرية. وكشفت نتائج البحث أيضاً أنَّ هناك أولويات معينة تحظى بأهمية خاصة لدى كلِّ من أصحاب المصالح، والجهات المشاركة في تنفيذ جدول الأعمال المحلية الحادي والعشرين في مدينة ميرى.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion; it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Science in Accounting.

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## DECLARATION

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*In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, and the Most Merciful.*

*I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my beloved parents,  
brother, family, teachers and lecturers, and also friends.*

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

MCC	Miri City Council
MPPJ	Majlis Perbandaran Petaling Jaya
LA21	Local Agenda 21
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PSD	Public Sector Department
LGCD	Local Government & Community Development
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environment Initiatives
CBO	Community Based Organization
MHLG	Ministry of Housing and Local Government
SWRWG	Solid Waste Reduction Implementation Group
3R	Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides an overview of the present study on the implementation of local agenda 21 in a local authority in Malaysia, Miri City Council (MCC). The chapter is divided into eight sections. Section 1.1 will introduce the chapter, followed by background of the study in section 1.2, section 1.3 describes the problem statements, and the research objective and research question for this study are explained in section 1.4 and 1.5. Then, section 1.6, 1.7, and 1.8 address the motivation for this study, significance of the study, and the structure of the thesis, respectively. Finally, section 1.9 provides summary for this chapter.

### **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

According to Brundtland (1987, p. 41), the sustainability definition covers two key concepts, which are the needs of the poor citizens worldwide and the idea of limitations whereby resources are scarce and limited for most of the countries. Sustainable development is on-going processes focusing on the improvement of the economic, social, and the environment (Baker, 2006). The social aspect refers to the institution or people morals, values, and relationships. Meanwhile, the economic aspect is about the management and usage of the limited resources in the minimum way to achieve maximum output. The environmental aspect is concerned with preservation of the environment through the environmental activities and awareness programs (Ekins, 2000).

The sustainable development awareness and its achievement at the local government is based on the action plan known as Agenda 21 introduced in the Earth Summit 1992 (Baker, 2006). Agenda 21 is a global action strategy to achieve sustainable development through dealing with the current problems and cultivate efforts to address the future problems, that contains information about the nature of the problems, aims, possible approaches, and desirable policies (Grubb et al., 1993). Its adoption and implementation at the local level by the local authority is known as Local Agenda 21 (hereafter, LA21). The LA21 is a strategy that can be used by the local authority to improve their service quality to public. LA21 consists of three aspects namely social, economic, and environmental. LA21 is one of the strategies that can be used to achieve sustainable development. The LA21 requires participation and partnership from the community, local authority, private sectors, and the NGOs (Zakaria, 2007).

Prior studies on LA21 were mainly focused on its implementation in specific countries or local authorities. Most of these studies examine the factors and progress of the LA21 implementation (Hughes, 2000; Marshall, 2002; Sanchez and Lorenzo, 2008; Agger, 2010; Sancassiani, 2005). While there are many studies on the implementation of LA21 in other parts of the world, studies in Malaysia thus far limited to the community awareness towards LA21 and participation of stakeholders in LA21 (Mohamed Osman, 2008; Zulkifli, 2007; Awang Kipli, 2006). It is therefore the intention of this study to fill this gap by documenting LA21 activities as well as obtaining insights from various stakeholder groups.

Studies also have discussed several success factors and barriers to the implementation of the LA21 such as funding or financial consideration (Sanchez and Lorenzo, 2008; Marshall, 2002; Sancassiani, 2005; Mohamed Osman, 2008; Zulkifli,



2007; Awang Kipli, 2006), the local authority management support (Hughes, 2000; Sanchez and Lorenzo, 2008; Mohamed Osman, 2008; Zulkifli, 2007), the local authority employee knowledge and LA21 involvement (Marshall, 2002; Sanchez and Lorenzo, 2008; Mohamed Osman, 2008; Zulkifli, 2007), community participation and supports (Hughes, 2000; Marshall, 2002; Sanchez and Lorenzo, 2008; Agger, 2010; Sancassiani, 2005; Mohamed Osman, 2008; Zulkifli, 2007; Awang Kipli, 2006), the NGO involvement in the LA21 programs (Hughes, 2000; Marshall, 2002; Sanchez and Lorenzo, 2008; Agger, 2010; Sancassiani, 2005; Mohamed Osman, 2008; Zulkifli, 2007; Awang Kipli, 2006), and whether LA21 activities are able to create awareness (Marshall, 2002; Agger, 2010; Sancassiani, 2005; Mohamed Osman, 2008; Zulkifli, 2007; Awang Kipli, 2006). The most important factors are awareness and involvement of the stakeholders (Zakaria, 2007). Therefore, it is important for the local authority to give priority to the stakeholders' views and concerns on the LA21 implementation. These problems and concerns will be explored further in the next section.

In addition to the above, research in this area has been mainly conducted using survey method. In the present study, a qualitative method is chosen in order to provide details insight from the stakeholders. Therefore, this research aims to document the LA21 success factors as well as factors that hinder the implementation of LA21 from stakeholder perspectives. Miri City Council (hereafter, MCC) was chosen as the subject case in this study. MCC is selected because of its distinctive focus on environmental aspect of the LA21 implementation (Awang Kipli, 2006). The problem statement of this study will be presented next.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

As briefly discussed earlier, LA21 implementation encompasses several elements including community vision and partnership. The community vision is to encourage all stakeholders of a local authority to establish a similar direction, and also to identify relevant information relating to stakeholders. Meanwhile, partnership is important between the local authorities, communities, and business through dialogue, cooperation, joint analysis, planning and action (Global Development Research Centre, 2014). Effective community vision and partnership will enhance the LA21 implementation where better stakeholders' involvement enables planning and implementation of the activities and programs (Zakaria, 2007).

However, the current problem with the LA21 implementation is that less emphasis is given by organisations on partnership with stakeholder groups including community and NGO, resulting in lack of commitment and interest for the stakeholder groups to be involved in programme planning and implementation of LA21 activities (Zakaria, 2007; Nabila Ahmad, 2012). Therefore, the researcher for this study focuses on the challenges of LA21 implementation. The identification of the relevant challenges that MCC faces in LA21 implementation enables the local authority to plan its strategy and activities that could overcome those challenges. As noted in prior studies of the implementation of LA21 in Malaysia, there is still lack of community awareness and involvement in the LA21 programme (Mohamed Osman, 2008; Zakaria, 2007; Awang Kipli, 2006).

Literature has also established that there are many other factors that can hinder the LA21 implementation. The identification and awareness about those factors is crucial for improving the LA21 implementation in the local government authority. Since stakeholder participation and involvement is important an element of LA21

implementation due to the direct impact of the program on them, the stakeholders might also face certain conditions that had encouraged and discouraged them to participate in the LA21 implementation programme. It is therefore imperative to study the LA21 implementation in Miri City Council. Furthermore, no prior study that has examined the implementation of LA21 from stakeholder perspective. The following section describes the research objectives and research questions for this study.

#### **1.4 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

To achieve the goal of the research, the study develops several objectives as follows:

RO1: To document the activities involve in the implementation of LA21 in Miri.

RO2: To identify the challenges related to the implementation of LA21 in Miri.

RO3: To identify the stakeholder group that has the received the highest priority in the implementation of LA21 in Miri.

#### **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION**

In order to accomplish the objectives of this study, the following research question are set out to be answered:

RQ1: What are the activities carried out in the implementation of LA21 in MCC?

RQ2: What are the challenges faced by the MCC in implementing LA21?

RQ3: How does stakeholder influence the implementation of LA21 in MCC?

#### **1.6 MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY**

The factors that affect the LA21 implementation and the LA21 progress have been discussed by previous studies conducted by several authors (Hughes, 2000; Marshall, 2002; Sanchez and Lorenzo, 2008; Agger, 2010; Sancassiani, 2005; Mohamed

Osman, 2008; Zulkifli, 2007; Awang Kipli, 2006). These studies have discussed the factors that encourage and discourage the LA21 implementation. Studies across the globe on the LA21 implementation have suggested that there is still limited number of studies that have examined the obstacles to the implementation of LA21 from stakeholders' perspective.

Besides that, the ways in which LA21 being implemented reflects the capability of the local authority in managing the public fund and the responsibility entrusted to them (Zulkifli, 2007; Mohamed Osman, 2008). The public perception on the importance of their involvement with the activities and programs carry out by the local authority is also important (Hughes, 2000; Marshall, 2002; Sanchez and Lorenzo, 2008; Agger, 2010; Sancassiani, 2005; Mohamed Osman, 2008; Zulkifli, 2007; Awang Kipli, 2006). Thus, the researcher was motivated by the need to examine whether the stakeholders involvement plays important role in the implementation of LA21 in MCC.

Furthermore, the MCC focus on environmental aspects of LA21 implementation since the pilot project phase has motivated this study to choose MCC as a case study organization. Therefore, this supports MCC's vision to be known as 'Green and Livable City'. This study also aims to discover the factors that can improve the LA21 implementation, thus assists the achievement of the vision of MCC. Hence, to focus on the importance of the study, the following section briefly discusses on the significance of the study.

## **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study is significant as it contributes to the body of literature from various ways. Specifically, this study will contribute to the limited research on the implementation

of LA21 in Malaysia. Additionally, the findings of this study contribute to the improvement of the local authority services in general as the result of this study may provide insights on stakeholder views on other services provided by the MCC to the public. One of the distinctive contributions of this study to LA21 implementation is to document the interaction of MCC and its stakeholders.

The stakeholder theory focus on the way stakeholders managed by the organization and the importance of stakeholder relationship. Thus, it is important to gain stakeholders perspective for LA21 implementation in Miri. There are two types of stakeholders involved in this study, primary stakeholders, which are the local authority employee and the community, and secondary stakeholders which is the NGO. The community are those receive benefits of the LA21 implementation and main key person of LA21 activities and programs should be focus and the involvement is important, the local authority employees enables give perspective from those involved with LA21 Unit who plan and execute, and the NGO's are those care about Miri improvements in term of welfare and environment based on voluntary basis.

There are several importances to carry out this study from the stakeholder perspective which is the local authority management want to gain more information of the stakeholders that part of the organizations. This helps the local authority to understand and identify the roles of the stakeholders in the LA21 implementation which enables them to address the stakeholders concerns and plan appropriate strategies (Freeman, 1984). Among the benefits of obtaining stakeholders perspective is the ability to identify the requirements or necessity of certain activities from stakeholders' perspective and enables smooth the idea and implementation of the programs and activities.

According to Blair and Whitehead (1998), sometimes there is conflict between the primary and secondary stakeholders where there is challenge to balance between demands and pressures of the conflicting stakeholders. Sometimes organizations satisfy maximally the main important stakeholders and minimally satisfy the other stakeholders. The stakeholders have more power and opportunity to impact on organization decisions when the organization requires more involvement and participation from the stakeholders. The stakeholders and organization cooperation enables better environment management.

Meanwhile, M.Farell and Jones (2000) where mentioned that the role of information is important for the stakeholders management. It is important for the community and NGO receive more information from the local government; the more information will enable the community and NGO to be responsive to local government as stakeholders. Thus, based on the findings of the study, future research may focus on the solution and improvements of the challenges noted by the present study.

## **1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY**

There are six chapters covered in this study. Chapter one about the introductions, chapter two covers the literature review of previous studies, chapter three about the theoretical framework, chapter four about research methodology, chapter five provides the findings of this study, and lastly chapter six about the conclusion for this study.

In Chapter One, brief information about this study is provided by presenting the purpose of this study and the way in which this study contributes to the overall body of knowledge and specifically in the LA21 existing literature. Chapter Two

provides reviews of literature on sustainability development, local agenda 21 and local authority, LA21 in Malaysia, brief information about MCC, and LA21 implementation in MCC. Chapter Three presents theoretical framework for this study. The stakeholders' theory is discussed in the context of the implementation of the LA21.

Chapter Four is about the research methodology and the methods used in gathering data in this study. The qualitative method is chosen as the research method for this study. Chapter Five will discuss the results obtain from this research how does that answer the research questions set out in chapter one. Lastly, Chapter Six concluded all the findings of this research. It briefly discusses all the relevant information that had been provided in the previous chapters and provides conclusion or overall view about this study. This chapter also provides information about the limitation or challenges had been faced when carry out this research and also recommendation or suggestions for future research.

## **1.9 SUMMARY**

This chapter had provided brief information about the background of the study, scope of the study, contribution of the study, and the structure of this research. The next chapter is about the literature review related to this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will discuss previous literature related to sustainability development and local agenda 21. This chapter is a platform for the reader to understand certain aspects or information about the sustainability development and local agenda 21. It is divided into ninth sub-topics which are about introduction, local government, sustainable development, concepts and implementation of LA21, factors attracting the LA21 implementation, LA21 in Malaysia, information about MCC, stakeholder empowerment and lastly summary.

#### **2.2 BACKGROUND**

##### **2.2.1 The Malaysian Federation: Federal and State**

There are two levels of government in Malaysia, which are federal level and state level. The legislative power jurisdictions of both government listed as federal list, state list, and those can be performed together by both government level known as the concurrent list as mentioned in the Ninth Schedule (Singaravelloo, 2013; Phang, 1989; Hussain, 1997). Table 2.1 below shows the responsibilities under the federal list, state list, and the concurrent list.

Within the state level is the o the local government falls under the responsibility of the state government. Thus, there are three government tiers where the power of each government tier levels is recognized and respected. However, there is federal interference to certain local government issues for securing the public welfare. Also, the federal government also can interfere with states or local