

NURTURING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMMES AND POLICY IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

A healthy community requires the fulfilment of basic needs, such as accommodation, food, financial, environmental sustainability, and social justice. In this regard, the Malaysian Government launched the National Community Policy, among others, to promote access to a healthy lifestyle. Despite the existence of such a policy, there exists issues and challenges in providing adequate housing in Malaysia, which affects access to a healthy lifestyle in the community. Literature and content research on different platforms from previous reports, articles and mass media provide an overview of the need for sports community policy as a sustainable development objective for affordable housing programmes. The research will be restricted to the international and local policies applicable in recognising the right to a healthy community. This paper concludes that sports facilities should be assimilated into affordable housing programmes in fostering sustainability.

Keywords: Adequate Housing, Affordable Housing Programme and Policy, Health and Wellbeing, Healthy Community, Sports Facilities.

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PEMBENTUKAN KOMUNITI LESTARI DALAM PROGRAM DAN DASAR PERUMAHAN MAMPU MILIK DI MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

Komuniti yang sihat memerlukan keperluan asas seperti penginapan, makanan, kewangan, kelestarian alam sekitar, dan keadilan sosial yang dipenuhi. Sehubungan itu, Kerajaan Malaysia melancarkan Dasar Komuniti Negara, antara lain, untuk menggalakkan akses kepada gaya hidup sihat. Walaupun terdapat dasar sedemikian, terdapat isu dan cabaran dalam menyediakan perumahan yang mencukupi di Malaysia, yang telah menjejaskan akses kepada gaya hidup sihat dalam masyarakat. Sorotan literatur memberikan gambaran keseluruhan bahawa terdapat keperluan untuk dasar komuniti sukan dibangunkan sebagai objektif pembangunan mampan untuk program perumahan mampu milik. Penyelidikan ini akan terhad kepada dasar-dasar antarabangsa dan tempatan yang berkenaan dalam mengiktiraf hak kepada masyarakat yang sihat. Kertas kerja ini menyimpulkan bahawa kemudahan sukan harus diasimilasikan ke dalam program perumahan mampu milik dalam memupuk kelestariannya.

Kata Kunci: Perumahan yang mencukupi, Program dan Dasar Perumahan Mampu Milik, Kesihatan dan Kesejahteraan, Komuniti yang Sihat, Fasiliti Sukan.

INTRODUCTION

Any citizen would seek to live in a healthy community that is clean, safe, and of high-quality environment.¹ Justice Harun Hashim in his article once highlighted, "...It is, however, surprising that in a country like Malaysia with strong religious roots and family ties that we should be concerned with declining moral standards, but the bitter truth is that the signs of moral decay have already appeared. It may well be that if

¹ Denise Tanata Ashby and Jennifer Pharr, "What Is A Healthy Community" (Las Vegas, 2012).

we can determine the root causes of the lapses in Malaysian moral behaviour the remedies will not be difficult to find.²

On the other hand, health is a basic human right for all without regard to class, gender, political ideology, or age group.³ Peace, shelter, education, food, income, a stable ecosystem, sustainable resources, social justice, and equity are essential conditions reserved for health and universal well-being.⁴ As part of achieving its social objectives, social planning is carried out for the benefit of the community in shaping the housing sector. To guarantee the quality of the housing products in the market, the housing sector must have a standardised and sustainable housing programme that promotes a healthy community.⁵

To sustain a healthy community in the affordable housing programme, the government underlines the following basic facilities to be provided including community hall/community area, supermarket, prayer room, dining/business areas, access to disabled persons, playground/field and waste systems. These features imply that the government has always pursued an adequate housing development strategy in focusing on economic growth and community well-being. Oxford English Dictionary defines the concept of well-being as a “state of being comfortable, healthy or happy”. According to the World Health Organisation, the notion of ‘well-being’ is far more extensive than just being happy, and relates to the economic, social, and psychological gains for the community as well as to the health and quality of life.⁶ To achieve a healthy community, “sports and physical activity will become an integral part of life, with most, if not all Malaysians embracing a healthy lifestyle”, as acknowledged in the 11th

² Harun Mahmud Hashim, “Ethics in the Legal Profession: Now and the Future,” *Malayan Law Journal Articles* 2, no. 81 (1993).

³ Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, “Health Is A Fundamental Human Right,” World Health Organization, 2017. Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

⁴ World Health Organization, “Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, 1986,” *World Health Organization* (Europe: World Health Organization, 1986).

⁵ Khazanah Research Institute, “Making Housing Affordable” (Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Research Institute, 2015), XIII .

⁶ World Health Organization, “The World Health Organization Quality of Life (WHOQOL),” World Health Organization, 2012.

Malaysia Plan.⁷ Such reflection proves that it is a critical element in an affordable housing programme that enables the community to maintain a healthier lifestyle.

The first section of the study reviews selected literatures to highlight issues and challenges in adequate housing that affected the well-being of a healthy community. Content analysis will be adopted to review relevant policies and reports on human rights, specifically with regard to the right to adequate housing and health, locally and internationally. The last segment will assess the connection between the provision of sports and affordable housing programmes in fostering a healthy community. This research aims to demonstrate that sports play an important role in affordable housing initiatives to realise a sustainable healthy community.

PART I - ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN PROVIDING ADEQUATE HOUSING

In Malaysia, various initiatives have been executed by the government to support the need for adequate and affordable housing. Since independence, adequate and affordable housing has become part of the national plan for achieving the social agenda.⁸ In 2019, the Malaysian government issued a 10-year plan to deliver one million affordable housing to the people embedded in the Affordable Housing Policy (AHP). AHP is a sub-policy developed to focus on the concept of sustainable housing towards achieving the true goals of affordable homes and a healthy community. Such includes ensuring that development projects have access to recreational parks, open green public spaces and solid waste management facilities.⁹

⁷ Unit Perancang Ekonomi, “Meningkatkan Kesejahteraan Rakyat,” *Rancangan Malaysia Ke-11 (2016-2020)*, 2015.

⁸ Haidaliza Masram and Siti Hajar Misnan, “Evolution of Policy for Affordable Housing,” *International Journal of Accounting, Finance and Business (IJAFB)* 4, no. 17 (2019): 96.

⁹ Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Dasar Perumahan Mampu Milik Negara* (Putrajaya: National Housing Department, 2019); Emma Mulliner and Vida Maliene, “Criteria for Sustainable Housing Affordability,” paper presented at the *8th International Conference on Environmental Engineering (ICEE 2011)*, Vilnius, Lithuania, May 19 - 20,

Furthermore, the right to adequate housing has been recognised through the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR). The definition of “homes that meet other basic needs” has been embraced by United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT 2011).¹⁰ Although Malaysia has yet to ratify ICESR, the government's efforts to provide sustainable and adequate housing to the marginalised group cannot be ignored but its realisation remains a challenge. The next part discusses four critical issues and challenges in providing adequate housing in Malaysia.

Housing Affordability

The Edge Property reported that Malaysia has affordability issues since inflation seems to have increased property costs post-2011.¹¹ According to the MyProperty Data, the dramatic rise in property prices in the country means that Malaysians purchasing power is decreasing, as the household income has not increased over the past few years.¹²

Most houses were built to serve the higher-income community. Such has affected the lower-income group who have limited access to financing from banking institutions.¹³ The home financing programmes in Malaysia do not accommodate those who do not have access to long-term credit, because almost all must borrow from limited lenders that imposed high interest. As such, individuals may face difficulty obtaining loans either from conventional financial institutions or

2011, ISSN 2029-7106 print/ISSN 2029-7092 online, 968. There are 17 criteria adopted by the AHP in line with the criteria outlined by Emma Mulliner.

¹⁰ UN Habitat, “Fact Sheet No. 21/Rev.1: The Right to Adequate Housing,” 2011, 3.

¹¹ Bernama, “Higher Property Prices Decreasing Malaysians’ Ability to Afford Homes,” *The Edge Property*, Aug 25, 2020, <https://www.edgeprop.my/content/1727972/higher-property-prices-decreasing-malaysians-ability-afford-homes>.

¹² Bernama, “Higher Property Prices Decreasing Malaysia’s Ability To Afford Homes,” *New Strait Times*, 2020.

¹³ Bernama, “Affordability Tops Housing Issues in 2018,” *New Straits Times*, December 21, 2018, <https://www.nst.com.my/business/2018/12/442656/affordability-tops-housing-issues-2018>.

Islamic banks.¹⁴ A household's limited resources and credit are two of the greatest obstacles to housing equity among marginalised groups.

The Rising Demand for Public Housing

The above problem leads to the next issue, namely the rising demand for public housing. Given the mounting demand for supply in the public housing market, the accessibility of affordable housing has now become increasingly troublesome for low and middle-income groups.¹⁵ According to Bank Negara, the issue of affordable housing reflects mainly the supply-demand imbalances in Malaysia, which worsened during the 2012-2014 period. During these years, the new housing supply fell short of the increase in demand (average supply of 85,000 new units versus the formation of 118,000 new households).¹⁶ Some of the reports highlighted that failure to create enough affordable housing for the masses on the market has contributed to the increasing demands as well.¹⁷ Whereas IDEAS claimed that private developers do not disregard the low-end business segment due to its unprofitable implications, but rather due to a series of burdensome regulations that pose as supply-side bottlenecks, arbitrarily rendering it unfeasible.¹⁸ To address the affordability issues, government agencies should abstain

¹⁴ Muhammad Bilal, Ahamed Kameel Mydin Meera, and Dzuljastri Abdul Razak, "Issues and Challenges in Contemporary Affordable Public Housing Schemes in Malaysia: Developing an Alternative Model," *International Journal of Housing Markets and Analysis* 12, no. 6 (2019): 1008.

¹⁵ Bilal, Meera, and Abdul Razak, "Issues and Challenges in Contemporary Affordable Public Housing Schemes in Malaysia: Developing an Alternative Model." The author claimed that because of limited resources, complicated land policy and growing demand for low-cost housing especially in urban areas, Malaysia has failed to achieve its goals for low- and medium-sized housing.

¹⁶ A Jalil Hamid, "Housing: (Un)Affordability Is Key Issue," *New Straits Times*, November 26, 2017, <https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/columnists/2017/11/307562/housing-unaffordability-key-issue>.

¹⁷ NST, "Affordable Housing: Beyond Reach," *New Straits Times*, October 12, 2018, <https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/leaders/2018/10/420438/affordable-housing-beyond-reach>.

¹⁸ Carmelo Ferlito, "Malaysian Property Market: Affordability and the National Housing Policy," *IDEAS*, 2019, 20.

from directly participating in the construction of low-cost homes and instead focus on eliminating administrative hurdles, beginning with a reduction in the overt participation of government agencies.¹⁹

Government Intervention in Affordable Housing Industry

In light of the Malaysian affordable housing crisis, interventions in the housing sector were thought to provide a sufficient supply of affordable housing for a certain target income group. As a result, the government has taken steps to help with growing housing problems including in prime urban areas. Although the availability of long-term government subsidised housing places additional pressure on the government; the involvement of both public and private organisations would promote and also offers low and middle-income housing. In this regard, the Malaysian government introduced the National Community Policy in 2018. In particular, Cluster 8 of the policy states that “Sporting and recreation culture among the community members should be nurtured so that it becomes part of their lifestyle”. A healthy lifestyle leads to a healthy body and mind. Sports and recreation will also enhance cooperation among communities at every age level as well as enrich the spirit of belonging between them.

There were three (3) strategies outlined under Cluster 8 as follows:

Strategy 8.1: Establish and maintain a safe infrastructure for sports and recreational activities.

Strategy 8.2: Increase the number of appropriate sports and recreational activities.

Strategy 8.3: Enhance collaboration with strategic partners in promoting a healthy lifestyle.

In this regard, the National Community Policy can become the backbone for any development plan to achieve the greater goal of a healthy society. At the same time, Planning Standard and Guidelines (Garis Panduan Perancangan) developed by PLANMalaysia has also advised that sports facilities be incorporated as part of the development plan in a community centre.

¹⁹ Tan Xue Ying, “Government Should Reduce Direct Involvement in Affordable Housing Projects — IDEAS,” *The Edge Market*, 2018.

According to Haidaliza and Siti Hajar, with recent market pressures and affordability constraints, the government must intervene to encourage greater private developer participation in affordable housing schemes.²⁰ This public-private partnership development is also a type of government intervention in providing affordable housing programmes.

This may be accomplished by reducing taxes or subsidisation²¹, direct ownership and/or interest in investment and the provision of goods and services²², or administrative and regulatory controls.²³ Another alternative intervention by the government in assisting the market is by way of reducing housing price costs²⁴ where the government has introduced stamp duty exemption on transfer instruments in order to boost housing ownership amongst the first home buyers for property prices up to RM300,000.²⁵

Although government policy is now correlated with an existing housing programme that defines, classifies, and specifies components, no provision in the law defines, classifies, and specifies a sense of privacy, security, and affordability when it comes to obtaining a home. This leads us to the next issue of safety issues and unhealthy environment.

²⁰ Masram and Misnan, "Evolution of Policy for Affordable Housing."

²¹ Abdullateef Olanrewaju et al., "Market Analysis of Housing Shortages in Malaysia," *Procedia Engineering* 164, no. June (2016): 322.

²² Azlan Raofuddin Nuruddin, Syed Putra Syed Abu Bakar, and Mastura Jaafar, "Unveiling the Challenges Faced by Malaysian Housing Developers through Government Policy Changes," *Journal of Construction in Developing Countries* 20, no. 2 (2015): 49.

²³ Syafiee Shuid, "Low Income Housing Provision in Malaysia: The Role of State and Market," *HSA Conference 2009*, 2009, 10.

²⁴ Reena Kaur Bhatt, "Latest Stamp Duty Charges, RPGT, Legal Fees & 4 Other Costs to Consider before Buying a House in 2020," Iproperty.com, n.d. The phrase "housing price costs" applies to the costs associated with the purchasing of a home, such as stamp duty, legal fees, capital gains tax, and property agent fees.

²⁵ Zailan Mohd Isa, "Developing Financing & Funding Opportunities For Affordable Housing – The Malaysian Experience," in *9th Annual Affordable Housing Projects Conference* (Singapore: Marcusevans, 2018).

Safety Issues and Unhealthy Environment

Safety and health are critical factors of daily life in order to ensure a higher level of security and quality of life in public housing.²⁶ This situation has a direct effect on the overall standard of affordable housing and living in the community. According to Ramli, the unswerving results of poor housing such as structural decay and collapsing building fragments may cause health problems and mental distress.²⁷

However, living in public housing, the common situation faced by the residents includes leaking pipes, failure of the water supply system, cracking in external walls, dampness to concrete walls, and faulty door handles has led to a dirty and unhealthy environment.²⁸ A recent incident was reported in which a resident threw trash from a second-floor balcony. The trash struck and killed another resident. It was a widespread practise and attitude among inhabitants to throw trash from the upper level.²⁹ Some of the residents claimed that this behaviour was due to the poor design of public housing. There was no designated wastage area on every floor, unlike other high-end apartments or

²⁶ Mohd Nasir Selamat et al., “Keselamatan Persekitaran Perumahan Dalam Kalangan Remaja Di Kawasan Program Perumahan Rakyat (PPR),” *Malaysian Journal of Society and Space* 14, no. 4 (2018): 116.

²⁷ A Ramli, Z A Akasah, and M I M Masirin, “Factors Contributing Building Safety and Health Performance of Low Cost Housing in Malaysia,” *Journal of Safety Engineering* 2013, no. 1 (2013): 1.

²⁸ Hamzah Abdul-Rahman et al., “Defects in Affordable Housing Projects in Klang Valley, Malaysia,” *Journal of Performance of Constructed Facilities*, 2012; Ahmad Ezanee Hashim et al., “Managing Facilities on Malaysia Low-Cost Public Residential for Sustainable Adaptation,” *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 168 (2015): 52–60, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.10.209>.

²⁹ “Common for People in PPR to Toss Things from Upper Levels | New Straits Times | Malaysia General Business Sports and Lifestyle News,” n.d.; “Tenants’ Poor Attitude the Cause of Many PPR Problems | The Star Online,” n.d.; “Bilakah Kisah PPR Akan Berakhir?,” n.d.; Bernama, “Tabiat Buang Sampah PPR Menjangkau Isu Kesedaran Sivik,” *Free Malaysia Today*, 2019.

condominiums.³⁰ In response, the residents have requested continuous enforcement and monitoring from the authorities.³¹

Social problems amongst residents

Other factors influencing the community's well-being and quality of life will be their living conditions. A variety of socioeconomic problems affecting youths living in public housing have tainted the housing conditions as far as health and safety are concerned.

Institute of Social Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia in 2007 reported on the involvement of teenagers in social problems that have attracted much public uproar.³² Recent research by Junaidi confirmed that even after almost a decade, social issues persist in public housing (such as PPR Subang Valley), whereby 65.8 percent of respondents agree that social problems are rampant in the community.³³ Incidents of loitering, drug abuse, theft, obscenity, smoking, gambling, vandalism, running away from home, and drinking alcohol were haunting the teenagers living in the area.

Agensi Anti-Dadah Kebangsaan has also urged the government to establish a special law to recognise the role of parents in taking proper care of their children from being caught up with social issues.³⁴ Furthermore, some tenants illegally sublet public houses and caused overcrowding and occupation of illegal immigrants. These were arguably done by tenants who are no longer staying in public housing,

³⁰ "Why Poor Flat Dwellers Simply Throw Trash | Malaysia | Malay Mail," n.d.

³¹ "Common for People in PPR to Toss Things from Upper Levels | New Straits Times | Malaysia General Business Sports and Lifestyle News."

³² Zamree Yaakob Ezhar Tamam, Jusang Bolong, Mohamad Rezal Hamzah, "Masalah Sosial Dan Kesedaran Sivik Generasi Muda Daripada Keluarga Berpendapatan Rendah Di Bandar," 2007.

³³ Junaidi Awang Besar et al., "Impak Sosioekonomi Dan Politik Program Perumahan Rakyat Lembah Subang, Selangor," *Akademika* 88, no. 1 (2018): 181–92.

³⁴ MalaysiaKini, "58% PPR Dan PA Di KL Jadi Lokasi Paling Berisiko Tinggi Penagihan Dadah.," MalaysiaKini, n.d.

hence contributing to the social problem in the PPR community.³⁵ All of the factors highlighted above have contributed to the unhealthy living conditions in the community.

PART II - RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING AND HEALTH

Fundamental human rights principles have been recognised as universal whereby international human rights law guarantees such liberties. No one in this world has the right to be refused their legal, political, fiscal, social, or cultural rights. As a component of economic, social, and cultural rights, individuals should have access to adequate housing.³⁶

Housing is a critical social determinant of public health. In the 19th century, health issues concentrated on poor hygiene, overcrowding, and insufficient ventilation in order to contain infectious diseases and fire hazards to avoid injuries. Today, public health can be used to improve housing standards through the creation and enforcement of housing guidelines and codes, the implementation of “Healthy Homes” initiatives to improve indoor and outdoor environmental quality, the assessment of housing conditions, and the advocacy for healthy, affordable housing.³⁷ It is crucial to address inadequate housing in order to achieve public health.³⁸

Right to Adequate Housing

Article 17(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) stated that: “*Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as*

³⁵ “Jujurlah, PPR Bukan Lubuk Pelaburan!,” Utusan Online, 2019; “Pulau Pinang Bergelut Masalah Penyewa PPR Salah Guna Rumah | The Malaysian Insight,” n.d.; Nik Hafizul Baharuddin, “PPR ‘Dilacur’ Kepada Warga Asing?,” Utusan Online, 2019.

³⁶ CESR, “What Are Economic, Social and Cultural Rights? ,” Centre for Economic and Social Rights, n.d.

³⁷ James Krieger and Donna L Higgins, “Housing and Health : Time Again for Public Health Action,” *American Journal of Public Health* 92, no. 5 (2002): 2–4.

³⁸ Xavier Bonnefoy, “Inadequate Housing and Health: An Overview,” *International Journal of Environment and Pollution* 30, no. 3–4 (2007): 411–29.

in association with others and that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.” It is submitted that Article 17 of UDHR provides a baseline for the recognition of the right to property. While in *Howard v. United Kingdom* (1987) 52 DR 198, the court determined that the extent of enjoyment of one’s property rights includes the freedom to live in one’s own home.

Enjoyment of the right to property and inclusive homes should be upheld in conjunction with the right to standard living under Article 25 (1) of the UDHR which states: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and of his family.” Article 11 (1) of ICESCR further emphasises the recognition of “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.”

The United Nations identifies adequate housing as a fundamental human right, defining it as: “*the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity.*”³⁹ The ICESCR clarifies these rights extend to tenure, security, adequate conditions, protection from forced eviction and accessibility to affordable housing. However, without the feature of affordable housing, the right to adequate housing cannot be enjoyed.

In line with the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of providing adequate, safe and affordable housing for all, genuine political commitment needs to be nurtured to ensure the long-term and inclusive solution is sustainable. Housing is not just a commodity; it is a human right. It should become the uppermost of the world’s political agenda by implementing the right to adequate housing and delivering affordable housing programmes to be accessible to society.

The Quality Standard of Adequate Housing

In 2015, the Millennium Development Goals Report described that approximately one billion people in the world are forced to live in slums due to their poverty and their lack of decent housing. The high

³⁹ UN Habitat, “The Right to Adequate Housing,” *United Nations Human Settlements Programme*, 2011, 3.

figures demonstrate the failure to ensure adequate and affordable housing on a large scale, owing to the difficulty of size, place, type, efficiency, and prices to be offered to society. As such, adequate housing is in urgent need, as it benefits all homeowners and their families, as well as the community. Without systematic and rigorous action from all interested stakeholders, including policymakers at all levels, this figure would continue to rise affecting the community's well-being.

UN-Habitat defines 'adequate housing' that meets the necessary quality must have more than four walls and a roof.⁴⁰ The following criteria must be observed before a shelter can be deemed 'adequate' as follows:

(a) Security of tenure where a shelter is insufficient if inhabitants lack legal defence from involuntary evictions, violence, and other risks;

(b) Infrastructure to survive: Housing is insufficient if its residents lack access to clean drinking water, proper sanitation, electricity and waste disposal;

(c) Affordability: Housing is insufficient if its cost jeopardises or deprives the residents' enjoyment of other human rights;

(d) Health and safety: Housing is insufficient if it does not ensure physical safety or proper living conditions, as well as insulation from the cold, damp, fire, fog, wind, and other health risks and structural hazards;

(e) Accessibility: Housing is insufficient if the basic interests of poor and vulnerable communities are not considered;

(f) Location: Housing is insufficient if it is geographically isolated from work opportunities, health care providers, education centres, and other social infrastructure, or if it is located in polluted or unsafe environments; and lastly

⁴⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "The Right to Adequate Housing," Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, June 20, 2022, [https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Right to adequate housing.pdf](https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Right%20to%20adequate%20housing.pdf).

(g) Cultural adequacy: Housing is insufficient if it does not value and include cultural practices.

According to Habitat for Humanity's research, poor housing quality, including living in unhealthy or unsanitary housing, is associated with increased mental and behavioural difficulties in children and adolescents. Further, poor housing quality is also associated with lower academic achievement in older children. The burden of living in substandard housing or relocating often took a toll on parents, resulting in depression and anxiety symptoms.⁴¹ The standard of housing in which children live has a significant impact on their welfare, educational development, and general well-being.

Due to such circumstances, inadequate accommodation has led to forced evictions and homelessness, which has a detrimental effect on the younger generation. Such includes impairing their growth, development, and enjoyment of a broad spectrum of human rights, including the right to education, health, and personal protection.⁴² Additionally, the location of houses is crucial for ensuring the young generation's access to education centres, healthcare, and other essential services. When the locations are located far from essential services and transportation is inaccessible or unaffordable, it makes it difficult for children to access those services.

This situation could lead to an initial conclusion that quality and affordable housing is connected to informal urbanisation and enable the various social-economic segments of the population to realise their right to adequate housing. In safeguarding the quality standard of living, the right to adequate and affordable housing should remain a fundamental agenda of every government in ensuring the well-being of the younger generation.

⁴¹ "Poor Quality Housing Is Tied to Children's Emotional and Behavioral Problems," MacArthur Foundation, (Grantee Publications, Housing Policy Research), August 29, 2013, <https://www.macfound.org/press/publications/poor-housing-tied-childrens-emotional-and-behavioral-problems/>.

⁴² UN Habitat, "The Right to Adequate Housing," *UN-HABITAT*, 2011, 18.

Right to Health

According to World Health Organisation, being healthy is “a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”.⁴³ Regardless of race, sex, political beliefs, or economic and social circumstances, the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being.

In 1986, the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion emphasised the importance of stability, shelter, education, food, income, a healthy ecosystem, sustainable energy, social justice, and equality as basic requirements and resources for a healthy environment. Health improvement requires a firm basis of these fundamental basics and it is a critical prospect for social, economic, and personal growth, as well as a critical component of life satisfaction. Community living will improve through development policy where health equality promotion can be achieved and the gaps in current health status can be closed to ensure that all residents have fair access to opportunities and services to reach their maximum health potential. This involves establishing a stable basis in a safe community, gaining access to knowledge, developing life skills, and developing resources to make healthier decisions. Individuals cannot reach their maximum fitness capacity until they can exert control over the factors that influence their health.⁴⁴

Along with mental health benefits, neighbourhood environments may have an impact on physical health. Certain affordable housing solutions will alleviate depression, improve access to amenities, and result in significant health gains by providing households with access to neighbourhood facilities. The expansion of social housing programmes to build safer communities that incorporate urban planning policies that have characteristics conducive to a healthier lifestyle – either through the revitalisation of existing neighbourhoods or through the creation of new neighbourhoods with the desired characteristics. This amenity can result in positive public health

⁴³ World Health Organization, “Constitution of World Health Organisation,” 1948.

⁴⁴ Organization.

outcomes, for instance, if green spaces promote sports activities in community facilities as part of affordable housing initiatives.⁴⁵

The Nexus between the Right to Adequate Housing and the Right to Health

The international community highlighted the availability of housing at affordable prices in cities as a human rights issue on various occasions. When the Habitat Agenda (1996)⁴⁶ and New Urban Agenda (2016)⁴⁷ were declared, more than 170 nations reaffirmed their commitment to the promotion of full and progressive realisation of the right to adequate housing.⁴⁸ Governments must create a favourable environment to achieve this ambitious goal. In other words, relevant policy, institutional, financial, and regulatory frameworks must be in place to allow adequate and affordable housing for individuals and households.⁴⁹

The dynamic connection between housing and mental wellbeing is a challenge for the live-in affordable housing initiative, which relies on social housing services to have a significant effect on the community's mental health. Built environment and housing surroundings including advances in employment and education benefits, all have an impact on citizens' mental health. Social housing providers may be well-positioned to alleviate housing-related stress by collaborating with

⁴⁵ J. Lubell, Rosalyn Crain, and Rebecca Cohen, "Framing the Issues - the Positive Impacts of Affordable Housing on Health," *Center for Housing Policy*, 2007, 19–20.

⁴⁶ HABITAT, "The Habitat Agenda Goals and Principles, Commitments and the Global Plan of Action," *United Nations Centre For Human Settlements*, 2003, 1–109.

⁴⁷ United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), *New Urban Agenda, A/RES/71/256* (New York: United Nations, 2017).

⁴⁸ Claudio Acioly, "Why the Provision of Affordable Housing Is Necessary for the Realization of Human Rights in Cities in the 21st Century," United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat), accessed September 21, 2020, <https://newcities.org/the-big-picture-why-the-provision-of-affordable-housing-is-necessary-for-the-realization-of-human-rights-in-cities-in-the-21st-century/#f1>.

⁴⁹ Shahrul Mizan Ismail, "Adequate Housing Dilemma."

other partners to offer programmes that enable tenants to exercise greater autonomy in these areas. Providing decent accommodation and prompt maintenance continues to be a critical environment where social housing providers may have a positive effect on health, in addition to funding for broader determinants of wellness.⁵⁰

A significant health determinant may be the high prices of accommodation that does not commensurate with the community income. Financial stress has been associated with unfortunate outcomes in wellbeing, including death, higher chronic disease incidence and depressive symptoms.⁵¹ Adequate housing is associated with advanced facilities that can contribute to health benefits, such as sports and recreation that create a healthy lifestyle. The current upsurge in housing prices may pose health risks including forcing drawbacks between housing costs and paying for other medications that promote goods and services such as medicines and healthy food); causing high levels of stress and emotional distress which may increase due to people's financial constraints.⁵²

An adequate and affordable housing programme will function as a 'vaccine' to the residents as they have a reasonable amount of money to invest in food and healthcare expenses. With acceptable shelter, households face fewer trade-offs between primary healthcare and housing costs. Numerous findings have shown that families who live in adequate and affordable housing will devote more than double as much of their income to healthcare and insurance and are far less likely to forego necessary medical appointments and prescriptions due to financial constraints.⁵³

⁵⁰ Eleanor Holding et al., "Exploring the Relationship between Housing Concerns, Mental Health and Wellbeing: A Qualitative Study of Social Housing Tenants," *Journal of Public Health*, 2019, 18.

⁵¹ Craig Evan Pollack, Beth Ann Griffin, and Julia Lynch, "Housing Affordability and Health among Homeowners and Renters," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 39, no. 6 (2010): 516.

⁵² A.A Bujang et al., "Factors Influencing the Housing Affordability Stress Among Bumiputera," *International Journal of Real Estate Studies* 11, no. 4 (2017): 125.

⁵³ Lubell, Crain, and Cohen, "Framing the Issues - the Positive Impacts of Affordable Housing on Health"; Pollack, Griffin, and Lynch, "Housing Affordability and Health among Homeowners and Renters."

PART III – INCLUSION OF SPORTS FACILITIES IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMMES

Housing and healthy environment are complex and interdependent; the intrinsic links between individuals and the environment form the basis of a socioecological approach to health. The guiding philosophy for the world, its nations, territories, and cultures must be to promote mutual conservation - to look out for one another, communities, and the natural environment. Changes in lifestyle, adequate shelter, jobs, and recreation greatly affect community well-being. The manner in which the community organises its efforts should promote the growth of a healthy society. Health promotion enhances living and working conditions.

Encouraging physical exercise and supplying nutritious meals will help decrease the prevalence of cardiovascular disease.⁵⁴ Lack of physical exercise and dietary food are the main reasons for the increased likelihood of heart failure, heart attacks, and death.⁵⁵ Providing easy access to shared infrastructure, such as sports and recreational facilities, and integrating them into a neighbourhood's design is frequently conducive to enhancing the community's well-being.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ministry of Health, Academy of Medicine, and National Heart Association of Malaysia, "Primary & Secondary Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease 2017," *Ministry of Health*, 2017.

⁵⁵ Annie Freeda Cruz, "Heart at Work," *Malaysianheart.org*, 2010.

⁵⁶ UK Green Building Council, "Health and Wellbeing in Homes," 2016.

Figure 1: The 17 urban and social functions that should be accomplished within neighbourhood



Source: Pozoukidou and Chatziyiannaki.⁵⁷

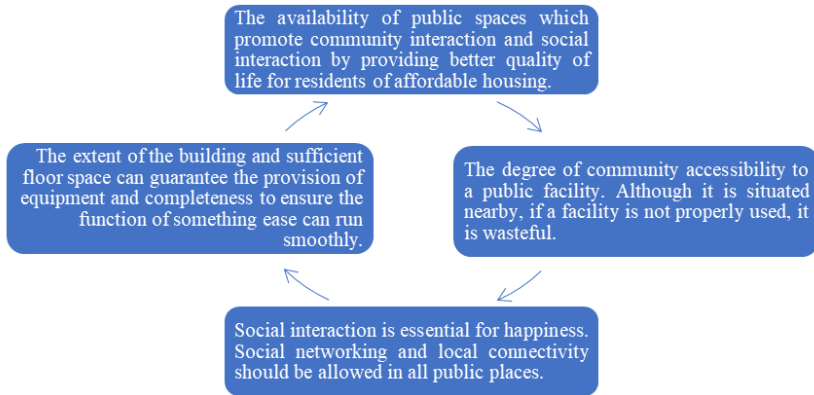
The above Figure 1 depicts the future Melbourne Plan, which places a premium on suburban density and suggests setting the bar for higher-density housing requirements. The Plan encompasses the central business district, as well as the inner and outer suburbs. Additionally, it identifies the opportunities for infill and densification through renewal initiatives in suburban neighbourhoods, activity centres, jobs and innovation hubs, and train stations connected to the primary public transportation network. Finally, the Plan encourages the advancement of a wide range of uses on the local level, including retail, education, leisure, sports recreation and social events.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Goergia Pozoukidou and Zoi Chatziyiannaki, "15-Minute City: Decomposing the New Urban Planning Eutopia," *Sustainability* 13 (January 18, 2021): 928, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13020928>.

⁵⁸ Pozoukidou and Chatziyiannaki.

Dasar Rumah Mampu Milik outlines some criteria for the development of affordable housing programme as illustrated below:

Figure 2.



The above criteria stated in the Melbourne Plan were in line with the Malaysian *Dasar Rumah Mampu Milik's* objective of outlining the requirements and characteristics of sustainable, liveable, and healthy housing construction in order to enhance people's quality of life at an affordable price.

According to Khazanah Research Institute Report, the ability to differentiate between poverty challenges and business problems in the housing market is critical for developing the appropriate policies and strategies.⁵⁹ The former advocates for more government intervention in directly meeting the housing needs of the appropriate target populations, while the latter allows the government to resolve business vulnerabilities to ensure that the housing market operates efficiently. The critical aspect of policy development would be to maintain a clear line of demarcation between business and social provisions.

To ensure that all social groups of the analysed environment have access to sports and recreation facilities, the selection of sports and

⁵⁹ Dr Suraya Ismail, *Rethinking Housing: Between State, Market and Society* (Khazanah Research Institute, 2019), viii.

recreation facilities on offer should be extensive.⁶⁰ With regards to persons with disabilities, compared to the general population, individuals with impairments are more likely to develop chronic and secondary health issues. Individuals with disabilities face significant barriers to engaging in health-promoting activities due to physical and social contexts that limit exercise and recreation possibilities, such as inaccessible parks, trails, walkways, and fitness facilities.

People with physical/mobility challenges are also more likely to miss opportunities to be physically active than adults without disabilities, and they have greater difficulties participating in physical activity due to physical impediments in the built environment. Fitness facilities and other locations, such as community parks, playgrounds, and ball fields used for competitive games and sports, frequently lack accessibility (i.e., uneven terrain, grass, or gravel surfaces), limiting the participation opportunities for individuals with physical/mobility disabilities.⁶¹

CONCLUSION

A solid public infrastructure is required to foster an interconnected and thriving neighbourhood community. If affordable housing is provided without regard for the surrounding community's amenities, distressed communities will continue to exist. The socioeconomic issues that contribute to community instability will be exacerbated if the quantity of housing is prioritised over its quality. The availability of community services such as community centres and areas for engaged citizens such as open spaces, multipurpose centres, community parks, sports and fitness centres, and religious sites can facilitate community empowerment. As a result, policymakers should consider incorporating

⁶⁰ Ewa Kruszyńska, Kruszyńska, and Joanna Poczta, "Difficulties Limiting Access to Sports and Recreational Facilities in the City in the Perceptions of Service Users. Sports and Recreational Infrastructure Management Policy-Poznan Case Study," n.d., <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17051768>.

⁶¹ James H. Rimmer et al., "Fitness Facilities Still Lack Accessibility for People with Disabilities," *Disability and Health Journal* 10, no. 2 (April 1, 2017): 214–21, <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.DHJO.2016.12.011>.

sport facilities into affordable housing programmes, as healthy homes will promote a healthy community leading towards a sustainable nation.