

EAROPH 43rd Regional Seminar – An EAROPH-IFHP Joint Conference
on

“Managing Urban Growth and Its Challenges”

Bandar Seri Begawam, Brunei, 8-10 November 2011
Hosted by the Department of Town and Country Planning
Ministry of Development, Brunei Darussalam

**PUBLIC HOUSING with COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT under SAM
ENHANCES RESIDENT FAMILIES’ QUALITY OF LIFE**

By KC Leong
EAROPH Honorary President &
President of EAROPH’s APIGAM
(Asia Pacific Institute for Good Asset Management)

SYNOPSIS

Brunei Darussalam, a small country located in the northwest coastal area of Borneo, is one of the oldest kingdoms in the Southeast Asian region. With a land area of 5,765 sq km, it has a population of around 408,000 (2011 estimate). Despite its size, Brunei’s social and economic progress has been impressive. In the global arena, it has a competitive edge due to the support of technology and infrastructure. With a per capita GDP way above most other Asean nations, Brunei is a wealthy country. In the 2010 Human Development Report released by UNDP, Brunei scored an HD Index of 0.805 and thus is included in the list of forty-two “Very High Development” countries.

Under the National Housing Scheme, citizens without land can buy houses at subsidized rates with a pay back period of 20 to 30 years. Additionally, the government also provides accommodation to its employees at low monthly rentals. For government employees who wish to build their own houses or acquire ready-built homes, interest free loans are available.

The March 16, 2008 edition of the Brunei Times published an article entitled: ***a Bruneian’s Castle: National Housing***, with a catchy photographic caption declaring: ***“A roof over one’s head: Brunei’s Public Housing programmes have enabled thousands of Bruneians to own houses, something which many citizens of other countries could only dream of.”***

On March 18, 2011, the Brunei Times announced the ***Lambak Kanan First Vertical Housing Site with Eight Design Proposals for Vertical Housing Development Schemes***. The local paper reported that the ministry, through the Housing Development Department, hopes this initiative will “overcome the issue of limited land and shorten the waiting list for public housing.” With this presentation, this author hopes to demonstrate that public housing is more than **“a roof over one’s head”**.

Sustainable public housing includes proper Asset Management. Otherwise in 20 or 30 years when the properties are paid off, they can end up as “lemons”! Since the government has already provided the subsidies, it may not be able to continue to manage the properties properly for their entire life span. Sustainable public housing includes community development and the residents need to be involved – not only in the asset management of the properties, but some of them should also be involved in the maintenance work and other essential social services, such as operating a day-care centre in order to enable young housewives to take up employment to increase their household income.

This paper will discuss how public housing and community development can work best with the involvement of the residents, who can earn an income from the public housing estate. Senior citizens, retirees, students and housewives can all take pride in systemic asset management that encompasses community development through training provided by the Housing Development Department. It is a positive way of enhancing the quality of life for the resident community. Systemic Asset Management will empower the residents to take care for their own assets and the well-being of their community.

A Special Note from the Author

This paper was originally prepared for the 42nd Regional Seminar on “*Affordable Housing – From Nomadic Life to City Life*” and EAROPH ExCo Meeting held on 24-25 September 2009, Parliament House, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The title of the paper was “*Sustainable Housing & Community Development— Opposite Sides of the Same Coin*”. The author was KC Leong.

Since then, it has been substantially revised and re-written for this 43rd EAROPH Regional Seminar scheduled for 9-10 November 2011 in Brunei.

Unfortunately, KC has to be away in Melbourne on long medical-leave. Much to his disappointment he will not be able to share his thoughts with you, on a subject about which he has immense interest. This paper entitled “Public Housing with Community Development under SAM Enhances Resident Families’ Quality of Life” forms part of the Application Section of his second book entitled “Systemic Asset Management (SAM) for Human Settlement Sustainability – A Guide for Management of Infrastructure by Government Agencies.”

Much to KC’s delight, Kerry McGovern has agreed to present this paper. Kerry being the President of EAROPH Australia has been working with KC on many SAM workshops and conferences in Australia and across the EAROPH region.

Kerry is a certified practising accountant and auditor by profession and practises as a Public Sector Asset, Governance and Financial Management Specialist with the company *K McGovern & Associates*, Australia. She is working closely with KC especially on the section related to Asset Accounting and Financial Management in APIGAM. You will be well enlightened by Kerry with her rich experience and vivid presentation.

KC Leong

1 Introduction

- 1.1 When public housing estates are sustainable, they become an essential part of basic infrastructure “ASSETS” that support the wellbeing of low-income people living in a human settlement. Whether these sustainable public housing estates are in a neighbourhood, a town, a city, or even in a remote rural area, they house a sustainable community established by the inhabitants living in a particular form of human settlement.
- 1.2 Housing, therefore, is a system; so is a human settlement that incorporates housing and other infrastructure systems to support the communities that form a society. Like all living systems in this Planet Earth, humans must live and work in a community in order to collectively establish social values and discharge responsibilities for the wellbeing of a society. Community is also a system; only it is perceptibly less tangible. Because a community is made up of humans, who are highly reactive to environmental, social and economic external factors — unlike public housing estates, which are, at best, material assets that do not react — therefore the human community is a much more complex system.
- 1.3 If housing is to be sustainable, it is never developed for its own sake, *per se*, but to provide a reliable and affordable service to the people seeking housing. Whether it is private or public housing, it leads to the evolvment of a community. With the latter, it is even more desirable to have this at the outset — because the head of each household, male or female must work for the government, which is the umbrella organization.
- 1.4 Over the last two decades people in UK have been increasingly realizing that they are not living ‘within their means’. In order to carry out sustainable housing development, the UK Government accepted a set of five principles as the basis for achieving the goals of housing sustainability:
 - “Living within environmental limits;
 - “Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
 - “Achieving a sustainable economy;
 - “Using sound science responsibly; and
 - “Promoting good governance.”

(Justine Cooper and Keith Jones, 2008)
- 1.5 Unfortunately, most government agencies around the world, including many in the UK, continue to treat housing and community development as two separate and distinctive objects within the narrow confines of ‘*object thinking*.’ This fragmentary approach has made public housing — even in the form of community housing or social housing — unsustainable; much to the detriment of the community in that housing estate, especially the poor.

- 1.6 This paper is prepared to illustrate to government policy-makers to establish public systemically integrated housing & community development for the enhancement of the residents' quality of life. This is done through applying the principles and practice of Systemic Asset Management (SAM). "*Public housing is more than a roof over one's head!*"

2 Public Housing Estates and the Well-being of its Residents as a Community

- 2.1 The "3-E" Sustainability under SAM stands for Environmental Integrity, Social Equity and Economic Prosperity. The current public housing approach pays little attention to the attainment of these three bottom-line aspects of sustainability. The basic problem lies in the attitude of providing housing purely as a form of building objects – without defining the *housing service's objectives*, which must go beyond the physical objects. Worst still, the department officers responsible for the housing planning and designs may just simply pull out the many standard housing plans in the drawers and put up a housing scheme with little change in the form of design improvements to include the 3-E aspects. As there are no housing and community social experts and socio-economists to interact with them, they provide another group of mundane government servant housing *quarters*. They do not raise the issues of environmental, social and economic wellbeing of government staff.
- 2.2 Consequently, there is no attempt to create public housing that positively impacts the lives of public servants' family members with regard to opportunity for: employment; learning and re-training; involvement in economic and social participations, including the establishment of a safe living environment, with optimal control over physical hazards, crime, nuisance, health risks or social risks, such as drugs. Since the government does not consider the importance of these social problems the policy-makers in the system are not motivated to exploit this kind of community development in concert with public housing.

3 The Impact of Pragmatic Public Housing Policy on the Well-Being of Households

3.1 Public Housing Affordability

- (1) The quality of housing is one of the most decisive factors in determining whether or not a household is poor.

- (2) Cost of housing is often the single largest expense for most households; and generally if this exceeds 30% of a household income, this family will not be able to meet other essential household needs – such as children’s education, adequate food supply, clothing, health-care, mobility, recreation and touring, insurances and others. In other words, this family will be struggling to maintain a level of normally expected quality of life.
- (3) In Australia, with easier access to home ownership under its social housing programme, policy-makers are able to help low-income households in the public service to trade-off after-housing income in the early years for greatly reduced housing cost in later years.
- (4) This form of retirement saving provides income security for the households without depending on their children’s disposable income when they grow up. Conversely, housing security and affordability in later years also enables income transfer from parents to children when household costs are highest for them to support their young families

*(National Community Housing Forum (NCHF) Seminar:
www.nchf.org.au/downloads/housing_sustain_comm.pdf)*

- (5) In the same NCHF paper it is reported that low-income people in either social home ownership or social rental housing in the public housing sector have ‘life tenure’ which is strongly associated with a positive quality of life. However, people in private rental are deprived of security of tenure hence they are least feeling secure and find it hard to enhance their ‘quality of life’.
- (6) In developed countries, such as Australia, private rental costs are too high. Even with the help of Government Rent Assistance, many low-income households live in poverty. Although in Australia the government has a social housing programme to protect these low-income tenants through the provision of affordable rents, it has no control over rent increase. Consequently, with every dollar earned by any member of the household, 25-30% of it is taken up by the increased rent. Under this poverty trap, many low-income residents are not able to remain in the workforce and contribute to the well-being of the society.
- (7) In any countries, the government of course is the one organization that has the largest employment workforce; it therefore can and should provide a social-housing programme to take care of its low-income group with regard to housing affordability without affecting the basic quality of life. In the private sector, it is a different social situation, the government must also step its efforts in strengthening its social-housing assistance programme with the support of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This is a different matter; which is outside the scope of this paper.

3.2 Physical Quality in Public Housing

- (1) Inadequate physical condition in housing, especially multi-household dwellings is also a major factor that determines whether a household is poor. Poor architectural design comes in many forms, such as: inadequate living spaces; lack of basic storage space; lack of basic environment for raising children, including spaces for them to do school home-work; poor natural ventilation; poor noise control; poor quality of building materials use; poor design quality in the provision of toilet, bathroom, laundry and kitchen amenities; poor design for general cleanliness upkeep; poor design concerning public security; etc.
- (2) Poor layout planning in a public housing estate often results in physical hazards, crime, nuisance, health risks or social risks, such as drugs.
- (3) Due to inadequate research and planning studies in public housing programmes, there are insufficient common areas in public housing estates for community interaction and strengthening of social ties. The estates also lack facilities for childcare, simple skills training, garbage holding rooms—let alone for refuse sorting for recycling, etc.
- (4) Poorly designed buildings in public housing fail to meet the needs of low-income households. The condition of public housing in Tanzania as reported by Felician Komu (2008) reveals that the floor space is too small to accommodate the average size of a family – consequently they don't have sufficient living space for a family of 7 (mother and father, 3 children, grandfather and grandmother), sharing a small toilet with a water tank for bathing and washing of clothes; insufficient storage space, insufficient areas to do school home work, and no privacy for the teenage children—not just the adults. Due to lack of space, the parents can't produce handicrafts to earn extra income. Such inhuman conditions are also found in many public housing estates in Asia.

(Felician Komu, 2008,
Quality Housing and its influence on House Consumers' Behaviour,
COBRA 2008)
- (5) Poor maintenance of buildings and common areas causes physical hazards, water damages from deterioration of building components and plumbing, and fire risks from poor electrical wiring system design and installation without adequate checking and maintenance.
- (6) Commercial contractors from outside, who have very little incentives to provide proper services, usually carry out Building maintenance. This has a psychological impact on the community with the result that they tend to litter and irresponsibly cause damage to the buildings and facilities.
- (7) Such inadequate housing conditions limit school children's ability to study; consequently, most of them don't perform well in schools. As a result their future employment prospects are poor. The same is also true with adults seeking retraining or acquiring further education to improve their employment opportunities; the poor living conditions limit their ability to learn.

3.3 Conventional Assistance to Public Low-Income Housing

- (1) For developing countries, assistance from international donors organizations are usually in the form of Low-Income Housing Finance. Such programmes are usually reported with high-sounding efforts made to assist the poor.
- (2) An example of the above is the recent report on the ADB's Assistance for Low-Income Housing in Sri Lanka completed early this year, 2011. The project involved ADB providing loans to the project beneficiaries in the following proportions: 1% of the beneficiaries were from the lowest 10% income group with monthly household incomes below SLRs 2,500 (approx. USD22.72) [see exch. Rate shown at end of this paragraph]; 60% from the 30th to 40th percentile of the income distribution of SLRs 5,000 to 10,000 (approx. USD 45.45 to 90.89); and about 25% were from the middle income group. The average loan in 2010 terms was about SLRs 200,000 (approx. USD 1,817.88), representing about 4.5% of the present average value of burrowers' houses. About 82% of the loans were used for extension or renovation of existing houses; 13% were used toward construction of new houses; 3% were used to buy land; and a small number of loans were used for service connections or were put toward the purchase of new houses. (USD1=SLRs110.018 at Oct 2011 Exchange Rate.)
- (3) Apart from the loans given, no other assistance was contributed in the Project. However, the evaluation team gave their report based on the results of their study which are briefly highlighted as follows:

“Household impacts:

“... The study found that about two-thirds of project households were satisfied with the physical housing conditions and generally indicated that quality of life had improved (*emphasis underlined by this author*). The increase in household expenditure and income might be attributed partly to higher labour force participation of women among the project households. The study attributed the marginal impact on higher-order welfare measures to the fact that a majority of project households were already near the middle-income level and generally not the very poor. Thus, they had generally good health, their children were already enrolled in school, and the adults were well educated and working. It therefore seems unlikely that relatively modest loans for home improvement would exert substantial influence on higher-order welfare outcomes such as education and health.

“Community impacts:

“The community survey ... revealed improvements in the quality of life in the community, especially in children's school attendance, general health conditions, and gender equity in both project and non-project areas. Less-pronounced improvements were found in employment opportunities, municipal service delivery, participation in community activities, and community peacefulness.”

- (4) Under the “Background” of the project, it states that: “The Strategy 2020 of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) highlights ADB’s strategic agenda in sustainable and inclusive growth. To improve the quality of life of urban inhabitants, ADB will assist its developing member countries in solving a range of social and environmental problems resulting from rapid urbanization, and will support urban growth strategies for more livable, more inclusive, and more resilient development.”
- (5) From the evaluation report this author for all his efforts just can’t see how ADB’s small loans on housing finance to the “poor” – who appears to be not so poor – could have succeeded in achieving the declared goal of improving “*the quality of life of urban inhabitants*”. In all sincerity, this author wishes ADB’s programme of housing assistance would combine with direct help in a real community development in practice.

3.4 Potential Contributions of Public Housing to Positive Employment Outcomes

- (1) Public housing complexes are public assets because they have the potential quality to contribute the essential community services for the wellbeing of all the low-income residents. A public housing community programme that involves residents in its design and set-up can and will enable the residents to acquire skills for participation in works identified both within the housing estate and other employment opportunities in the neighbourhood.
- (2) Through political will, policy-makers can ensure public housing, including social and community housing in the public sector, is properly planned, developed and managed. With such a home environment, it will first and foremost improve school retention for the young residents.
- (3) The Australian National Community Housing Forum (NCHF) found that three housing related factors adversely affect school retention:
 - A. Frequent relocation,
 - B. Overcrowding (limiting the ability to study), and
 - C. Lack of after-housing income for meals and school activities.
- (4) The NCHF also finds that proper social housing contributes to employment outcomes:
 - A. It may provide security of housing tenure – policy-makers in the government should take advantage of this in social housing.
 - B. Some forms of social housing, such as community housing, put an emphasis on tenant participation.
 - C. The skills picked up from social participation programs often open up employment opportunities for residents entering the program for the first time; and for those who have gone through the process before, it will open pathways to further training to improve skills, which means better employment outcomes.

- (5) Some models of community-managed housing—such as affordable housing and co-operative housing—provide socioeconomic programs involving housing organization with close-links between tenants and a variety of attachments to the labour market.

(National Community Housing Forum (NCHF) Seminar:
www.nCHF.org.au/downloads/housing_sustain_comm.pdf)

- (6) Further down I will deal more deeply into the positive employment outcomes.

4 Sustainable Community Development In Public Housing Estates

4.1 Changing the stigma of public housing estates in developing countries as amongst the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods

- (1) Due to poor living conditions accentuated by over crowding, lack of neighbourhood and building management and maintenance and seemingly total deprivation of community development, public housing estates in many developing countries are contemptuously scorned by the population as being only slightly better than the squatter settlements. Even in developed countries the public housing estates are often taken to manifest themselves in:
- A. Low educational achievements,
 - B. Low employment opportunities,
 - C. Social stigma,
 - D. Family breakdown,
 - E. Drug-use and crime,
 - F. Serious health problems, and
 - G. Lack of access to public transport and other essential services.
- (2) Through the process of Systemic Asset Management (SAM) for public housing, a public housing estate can be upgraded to work in tandem with Sustainable Community Development (SCD) so as to empower the tenant residents to change the social stigma.
- (3) Most importantly, under SAM, the housing policy ensures public housing communities contain a “social mix” of medium-income to low-income tenants including rent assistance (RA) renters. The objective is to avoid over concentration of low-income and RA renters including single-parent (SP) renters that would make them a disadvantaged community.

4.2 Support for low-income tenant residents so that they have access to socioeconomic participation

- (1) If residents in public housing have childcare and other family support services, including health care, skills training, further education, they too can have job opportunities.
- (2) This is where policy-makers, public housing providers and community development agencies need to work together to establish sustainable community regeneration in line with a sustainable public housing programme. As discussed earlier, they are interrelated and interdependent; they must therefore be holistically planned, developed, operate and maintained systemically.
- (3) So what is “Sustainable Public Housing”?

Sustainable Public Housing means the development of a living environment within a public housing estate that supports and enables the residents to have opportunities for socioeconomic participation.

- (4) What about “Sustainable Community”?

A. NCHF defines it as follows:

A “Sustainable Community is one in which the relationships and supports exist to allow its members to sustain economic and social participation.”

B. NCHF explains further that:

“In today’s Australia, this also means the ability for this to occur within a diverse community and not simply one tightly linked around extended family, clan or employment relations.

(a) Where you live (location),

(b) The standard of housing,

(c) The affordability of housing, and

(d) Most importantly, the sustainability of housing arrangements is a fundamental condition for all of these.”

C. “The ability for communities to take responsibility for meeting community needs and challenges may be the most important aspect of a sustainable community. This is a key to the growing concern with community renewal as a response to social exclusion.”

(National Community Housing Forum (NCHF) Seminar:
www.nchf.org.au/downloads/housing_sustain_comm.pdf)

(5) In the final analysis, *Sustainable Housing and Community Development are Opposite*

“Public Housing with Community Development under SAM
-- *Enhancing the Resident Families’ Quality-of-Life*”

By KC Leong©, EAROPH & APIGAM

Sides of the Same Coin. Having understood the physical, environmental and social values of both, sustainable housing and sustainable community development must work together, as they are closely interrelated as well as interdependent.

(6) So how and where should a housing estate begin?

A. Strengthening Community

- (a) In the case of existing public housing estates, the government at different levels and the cross-sector agencies establish a *Strong Community Strategy* to strengthen the community in such a neighbourhood.
- (b) Under a combined Housing and Community Development Programme, an existing public housing estate is modified so that it can create conditions whereby the resident community is able to respond to meeting the social, economic and environmental needs.
- (c) Existing public housing estates are restructured to incorporate the following in a Community Development Programme funded by the government:
 - i. Building and conducting a skills-base training programme in the estate so that residents can take up socioeconomic participation. The trainers are provided by the government, which also provides the programme's funding. With work experience and further training, the residents can also become trainers.
 - ii. Fostering community leadership.
 - iii. Establishing self-SAM-management capacity and capability to take care of the public housing estate.
 - iv. Strategizing social programmes to overcome public annoyance, vandalism, crime, public safety or rent/service charge arrears as well as family dysfunction.
 - v. Creating dynamic community-business-government partnerships
 - vi. Improving the transport infrastructure to gain access to employment and services.
 - vii. Ensuring that socioeconomic participation within the public housing estate will positively impact neighbourhood wellbeing.
 - viii. Developing control, trust and good financial management to attain social pride and security.
 - ix. Providing security of land/house tenure to qualified tenants. (See details in (d) below.)

- (d) All the nine points cited above under (c) are closely interrelated. Being tenants, they don't enjoy any security of land/house tenure, hence they have no incentives in the maintenance of the entire housing estate, including their own apartments. Even when there is employment opportunity in the estate, the tenants have no confidence in the employment as they are not certain that they will have the legal right to stay there for long. On the other hand, if the tenants are entitled to a security of tenure after they have been tenants for, say, 10 years, they will want the whole estate to be well maintained. Members of the resident families who are not in the government service will want to be trained and take up employment offered in the estate, as described in B below.
- (e) In addition, the resident families will want to see that the whole public estate is well maintained in all aspects, so that when they do own the apartments they will want the properties in good condition so they command a good market value. In view of this, paragraph A above and B below under (6) are interrelated and they must be read and work together in order to achieve the combined goals of environmental, social and economic sustainability.

B. Community Jobs Programme within a Sustainable Public Housing Estate

- (a) Under a Sustainable Housing Programme socioeconomic participation begins in its own housing estate.
- (b) Once the tenant residents have received effective capacity building in skills development [as stated in 4.2 (6) A (c) i above], the public housing management employs them in management and maintenance to take care of the housing estate. This employment scheme must base on the residents' newly acquired qualifications and skills. The paid jobs within the public housing estate should include the following:
 - i. Housing estate administrative office staff.
 - ii. Cleaning and non-specialist maintenance work of common areas.
 - iii. External compound maintenance, care of shrubs and trees planting, and grass cutting.
 - iv. Security contractors to employ residents with security training and to recruit them for half of the 24-hour security service teams in 3 shifts.
 - v. Refuse contractor to employ residents to carry out refuse sorting for recycling before being picked up by the recycling contractor's truck-crews.
 - vi. Painting contractor to employ residents with training to execute making good wall and floor defects, surface preparation and painting works under the contractor's supervising (scaffolding erection must be done by specialist workers sub-contracted by the painting contractor).

- vii. Vegetable farming plots with training for residents to grow produce for their own household needs and to sell surplus to the cooperative shops in the housing estate. (This is a big success in Australia. Chinese tenants are excellent vegetable growers while in exchange, other tenants teach them the English language. Soon, it becomes a win-win task that brings them lots of fun while harvesting great produce with better understanding in the use of English. Not only the community enjoys fresh quality vegetables, they earn good income in the cooperatives store too.)
 - viii. Child-care centre within the housing estate. *See (c) below for more details.*
 - ix. Other paid work and non-paid work activities promoted or approved by the housing management in the estate to suit the skills training programme.
- (c) **Child-care centre** is one of the essential community facilities needed in a public housing estate. Many wives of government male employees become housebound and unable to take up some sort of employments to supplement the family's household income. With proper training, a housewife can operate a child-care centre professionally and in a business-like manner. Once a child-care centre is set up, many other wives living in the housing estate can leave their children in the centre and take up part-time employment, at least for half-a-day elsewhere. Once the centre is well run and popular, other women in the estate can also be working there after having completed the specialist child care training under the estate's skills training programme.

C. The ability of Public Housing Estate Management to identify Work in the Job Network and build the Capacity of Residents to get Employment

- (a) Providing jobs for public housing residents in the employment market needs appropriate capacity building to help them. With community development support, a public housing estate can achieve that. In Australia, NCHF includes the following in their social housing programme:
- Work orientation,
 - Information about jobs available in their Job Network,
 - Residents are trained in how to apply for jobs,
 - The Housing Estate Management with a good record of Sustainable Community Development can provide informal and formal references to support residents' job applications.
- (National Community Housing Forum (NCHF) Seminar:
www.nCHF.org.au/downloads/housing_sustain_comm.pdf)
- (b) As all the above are part of the sustainable public housing programme, the same have a major bearing on the job application outcomes.

- (c) If there is a “social mix” in the structure of a Sustainable Public Housing Community, its housing organization will have a greater capacity to establish close links between the tenant residents, with a variety of connections to the labour market.
- (d) In Australia, the role of public housing managers is often expanded to include the role of social housing managers. They are increasingly recognized as the effective lead agents in such community development activities, to lift the social status of otherwise disadvantaged communities.
- (e) Often social housing managers are in a “strong position to broker partnerships between tenants and other agencies, such as:
 - Health;
 - Community services; or
 - Police.”
- (f) One striking example is “the rejuvenation of Proctor Way, Argyle Community Housing, Claymore, NSW.” For 27 years, the tenants in this community endured a constant barrage of negative publicity. “Today, tenants are working closely with the Community Housing Manager, this housing estate has not only provided safe and secure tenancy, but has lifted the area to a clean and desired housing level. Now it has a long waiting list of new tenant applicants.”

(Proctor Way, Argyle Community Housing,
Building Sustainable Communities,
Office of Argyle Community Housing, 1998)

5 Developing Reliable and Efficient Housing Assets with Sustainable Community Development through Systemic Asset Management

5.1 Sustainable Housing and Sustainable Community Development are both Systems Assets

- (1) Public housing *per se* is just the development of public buildings to house low-income people. It does not realistically concern itself about the wellbeing of the residents. Neither does it do anything towards developing a sustainable community.

- (2) Since housing does not go beyond quantitative concerns to provide optimum housing, and also housing quality is strictly confined to “low-cost”, it does not contribute to service delivery of any social, economic and environmental benefits whatsoever to the tenants or the residents—not even security of tenure, safety, health. Under the circumstances, public housing for the sake of building provision alone cannot be termed an infrastructure “asset”, as it does not provide the services of the 3-Es.
- (3) Housing without community development has no sustainability either. Sustainable housing therefore must go hand-in-hand with sustainable community development. The two systems are interrelated and interdependent. Consequently, sustainable housing combined with sustainable community development becomes a complex system of systems.

5.2 Systems Assets need Systemic Asset Management

- (1) As systems assets, both sustaining housing and sustainable community development need Systemic Asset Management (SAM) for planning, development, operation, maintenance and renewal or disposal.
- (2) When the two systems are working together to gain optimal social, economic and environmental sustainability in service delivery, we need the two systems to work in tandem within the SAM framework in order to satisfy two sets of multi-systems criteria. Only with such an integrated process will we be able to harness all the working benefits from cross-disciplined and cross-sectoral efforts of performance monitoring, data analyses and decision-making to continually optimize the community’s quality of life.

5.3 The conventional approach to achieving Sustainability of Social Housing

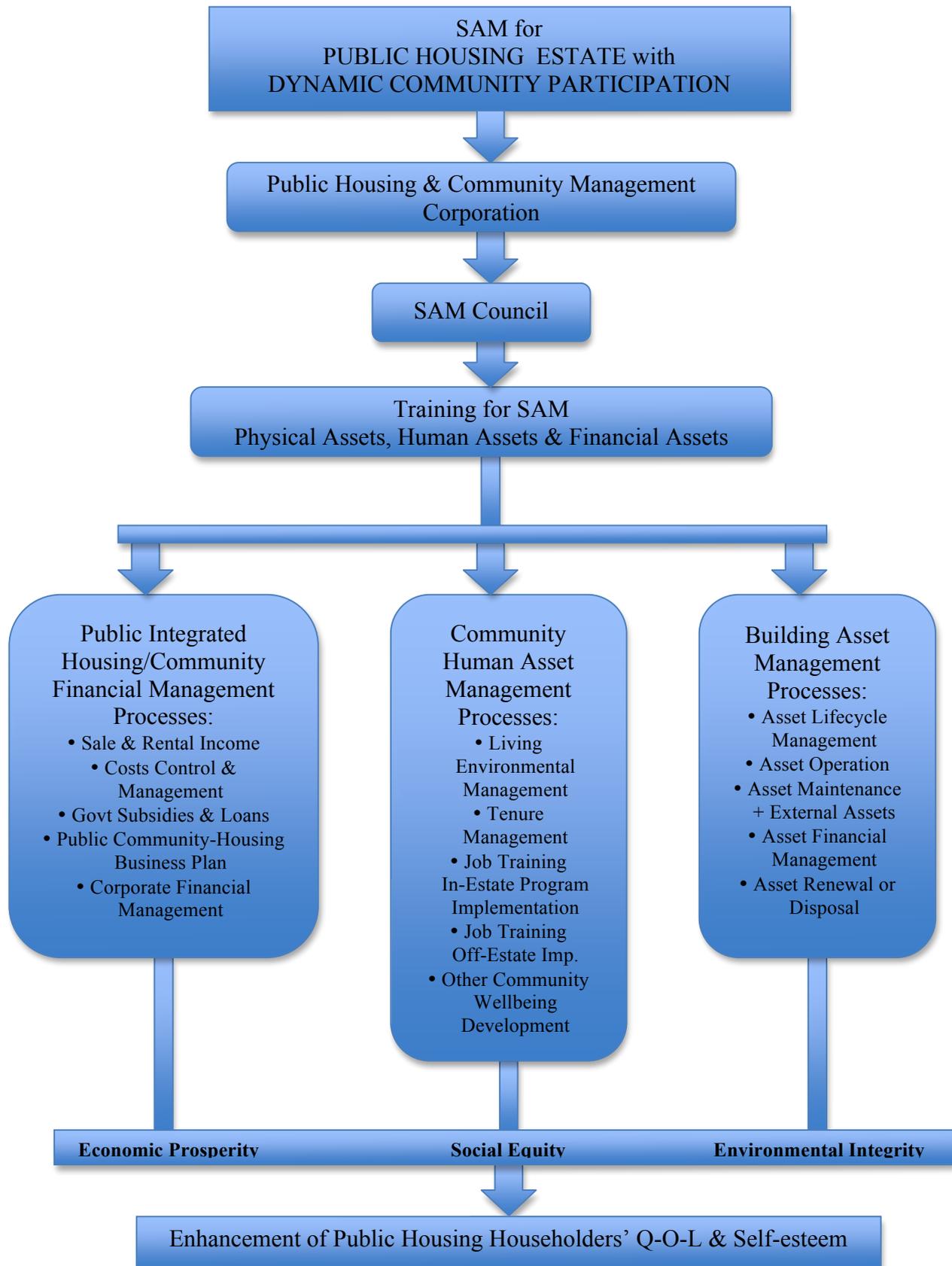
- (1) The conventional approach to achieving Sustainability of Social Housing is to focus the efforts on building maintenance of the existing stock.
- (2) Even in UK, much of the results of public housing research and analyses from the Stock Condition Survey (SCS) rely on public housing estate maintenance managers and the Decent Home Standard (DHS) to achieve sustainability of social housing. (Justine Cooper and Keith Jones, 2008)
- (3) Community development is more or less ignored as it is beyond the work-scope and expertise of the maintenance managers; under them the so-called sustainability of social housing, if ever achieved, is rather superficial.
- (4) Earlier, we saw the example of rejuvenation of Proctor Way, Argyle Community Housing, Claymore, NSW. It is an excellent example of sustainable housing combining with tenant-residents empowerment through sustainable community development.

- (5) In 2002 the Victorian State Government in Australia launched a statewide programme of Neighbourhood Renewal to transform communities that might have missed out on the state's growing prosperity. In 2004 when the Hon. State Housing Minister Candy Broad became the President of EAROPH, she gave a status report on the Neighbourhood Renewal's progress in her Keynote Address at the EAROPH 19th World Planning and Housing Congress, 21 September 2004:
- A. "More than 1,000 community jobs have been created.
 - B. "More than 2,500 houses have been upgraded.
 - C. "Acceptance rates for public housing are up in 90 per cent of locations that have Neighbourhood Renewal projects.
 - D. "Crimes against people are down in 90 per cent of Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) areas.
 - E. "Community perceptions about their neighbourhoods are tracking upwards."
- (6) That was less than 2 years after the NR programme had been launched. By the end of 2008, the programme has a lot of impressive success stories that anyone can see on their website.
- (7) What makes the NR programme so successful is the combination of physical renewal of neighbourhood with empowerment of local people through community development activities.

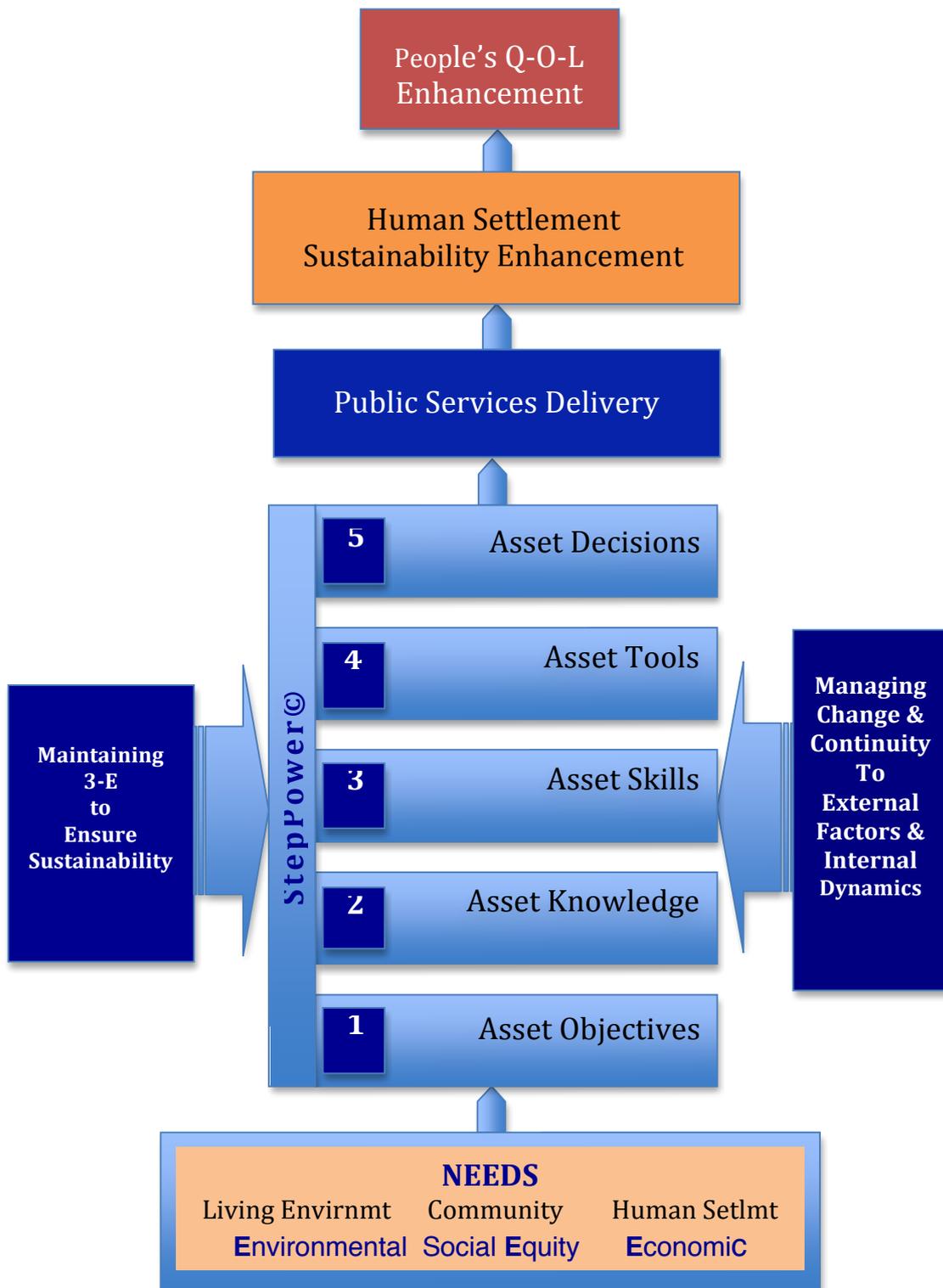
5.4 Systemic Asset Management (SAM) for Sustainable Housing combined with Sustainable Community Development

- (1) By combining housing and community development as a dynamic system, housing now has a service outcome of enhancing community life. Conversely, community development as a dynamic system will also have a service outcome of enhancing the socioeconomic and environmental quality of housing.
- (2) Combining the two through SAM has a service outcome of establishing a sustainable human settlement for the ultimate enhancement of the people's quality of life.
- (3) Under the SAM programme, government officers will be trained in Sustainable Public Housing Assets' Planning, Development, Operation and Renewal with Service Delivery leading up to Sustainable Community Development.
- (4) Under another SAM programme, tenant residents from the related Public Housing Estate will be trained in Sustainable Community Development as an essential asset for enhancing the 3-E Sustainability of this Housing Estate.

- (5) Trainees will learn to understand the principles and practice of SAM. They will learn the process of setting up a SAM Plan for Sustainable Housing and another SAM Plan for Sustainable Community Development to complement Sustainable Housing.
- (6) The trainees will have to learn all the modules in order to reach goals of optimal service delivery from the assets.
- (7) For example, the public housing agency will be trained to set up and implement community surveys, data analysis and use of the analytical results in improving the housing standards. The tenant-residents will be trained to enable them to become involved in key aspects of the survey, such as understanding the survey process, obtaining data, assisting in data analysis and participate in decision-making.
- (8) Both groups will learn:
 - A. How to increase tenant residents' pride and participation in the community in their public housing estate.
 - B. How to enhance housing standards and the physical environment through participation.
 - C. How to become involved in training, continuing education, leading to increasing employment opportunities.
 - D. How to improve personal safety in the housing estate and reducing crime.
 - E. The promotion of health and wellbeing of the community.
 - F. How to improve access to services in the housing estate through improving government responsiveness under a public-private- partnership (PPP) program.
- (9) Both groups will also learn the importance of:
 - A. Engaging tenant residents in managing and maintaining the wellbeing of this public housing estate under a paid work programme.
 - B. Involving tenant residents in learning opportunities and how the impact of work and learning will improve individual and community health and socioeconomic wellbeing.
 - C. Enabling residents to convert welfare to work through government's cross-sectoral support programs on local employment connected to education and training.
 - D. Setting up employment and learning coordinating program.



**Integrated Public Housing Asset Development & Management
 with Continual Pragmatic Community Development Practice**



The SAM Framework

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 Public housing by itself is just building for the sake of building, and it cannot be considered an asset in the real sense. In fact, more often than not, neglecting public housing estate can turn it into a serious public liability.
- 6.2 Only when public housing is combined with pragmatic community development in active practice will it become a public asset.
- 6.3 Both housing and community development are complex systems; hence we need Systemic Asset Management to ensure the combined systems is tangible and becoming sustainable, thus enhancing the people's quality of life.
- 6.4 Housing, even in the public sector, is an important family investment. What has been presented in this paper is not a mere set of theories but an empirical success story in Australia and elsewhere – no doubt their social and economic environments have greater advantages as compared with the situations in many developing countries in Asia. However, we may consider that given the life styles related to the Asian cultures, their *cost* of living in general is lower and therefore their quality of life is a lot easier to achieve without the developed countries' *glossiness*.
- 6.5 All said, we need to make a start and with commitments we can put the full SAM programme for capacity building in achieving Sustainable Public Housing with Sustainable Community Development. Housing is more than just *a roof over the heads*; it is the key to build a strong and vibrant society.

KC Leong

EAROPH Honorary President &
President of APIGAM

Level 4, Block B (North)
Ministry of Housing & Local Government
Pusat Bandar Damansara 50644 Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

Office Tel: +60-3 2092 5217 Office Fax: +60-3 2092 4217

Email: kcleong7@gmail.com Email: kcleong@earoph.info