

INTRODUCTION

Beserah is a typical Malay fishing village in the east coast of Malaya, about five and a half miles to the north-east of Kuantan, the capital of Pahang.¹ The population of about 3,500 which are concentrated along the coast are predominantly Malays whose economy is dependent mainly on fishing. However, one out of every twenty-five income earners surveyed is dependent on rubber tapping in the rubber smallholdings located about two miles inland. The Chinese and the Indian Muslims who make up a small proportion of the total population of the village do not take up fishing as an occupation. The Chinese are either fish dealers or shop-keepers, while the Indian Muslims are solely shop-keepers.

A. Purpose.

Briefly the purposes of this investigation are to study:-

- (i) the pattern of household expenditure among the fishermen in Beserah,
- (ii) the factors affecting the expenditure pattern, and
- (iii) how the expenditure pattern adjust itself to the changing factors.

1. See Appendix I A and I B on page 50 and 51.

From the analysis of the adjustment of the expenditure pattern to changes in income, it is hoped that it may be possible to estimate roughly the marginal propensity to consume and the marginal propensity to save among the fishermen. Finally it is hoped that the pattern of household expenditure may also be able to indicate the standard of living of the fishermen.

B. Scope.

The scope of this study is confined only to the detailed study of current household expenditure and does not include the detailed study of expenditures on durable and semi-durable goods.¹ Expenditures on all food items, fuel and cigarettes are, therefore, studied in detail while the expenditures on clothing, furnitures, crockery and repairs to fishing gears are not. These latter items are merely grouped under one item referred to as 'others'.² It is also limited to expenditure of household members as a group and not of members as individuals. Expenditures on cigarettes and food consumed outside the house by the subsidiary income earners are, therefore, excluded from the total household expenditure because such expenses do not affect the total household expenditure.³

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1. See Appendix II B on page 54 for the expenditure items.
 2. No detailed study of the expenditure on these items was made by the writer as they are being studied by two other honours students. Refer Sallehudin bin Mohamed, Economics of Fishing Equipments in Beserah, and Hussein bin Idrus, Distribution of Household Capital in Beserah.
 3. Refer Chapter II, pages 8-13, for the role of subsidiary income earners in the household.

But similar expenditures by heads of household are included, since what the head of household spends as an individual does affect the total household expenditure.

C. Method.

This survey is based on data collected from 57 households, having a total of 246 members which make up about 7 per cent of the total population of Boesrah village.¹ It does not include the few Chinese and Indian Muslims who are not fishermen.

The field work in Boesrah which includes the preparation of questionnaires and interviewing the households lasted for six weeks. The drafting of questionnaires was by no means simple because a compromise had to be made between what information was required and what was practical under the local conditions. To get the most suitable questionnaires the writer undertook, for the first three days, a preliminary survey of five households. From the experience thus gained final questionnaires were prepared.²

The questionnaires were divided into three main parts. The first part sought information on the structure of households, the number of members, their ages, relationship to head of household and the number of income earners in the household. The second

1. The 57 households were selected by Ungku Asis who was making a detailed study of the economic activity of the members.

2. The forms ultimately designed and used are produced in Appendix II A and II B on page 53 and 54.

part sought information on the sources and amount of income accruing to the household.

The last part dealt with the distribution of average monthly expenditure on the various items. Here, wherever possible, the amount per purchase and the frequency of buying per week were also recorded. Whether the expenditure on the various items varies with changes in income was also asked.

Since different questions could be answered more accurately by different members of the household, it was sometimes necessary to visit a house more than once. For example, information on household expenditure could be given more accurately by the housewives while information on household structure and income could be given more accurately by heads of household.

The data collected were tabulated and analysed at the University of Malaya, Singapore. All tables presented in this exercise are derived from data collected during the survey.