

# UMS, Unicef form research unit

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**KOTA KINABALU:** A development communication approach that aims to further strengthen social development programmes in Sabah is being introduced to key stakeholders by a newly established research unit, the effort of a collaboration between Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef).

Beyond the traditional method of providing information, Communication for Development or C4D is an approach that seeks to understand people, their beliefs and values, and the social and cultural norms that shape their lives, and it involves engaging target groups as they identify problems, propose solutions and act upon these.

C4D interventions are an integral part of project activities in some parts of the world, critical in addressing



Participants of a dialogue between the UMS-Unicef Communication for Development (C4D) Research Unit and civil society organisations at the Sabah State Library in Tanjung Aru.

wideranging social issues such as age at marriage, violence against children, discrimination against persons with disabilities and child health.

The UMS-Unicef Communication for Development (C4D) Research Unit tasked with advocating the approach

has started engaging government, civil society organisations and academia, a process that is also providing feedback on issues surrounding women's and children's well-being, persons with disabilities, youths, communities and conservation.

Research Unit head Latif Lai said the initial focus is to introduce C4D and how it could be used in social development programmes in Sabah, before a series of training workshops and consultations are rolled out next year for stakeholders who are

interested to use the approach in their work.

"We are currently working to get the commitment of stakeholders to use C4D as a tool in social development programmes and on our part, we will provide support in terms of training and consultation on how this approach can be applied.

"Through this research unit, we are also able to share new developments related to C4D with the organisations that we are engaging with, apart from conducting research on how to effectively use the C4D approach in the local context," he said in a Press release.

Latif said a dialogue on Oct 14 to introduce the research unit and C4D to civil society organisations was positive as participants were interested in wanting to be trained to use the approach for their respective

areas of social development work.

"Most were unaware about C4D but by the end of the dialogue session, they saw it as a relevant approach for their work.

"C4D also encourages the need to use evidence-based strategies and tactics as well as verified monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability in social development programmes, and this is an aspect that appeals to those we engage with," he said.

The work carried out by the research unit which is based at the UMS Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Heritage, is in line with the university's Knowledge Transfer Programme that seeks to exchange knowledge with other organisations to create a better understanding of issues and promote the existence of a well-educated nation.