

## Project creates strong collaboration in sustainable management of natural resources

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**KOTA KINABALU:** The Kinabalu Ecolink Project has succeeded in creating strong collaboration between the government and the community in the sustainable management of natural resources.

Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Dr Joachim Gunsalam, who is proud of the achievement, said it clearly showed the government's commitment in helping the community not only in nature conservation activities but also in terms of self-capacity as well as standard of living developments.

He said this when officiating the Kampung Bundu Tuhan community hall and launching of three new trails of the project at a ceremony held in the village yesterday.

The Kinabalu Ecolink Project began with a study by ERE consultant in 2011 with the aim to look at the need and importance of the formation of an 'ecological linkage' that connects Crocker Range Park and Kinabalu Park.

"I was then serving as the chairman of the Board of Trustees of Sabah Parks. I was all for the implementation of the Ecolink project known as the 'Wildlife Corridor Project' at the time and my support was not in

vain.

"Today, the Ecolink Project is implemented in Kampung Bundu Tuhan. I am very proud of the success," said Joachim, who is also the Kundasang assemblyman, in a statement yesterday.

He went on to explain that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed in December 2014 and the collaboration was manifested with the construction of a nursery in 2015 and was officially launched in May the following year.

According to him, the aim of constructing the nursery was to streamline the forest restoration programme and the affected areas. More than 2,000 saplings have been placed at the nursery and to be planted in Kampung Bundu Tuhan and several selected villages.

Apart from that, the Kampung Bundu Tuhan community too is directly involved with the sustainable agriculture programme.

"We know that majority of the villagers in Kampung Bundu Tuhan are involved in agricultural activities and it is also their main source of income.

"Through the Kinabalu Ecolink Project, they are introduced to a sustainable agriculture system

which is more environmentally friendly.

"The programme is carried out carefully and training on agricultural applications is also included. Experts from Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) were also invited to provide exposure on sustainable agricultural techniques.

"Agricultural products are not only limited to raw products but also processed, such as tuhau floss, pickles and production of compost," he said.

From 2019 until now, he said the community of Kampung Bundu Tuhan have enjoyed an increase in their productions, which contributes to increase in incomes.

"Today, we can see the results of this close cooperation through the opening of the Kampung Bundu Tuhan community hall.

"This community hall was constructed with funds contributed by the Kinabalu Ecolink Project under the Sabah EU-REDD+ Project.

"The community hall will be used as an administrative center by the 'Pemegang Amanah Hutan Lindungan Komuniti (Winokok) Bundu Tuhan' committee," added Joachim, who is also the Minister of Industrial Development.

He said with the community hall now available, the management of the Winokok forest can be implemented more easily and comfortably.

In related development, the Bundu Tuhan community will also receive 14 units of camera traps donated by the Kinabalu Ecolink Project, which can be used for more effective and systematic monitoring of Winokok forests.

Meanwhile, Joachim also officially opened the 'Heritage Trail', 'Hatob Trail' and 'Boundary Trail' at the same function.

"I will continue to support this project between the government and the community.

"Cooperation between the government and the local community is key to protecting our natural resources," he said, while congratulating Sabah Parks and Kampung Bundu Tuhan community for the success of such collaboration.

Among those present were Sabah Parks deputy director Ludi Apin; Ranau District Officer Syahrin Samsir; Kundasang Native Chairman Dominic Ghani; principal assistant director of Sabah Parks, Thomas Yussof; Kinabalu Ecolink Project manager Andy Martin.