

No evidence of feasibility study made on projects, Land Rights Inquiry told

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KOTA KINABALU: An 18-month study on Native Land Rights in Sabah found no evidence of any feasibility study being made on projects in a particular area.

Associate Professor, Dr. Fadzillah Majid-Cooke of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) said, a feasibility study needed to be carried out in detail before a project is implemented by taking into account the socio-economy of the local residents.

She said the study could then be used as a benchmark to measure the level of success of a project especially those on a large-scale.

"Based on our experience, we have not found any evidence to show such a study had been made," she said, when giving a briefing on the Land Development Model in Sabah on the fourth-day of the Suhakam Public Inquiry at Wisma SEDCO here yesterday.

Dr. Fadzillah, who conducted the

18-month study, said, a feasibility study should be made for two to three years before a project is implemented. This is to enable the project managers to identify the socio-economic status of the local residents before the project is implemented.

Another study again has to be made after the project shows results.

"For example, an oil palm cultivation project takes seven years to produce results so there must be someone studying to determine if the villagers have become richer or poorer after the seven years are up," she explained.

She also recommended that those implementing the project should stay in the area for a certain period of time to appreciate the situation and needs of the local community.

Any parties intending to carry out projects on a large-scale are encouraged to work together with the villagers to reach a mutual understanding that will facilitate the work.

"Some conveniently make assumptions by saying that the villagers refuse to co-operate and take



Dr. Fadzillah speaking at the Inquiry

the easy way out by hiring foreign labourers... if we really take time to understand the villagers, maybe we will learn that they really need jobs and with the project, they can have that job opportunity," said Dr. Fadzillah.

The inquiry by Suhakam or Malaysian Human Rights Commission runs for 10 days from June 4 to 16 with natives, non-government organisations, the private sector and government representatives invited to take part in dialogues.