



UMS students and the communities of Kampung Popok Laut involved in the programme.

UMS brings climate change awareness to coastal villagers

BP 6-12-2017 2

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is undertaking a programme to raise the awareness of coastal communities, who rely on the sea for their livelihood and survival, on climate change.

UMS Borneo Marine Research Institute (BMRI) Associate Professor Dr Julian Ransangan said that they carried out an awareness programme for the coastal community of Kampung Popok Laut in Kota Marudu on climate change and adaptation on November 15.

He said the programme involved a group of marine science students led by Dr Chen Cheng Ann (also from BMRI) and himself.

"The focus of the program was to enlighten the coastal community, the majority of whom are fishermen, on the impacts of climate change to marine ecosystem and fishery resources, and how they can adapt themselves to the impact," he said.

He added that the impact of climate change on the sea covered the increase in the ocean heat and sea surface temperatures, rising of sea levels, and a drastic change in the water's acidity levels.

"These conditions are not ideal for marine life, therefore fish

migration patterns will also be altered impacting various marine ecosystems, such as mudflats, soft bottoms, corals and mangroves," said Dr Julian, who is also the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) Sabah branch manager.

He added that natural disasters such as floods tend to occur more frequently and at higher magnitudes, causing extreme damage to ecosystems.

"This is a major issue as coastal communities depend on the marine life for their livelihood. Therefore, the present programme is to raise the awareness and expose the local community to the threats of climate change," he said.

Among the focus of the programme is to disseminate knowledge on climate changes impact on the local communities and to allow UMS marine science students to interact with the community to further understand their needs.

"As a higher education provider like UMS, I believe that the study environment of the students should not be limited to campus life only, but community exposure is crucial in order for the students to interact and serve the local community using the knowledge they gained," said Dr Chen.

Kampung Popok Laut village head Asmara Matussin said his community benefited from the programme as it raised their awareness on climate change which had significantly affected their daily livelihood.

He urged for similar activities to be conducted at other villages to warn the communities of the implications of climate change.

Meanwhile, UMS marine science student Sharifah Nur Afiqah Syed Nasirin felt that the programme had taught them a lot with many of them shocked to learn how climate change had affected those who rely on natural resources such as fish for their livelihood. She said that educating the villagers was important as their livelihood was at stake.

"By organizing this programme, we get a real practical experience and at the same time share our knowledge with the local community. All the students are excited that they could help in community development besides raising awareness on climate change to the fishing community. With new relationships created between us and the villagers, we can look forward to working together with them more easily in the future," she said.