

UMS adopts Sikuati for its medical study

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KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) has adopted Sikuati as a niche for its Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FMHS) to expand into the interior of Sabah.

A rural suburb in the district of Kudat, some 185km north from Kota Kinabalu, Sikuati is a district which has a majority of Rungus ethnics and is formed by several nearby villages.

FMHS UMS had been actively engaging with the villagers in Sikuati and around Kudat for various health programmes. Among them was the Program Perkongsian Keluarga dan Universiti (PuPUK).

PuPUK is a unique programme which were coined by the first dean of FMHS, Prof Dr Osman Ali, whereby the medical and nursing undergraduates are exposed to the villagers in Sikuati from year one of their study until they graduated.

The students have to follow up on the wellbeing of their foster families and write a complete narrative report and presentation during the final year of their studies.

PuPUK is a well formulated programme whereby the undergraduates are able to contribute back to society for the betterment of the community. Recently, PuPuk was rebranded as iPuPUK by the new Dean of FMHS, Prof Dr Mohammad Saffree Jefferey – adding the component of innovation into the programme.

The new component will allow greater flexibility for the community and students to engage with each other in communication, learning and evaluation. There will also be innovation in terms of family intervention and prevent with the usage of latest information technology.

To date, some 16 villages around Sikuati have participated in the programme. Other valuable programmes include researches by the Year 4 Community Medicine Posting, FMHS lecturers and health promotions.

As Sikuati is located far from reach of optimum medical facilities, UMS has established a Rural Medicine Education Centre (RMEC) at Sikuati in 2009. It is situated on 20 acres which houses five hostels that can accommodate up to 50 students.

On top of that, it has four lecturer's quarters that are well equipped with basic necessities. Among the facilities available include a badminton hall, surau, sepak takraw court, and basic laboratory services for X ray and blood investigations.

The lecturer's quarters and badminton hall are ready to be rented to the public at reasonable fees.

Several local events such as *kenduri kahwin* and badminton tournaments had been held at RMEC since its establishment; signifying the high confidence of the local people towards the facilities of UMS.

The hall of RMEC can fit in approximately 500 people at any one time and is well equipped with updated audio visual system and fans.

RMEC acts as a centre whereby the villagers around Sikuati can seek treatment and follow up for various medical illnesses for free.

Since its establishment, the RMEC has received the support of villagers of around Sikuati.

Many villagers visited RMEC to seek treatment and as of March this year, a total of 4,300 villagers had benefited the services. Among the medical services provided

by RMEC are TB clinic and community wellness clinics, which are run by various specialists from FMHS UMS.

The lecturers are also actively utilising RMEC as a centre for research. Among the on going researches are malaria, tuberculosis (TB) and hook worms manifestations. Several publications had been made internationally and won prestigious awards from the year 2012 until 2018.

"The close ties between UMS FMHS and Sikuati are very unique. We hope the villagers, the Kudat Health District officers and Sabah State Health Department (JKNS) will continue to support RMEC and FMHS UMS in helping to provide a good health care service to the community of Kudat and Sikuati," said Prof Dr Mohd Safferey Jefferey.

"We plan to transform Sikuati into a one stop medical hub with the usage of RMEC as our platform, which will cater as a research, wellness and academic centre of excellence. With the introduction of iPuPUK (innovative PuPUK), the villagers will have greater access to the health care services.

They can communicate easier with their foster children in UMS, which in turn will provide them with better care" Safferey added.

The Universiti Malaysia Sabah Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, previously known as School of Medicine, was established in the year 2003 with the initial enrolment of 32 medical students.

Currently, it has 450 medical and 156 nursing undergraduate students together with post graduate students in masters of Public Health (MPH), Doctor in Public Health (DrPH) and PhD.