



## KERATAN AKHBAR

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## Water relief for rural poor in Sabah

**KOTA KINABALU:** Almost 200 people from the Rungus community in Kampung Suang Duyung, Pitas, have benefited from a water programme initiated by Mercy Malaysia, Sabah and the UMW Group.

Thanks to the efforts of these two entities, the health situation of the poor in this rural area has improved.

Water supply was a major problem for the villagers as there were no proper water sources. The only sources of water for the villagers is from a well and a man-made retention wall used to retain rain water.

Mercy Malaysia Sabah chairman Dr Anbarasu Ramalingam said the water from

these two sources were found to be contaminated.

Studies showed traces of heavy metals, faeces and pesticide.

Anbarasu said drinking the contaminated water had affected the villagers, some of whom suffered food poisoning and skin-related infections.

Describing the Rungus community as "resilient", he said they were also innovative in finding ways to access water.

"Water is a basic need, and it is unacceptable to think that a water-rich country like Malaysia would still have pockets of communities with poor access to clean water," UMW group

corporate communication general manager Badrul Rahman said.

Suang Duyung village head Marius Molsinson said there were often times when water would have to be carried from the nearby town.

"We would have to buy water bottles in town, especially during the dry spells that occur from August onwards."

"Our main issue was transport, especially for those who were ferrying the water."

"It is tough, but we needed to get on with life. Now with the water tanks, the burden is lifted."

The topography of the land, which is flat,

made natural water systems for the area impossible and developing a central water distribution source to the scattered homes from one existing pond was also not viable, due to contamination such as E. Coli bacteria.

Hence, a central communal water system was created for the village, using ten 5,000 gallon tanks to store water.

Anbarasu said the villagers were taught how to care and maintain the water tanks, including changing the filter and cleaning the debris.

"With the tanks, they will now not only have access to clean water for their daily needs, but the security of a vastly improved livelihood in many ways."