

# Ministry bent on reaching out to more deprived households

By Karen Bong

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**KUCHING:** The Ministry of Welfare, Women and Family Development has reiterated its commitment to reach out to more deprived households throughout Sarawak which have not received any form of assistance from the government.

Its minister Datuk Fatimah Abdullah thus urged all agencies concerned including PBB Sayang Squad as well as community leaders and elected people's representatives to look closely into their own backyard to identify the poor people in their midst.

"We do not want anyone deserving of government's aid to be left out of the system," she said at the Giant-MyKasih Love My Neighbourhood Sarawak Food Aid Programme held at Giant Hypermarket in Tabuan Jaya yesterday.

She said records from e-Kasih system as of Aug 17 had shown that 396 households in Kuching Division had yet to receive any government assistance.

"They consist of 317 households in Kuching, 36 in Bau and 43 in Lundu. In the whole of Sarawak, statistics shows there are 773 households yet to receive any form of assistance," she added.

Fatimah commended the collaboration between MyKasih Foundation and Giant Hypermarket in rolling out food aid support to benefit 200 families in Kuching, Padawan, Sibuan and Miri yesterday.

The function was also attended by 50 recipients from Kuching.

"Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as MyKasih and the private sector play a

significant role in helping the government eradicate urban and rural poverty by reaching out to the poor sections of the society through various initiatives," she said.

Fatimah also said that breaking the cycle of poverty required the collective effort of all levels of government, the private sector and non-profit organisations.

"Poverty does not only occur in rural communities. There are still pockets of poverty in urban areas of Kuching like Petra Jaya and Tabuan as well as other major towns and cities throughout Sarawak.

"We therefore hope that more donors can follow the footsteps of big corporations like Giant to work with my ministry or other agencies to help the poor people in society by any means possible," she added.

Under the collaboration in Sarawak, Giant contributed RM192,000 to the MyKasih Love My Neighbourhood food aid programme to support 200 underprivileged families in Sarawak for one year.

MyKasih Foundation Board of Trustees member Siti Khairon Shariff said the foundation was a charitable organisation that helped underprivileged Malaysians through food aid and education.

"The uniqueness of MyKasih programme is in the technology that drives its welfare distribution. The cashless system through the use of MyKad or a separate MyKad-linked smartcard allows transparency and prevent waste or abuse.

"Card readers are provided to retailers to authenticate the MyKad or smartcards presented for payment. A unique barcode scanning process at the point-of-sale ensures that only approved items are purchased," she added.

The recipients, she said, would receive RM40 fortnightly which would be credited into their MyKad or smartcard.

Meanwhile, GCH Retail Malaysia Sdn Bhd head of operations for East Malaysia, Marius Knight, said the initiative allowed the recipients to experience the comforting normality of grocery shopping.

"The recipients can choose and purchase food themselves, which is an opportunity they often lack," he said referring to the cashless system which enabled aid recipients to make purchases using MyKad.

"They will be able to buy daily essentials that include rice, bread, biscuits, flour, beverages, cooking oil, eggs, seasoning, noodles and canned food at any of the six Giant stores in Sarawak," he added.

Poverty does not only occur in rural communities. There are still pockets of poverty in urban areas of Kuching like Petra Jaya and Tabuan as well as other major towns and cities throughout Sarawak.

Datuk Fatimah Abdullah, Welfare, Women and Family Development minister



Fatimah (second right) and Siti Khairon (left) accompany a recipient (second left) to make purchases at the store. Also seen is Knight (back row, right).



Fatimah (centre), together with Knight (fourth left) and Siti Khairon (third right) in a group photo with some of recipients of Giant-MyKasih food aid programme.