

# Home Stay Experience at Kampung Widu

“I hear and I forget, I listen and I remember, I do and I understand.” This classical Chinese proverb (Wessel: 2002) was the inspiration for a two-day ‘Stay in the Kampung’ experience organized for students attending the Kadazandusun Language Course at PPIB.

Hosts for the home stay experience, which was held on 15-17 October, 2010, were the residents of Kampung Widu, Tambunan. The participants, comprising 54 UMS students and their course instructors, Mr. Raymond Podtung and Mr. Henry Bating travelled to the kampung in two buses. Launching the programme was the former Dean of PPIB, Associate Professor Dr Andreas Totu.

Kg. Widu is located at the boundary between Tambunan and Ranau district. It is located approximately 24 kilometres from Tambunan town and another 26 kilometres from the junction of the Tambunan-Ranau main road. The unsealed gravel road that leads to the kampung crosses hills and the occasional river before reaching its destination.

The kampung was chosen as the venue for the programme for two reasons. Firstly, the kampung folks still use the Kadazandusun language in their daily communication, (their speech dialect is coincidentally the same as that taught to students at UMS). Secondly, the kampung environment is unspoilt: there are no commercial activities and the residents still rely on the natural resources around them for their daily needs. Another interesting aspect of this kampung, is that legends and myths are still frequently remembered and recounted.

The programme, which was sponsored by PPIB and the students themselves, aimed to give participants the opportunity to put into practice the language skills and cultural knowledge that they had learned in tutorials. Naturally, students were encouraged to hone their language skills by conversing in the Kadazandusun language whenever possible. Students were assigned to one of 15 groups for the duration of their stay. Each group was ascribed a mentor, whose job was to advise the students on how to carry out various activities in the kampung. Group members were adopted by families and stayed in their homes.

“This is one of the greatest experiences of my life,” said a student from a metropolitan area in West Malaysia. “I’ve never stayed in a kampung before. Even though there is a lack of amenities here, I still feel happy and I sleep soundly at night.” During their stay in the kampung, students were served traditional food at breakfast, lunch and dinner. Generally, the students interacted well with the kampung people. On top of that, they were also prepared to demonstrate their Kadazandusun speaking skills in front of the video camera. Work wise, the students had a demanding day in the kampung: their chores included cleaning, cultivation, building fences and catching fish from the river. However, there were moments of respite and they did get the opportunity to play some traditional leisure games such as rampanau, momositik, magagung and mogundalo. Cultural Night proved to be a memorable climax to the home stay experience with each group doing a presentation which involved either storytelling, singing, or dancing. It was also the last chance for the students to mingle with their hosts and to thank them for their gracious hospitality.

