

Poverty eradication project in Sabah, Malaysia: new initiative, new challenges?

ABSTRACT

Since independence, the Malaysian government has invested billions of ringgits in the fight against poverty. Despite the national decrease in the percentage of the population living in poverty, the state of Sabah has had the highest poverty rate in Malaysia since 1997. Why has the poverty alleviation programme been less effective in reducing this social phenomenon among the poor communities in Sabah? To address this question, this paper discusses the issues and challenges confronting stakeholders involved in the poverty eradication programme in Sabah. The paper focuses on the implementation of the People's Income Initiative (PII) Phase 1 project in two communities: Penimbawan Village, Tuaran, and Bongkol Village, Pitas. This qualitative study reveals those participants, implementing agencies, and other stakeholders face issues and challenges when implementing poverty eradication projects. Furthermore, the issues faced by the poverty eradication project participants were found to include their own attitudes towards the project, such as a lack of focus on or interest in the project; the existence of a subsidy mentality; and the lack of clarity regarding the project's goals. However, the implementing agency was discovered to encounter issues with market support. The difficulties currently faced by these three parties could affect how long the PII Project can successfully eradicate poverty in both localities.