

THE SARAWAK MUSEUM JOURNAL

Vol. LXIV No. 85 (New Series) Since 1911 ISSN. 0375-3050 December 2007

(Reprint)

**Laying the foundations for a caring community:
Exploring the experiences of residents in a new
low-cost housing development in Sarawak**

by

Gill Raja and Dolly Paul Carlo



SARAWAK MUSEUM DEPARTMENT

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A CARING COMMUNITY:

Exploring the experiences of residents in a new low-cost housing development in Sarawak

by
Gill Raja and Dolly Paul Carlo

INTRODUCTION¹

A feature of development is an increase in new estates to house families with low incomes. Such estates create the challenge of how to transform a collection of family units into a caring community

This paper explores the experiences of residents who have recently moved into a new estate of low-cost flats on the perimeter of an urban area in Sarawak – a state that has a strong tradition of community living and good inter-racial relationships.

The authors argue that to maintain and foster these traditions, the State needs to lay the foundations by (a) developing bonds between neighbours through paying attention to how the physical environment affects the social life of a community, (b) facilitating the formation of effective community leadership, (c) providing opportunities for the migrants to stay connected to their communities of origin, (d) enabling the fledgling community to develop effective links to external resources and (e) fostering the development of norms which encourage consideration and care of each other and the shared environment. Ideas on how to practically implement these goals are discussed in relation to building social capital, community landscaping and promoting empowering partnerships between a range of stakeholders. The need to engage residents early in the community life of the estate is stressed. This can be facilitated by employing trained community-orientated social workers to work on the estates.