

'Paula' to be tested in remote Sarawak

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Dr Rundi (fifth left) giving his thumbs-up to the Paula system at a village collecting treated water from the said system at Da Nang, Vietnam. Liwan is seen at fourth left.

KUCHING: If all goes according to plan, Portable Aqua Unit Lasting Affordable (Paula) systems will soon be a permanent feature in the state's remotest and most isolated settlements in the very near future.

According to Minister of Rural Electricity and Water Supply Datuk Sri Dr Stephen Rundi Utom, Paula will be tested in two remote locations in Sarawak to see whether it will be viable for local conditions.

"We are going to try Paula in Ulu Katibas in Song and Pilla in Kapit. The two sites shall be chosen as pilot projects for the Paula system in Sarawak. This is to test the suitability of the Paula system in local conditions and environments where raw water is more turbid," Dr Rundi told The Borneo Post here recently.

He stressed that if it works well in the two locations, the state will implement the system here as it is considered cheap and easy to implement.

"It's a German technology which has been successfully implemented in remote areas in Vietnam. So since it works there (in Vietnam) and if it works in our two identified locations, then it would solve our problem of water supply for rural and coastal communities in Sarawak," Dr Rundi said.

Recently, Dr Rundi led a delegation from Sarawak to Vietnam to witness the success of Paula there.

He said the objective of the trip to Vietnam was to understand the Paula system and its suitability to be adopted under the Sarawak Alternative Water Supply (Sawas). Sawas is the state government's effort to provide clean water to the most remote communities in Sarawak prior to piped water which could take many years to implement due to logistics.

Paula uses an Ultrafiltration (UF) membrane system and caters to a small community of 20-30 households.

"Vietnam currently has eight such plants operating successfully providing for daily water needs for cooking and drinking," Dr Rundi said.

He disclosed that Paula technology was developed based on experience gathered from a portable treatment unit for disaster relief. Paula provides water which is virus and bacteria free, is low-cost and easy to install, easy to handle and operate by unskilled workers, and is suitable for implementation in remote areas.

Among those in Dr Rundi's delegation to Vietnam recently were Assistant Minister of Water Supply Liwan Lagang, director of Rural Water Supply Department Chang Kuet Shin, and Ting Ching Zung and Dr Chen Shiun from Sarawak Energy.