



Cressentia receiving the aid from Yusof.

## B40 student glad for Sulung scheme and Unimas offer

### Agust Dean

PAPAR: Outstanding B40 students can complete their studies without being hampered by financial constraints thanks to the Government's Sulung Student Development Programme.

The Sulung programme was initiated last year, targeting the first person in a family from the B40 group to attend university.

Cressentia Paul from Kg Langkawit, here, is one such example. She fulfilled her mother's desire of being the first in her family to pursue higher education, in this case at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas).

The former Labuan Matriculation College student was relieved at being chosen for the Sulung 2.0 Student Development Programme, which allows her eight semesters at Unimas to be fully funded by the National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PIPTN).

Cressentia, a B40 student raised by a single mother, is grateful that she does not have to pay PTPTN for her tuition.

The fourth of six siblings said she applied for the Sabah State Scholarship but received no response. She intends to reapply for the scholarship to pay additional expenses during her four years at Unimas.

She said Unimas was her second option, after Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

"Even though I have to be away from my family, I agreed because the offer I got was from Unimas and not UMS," she said.

She said this during a meeting with Higher Education Deputy Minister Datuk Mohammad Yusof Apdal, who presented her with the Sulung 2.0 Student Development Programme offer letter on Friday. Prof Dr Al Khalid Othman, Unimas' Deputy Vice

Chancellor (Student and Alumni Affairs), was also present.

Meanwhile, Damaris Sokan, 52, was beaming with pride as she watches her daughter pursue her studies.

She said the family's financial restraints had driven Cressentia's elder sister to abandon her hopes of furthering her studies.

"Cressentia's sister excelled in her studies as well, but due to financial constraints, her sister had to turn down the offer to attend university. This is a lesson on not making the same mistake twice.

"I am grateful that my children are brilliant and eager to continue learning," she said.

"Cressentia's offer can at least ease our financial burden of sending her to university," she added.

The family's financial resources, according to the single mother, are supported by her two working children. After her husband died of cancer nine years ago, she used to take a house cleaning salary of RM300 per month to raise her six children.

Meanwhile, Cressentia said her older brother and sister encouraged her to continue her studies despite financial difficulties.

"After receiving the offer to continue my studies in the field of accounting at Unimas, I had mixed feelings at first.

"Of course, I am delighted with the offer, but financial constraints are the biggest restraint for our family. So when my sister and brother pushed me to continue my studies even if it meant taking out a PIPTN loan. I was eager to continue my studies.

"My siblings wanted at least one of us to pursue studying at the university," she said.