

Family of 20 living in one small flat



Big household: Norlini recording information about family in their Desa Mentari flat yesterday.

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PETALING JAYA: Unlike the homeless, they have a roof over their heads; but the poverty of the household of 20 was apparent.

The family live in a small, cramped low-cost flat with second-hand worn-out sofas, an old television that was a gift from a relative, and mattresses that have turned yellow.

When visited by an enumerator from the Statistics Department during the census exercise at their home in Desa Mentari near Kampung Medan here yesterday, third child 29-year-old Mariama's first response was,

"Dari kebajikan?"

She gave a small smile of embarrassment when she was told by census officer Norlini Abu Bakar, 22, that she was not from the Welfare Department.

When interviewed by *The Star*, Mariama said that in her family of seven adults, only three had jobs; two were lorry drivers and one a part-time labourer.

The family's 47-year-old matron, who was not at home during the visit, works as a cleaner and receives RM300 monthly from the Welfare Department "as she is asthmatic and sickly", Mariama, the homemaker said.

There were 13 children under 12 years of age living in the unit and all study at SK Vivekananda.

At night, 10 of them sleep in the master bedroom and the rest share the living room space, using mattresses or clothes as bedding.

Norlini said an average of 15 minutes is needed to interview each household.

"Some have been reluctant to respond, mostly due to the language barrier and misconception that I may be a door-to-door salesperson," she said.

The fifth national population census will be conducted over six weeks until Aug 22.