



## **Media Release**

For immediate release

### **Samling steps up to rebuild bridges for rural communities**

**1 October 2020, Miri, Sarawak** – The Samling Group (the Group), responding to the urgent needs of rural communities in Sarawak, sent in emergency teams to rebuild vital infrastructure that had been damaged by the heavy rains.

Due to the heavy rainfall and flash floods over the last few weeks, one of the bridges across a stream that serves 91 villages in the Baram area, partially collapsed on 8 September 2020. This was caused by soil movement which led to the bridge caving in. The Group had immediately mobilized its team from the Baram Central Base Camp, and the required machineries to the site on the same day. A temporary access road for light vehicles was constructed four (4) hours after the Group received news of the damage. The Group then took the necessary steps to repair the bridge, ensuring it was fully operational by the end of 9 September 2020, and passable to all vehicles including heavy trunks. This bridge serves communities in the upper Baran and Tinajar areas, all the way to Bario.

The Group had also restored the Lg Pillah – Lg Miri trunk road that collapsed on 13 September 2020. Recovery measures were taken immediately to ensure light vehicles were able to access the road, and it was restored to full operations by mid-day of 15 September 2020.

Both the bridge and the stretch of road were built by the Samling Group in the late 1980s, providing vital linkages for rural communities with essential amenities such as schools and a few market Bazaars which are located in Long San, Lapok and Long Lama. Before these essential infrastructures were put in place, it would have taken days for children to get to the nearest schools or for communities to access the nearest amenities. Today, this infrastructure allows for children to reach schools safely and much faster, within a few hours using the transportation sponsored by the Group. Access to medical centres have been greatly increased too. Currently, there are 51 primary schools and 7 secondary schools in areas the Group operates.

The Group works closely with the State Government to ensure all its initiatives are in line with the developmental masterplan of the State. This includes bringing connectivity to the rural population who have never had access to essential social amenities like healthcare and education.

To date, the Group has built and maintains more than 10,000 km of roads and 81 bridges, most of which are in the deep interior of Sarawak, bringing access and greater mobility to 172 villages in 3 regions. Additionally, in the last decade, the Group has also through numerous medical outreach programmes brought doctors, specialists and volunteers to the rural communities.

The Group is committed to providing and improving the quality of life of rural communities by ensuring that they are not physically isolated, and have access to essential amenities.

The Group has also, among others, provided transportation of heavy materials (including but not limited to cement, gravel, bricks, plywood), materials for roofs (such as zinc and spandex sheets),



and water pipes (used to bring clean water) to the rural communities. Furthermore, gen-sets and an ample amount of diesel are provided to generate electricity in the rural areas.

The communities in these areas have expressed their gratitude in various ways over the years as opportunities open up, beyond life in the forests.

Sarawak's rural population is large, much of which still lives in poverty and inhospitable conditions. The bridges and roads are directly correlated to the communities' economic and education gains. Along with other infrastructural improvements in the rural areas, the bridges and roads built are essential in alleviating poverty and achieving long-term prosperity in Sarawak.