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ISKUL SAMA DILAUT OMADAL

*To build young leaders among the local community
(Malaysian citizen and stateless) through holistic education*



Iskul E-News | May 2023

Dear <<First Name>> ,

Selamat Hari Kaamatan from Iskul! Kotobian Tadau Tagazo Do Kaamatan

This is a month of joy and celebration in Sabah, and it is the perfect time to appreciate the people who make this state so precious. Local communities who uphold their traditions and lifestyles for the generations to come.

On Omadal Island, it is the Malaysian Bajau and Bajau Laut people who preserve this culture every day, and deserve the recognition and appreciation.

With that in mind, we have also been very busy this month. Our field team has had a hectic schedule hosting external groups for media production, and a site visit by Yayasan Gamuda, as well as running mental health programs.

Here's a rundown of what we've been up to

- In mid-May, we welcomed a production team from Comberry Studios. The international content studio works on documentaries for TV and media in over 50 countries. During their visit they collected media sources that will go towards a short documentary for a TV station in Germany. The documentary explores how students go to school in different parts of the world. This project provides a unique opportunity for our story and the reality for our students to

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- To create a culturally sensitive mental health program that caters to the unique needs of the marginalised Bajau Laut community, we have launched the Iskul Mental Health Program. The program was funded by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), where we partnered with ECHO.
- Our mental health programs kicked off with self-efficacy surveys for Iskul teams and young adults on the island. These determine levels of empathy towards themselves and others. There have been Resilience in Children workshops on two groups of Iskul students, and Mental Health Support Training for Iskul teams. This helps so we are better equipped to respond to the needs of the children.



- After winning the Gamuda Inspiration Award in 2022, we hosted three teams from Yayasan Gamuda at the end of May. Engineers from their team have discussed design and construction plans for Pondok Iskul 2 with our team. A medical team checked in on our Mini Klinik and the health conditions on Omadal.
- Another team conducted painting activities with our students on May 30th. We coordinated activities for the students with our visitors from Yayasan

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- To wrap up the month, Iskul provided our students with school holiday food baskets, in preparation for the holidays in the first week of June. The students receive meals when they are in school, and these baskets give them that same food source while on holiday. The Yayasan Hasanah Special Grant 2 made this possible.



In Remembrance

Almost everyone benefits from the stateless Bajau's way of living, except for themselves. Private tour guides profit from organising visits for tourists to their settlement without consent. The influx of tourists to Semporna boosts the economy, which trickles down to the Malaysian population. Yet, the Bajau Laut community receives nothing. They go without basic necessities like running water and electricity, let alone healthcare and education. How can we continue to take advantage of the poorest in our society?

A recent incident made it very clear how important it is to deal with this issue. Tebek, a girl of Bajau Laut descent who lived on Omadal, is with us no more, through a very avoidable disaster.

Visitors to the Island are legally required to obtain passes issued by the police, but this is very rarely enforced. Instead, they come in unauthorised boats, eager for the opportunity to snap pictures of local life.

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Tebek was in the water, excited at their arrival, when she was hit by seizures, a result of pre-existing medical conditions. There are no lifeguards on these islands, or trained professionals to help out when trouble strikes. So Tebek struggled in the water, and help did not come.

This tragedy is only the tip of the iceberg of the effects that entitled tourists have on local communities. This is why Iskul has launched a police report against these visitors who come to the island without thinking about the people who actually live there. As we grieve for Tebek and her community on Omodal Island, we attempt to make life safer for others like her.

The only choice we have is to take action. Our people are suffering an injustice and there cannot be silence in the face of this kind of wake up call.

Read our official press statement [here](#).

We look forward to writing to you soon with more updates; thank you for being with us on this journey!

We thank you for your time and support. Magsukul!

The grants that support our operation and activities end by December this year. If our work resonates with you, please consider making a contribution to keep us going.

To build young leaders in Omodal, you can transfer to:

Bank: Public Bank

Account Number: 3-2165146-31

Account Name: Persatuan Pendidikan Bajau Laut

(Iskul Sama diLaut Omodal)

Donation Subject: For 2024

Please email a transfer receipt to info@iskul.my to let us know! Every bit of help makes all the difference to us!

With gratitude this season,
Iskul Team

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