

**ISKUL SAMA DILAUT OMADAL**

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

**Iskul E-News | January - May 2024**

Dear <<First Name>> ,

**Greetings from Iskul!**

We hope this newsletter finds you in good health and high spirits. As we find ourselves halfway through the year, we are excited to share all the latest from Iskul, since our last update in January. Given all that has unravelled since then, we thank you for taking the time to stay informed about all our recent developments.

These months have been especially harrowing as we continue our regular classes with the students, while campaigning to ensure that Iskul can continue operating. We hope our dedication to sustaining Iskul's operations reflects our unwavering commitment to our mission and the community we serve, and that it will yield fruitful results in the near future.

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

- **Book Launch of 'Neha yang Kehilangan Negaranya' and Screening of Short Film 'Kongsi'**

Iskul recently debuted "Neha yang Kehilangan Negaranya" and the short film "Kongsi" in Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu.

"Neha yang Kehilangan Negaranya" explores the challenges of statelessness through Neha's journey, while "Kongsi" follows Kayum's struggles in a new community. Produced through Iskul's program, "Kongsi" features local youth talent in Omadal. The launch sparked discussions on statelessness, leading to a tour of film screenings and discussions in multiple states through the Jelajah Malaya and Jelajah Sabah programmes, amplifying voices of stateless children and youth.



### • Farewell to Cikgu Jefry

Cikgu Jefry, a dedicated teacher at Iskul, has made the difficult decision to part ways with the institution after several years of service. His passionate and caring approach has left a lasting impact on both the school community and the students he has guided. While we are sad to see him go, we are grateful for all his contribution over the years and wish him all the best in his future endeavours.



### • World Conference on Statelessness 2024

Our co-founder, Ee Chia, attended the World Conference on Statelessness 2024 in Kuala Lumpur, where she engaged with stakeholders and advocates for stateless

Mariati expressed her support for Iskul's operations and we had the opportunity to share our recent Students' Impact Report with her.

Our Students' Impact Report documents the incredible growth and community impact of Iskul's students in Omadal. This report showcases how our students have become change makers within their community, highlighting their achievements and the positive changes they have inspired. Read the Impact Report [here](#).

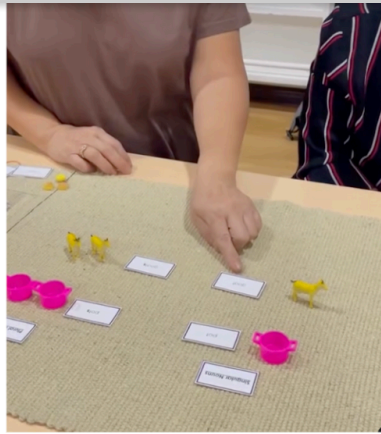
In addition to this, the Minister of Technology, Science, and Innovation, YB Chang Lih Kang has also endorsed Iskul's digital initiatives. Letters have also been sent to Education Minister YB Fadhlina and Chief Minister Datuk Hajiji to seek further support for our cause.



### MARCH

- **Teacher Training Program in Sibul, Sarawak**

Cikgu Rahmat and Cikgu Ayu participated in a Teacher Training program in Sibul, Sarawak, organised by Dignity for Children from the 4th to the 7th of March. They focused on Montessori teaching methods, classroom management, and creating conducive learning environments. They also learned about Social Emotional Learning (SEL) to enhance student and parent well-being. The training was enriching, and Iskul looks forward to integrating these innovative methods into teaching practices.



### • Iskul Provides Medical Assistance to Gudsali and Hamzah from Omadal's Stateless Community

On the 10th of March, Iskul provided swift medical assistance to two members of Omadal's stateless community, Gudsali and Hamzah. Gudsali received wound stitching treatment for a leg injury from a boat fan blade, while Hamzah was admitted to Hospital Semporna for a severe skin infection on his scalp. Both are now in stable condition. Community health helpers Bilkuin and Shima from Pusat Kesihatan Omadal, who are also assistant teachers at Iskul, provided early first aid to Gudsali, showcasing an ability to act in an emergency, and apply the knowledge they've gained during their medical training.



### • Waste Management in Omadal

Iskul, WWF, and WAPO have collaborated on waste management efforts on Pulau Omadal. Initially launched by Iskul in December 2021, the project involved multiple island communities. Together, from 2021 to 2023, they collected around 1.6 tons of plastic waste. Recently, the partnership expanded to include waste management for local communities and the Bajau Laut community. WAPO supervises the local community's waste management, Iskul handles waste collection and transportation for the Bajau Laut group, and WWF focuses on waste management. As of March 2024, a total of 160kg of plastic and 25kg of plastic bottles have been collected.



### • Ee Chia and Khairul's Engagement with Government Officials in Kota Kinabalu and Semporna

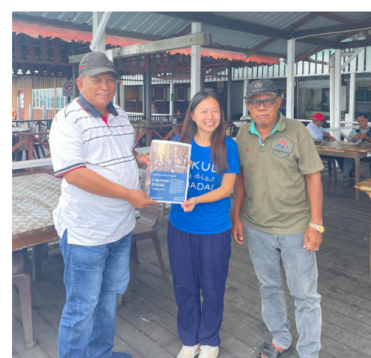
During the week of 11-16 March, Iskul's co-founders Ee Chia and Khairul visited Kota Kinabalu and Semporna to engage with government officials and seek support for Iskul's initiatives. They met with Dr. Roland Chia, the Chief Minister's political secretary, who connected them with Datuk Hajan, the new Pemimpin Pembangunan Masyarakat (PPM) of UPPM Dun N.64 Sulabayan, overseeing JPKK of Omdal. In Semporna, they discussed Iskul's challenges with Datuk Hajan, who expressed support and suggested a community-wide meeting to address issues. They also met YB Phoong, Sabah's Minister of Industrial Development, who agreed to provide a support letter for Iskul. Additionally, discussions with En. Amly, an officer from Unit Pendidikan Swasta, revealed that while the education department had no objections to Iskul's application, it was on hold due to a complaint letter by the Ketua Kampung. The complaint stemmed from a series of miscommunications and misunderstandings regarding our member's reaction concerning tourist visits to the island. En. Amly stressed the need to address these concerns with the KK to resolve the issue. Iskul is focused on building collaborations and has extended an apology to the Ketua Kampung of Pulau Omdal during the month of Ramadhan to foster positive relationships.



Khairul with Dr. Roland Chia, the political secretary of the Chief Minister



Meeting with YB Ginger Phoong, Sabah's Minister of Industrial Development and Entrepreneurs



With Datuk Hajan, the PPM of Sulabayan and a diaspora of Omdal Uluwh whom Datuk Hajan called to meet us.



Meeting with En. Amly of Unit Pendidikan Swasta, JPM Sabah



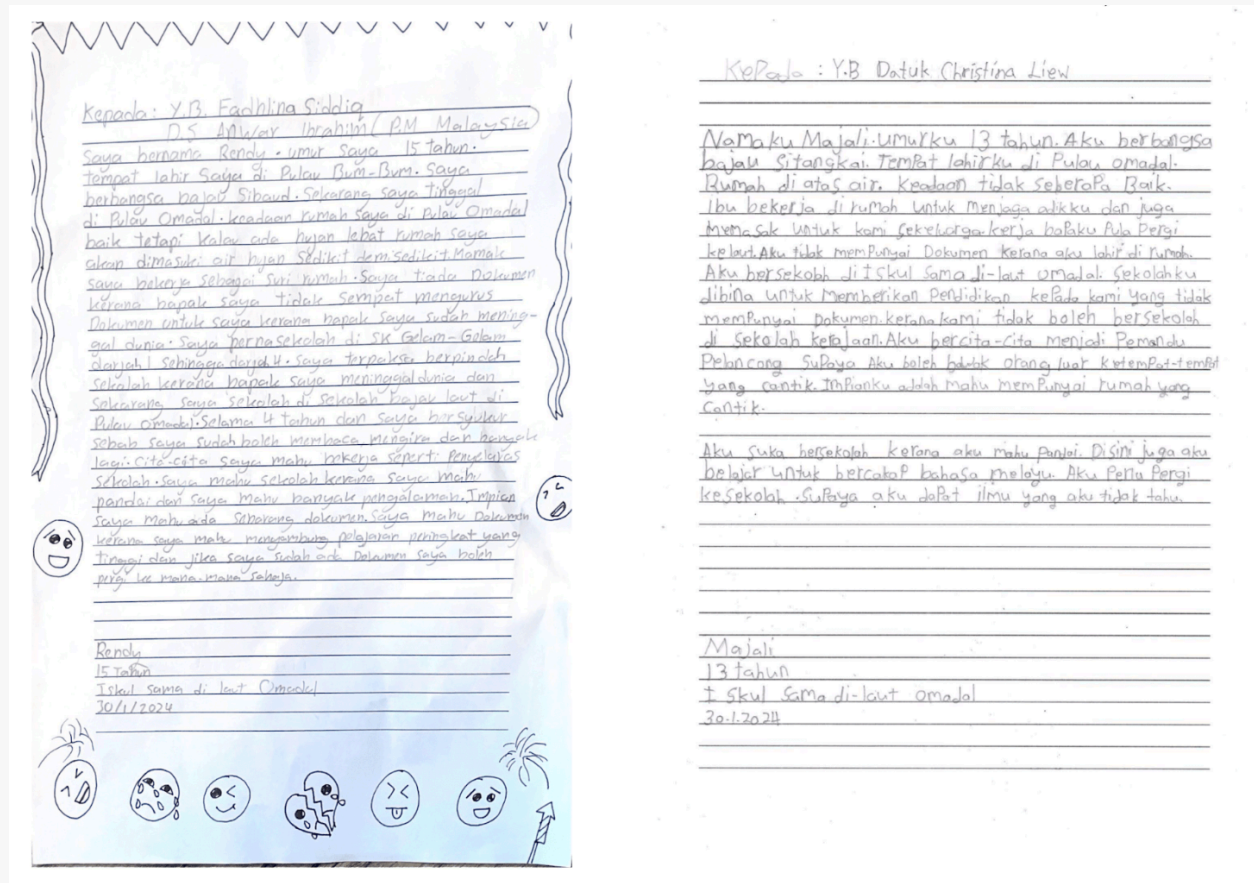
Iskul team meet up briefly to re-strategize during our 1 day trip to Semporna from KK.



Ayu, Iskul teacher meet with Tuan Majid, Ketua Daerah Mahkamah Anak Negeri, Semporna to ask him to help Iskul to reach out to the Ketua Kampung

## • Students Appeal to Politicians for Support

Iskul students on Omdal Island have written heartfelt letters to politicians, including the Chief Minister of Sabah, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment of Sabah, and the Prime Minister of Malaysia. They highlight Iskul's importance in providing education to stateless children and youth, empowering them for a brighter future.



Please find the rest of the letters [here](#) on our Instagram page.

## • Iskul's Short Film and Tikar Exhibition at BAMPFA, University of California Berkeley

Iskul's short film "Ini Bukan Terlewat Raya" has been selected for screening at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) in the University of California Berkeley, alongside two other Sabah short films. This opportunity includes an exhibition featuring woven tepo/mat motifs crafted by community members, including Iskul students. The international recognition of their work is a source of pride, aiming to raise awareness and support for the Bajau Laut, stateless communities, and Iskul itself. The quotes by Yee I-Lann in tandem with the artwork resonate with the students' experiences, highlighting education's transformative power in challenging oppressive structures and empowering advocacy for change.



**Rama Rama "Kolihembang" (2021)**  
Directed by Ekin Kee Charles  
Produced by Ekin Kee Charles & Atika Rosdi  
Awarded Winner Han Nefkens Foundation,  
Loop Barcelona Video Art Production Grant 2022



**Ini Bukan Terlewat Raya (It Is Not Too Late Raya) (2023)**  
Directed by Jefri Musa  
Produced by ISKUL Sama Dilaut Omadai  
Awarded Golden Kinabalu Award: Indigenous Language,  
Kota Kinabalu International Film Festival 2023



**The House Without A Ground (2019)**  
Directed by Putri Purnama Subana  
Produced by Tan Cher Kian  
Awarded Best Director, Best Screenplay,  
Pesta Film Kita 2019 Malaysia



## ART WALL

### Yee I-Lann: TIKAR/MEJA/PLASTIK

with weaving by

Aisyah Binti Ebrahim, Alini Binti Aniratih, Alisyah Binti Ebrahim, Ardhi Binti Belasani, Darwisa Binti Omar, Dayang Binti Tularan, Dela Binti Aniratih, Endik Binti Arpid, Erna Binti Tekki, Fazlan Bin Tularan, Kinnuhong Gundasali, Kuoh Binti Enjahali, Luisa Binti Ebrahim, Makcik Lukkop Belatan, Makcik Siti Aturdaya, Malaya Binti Anggah, Ninna Binti Mursid, Noraidah Jabarah (Kak Budi), Roziyah Binti Jalalid, Sabyana Binti Belasani, Sanah Belasani, Tasya Binti Tularan, and Venice Foo Chau Xhien

"How do you colonize someone? Instead of an army of guns, imagine an army of tables. That violence of administration is more lethal, more violent, than a gun. With a gun I may shoot you, but with a table, I will tell you who you are, what your history is, what is valuable to be kept in a museum and what is not. This indoctrination of the mind becomes inherited violence."

YEE I-LANN

Yee I-Lann's (b. 1971, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysian Borneo) multidisciplinary

## • Meeting with Private Education Division, Ministry of Education Malaysia

Before Raya, our co-founder, Ee Chia has attended a meeting with Mr. Mohd Suffian Bin Mahmud, the Principal Assistant Director of the Private Education Division at the Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM). During the discussion, Mr. Suffian informed us that KPM does not have the mandate to register any school for undocumented students in Sabah. Their jurisdiction is limited to granting permits for Indonesian schools in plantations in Sabah and schools for refugees in Semenanjung only. For KPM to take any further action, the Malaysian National Security Council (MKN) would need to release a specific policy (dasar).

This clarification has left us puzzled, as it contradicts the guidance we received from the Pegawai Pendidikan Semporna during our meeting with the District Officer in July 2023, which set off the current series of events. We understand that this may be frustrating, but we are committed to continuing our efforts to find a resolution. We will keep you updated on any further developments.

## • Iskul Students Celebrate Raya Together

The spirit of Hari Raya Aidilfitri was alive and vibrant at Iskul as students came together to celebrate the joyous occasion. Despite the challenges they face, the students embraced the festive spirit with enthusiasm, showcasing the resilience and unity of the Iskul community.



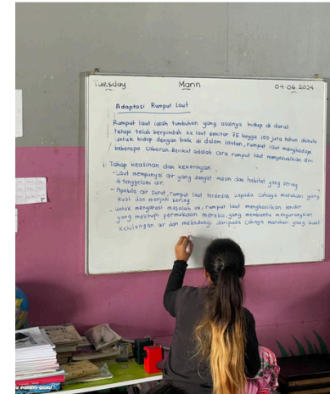
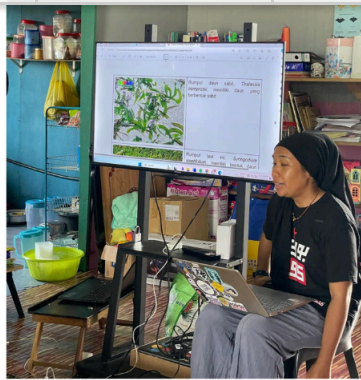
- **Meeting with meet Datuk Shahminan, the Setiausaha Hal Ehwal Dalam Negeri dan Penyelidikan**

Iskul recently had a significant meeting with Datuk Shahminan, the Setiausaha Hal Ehwal Dalam Negeri dan Penyelidikan, where we presented about the school and its mission. Despite the short notice, the team managed to prepare and discuss Iskul's initiatives with key stakeholders, who highlighted the interdependency between Malaysian Bajau and stateless Bajau Laut in Omdal's weaving economy. Datuk Shahminan expressed interest in Iskul and its needs, showing support for education among stateless Bajau Laut children. However, challenges remain as MoE cannot register schools for stateless children in Sabah without a directive from MKN. In response, Iskul updated its survey of the stateless population in Semporna and faces uncertainty due to potential evictions in Omdal. The team seeks ideas and support as we navigate these challenges, emphasising solidarity with the Bajau Laut community. Iskul's message is clear: stateless children also aspire to contribute to society.

## MAY

- **Updates on Iskul's Classes**

At Iskul, students actively engage in learning new materials each month, impressing us with their progress and dedication. Exciting updates to the school schedule include morning classes from 8 am to 12 pm, vocational classes in the afternoon from 2 pm to 5 pm, preschool class on Mondays and Sundays from 2 pm to 3 pm, and the MA class three times a week in the afternoon. In music class, students showcase their talents by playing ukulele and xylophone while singing assigned monthly songs, enhancing creativity and arts appreciation. In art and culture class, they delve into creating mind-bending 3D illusion images, mastering perspective, shading, and depth to bring visions to life. Iskul recently welcomed a visit from MYReaders, offering engaging alphabet and phonics activities for students and a sharing session on incorporating Montessori teaching methods for teachers. MYReaders' donation of tactile letter cards and interactive tools will enhance classroom experiences. Grateful for the support, Iskul looks forward to more inspiring collaborations ahead in shaping bright futures and fostering a lifelong love for learning.



## MOVING FORWARD

### • Thank You for Your Support and a Call for Continued Assistance

We want to express our deepest gratitude to all our wonderful donors who have supported Iskul, allowing us to maintain our operations from January to April. Your generosity has been instrumental in providing meals for our students and sustaining our essential activities during this time.

However, we need to share with you that due to budget constraints, we had to temporarily pause our student meal program in May as we sought additional funding. Thankfully, we received approval from Yayasan Hasanah at the end of June to use our grant balance to provide meals for the next three months. While this has been a challenging situation, we continue to reach out to our community for ongoing support to ensure we can serve our students and fulfill our mission.

In addition, we are seeking donations to cover the costs of our recent Strategic Planning Meeting held in early July. This meeting was crucial for strengthening our team and aligning our efforts with our shared vision and mission. Ultimately, our goal is to empower the local community in Omdal, including our current staff and students, to take on leadership roles within Iskul.

To achieve this, we conducted a 7-day Strategic Planning Meeting (SPM) for our team members, including assistant teachers who are Iskul graduates. The key of this program was to provide an opportunity to include the voices of the Mastal Arikik from the stateless community into our future planning.

During the program, we focused on team-building activities, clarifying our vision and mission, brainstorming for future direction, and engaging key stakeholders.

As our teachers attend trainings to ensure that they can provide for the children to the best of their ability, it had become clear to us that we are in need of assistance in specific areas. We are on the

We sincerely ask our donors and supporters to consider contributing to our cause. Your continued generosity will play a crucial role in empowering our team and ensuring the sustainability of Iskul's mission. Together, we can make a lasting difference in the lives of stateless children and youth in Omadal.

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 Omadal, you can transfer to:

Bank: Public Bank

Account Number: 3-2165146-31

Account Name: Persatuan Pendidikan Bajau Laut

(Iskul Sama diLaut Omadal)

Donation Subject: For 2024

Please email a transfer receipt to [info@iskul.my](mailto:info@iskul.my) to let us know! Every bit of help makes all the difference to us!

With gratitude,  
Iskul Team

Follow our social media for more real-time updates!



