

ISKUL SAMA DILAUT OMADAL

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



Iskul E-News | June/July 2024

Dear <<First Name>> ,

Greetings from Iskul!

In our latest newsletter, we reflect on two months of active work with the community on Omadal, that showcase our students' growth and commitment to making a positive impact on their home and people. Do take a peak at our [Students' Impact Report](#) to really get a full idea of all our students' amazing progress!



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

JUNE

- #pandangkesabah

Bajau Laut communities in Semporna have suffered immense loss as their homes were taken from them. We are all deeply saddened by this crisis, and trying very hard to bring comfort and aid to those affected. As one of the organisations that have been actively working with the Bajau Laut in Semporna, Iskul published a statement in support and acknowledgement of the community. For the full statement for Iskul, read [here!](#) Several organisations have shown solidarity with the community in these trying times, and we are so grateful for this!

- Visit from Secretary of Domestic Affairs Department of Sabah

performance of "Pijak Atas Bayang." Upon his request, they also sang Sabah Tanah Airku. This performance seemed to please him.

Many meaningful discussions were held, focusing on Iskul's operations, challenges, and pending permit application issues. Bilkuin, the Mastal Arikik of Iskul, shared his journey from student to teaching assistant, highlighting his role as the Waste Management Coordinator.

Datuk Ag Shahminan also visited the Pusat Kesihatan Komuniti Omadal (Omadal Community Health Centre) to check his blood pressure, where Mastal Arikik Shima introduced the centre's operations.

We received feedback that he was very impressed with our MA's, Bilkuin and Enidah, who we are incredibly proud of!



- Participated in German Ambassador's closed door dialogue on the economic, social and environmental impacts of statelessness, with a focus on the Bajau Laut community

Khairul and Ee Chia were invited to join the panel for the Deliberation on the economic, social and environmental impacts of statelessness, with a focus on the Bajau Laut community on 26 June 2024 at the Residence of the Ambassador of Germany.

Other panellists included Dato Dr. Hartini Zainuddin, DS Panglima Mohd Shafie bin Apdal, and DS Panglima Dr. Jeffrey Gapari Kitingan. The discussions covered health and education, economy and environment, and social integration and awareness building. Ee Chia and Khairul have worked very closely with the stateless community and share their stories and experiences with potential partners; we are happy to experience seeing them at work.

Participants agreed to keep working together by creating a system led by both the government and the opposition to tackle the serious problems faced by the Bajau Laut community. They hope to collaborate to help the Bajau Laut obtain identification documents and support their gradual integration into mainstream society. This gives us hope for progress towards the rights of the people in our community.



- Courtesy Visit to Semporna District Officer, Tuan Alexander Liew

On the 27th of June, Khairul and Ee Chia visited the Semporna District Officer (DO), Tuan Alexander Liew to get some advice regarding Iskul's operations and our Digital Lab & Digital Literacy initiative. The visit went well, and he showed genuine interest in our application to the MoE. When Ee Chia shared the details of how MoE has no mandate to register schools for undocumented children in Sabah, he seemed puzzled, and asked us to refer to Datuk Shahminan's office for further support. This interaction gives us hope for opportunities for collaboration and goodwill.



- Plastic-Free Environment initiative

On the 28th of June, WWF-Malaysia, through its Plastic-Free Environment initiative, organised a focused workshop and discussion aimed at improving the waste management system managed by WAPO and Iskul Sama DiLaut Omdal on Pulau Omdal. The event also included corporate partners from Amwil, who contributed to cleaning the Semporna shoreline and provided valuable ideas and feedback. This program aims to foster collaboration between Iskul and WWF-Malaysia to ensure the environment remains clean.

Three organisations participated in the program, with each sharing their

challenges faced along the way.

For instance, one of his approaches involved distributing waste bins and garbage bags to the Pulau Omdal community. Community members would collect the waste before bringing it to Iskul, where it was weighed, segregated, and recorded as data. The waste would be collected for over two weeks before being sent to Amwil.

One of the ongoing challenges is that some community members still do not dispose of their waste in the bins provided.



- Iskul Joins Ground-Truthing Survey on Bajau Laut Eviction

The Iskul team is grateful to join the Semporna Islands Project (SIP) for a crucial ground-truthing survey on the Bajau Laut community on 29 June 2024. Joining this trip were our co-founder Ee Chia as an interviewer, our Mastal Arikik Bilkuin, and our co-founder and field coordinator, Khairul, as translator to gather firsthand information.

We're proud of our team for their role as translators, bridging the language gap between the Bajau Laut community and the survey team. The survey, conducted with permission from Sabah Parks and local authorities, aimed to understand the challenges faced by the community following their displacement.

Our findings highlight the hardships endured by the relocated Bajau Laut families. Forced to leave their homes on Pulau Maiga, many sought refuge

water and firewood. They also shared that it is hard to find fish and sea products there.



- Visit to Sekolah Alternatif Semporna

We made a visit to Sekolah Alternatif Semporna on the 29th of June, and had a great time! Mukmin shared details of their upcoming launch of Universiti Alternatif (UA) and extended an invitation to our MA Bilkun to enrol as a student. Borneo Komrad are strong champions of indigenous rights in Semporna, and have long been our partners in many projects and goals. Their kind support and inspiring work make everything we do easier, and we are honoured to be on this journey with them!



JULY

- Ee Chia held sessions with students from Ata'u, Ahungun, Ahap and vocational classes

On June 30th and July 2nd, Ee Chia conducted private sessions with students from our Vocational, Ata'u, Ahungun, and Ahap classes. The students introduced themselves and wrote down Personal introductions in their notebooks. Ee Chia provided guidance on their writing, and they were eager to make improvements. To gain insights into student preferences and needs, Ee Chia asked about their favourite aspects of Iskul and what else they would like to learn in Iskul.

alarming problem of glue sniffing among Bajau Laut children and adults in Pulau Omadal. They offered their perspectives on potential solutions, providing crucial insights for addressing this challenge.

Having a co-founder that takes the time and effort to spend time with our students contributes to the culture at Iskul, and allows the students to know that they are truly cared for. These sessions instill confidence and self-worth in the children, and we hope they continue to learn from the best to be upstanding community leaders.



- Iskul Team brought Enidah to register her pregnancy so get her Buku Pink so later her newborn baby can get a birth certificate!

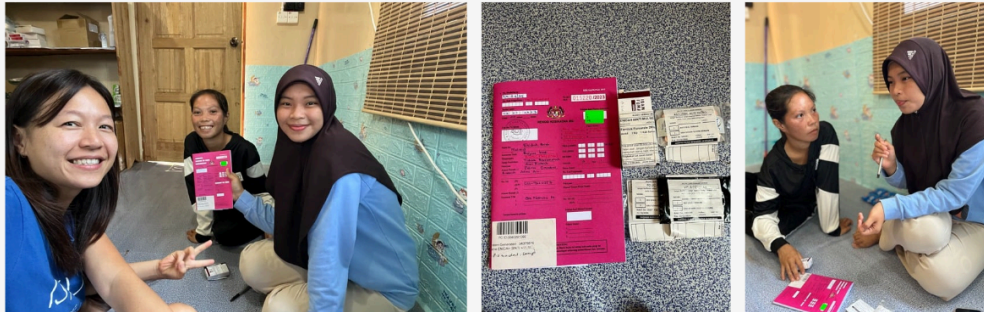
On the 1st of July we brought our Mastal Arikik, Enidah to Hospital Semporna to register and have her pregnancy check-up so she could get her Buku Pink. With Buku Pink, when she gives birth in the hospital, her baby will receive a birth certificate! We are excited for the possible first birth certificate for our Iskul babies! The process has been challenging, and this breakthrough feels very rewarding.

Before we went, Ee Chia confirmed with Dr Hamiza from PKD if a stateless person could register their pregnancy in the Hospital and she was told that it's possible. However, when MA Shima brought Enidah to register, we were rejected and told to go to Klinik Igang-Igang instead. We alerted Dr. Hamiza and she made a call to the registration desk, which prompted them to allow the registration. The whole process was intimidating for Shima and Enidah, but they were brave throughout, and we are so proud of them!

Regrettably, the nurse who filled Enidah's information in the pink book chose not to consult her as she did, and made some unfortunate assumptions regarding the situation. For instance, she assumed that Enidah is from the Philippines, despite evidence that her grandfather has a Malaysian IC, and herself being born in Semporna. For her education level, the nurse wrote "Tidak Bersekolah", although Enidah has been a student in Iskul. Furthermore, her occupation was noted as "Suri Rumah", while she is actually a teaching assistant in Iskul.

These discrepancies highlight significant concerns regarding

We paid RM385 for the registration and prenatal checks. After the initial checkups, Enidah had to go to Klinik Bum Bum and Klinik Igang-Igang for subsequent checkups. Besides the medical fees, Iskul needed to pay the transportation fees for Enidah and our team members who accompanied her as well, which was significantly expensive.



- Iskul held our Strategic Planning Meeting (SPM) 2024 for the first time in Semporna!

We held our Strategic Planning Meeting from the 4th to 10th July - our first time having it so nearby Iskul! This was very necessary to discuss ways to incorporate the voices of our Mastal Arikik in the future planning of Iskul.

The meeting began with open and honest discussions about our goals and expectations. We then took a deep dive into our existing programs and activities, identifying areas for improvement. Our co-founder, Adzmin joined us to facilitate a session on stakeholder mapping and analysis and conducted a SWOT Analysis.

We wrapped up the week discussing solutions to address gaps, and identify options for resource planning for the next 2 years. Every team member - Khairul, Rahmat, Ayu, Ee Chia as well as MAs Shima, Bilkuin and Enidah played a role in facilitating ice-breaking sessions. It's clear that we have ambitious plans, and while some challenges will require external support, we're excited to tackle them head-on. Stay tuned for more updates on our next steps!

We want to thank Mabul Paradise for giving us a special price and our friends at Pemimpin Iklim Mabul for sharing their experiences with us.



- Meeting with Ketua Kampung and Pengerusi JPKK Omadal Hujung

Khairul and Ee Chia had a meeting with the Ketua Kampung, Tuan Nantang and Pengerusi JPKK Omadal Hujung, Tuan Boneka to personally apologise for all the misunderstandings that have occurred, and to ask for their support, on 11 July 2024. They gave Iskul permission to continue our current operations until a decision is made by the state government. Since the issue is now under jurisdiction of the state government, they cannot provide us any official letters or support until that decision has been announced.



- Iskul team joined SUHAKAM in their field visits to the Tun Sakaran Marine Park (TSMP) as guides and translators from 16 to 19 July 2024

We're thrilled to share that our amazing student - Majali, and Mastal Arikik - Bilkuin, along with our co-founder Khairul, joined the SUHAKAM team as guides and translators during their recent field visit to TSMP from July 16th to 19th!

Language has always been a barrier between the government agencies and the Bajau Laut community as many of them only converse in their mother tongue, Bajau. It was one of the reasons Iskul was founded - for the children to learn Bahasa Malaysia so they can communicate with the authorities and the wider communities in Semporna and Malaysia.

It's been a nine-year journey, and we're so proud that some of our



- Urgent Prayer Request

One of our community members, Kenang - mother to two of our students, Jima and Mina - recently gave birth to twins; Adla and Adli. When a volunteer doctor told us that the premature babies would need hospital care due to being extremely small, we were very worried, as hospitals are costly for stateless persons. Fortunately, we were offered fundraising aid by Dr Hartini, and so we sprung into action. It was challenging to let the parents know that there was a chance their babies may not survive, and convince them to take the trip to the hospital, but necessary.

The babies had to be taken to the Tawau hospital, as there is no neonatal care in Semporna hospital, meaning the team had to provide aid with language and assurance, as well as accommodation and meals for Kenang. The boat ride was very difficult, as the babies had to be shielded from the rain, and ended with frustration as the doctor who saw the twins in Semporna Hospital was hesitant to admit them, believing that the premature babies were simply 'born small-sized.'

After a phone call with the volunteer doctor who recommended the trip, they were admitted after all.

We regret to inform you that Adla, the younger twin, passed away due to severe bleeding shortly after being transferred to Tawau Hospital. Adli, the older twin, remains in a fragile condition but shows some signs of improvement. He has been moved from the NICU to the SCN ward due to space constraints. Although Adli is weak and not very active, there are currently no signs of bleeding. His mother, still in Pulau Omadal and unable to visit him, needs our support. Please keep baby Adli in your prayers as he continues to fight through this challenging time. Your strength and support mean a lot.

The reality for the stateless community is harsh. We have to move mountains for them to be able to receive the needed medical care that so many of us take for granted as Malaysians. This reality extends to other fields like funding, education, and clean water too. Stories like Kenang's are a big part of the reason for what we do, and why we will continue to do



- Making steps to reach out

On July 23rd, Iskul wrote a letter to Datuk Shahminan, the Secretary of Domestic Affairs Department of Sabah (Pejabat Hal Ehwal Dalam Negeri dan Penyelidikan) to ask for his support for Iskul's operation and our Digital Lab and Digital Literacy Initiative. We hope that this communication can jump start positive strides towards providing legitimate, quality education for our students.

- We're thankful for our interns!

We also would like to acknowledge and express gratitude towards the wonderful work of our intern, Irfan Tajuddin who has been helping us with this e-newsletter since late last year, and also with our [Students' Impact Report!](#) He has been such a great help; working in the best interests of the Bajau Laut while pursuing a degree.

Our previous intern turned volunteer, Lalitha, used to work on this e-newsletter and updated information to our webpage. You can check out all previous editions of our newsletters on our webpage.

We are so thankful for their hard and wonderful work!



If you would like to volunteer to aid us in the work that we do, this is how you can do so! If you have a field of expertise or talent that you think may serve this cause in some way, it would be great to work with you! Feel free to contact us!

We would like to thank you deeply for all of your support - every little bit means the world to us and our cause. If you haven't gotten it, our [Student Impact Report](#) is available to you! Take a look at how far our students have come and the incredible things they are doing.

Fortunately, we have managed to get approval to channel excess funds from a previous grant into our student meal program. It has been a blessing to be able to start providing meals again, as this has long been a crucial source of nutrition for a significant number of students. The current funding sets us up to continue our meal program from July through September. We are on the lookout for a sustainable way to continue providing meals beyond that, and would be grateful for any resources that could help.

We are also still on the lookout for resources and volunteers to train our teachers in Bahasa Malaysia for classes. We would appreciate any aid in this, as it is such a necessary part of our curriculum for students to learn to communicate.

We humbly appeal to our valued donors and supporters to think about making a contribution to our cause. Your ongoing kindness is vital in strengthening our efforts and sustaining Iskul's mission. By uniting our resources, we can create a significant impact on the lives of stateless children. Together, we have the power to bring about meaningful change and hope for these vulnerable individuals.

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!

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