

Vol. 2, No. 1, 2020

IIUM JOURNAL OF HUMAN SCIENCES

A Peer-reviewed Journal
ISSN 2682-8731 (Online)

- Facebook and Political Communication: A Study of Online
Campaigning during the 14th Malaysian General Election 1-13
Shafizan Mohamed and Kamaruzzaman Abdul Manan
- Reviewing the Literature on Working Dual Jobs among Workers
with Specific Discussion on Malaysian Women 14-24
Aslynda Jane Mohd Afsur Khan and Rohaiza Rokis
- Media Agenda in Politics: How Malaysian RTM Radio Stations
Cover 14th General Election 25-38
Tham Jen Sern, Brendan Ong Wei Wenn and Lim Lean Yee
- How Did People Tweet in the 2018 Malaysian General Election:
Analysis of Top Tweets in #PRU14 39-54
Mohd Faizal Kasmani
- Stateless Filipino Children in Modern Day Sabah: Issues of
Concern and Responses of the State Government 55-63
Jassica Jane Mohd Afsur Khan and Fauziah Fathil
- Adaptation and Initial Validation of Student Stress Inventory for
Use among Malaysian Secondary School Students 64-75
*Farah Nadiyah Abdul Kudus, Nur Syazera Shamsul and Shukran
Abd Rahman*

IIUM JOURNAL OF HUMAN SCIENCES

IJOHS

IIUM Journal of Human Sciences

Editor-in-Chief

Prof. Dato Sri Dr. Syed Arabi Idid, *Malaysia* Dept. of Communication, KIRKHS, IIUM

Email: sarabidid@iium.edu.my

Editor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Shukran Abdul Rahman, *Malaysia* Dept. of Psychology, KIRKHS, IIUM

Email: shukran@iium.edu.my

Co-Editor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rohaiza Rokis, *Malaysia* Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology, KIRKHS, IIUM, rohaiza@iium.edu.my

Associate Editors

Assoc. Prof. Dato Dr. Marzuki Mohamad, *Malaysia*, Dept. of Political Science, KIRKHS, IIUM

Email: marzuki_m@iium.edu.my

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Che Mahzan, *Malaysia*, Dept. of Communication, KIRKHS, IIUM

Email: chemahzan@iium.edu.my

Dr. Aini Maznina Abdul Manaf, *Malaysia*, Dept. of Communication, KIRKHS, IIUM

Email: maznina@iium.edu.my

Dr. Zeti Azreen Ahmad, *Malaysia*, Dept. of Communication, KIRKHS, IIUM

Email: azreen@iium.edu.my

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariam Adawiah Dzulkifli, *Malaysia*, Dept. of Psychology, KIRKHS, IIUM

Email: m.adawiah@iium.edu.my

Dr. Mardiana Mohamed, *Malaysia*, Dept. of Psychology, KIRKHS, IIUM

Email: mardiana@iium.edu.my

Dr. Nor Diana Mohd. Mahudin, *Malaysia*, Dept. of Psychology, KIRKHS, IIUM

Email: nordianamm@iium.edu.my

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Noor Azlan Mohd Noor, *Malaysia*, Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology, KIRKHS, IIUM Email: noorazlan@iium.edu.my

Dr. Norasikin Basir, *Malaysia*, Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology, KIRKHS, IIUM

Email: norasikin@iium.edu.my

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nadwah Hj. Daud, *Malaysia*, Dept. of Arabic Language and Literature, KIRKHS, IIUM

Email: nadwah@iium.edu.my

Dr. Elmira Akhmetova, *Malaysia*, Dept. of History and Civilization, KIRKHS, IIUM

Email: elmira@iium.edu.my

Dr. Fachruddin Mangunjaya, *Indonesia*, Centre of Islamic Studies, Universitas Nasional

Prof. Dr. Fazal Rahim Khan, *Pakistan*, Dept. of Media and Communication Studies, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan

Dr. Nada Ibrahim, *Australia*, Centre of Islamic Thought and Education, University of South Australia

Dr. Hassan Al Kurd, *Maldives*, Dept. of Sociology (Islam and Shariah), University of Maldives

Prof. Dr. Abdrabo Moghazy Abdulraof Soliman, *Qatar*, Psychology Program Coordinator Applied Cognitive Psychology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Qatar University

Email: Soliman@qu.edu.qa

© 2020 by International Islamic University Malaysia

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.

Stateless Filipino Children in Modern Day Sabah: Issues of Concern and Responses of the State Government

Jassica Jane Mohd Afsur Khan
Postgraduate Student, International Islamic University Malaysia

Fauziah Fathil
International Islamic University Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Stateless children have been an ongoing issue specifically in Sabah state for years since independence in 1963. The civil war back in the late 1960s in Southern Philippines saw a tremendous number of refugees from the country seeking refuge in Sabah. They were among the earliest refugees from Mindanao that came to the state whose presence over the years has resulted in the rising number of stateless children of Filipino origin. Although being born and raised in Sabah, legally the children are not citizens of Sabah due to the absence of proper documentation of birth records or certificates. This paper is based on a qualitative study using content analysis. The analysis involves mainly secondary sources with the aim to shed light on the root cause of the issue and identify actions taken by the Sabah government towards finding solutions to the problem. In doing so, the study is assessed against the standpoint and response of the Sabah government, the background of Filipino migrants in Sabah and their stateless children, and the socio-economic and political contexts of the state as a whole. The findings indicate that the root cause of the issue is very complicated and despite some actions taken by the Sabah government, the matter continues to persist affecting not only the refugees and their stateless children but the local people and state of Sabah. Finally, the paper ends with some recommendations i.e. several proposed actions to be taken by relevant parties so that the issue which has been ongoing for decades in Sabah and affected the lives of so many children could be finally solved.

Keywords: children, Sabah, Malaysia, stateless, stateless children

INTRODUCTION

A legal definition for a stateless person as stated in the 1954 Convention of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was ‘individuals who are not considered citizens or nationals under the operation of the laws of any country’ (UNHCR Malaysia, 2020). In March 2009, a written parliamentary reply from the Malaysian Home Ministry reported that there were 32,440 stateless children in the country (Allerton, 2014) although the National Registration Department (NRD), an agency under the ministry, said it does not keep records of stateless persons. In the same year, the Asia Foundation suggested that there could have been 52,000 stateless children in Sabah as of 2009 (Allerton, 2017).

In Malaysia, there is no other state that faces the issue of stateless children resulting from the coming of foreign migrants or refugees, more pressingly than Sabah. For decades, even before the inclusion of Sabah into Malaysia in 1963, the number of foreign migrants particularly from the Philippines and Indonesia in Sabah has been steadily on the rise. Their contributions to the development

of Sabah's economic progress is unquestionable. Actively involved in various industries, the migrants can be found working in the field of construction, agriculture, timber, fisheries, and domestic sectors. Additionally, they also involved in petty trade, selling cigarettes, vegetables, and fishes at markets in districts all around Sabah (Tajari & Affendi, 2015).

This paper aims to increase people's understanding of stateless children in Sabah particularly those of Filipino parents or families since 1963 independence. Not only does their state of statelessness pose problems to the children in the way of depriving them of various benefits normally enjoyed by citizens of the state, but also creates certain perceptions among the local people or citizens, and difficulties to the State government having to deal with untoward consequences resulting from the presence of quite a large number of stateless children in the state. Accordingly, the paper further intends to identify various moves by the Sabah government to address the issue or problem.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Ever since the colonial period, Filipino migrants had been well documented entering Sabah where they proved to be significant as labour workers in plantation sectors, mainly in estates around Sabah. Yet, their number increased greatly following the outbreak of civil war in Southern Philippines in the late 1960s. Many of them who were Muslim refugees from Mindanao, an island in the southern Philippines, fled in order to escape the war and save their lives. Their coming to Sabah, as noted by Lasimbang et al. (2016), continued into the early 1970s due to the same cause, during which Malaysia was at the outset of a major socio-economic reforms called the New Economic Policy.

According to Loh et al. (2019), those refugees from the Philippines who came and settled down in Sabah back from the year 1970 until 1980, can be considered as fortunate compared to others who came afterward. This is because Malaysian federal authorities had granted permission to the former to stay and work in Sabah, provided that they constantly renew their special pass (known as HF7, later rebranded IMM13), which can be extended to their children simultaneously (Kassim, 2009). As of 2017, it was estimated that there were 99,000 Filipino refugees in Sabah of which around 55,000 of them annually renewed their passes without fail (Loh et al., 2019). The remaining number belonged to either one of the following categories, namely, 1) went back to Philippines 2) died 3) granted permanent resident in Malaysia, or 4) went back to the Philippines and came back as illegal immigrants. It was reported in the World Bank Document, it was from those 55,000 that around 100,000 stateless children were born in Sabah (Loh et al. (2019).

In Sabah particularly, the status of foreigners can be divided into three, namely those with valid status, those with illegal status, and those with status under the management of the Sabah Foreigners Management Committee. Those with valid status are foreigners holding Permanent Resident status, visitors, expatriates, foreign workers, and IMM13 holders, while those with illegal status are without passes and have no documents. Those whose status is under the management of the Sabah Foreigners Management Committee refer to foreigners with temporary resident status, refugee children without IMM13, document holders other than immigration documents, children born from marriage with illegal immigrants, and *pa'lauh* (sea gypsies). Statistic of foreign visitors to Sabah showed that in 2016 the number of foreigners visiting Sabah was 1,230,621 (Dollah & Abdullah, 2018), a fraction of which could have settled down in the state.

The number of passes and permits issued by the Immigration Department in Sabah as of August 2018 since 2016 is 26,708 where of the figure, a total of 3,309 undocumented immigrants were detained during operations carried out by the state authorities against illegal immigrants, while 5,435 were arrested after turning themselves in, while a total of 45 employers were detained during illegal migrants

search operations and 459 were caught under the 459 rehiring program (Jeffrey, 2018). From 2016 to August 2017, a total of 4,514 undocumented immigrants and employers have been charged in court, while 574,619 have been deported from 1990 until August 2018 (Dollah & Abdullah, 2018).

Malaysian law demands that a child of foreign migrants must be registered within 42 days of birth, and to do that, the parents' identity cards, marriage certificates, birth certificates of other siblings, and photos of all family members must be submitted to the National Registration Department. If Filipino parents do not have identity cards or passports, they can neither go to the Philippine Embassy nor the National Registration Department of Malaysia for registration. However, there are situations where even if one parent holds a Malaysian identity card and can register the child's birth without any difficulty, there is a fear that the spouse will be repatriated to the Philippines; thus the registration of the child's birth becomes a low priority. For those who have proper documentation, registering child's birth at the Embassy of the Philippines in Kuala Lumpur could mean a financial burden in addition to having to deal with unfamiliar bureaucratic red tapes. Most parents and children on the islands near Sabah too, due to the above reasons do not have birth registration documents, and oftentimes, the process of documentation is beyond their comprehension.

As of 2018, it was estimated that a total of 800,000 stateless people among whom were children, living in remote areas or districts across the state, but constantly on the lookout. Due to the absence of proper documentation and hence, lack of opportunities to undergo formal education and training, almost all the stateless children in Sabah as they reached a certain age, are mainly hired as manual labourers in palm oil plantation, construction and fishing sectors all over Sabah (Free Malaysia Today, 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Statelessness or in other words, lack of nationality, according to Groot et al. (2015) has been a global issue that affected not only individuals and states but the international community as a whole. He added that statelessness is related to the deficiency in providing proper documentation of birth certificate or proof, and this leads to another major problem where it prevents a person from proper access to civil, cultural, and social rights, to name a few.

In the work of Torpey (2000), the work particularly dealt with nationality, statelessness and citizenship issues in developing countries, and national identification card issuance by governments, among others. While this work did not mention the situation in Sabah state, in particular, it touched on the underlying problem mentioning that the lack of birth registration proof in most cases is the root cause for the statelessness issue among children of foreign immigrants or migrants. Unfortunately, this kind of situation, according to the author, often leads to a more complex problem for the children concerning various matters related to nationality and citizenship.

In the work of Anthony et al (2020), it presented social, legal and psychological implications of statelessness onto children where from the beginning of migration process, the children normally face hardship regarding physical and mental health conditions (tiring and exhaustion), difficulty in obtaining basic rights such as legal protection, and problem in dealing with social and cultural shifting in the host countries; as to how to fit in their culture and traditions.

Regarding situations in Sabah and Malaysia in general, several authors deliberated on the migration issue and its effects. Jeffrey (2018) maintained that in the past decades, the Malaysian economy particularly in Sabah has been highly dependent on migrant workers, predominantly Indonesian and Filipino workers. This over-reliance on migrant workers made the ruling elites in the country to fear that their dominant presence would undermine the government's policy to move Malaysia from a labour-intensive to automation in order to achieve the status of a developed nation, as

well as the policy to prioritize locals over foreigners in all economic sectors. It was reported that the foreigners make up one-third of the workforce in Sabah (Daily Express, 2019), causing an issue of concern among leaders of the country.

Concerning the issue of stateless children in Sabah, Malaysia Kini (2019) for one, reported that stateless Filipino children have been a prolonged issue that yet to be resolved. They have been living with and helping other Sabahans. Warren (1981) explained that Filipino children and grand-children faced difficulty regarding their issue of nationality due to logistics and economic context. Commenting on the same issue, Blitz (2009) highlighted that Filipino migrants are bound by certain regulations in managing their documentation issue under a particular Standard of Procedure issued by the authorities.

Looking from a different perspective, Sabah's development, according to Lasimbang et al (2016), has been impacted by Filipino migrants since their migration, politically, economically, and socially. As a result, there are several negative perceptions held by the local authorities, as well as local people towards stateless children of the migrant groups that they are often associated with criminal acts and social problems.

The work of Ibrahim et al (2019) did not deal directly with statelessness and citizenship issues in Sabah. However, the work interestingly discussed how Sabah as a state has grown to have multi-cultural diversification from years of foreign migration into its borders. This can be seen in the aspect of multi-ethnicity, different races and languages, various customs, and cultural diversity, which indirectly contributed to Sabah's uniqueness as a State.

There have been several works written on Malaysian government measures in tackling the issue of stateless children in Sabah. Olson (2007) stated that the government of Malaysia has continuously come out with some strategies ranging from making it compulsory for parents to register their children at birth, to establish contacts with various domestic and international agencies such as UNCHR, UNICEF, SUHAKAM, NGOs and members of Parliament. Also on the Sabah state government's measures, The Borneo Post (2019) reported that there have been discussions and suggestions on granting stateless children with valid documentation which allows them to attend schools and later work legally in the state. The state government believed that by taking such a measure, the children can be prevented from committing crimes or involving in social problems.

A report by UNICEF Malaysia (2017) has presented generally its strategic plan for the year 2018 until 2021 on three main areas of importance; refugees, migrants, and stateless persons in Sabah. Further discussions on capacity development, policy dialogue, advocacy for migrants, partnerships, south-south and triangular cooperation, identification and promotion of innovation, as well as evaluation and research are among the topics addressed in the report, to name a few.

To conclude, the previous works provide significant inputs to the study in terms of highlighting the concerns faced by Sabah particularly regarding this issue of stateless children. However, more concrete actions and solutions are needed for effective results.

METHOD

For this study, the method used for data collection is a content-analysis approach involving secondary sources such as scholarly books, websites, online newspapers, and journal articles. Upon careful analysis, relevant data were identified and extracted to draw findings. Whenever plausible, critical thinking was applied to ensure that the arguments and issues at hand were thoroughly explained and discussed.

DISCUSSIONS ON RELEVANT CONTEXTS

In highlighting the importance of this study and fill in the research gaps, discussions presented below touch on various contexts related to the stateless children issue in Sabah. This is meant to demonstrate the bigger picture of the issue which affects not only the migrants and their children, but also the socio-economic and political conditions of Sabah.

The Context of Migrants and Stateless Children in Sabah

To understand the complexity of the issue, a closer look into the conditions of the Filipino migrants and stateless children in Sabah is necessary. It was reported in the World Bank Document that as of 2017, there were around 100,000 stateless children in Sabah. They were children of mostly Filipino refugees who fled to the state following the civil war in Southern Philippines back in the 1970s. The influx of the refugees continued until 1980 where, by this time, more and more have entered Sabah for safety as well as family reunion (Loh et al., 2019). In Sabah, the migrants largely involved in timber mill, plantation, construction, agricultural, transport, and service sectors (Razali et al., 2015).

As to how the statelessness came about, some explanations are worthy to be discussed here. As mentioned earlier, the refugee status of the Filipino migrants means that they are IMM13 holders instead of citizens of Malaysia, and this is automatically passed on to their children born in Sabah. While the refugees could apply for Filipino citizenship instead, it is difficult for them to get in touch with the Philippines Consulate or Embassy to complete the proper procedures. This explains why the number of stateless children continues to be on the rise. The only Philippines Consulate is located in Kuala Lumpur, West Malaysia while Sabah is the easternmost state in East Malaysia. Not only does the high expenses of traveling to Kuala Lumpur deter many poor Filipino migrants or refugees from doing so due to poverty, but their IMM13 status implies that by law they are not allowed to travel outside Sabah.

While there have been attempts towards mobile registration for children of the migrants to become citizens of Philippines done by the Consulate's mobile registration unit which occasionally visited Sabah, yet, most of the migrants did not aware of their visits given the condition that most of them living in remote districts in Sabah. In the case of those who made through, still, there is an ongoing debate on how the Consulate granted the citizenship upon children and grand-children of Filipino migrants who were born in Sabah, due to the lack of proper evidence to prove their claims (Blitz, 2009).

A close up of the stateless children themselves demonstrates that their conditions are far from convenient. The majority of the stateless children are poor and illiterate, coming from the most vulnerable community of Sabah. This arose due to their parents and family members could not obtain proper employment due to the absence of proper documentation, hence resulting in their inability to escape poverty. Therefore, the children resorted to begging for money at every corner in the state, and involved in petty theft and worst still in drugs. It is believed that these stateless children and their families will continuously live in the cycle of poverty and statelessness from generation to generation, having suffered from the lack of proper access to education which will then affect their chances in future employment although they were born in Sabah (Malaysia Kini, 2019).

Furthermore, there are also issues of lack of access to proper healthcare services and limit their freedom of movement. Unlike normal citizens of the state, stateless children and their parents due to the absence of formal documentation such as birth certificates, have problems in getting proper healthcare services as the former do. Nor are they free to travel far as their movement is restricted within the state due to their IMM13 status. This entails limited opportunities to venture outside the state in search of better work or livelihood.

Socio-economic and Political Contexts of Sabah

While there is no doubt that the foreign migrants in Sabah including those of Filipino origin did contribute to the economic progress of the state, their presence, as well as that of stateless children occasionally, does not sit well with the local people or citizens of Sabah. As the children could not attend schools which means they are not able to secure proper employment and live in poverty, very often they are labelled by the local community as persons with social-ills due to desperation or hardship in life (Malaysia Kini, 2019). Another impact in the social context of Sabah in regards to the stateless children is that it gives rather a bad image to the State in general because of their act of roaming around the town and cities, begging for money from local people and foreign tourists. Worst still, among the local citizens there is an impression that these children are involved in some kinds of wrongdoings even though they are not necessarily committing any crime (The Star, 2019).

Since the implementation of the New Economic Policy (1970-1990) in Malaysia, most of the local natives of Sabah left for towns for new employment. They showed less interest in agricultural and plantation, as well as construction and service sectors particularly in rural areas of Sabah as jobs related to these sectors, were unfavourably viewed as 3-D (dirty, difficult, and dangerous) (Kassim, 2009; Seng, 1989 and 1990). Therefore, Filipino immigrants were the group that helped to fill the labour shortages for the said sectors and boost the state's economic development in those areas (Kassim, 2009; Seng, 1989 and 1990).

Economically speaking, the Sabah state has been highly dependent on migrant workers, predominantly Filipino workers. It was undeniably agreed that this group along with other migrant groups like Indonesia have contributed to the economic progress of Sabah where together they formed about one-third of the working force in the state. That said, there was a concern among some leaders of the country that the over-reliance on migrant workers might undermine the government's policy to shift the Malaysian economy from labour-intensive to the modern manufacturing industry as outlined under the New Economic Policy. Furthermore, under the Policy, it was the target of the government to prioritize locals over foreigners in all economic sectors in order to uplift the socio-economic conditions of the former especially the Bumiputra (Jeffrey, 2018).

Politically, for many years the issue of stateless children has been a highly contentious subject in politics of Sabah. Most of the political parties in the state have their views in supporting or opposing the suggestions, implementation of policies and actions to be taken by the state government, in particular concerning the issuing of valid documentation for the stateless children to go to schools (Free Malaysia Today, 2018). Until now, the issue is still ongoing and unsolved.

The Context of State Government of Sabah

Almost all of the stateless children in Sabah are of Filipino descent born in Sabah. These children are without proper identification documents as they were not registered upon birth by their parents. Under the state laws, being born does not guarantee the granting of a permanent resident or citizen status unless one of their parents is a Malaysian. In a situation where stateless children and teenagers are caught by the immigration authority, they would be automatically detained and later deported back to the country of their parents i.e. Philippines on the ground of violating the law although they have been brought up in Malaysia since born (Free Malaysia Today, 2018).

Apart from the main cause i.e. Filipino parents not being able to register their offspring at birth, which led to the rising number of stateless children in Sabah, it was argued that there were a few loopholes that also contributed to the problem. One shortcoming was rather weak coordination among

enforcement agencies which led to a substantial number of overstaying foreign workers in Sabah (World Bank, 2013) and secondly, there was evidence of corruption and bribery taking place among government civil staff involving different levels of personnel purposely allowing undocumented Filipino migrants (as workers) to overstay in Sabah (New Straits Times, 2018).

In dealing with the problem, several measures have been taken up by the State government. One such move is the implementation of 'mobile court' service which started in the early year of 2000 to overcome the issue of stateless children and adult migrants. So far, a total of 40,000 stateless cases have been dealt with by the mobile court since it was implemented. Using modified buses as mobile courtrooms, each court service was assigned a Judge or Magistrate and the buses were sent to all Sabah districts including rural areas to address and solve the birth registration issue involving the stateless children. To confirm any birth and late birth registration, the Judges or Magistrates require parents to produce clinic check-up reports, marriage certificates, and witnesses as proofs (Kassim, 2009).

In addition, other moves by the State government towards finding solutions to the problem are 1) to ensure all births in Malaysia registered 2) to promote regular discussions with concerned parties; the Government of Philippines, UNHCR, UNICEF, Ministers of Parliament, NGOs in Malaysia and community leaders of the migrants 3) to act committedly under the Convention on the Rights of the Child 4) to act committedly to the idea of allowing free primary education to undocumented children in Sabah, and 5) to uplift the arrest and detention upon undocumented children in Sabah. Additionally, non-governmental organizations in Malaysia together with the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM) have tirelessly conducted fact-finding missions or delegations to Sabah in monitoring the issue of stateless children where reports were then sent to both UNHCR and UNICEF covering the aspect of protection for the children, and their access to basic rights which include the granting of identity, nationality, and access to education (Allerton, 2014).

All the above-discussed contexts led to some consequences particularly for Sabah; the rising cost of expenses to bear all the necessary administrative procedures falls on the government, while the political, societal and economic brunt resulting from or in dealing with the presence of the large number of stateless children is felt by the general population of the Sabah. It is worrisome that if changes did not take place with respect to these children, the possibility that they will not obtain any citizenship from their host-country and remain as illegal migrants or refugees persists not only throughout their lifetime but that of their next generations.

Limitation of the Study

Due to the inability to secure rapport and gatekeeper in conducting interviews towards potential participants for this study, the study is mainly based on secondary data and few primary data such as UNHCR and UNICEF reports. For further research on the issue in the future, it is suggested that interview techniques are used in combination with library research approach.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given a large number of stateless children in the present state of Sabah and the complexity of the issue, it is to be expected that the issue will linger and take a long time before it can be solved. Based on the discussions put forward in some articles and journals, a few recommendations are presented here. Among them, outreach programs on a large scale can be put into action to reach out to all the migrant families all over Sabah with stateless children; phase by phase, and with consistency, with the aim to solve the documentation problem to begin with. This can be done simultaneously by two important Malaysia federal government agencies in a concerted manner, namely, the National Registration Department and Malaysia Immigration Department. Furthermore, religious and societal leaders can

team up with relevant government agencies in the outreach programs using spiritual and motivational approaches in order to get the migrants to feel at ease and convince them that their host country is trying to assist them to solve the problem.

As for Sabah state government, two main agencies, the Chief Minister Department and Ministry of Housing and Local Government might come up with some incentives such as housing plan; to offer a proper low-cost house for all migrant families with stateless children to start a decent life in their host country i.e. Sabah while processing the needed documents. Not only will this provide safety to the children but also prevent them from roaming the streets. Media coverage too can play a significant role in reporting the progress of the programs put in place, promoting awareness among the migrants and highlighting the perspectives of the society and local community on the issue. The media can also gather the attention of international agencies or bodies to assist Sabah in addressing the issue that has been going on in the state for decades. Indeed, the proposed actions are in line with Malaysia's pledge of commitment towards the Global Action Plan of ending statelessness by the year 2024, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals 16.9 on 'Legal Identity for All, Including Birth Registration' campaign.

In conclusion, stateless children are an enduring issue in Sabah that is inseparable from the state's society, economy, and politics. While there have been some efforts done to solve the issue by the State government, the Philippines government through its Consulate, non-governmental bodies, and international bodies, the issue is still present and poses real problems to the Sabah state government and its people. Hopefully, more concerted and serious efforts will be made in the future by all the said parties to effectively solve the issue if not once and for all, at least to a greater degree for the sake of the future of the stateless children, who, by uncontrolled circumstances found themselves stuck in the condition that they are currently in.

REFERENCE

- Allerton, C. (2014). *Statelessness and the Lives of the Children of Migrants in Sabah, East Malaysia*. Retrieved 10 December 2019 from <https://www.google.com>
- Allerton, C. (2017). *Contested Statelessness in Sabah, Malaysia: Irregularity and the Politics of Recognition*. Retrieved 10 December 2019 from <https://www.google.com>
- Anthony, I., Bazz, M. B. & Olu, O. I. (2020). *Impact of Migration on Women and Children*. Tolle Lege: An Augustinian Journal of Philosophy and Theology, Vol. 2. No. 2, pp. 2-12
- Blitz, B. (2009). Advocacy Campaigns and Policy Development. *Forced Migration Review*, pp. 25-26.
- Daily Express (2019). *Foreigners make up one-third*. Retrieved 10 December 2019 from <https://www.thedailyexpress.com/>
- Dollah, R., & Abdullah, K. (2018). The Securitization of Migrant Workers in Sabah, Malaysia. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 717-735.
- Free Malaysia Today (2018). *Stateless in Sabah: the boys and girls who can't go to school*. Retrieved 19 April 2020 from <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/>
- Free Malaysia Today (2018). *Sabah's opposition is not keen on having stateless kids in government school*. Retrieved 19 April 2020 from <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/>
- Groot, R. R. D., K. Swider, K. & O. Vonk, O. (2015). Practices and Approaches in the EU Member States to Prevent and End Statelessness. *European Union*, pp. 14.
- Ibrahim, I. A., Hajimin, M. N. H. H. H., Jamsari, E. A., Nasir, B. M. & Safiai, M. H. (2019). The Impact of Filipino Muslim Ethnic Migration into Sabah on ASEAN Integration. *International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering (IJITEE)*, pp. 369-371.
- Jeffrey, S. (2018). *Foreigners make up one-third*. Retrieved 10 December 2019 from <https://www.thedailyexpress.com/>

- Kassim, A. (2009). Filipino Refugees in Sabah: State Responses, Public Stereotypes, and the Dilemma over Their Future. *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 1.
- Lasimbang, H. B., Tong, W. T., & Low, W. Y. (2016). Migrant workers in Sabah, East Malaysia: The importance of legislation and policy to uphold equity on sexual and reproductive health and rights. *Best Practice & Research Clinical Obstetrics & Gynaecology*, pp. 113–123.
- Loh, W. S., Simler, K., Wei, K. T. & Yi, S. (2019). MALAYSIA: Estimating the Number of Foreign Workers. *The World Bank*, pp. 1-52.
- Malaysia Kini (2019). Living with and helping 'other Sabahans'. Retrieved 20 April 2020 from <https://www.malaysiakini.com/>
- Olson, C. (2007). *Malaysia: Undocumented Children in Sabah Vulnerable to Statelessness*. Refugees International Bulletin.
- Razali, R. M., Nordin, R. & Duraisingam, T. J. (2015). Migration and Statelessness: Turning the Spotlight on Malaysia. *Pertanika J. Soc. Sci. & Hum.*, pp. 19 – 36.
- Seng, H. T. (1989; 1990). International migration and urban development: the case of the Filipino immigrants in Sabah. *Urbanization and Development: Prospects and Policies for Sabah Beyond*, pp. 42.
- Tajari, A. & Affendi, N. (2015). Illegal Immigrant and Security Crisis in Sabah (Malaysia). *E-Proceeding of the International Conference on Social Science Research*, pp: 1-11.
- The Borneo Post Online (2019). *Issuing stateless children with ICs positive move*. Retrieved 29 April 2020 from <https://www.theborneopost.com/>
- The Star (2019). *Stateless kids causing a headache for Sabah authorities*. Retrieved 20 April 2020 from <https://www.thestar.com.my>
- Torpey, J. (2000). *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- UNHCR Malaysia (2020). *Statelessness*. The UN Refugee Agency. Retrieved 22 June 2020 from <https://www.unhcr.org/en-my>
- UNICEF Malaysia (2017). *UNICEF Annual Report of 2017*. UNICEF. Retrieved 24 June 2020 from <https://www.unicef.org>
- Warren, J. F. (1981). *On the Sultanate of Sulu, the Sulu Zone, 1768-1898: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State*. Singapore University Press.