



PROCEEDINGS OF SEMINAR ON PUBLIC RESPONSES TO FOREIGN WORKERS IN SABAH

EDITOR
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**Proceedings of Seminar on:
PUBLIC RESPONSES TO FOREIGN
WORKERS IN SABAH**

PERPUSTAKAAN
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

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Edited by:
Azizah Kassim

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UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADUN	Ahli Dewan Undangan Negeri (Member of the State Legislative Assembly)
BIMP-EAGA	Brunei Indonesia Malaysia Philippines-East Asia Growth Area
CIDB	Construction Industry Development Board
DPBS	Dewan Perniagaan Bumiputra Sabah (Sabah Bumiputera Chamber of Commerce)
EMPA	East Malaysian Planters' Association
FELCRA	Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
FFB	Fresh Fruit Bunch
FOMEMA	Foreign Workers' Medical Examination and Monitoring Agency
FSM	Federation of Sabah Manufacturers
GNP	Gross National Product
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILP	Institut Latihan Perindustrian (Industrial Training Institute)
JKKK	Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung
JKR	Jabatan Kerja Raya
KDN	Kementerian Dalam Negeri
MAPA	Malaysian Agricultural Producers' Association
MLVK	Majlis Latihan Vokasional Kebangsaan (National Vocational Training Council)
MP	Ahli Parlimen (Member of Parliament)
MPOA	Malaysian Palm Oil Association
MPOB	Malaysian Palm Oil Board
MSC	Malaysian Super Corridor
MTUC	Malaysian Trade Union Congress
NPC	National Productivity Corporation
NUPW	National Union of Plantation Workers
PAM	Persatuan Arkitek Malaysia
PDRM	Polis Diraja Malaysia (Royal Malaysian Police)
PLKS	Pas Lawatan Kerja Sementara
SHAREDADA	Sabah House and Real Estate Developers' Association
SLDB	Sabah Land Development Board
SSTC	Sabah Skill and Technology Centre
VSS	Voluntary Separation Scheme

PREFACE

On the 11th of May 2004, Unit Penyelidikan Etnografi dan Pembangunan (UPEP) held a seminar on “Public Responses to Foreign Workers in Sabah” to provide a platform for informed discussion on the subject by various interested parties. UPEP invited representatives from the manufacturing, construction, agricultural and commercial sectors and recruiting agencies to present their views on the subject along with members of the academic community.

The seminar is part of UPEP’s on-going research project entitled “State and Public Responses to the Presence and Employment of Foreign Workers in Sabah” which is funded by a grant from Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) under its Fundamental Research Grant Programme. The project which began in early 2003 involves a team of six researchers from the School of Social Sciences, led by head of UPEP, Prof. Dr. Azizah Kassim. Fieldwork for the project was carried out in several phases which began with site visits to immigrant settlements and their places of work as well as several government departments in Sandakan, Semporna, Tawau, Kudat, Kota Marudu, Lahad Datu, Kunak and Kota Kinabalu in an attempt to get a comprehensive picture of the issues and problems related to foreign workers and to gauge the responses of the state authorities towards them. This was followed by intensive fieldwork in Kota Kinabalu, the main focus of our research, where responses of the public was studied through focussed group discussions with community leaders and by questionnaire surveys.

With the completion of the fieldwork at the end of 2003 members of the research team are now in the process of analysing the research data and writing up their findings. The first part of the findings on state responses to the presence and employment of foreign workers was presented at an earlier workshop held in February 2004. In this seminar, the team members presented the second part of their findings which touches on public responses. They were joined by representatives of organisations which have direct dealings with foreign workers namely the Malaysian Palm Oil Association (MPOA); Federation of Sabah Manufacturers (FSM); East Malaysia Planters’ Association (EMPA); Sabah Housing and Real Estate Developers’ Association (SHARED A); Sawit Kinabalu Berhad; Emcojuta recruiting agency;

and Sabah Bumiputera Chamber of Commerce. The off-campus writers who are experienced in their respective fields presented excellent in-depth insights to their specific problems in dealing with foreign workers. Our research team members feel that such information should be shared with others; hence our decision to publish the seminar papers.

We extend our profound thanks to Universiti Malaysia Sabah, particularly to our Vice Chancellor, Tan Sri Professor Datuk Seri Panglima Dr. Abu Hassan Othman and the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Development, Professor Datuk Dr. Kamaruzaman Ampon, for providing us the research grant and for funding our seminars and publication. We also wish to thank all the paper writers for their contributions and hope they will continue to assist and co-operate with us in subsequent research projects, seminars and publications.

Azizah Kassim
Editor

problems forced desperate employers to opt for employing illegals; and as long as the demand for illegal workers is high aliens will find ways and means to come and work in Sabah. Presently, with Malaysia's drive to encourage tourism and to make the country a regional centre for education, aliens can enter Sabah easily as tourists or students; they then overstay, work illegally and thus expand the number of irregular and undocumented workers in Sabah.

The preliminary findings of the study also highlight the dilemma of some Sabahans with regards to foreign workers - they want alien labour but not the attendant problems often associated with their presence, a position which is shared by the state. It is this very stand which allows for the proliferation of a large number of illegals in the state.

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In the last three decades, commendable economic development in Malaysia has led to the expansion of employment. But such expansion was not accompanied by similar growth in the workforce, causing labour shortages in several sectors of the economy. The situation is further exacerbated by rising job expectations among the populace, many of whom shun menial jobs in favour of clerical and professional ones. The result is an influx of foreign workers. In 2003 there were about 1.2 million legally recruited workers in Malaysia, in addition to illegal ones whose number cannot be ascertained. A large number of the foreign workers are in Sabah, where immigrants account for about 24 percent of the state population.

The presence and employment of immigrants in Sabah have numerous negative consequences and mindful of such problems Unit Penyelidikan Etnografi dan Pembangunan (UPEP) in Universiti Malaysia Sabah, in 2003, undertook a research project entitled "State and public responses to the presence and employment of foreign nationals in Sabah". As part of the on going research, UPEP also organises seminars on the subject from time to time. This book contains eight papers presented at one of the seminars held on 11th May 2004. The papers were written by UPEP's researchers and representatives of organisations which recruit and employ foreign workers. They provide in-depth insights into the problems of recruitment and employment of immigrant workers as well as the views of employers on prevalent rules and regulations pertaining to alien labour employment in Malaysia, particularly Sabah.

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