

PROCEEDINGS OF SEMINAR ON  
**STATE RESPONSES TO THE  
PRESENCE AND EMPLOYMENT OF  
FOREIGN WORKERS IN SABAH**



EDITOR  
**AZIZAH KASSIM**



Research Unit for Ethnography & Development  
Universiti Malaysia Sabah

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**Universiti Malaysia Sabah  
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ARMM</b>	<b>Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao</b>
<b>ASA</b>	<b>Association of Southeast Asia</b>
<b>ASEAN</b>	<b>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</b>
<b>BIMP-EAGA</b>	<b>Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asia Growth Area</b>
<b>CIDB</b>	<b>Construction Industry Development Board</b>
<b>EPF</b>	<b>Employees' Provident Fund</b>
<b>FELDA</b>	<b>Federal Land Development Authority</b>
<b>FOBMI</b>	<b>Federasi Organisasi Buruh Migran Indonesia</b>
<b>FOMEMA</b>	<b>Foreign Workers' Medical Examination and Monitoring Agency</b>
<b>FIP</b>	<b>Foreign Investment Policy</b>
<b>GNP</b>	<b>Gross National Product</b>
<b>ICT</b>	<b>Information and Communication Technology</b>
<b>ILO</b>	<b>International Labour Organisation</b>
<b>JKKK</b>	<b>Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung</b>
<b>JKKK(MP)</b>	<b>Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung (Masyarakat Pelarian)</b>
<b>JKPP</b>	<b>Jawatankuasa Pegawai Dagang</b>
<b>JTR</b>	<b>Jabatan Tenaga Rakyat</b>
<b>LHDN</b>	<b>Lembaga Hasil Dalam Negeri</b>
<b>MEV</b>	<b>Multiple Entry Visa</b>
<b>MNLF</b>	<b>Moro National Liberation Front</b>
<b>MILF</b>	<b>Moro Islamic Liberation Front</b>
<b>MTUC</b>	<b>Malaysian Trade Union Congress</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Government Organisations</b>
<b>PAPA</b>	<b>Association of Foreign Workers' Agencies</b>
<b>PCN</b>	<b>Parent Country Nationals</b>
<b>PLKS</b>	<b>Pas Lawatan (Kerja Sementara)</b>
<b>PLN</b>	<b>Pendatang Luar Negeri</b>
<b>PPKP (S/L)</b>	<b>Pasukan Petugas Khas Persekutuan (Sabah / Labuan)</b>
<b>PR</b>	<b>Permanent Resident</b>
<b>PTI</b>	<b>Pendatang Tanpa Izin</b>
<b>RELA</b>	<b>Angkatan Relawan Rakyat</b>
<b>SFTF (S/L)</b>	<b>Special Federal Task Force (Sabah / Labuan)</b>
<b>SLDB</b>	<b>Sabah Land Development Board</b>

<b>SPPA</b>	<b>Skim Pampasan Pekerja Asing</b>
<b>STAR</b>	<b>Shangrila Tanjung Aru Resort</b>
<b>UNHCR</b>	<b>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</b>
<b>UPKO</b>	<b>United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation</b>
<b>USNO</b>	<b>United Sabah National Organisation</b>

## PREFACE

Malaysia has undergone tremendous socio-economic development in the last four decades or so; however, such achievement has its attendant problems. The expansion of job opportunities far exceeds that of labour and the result is a severe shortage of workers in many sectors of the economy. The worst affected are the plantation, construction and service sectors which now engage over a million foreign workers. While the presence of alien workers help sustain economic development and make Malaysian products competitive in the world market, it also has a number of serious negative consequences on the society, its economy, political stability and security. It is in Sabah where utilisation of foreign nationals is most problematical.

Of the fifteen states (inclusive of two Federal Territories) in the Malaysian Federation, Sabah has the largest number of foreign nationals among its population. According to the last Population Census in 2000, about one fourth of the state's population comprise foreign nationals and large concentrations of aliens in some districts and job sectors make their presence very conspicuous, thus, eliciting strong objections to their presence and employment from some quarters. The state is in a dilemma about its immigrant population - while their labour is acutely needed to keep the economic engine going, the accompanying problems seem too much for the state to handle.

Members of the academic community are equally concerned about the dilemma faced by the state. This prompted a group of researchers from the School of Social Sciences, led by the Head of Research Unit for Ethnography and Development to undertake a research project entitled "State and Public Responses to the Presence and Employment of Foreign workers in Sabah" in 2003. The research, which is on-going, is funded by Universiti Malaysia Sabah under its Fundamental Research Grant Programme.

The fieldwork, which began in early 2003 was temporarily halted in early 2004 to enable the researchers reflect on and examine their initial findings. The researchers who are in the initial phase of writing their report felt that it would be beneficial for them to present part of their findings



to others to gauge their views on the subject. To achieve this objective, Research Unit for Ethnography and Development held a closed workshop entitled “State Responses to the Presence and Employment of Foreign Workers in Sabah” on February 25, 2004. It was well attended by state officials directly involved with immigrants and foreign workers from such agencies as the Sabah Department of Immigration, the Police, the Special Federal Task Force (Sabah & Labuan), Department of Human Resource, Kota Kinabalu City Hall, as well as recruiting agencies, members of the academic community, and the general public.

The workshop generated a lively discussion. Comments and criticisms made by the participants are most welcomed as they help the paper writers sharpen their understanding on the dynamics of labour inflow into Sabah and the state’s reaction towards them. With input from the participants the six seminar papers were re-written and the revised version of the papers are presented in this book. The papers discuss state responses to the issues and problems of illegal immigrants in Sabah, the refugees, foreign workers, the expatriate group and the repercussions of cross border migration from Indonesia and the Philippines on bilateral relations between Malaysia and the two source countries.

We would like to extend our thanks to Universiti Malaysia Sabah, especially to our Vice Chancellor, Tan Sri Professor Datuk Seri Panglima Dr Abu Hassan Othman and to Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Development), Professor Datuk Dr Kamaruzaman Ampon, for their generous support by providing us the research grant and funding for the workshop. We also wish to express our thanks and gratitude to all those who participated in the workshop and hope that they will continue to offer us their assistance and co-operation in all our future workshops and other academic endeavours.

**Azizah Kassim**  
**Editor**