

Education needs of stateless kids should be addressed

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By: David Thien

Kota Kinabalu: A significant number of stateless and undocumented children face barriers to accessing public education. Although Malaysia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), local laws create legal hurdles for non-citizens with limited resources to enrol in public schools, according to Prof. Vincent Pang of University Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

Consequently, many rely on alternative learning centres (ALCs) or Community Learning Centres (CLCs), which often provide only basic education and offer limited pathways for further studies.

This was articulated in Sabah Action Body Advocating Rights (Sabar) and Kopitiam Council Podcast's second episode of "Voices to Action" on March 21. Datuk Mohd Hanafiah bin Mohd Kassim, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation and UMS Prof. Vincent Pang spoke to hosts Adi and Haffisz.

"The challenges faced by these children are compounded by the complexity of their status. Stateless children often come from generations of families born in Sabah but remain unregistered due to various legal or logistical complications. Others are children of migrants who lack the necessary identification documents to enrol in formal education."

"This legal uncertainty leads to social exclusion, with children growing up without the skills, knowledge or recognised qualifications needed for future employment."

"While ALCs and CLCs provide valuable educational support, they face challenges such as limited funding, inadequate resources, and unrecognised certification, restricting their students' opportunities for secondary education or vocational training.

"Many ALCs operate on shoestring budgets, relying heavily on volunteer teachers and donated materials."

He said this financial instability limits their capacity to expand services or upgrade facilities. Without official qualifications, these children struggle to access higher education and secure stable employment.

Furthermore, without formal recognition of their learning achievements, they face additional obstacles in seeking employment, as employers may hesitate to hire individuals without verifiable education credentials."

"Reviewing Clause 29A of the Education Act 1996 is crucial to ensuring compulsory primary education includes stateless and undocumented children. Flexible mechanisms should be developed to simplify their enrolment and minimise legal hurdles.

The review should also consider introducing alternative certification pathways for stateless children educated in non-traditional systems such as ALCs and CLCs."

"By recognising these learning institutions and accrediting their graduates through certified examinations like SPM, marginalised students will gain access to higher education and vocational opportunities.

"In addition, the government should strengthen support systems for alternative learning centres. By formalising their status and improving resource allocation, these institutions can provide a stronger educational foundation for marginalised groups.

"Partnerships with NGOs and international educational bodies can offer additional resources, mentorship programs, and teacher training to further improve the quality of education in these centres," Prof. Pang suggested.

Both experts and hosts concurred that education plays a vital role in social progress and economic growth.

Yet, in Sabah, significant barriers continue to hinder many children from accessing quality education. Geographical challenges, economic difficulties and social disparities have left many communities underserved.

Marginalised groups, such as stateless children, undocumented migrants, and low-income families, face additional struggles that further hinder their educational journey.

By adopting inclusive policies, improving infrastructure, expanding digital learning, and enhancing teacher support, Sabah can create a more equitable educational landscape.

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"Sabah Voices to Action - Shaping Sabah's Future Together" is a citizen-driven, non-partisan initiative running from March to June 2025, dedicated to amplifying Sabahans' voices, fostering meaningful discussions, and shaping policies on education, healthcare, public infrastructure, and good governance.

Join the Movement:

<https://www.sabar.org.my/action/#join-movement>

Podcast Channel:

<https://youtube.com/@kopitiamcouncil>

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Together, we can build a stronger, more inclusive Sabah!

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The review should also consider introducing alternative certification pathways for stateless children, including non-traditional systems such as ALCs and GEs.

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Special rebate for YS study loan borrowers

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KOTA KINABALU: Yayasan Sabah Group is offering attractive rebates for Yayasan Sabah College of Technology



studies at KTYCS and UCSF and to motivate them to excel in their academics," said Gulamhaider.

UCSF offers academic and training programmes to advance Sabah and Malaysia's socioeconomic and cultural agendas.

providing access to high-quality academic Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) education, producing inclusive and competent graduates, and establishing a governance system that is high-quality, efficient and integrity-based.

STR recipients describe cash aid as lifesaver

KUCHING: The Rahmah Cash Aid (STR) has been described as a lifesaver by several recipients in Sarawak for helping them reduce their household's financial expenses, especially in the face of rising costs of living.

Catchrinner Joyce, 36, a marketing communications executive, told Bernama here Tuesday that the government initiative was not just a number in the bank account, but a form of concern shown by the government that she truly appreciates.

"The initiative is really useful and helps a



"The aid really does reduce my family's burden. Now, prices of most things have risen, fuel is also expensive. I use the STR to buy what my children need and for groceries. It really helps a lot, my thanks to the government," he added.

Editorial: *Caroline Bannister & Kristina*