

Research Article

The Role of Non-Government Organizations in the Education of Migrant Workers' Children in Sabah Malaysia

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Abstract.

The number of Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) in Malaysia is at the highest compared to other countries. Most IMWs in the states of Sabah and Sarawak are illegal migrants though they have lived in Malaysia for decades, some for up to three generations. Thus, many of their children have also been born and raised in Malaysia. There is a serious problem regarding the education of their children. The Malaysian government does not acknowledge this because the children are not citizens. The Indonesian government is also very limited in its ability to facilitate aid to these children because there are over 50 thousand of them. This article aimed to determine whether non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are concerned and what their role is in helping to overcome the education problems of IMWs children, especially those in the Sabah region of Malaysia. The method used in this study is qualitative. Data collection by interview method, focus group discussion offline and online via zoom, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out interactively. The results indicate that NGOs play a significant role in the education of IMW's children. There are 2 NGOs play a role: the first NGO, Humana, at the elementary school level in Sabah, Malaysia. Humana NGO resources are various stakeholders in Sabah Malaysia. Second, the NGO Sabah Bridge plays a part from junior high school level education to Senior high school level. The NGO Sabah Bridge's resources are teachers sent from Indonesia to Malaysia and former teachers who have returned to Indonesia.

Keywords: Non-governmental organizations, children, education, Sabah

1. Introduction

A large number of Indonesians has become the basis for the emergence of various existing social problems. Many residents are not absorbed in domestic job vacancies related to labor problems. Instead of being unemployed even in their own country, many of them go abroad to become Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMW). In the process

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of IMW's departure abroad, placement of a place of work while abroad, until they have returned home, many problems still adorn their lives because most IMWs are relatively low-educated [1], [2].

The most significant number of IMW is in Malaysia. Likewise, the duration of stay may also be the longest. Coupled with the illegal status, especially in Sabah and Sarawak because of the closest countries geographically. Employment opportunities are plentiful, although menial work on plantations does not require special skills. The cultural and linguistic are also similar. It is the pull factor for IMW from Indonesia. But the problems associated with their presence there are also very many. One of the exciting things is related to the educational needs of IMW's children, which are not small in number.

In a democratic socio-political system, as it is today, the presence of NGOs is very much needed in society. For a country with a huge population like Indonesia, the Indonesian government can't tackle social problems alone without the help of social organizations and community participation. One of the factual and actual cases is about the education rights of children of Indonesian migrant workers in other countries, especially Sabah Malaysia. The number of IMW children in the Malaysian state is around tens of thousands of children under the age of 18. This age range is the age to obtain primary education. It is not easy for them to get educational facilities in other countries because almost all of these children are illegal.

Glind explained that regarding non-formal education was provided on plantations in the states of Sabah and Sarawak, East Malaysia, to increase access to education for children of irregular status. The so-called invisible children are not legally supposed to be there. The majority are unregistered because they are the children of migrant workers from neighboring Indonesia whose visas do not allow them to carry or have families. It is estimated they number between 50,000 and 200,000 so-called 'invisible' children unable to attend school in East Malaysia [3].

The illegal status begins with their parents, who are indeed illegal to live in other countries. However, in reality, it has been decades since they breed there. Because of this illegal status, the children of PMI are not provided with education facilities by the Malaysian state. The Indonesian government also finds it difficult to provide educational facilities to them. In such conditions, NGOs are here to help provide educational facilities even though they have limited facilities and infrastructure.

Muyamin stated that the Indonesian and Malaysian governments had a meeting to agree on educational services for the children of Indonesian migrant workers in Sabah, Malaysia [4]. The meeting resulted in an agreement to establish the Indonesian School of Kota Kinabalu (ISKK) in 2008, which is the parent of the Community Learning Center

(CLC), currently in the hundreds. Besides ISKK and CLC, there are Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that also serve the education of Indonesian children in Sabah. The NGO is the Humana Child Aid Society which also serves the education of Indonesian children in Sabah. Even though Indonesia already officially has ISKK and CLC in providing education services and is recognized by Malaysia, Humana continues to strive to offer educational services for Indonesian children in Sabah.

Based on the above reality, this paper aims and at the same time as the novelty to show the existence of NGOs that have played a role in providing educational assistance to the children of migrant workers in Sabah Malaysia. Even though normatively all children should receive educational services, in reality it is not always the case for the children of migrant workers whose status is illegal. It is hoped that this novelty article will serve as a bit of a warning for the governments of both Indonesia and Malaysia to pay more attention to the fate of children of migrant workers in their right to receive educational services. Naturally, the state should not just leave it to NGOs to take care of its citizens, because there are still many children who have not been touched by their services.

2. Method

The method used in this study is qualitative. Data collection using interviews, focus group discussions, and documentation. The targets of the investigation are:

1. The children of Indonesian migrant workers from Sabah are currently studying in Indonesia. Collecting data for them by means of direct interviews and focused discussions in Purwokerto.
2. Officials from the Ministry of Education and Culture manage the Adem and repatriation sister funds. Data collection for the management of Adem repatriation was carried out by means of direct interviews and focused discussions in Jakarta.
3. Officials from the Ministry of Education and Culture manage the Adik and repatriation funds. Data collection for the management of Adik repatriation was conducted by direct interviews and discussions in Jakarta.
4. Managers of the NGO of Sabah Bridge. The search for data to the Sabah Bridge manager is by focused discussions via Zoom or online. the board of Sabah Bridge consisted of several people who were both in Indonesia and Malaysia.

The analysis was used with the interactive analysis method [5].

3. Result and Discussion

Education is an essential thing in life. Therefore, education is part of human rights. The regulation regulating citizens' human rights is [6] Law Number 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights. In Article 60 of the law, children have the right to education; the paragraph reads: "Every child has the right to receive education and teaching in the context of his personal development by his interests, talents and intelligence level."

Education is a complex need that is even impossible for IMWs to fulfil [7], [8]. Children from marginalized families whose parents cannot meet their children's needs in accessing education. Moreover, the families of Indonesian migrant workers who are in Sabah Malaysia with illegal status. Meanwhile, the Indonesian state also finds it challenging to meet its educational needs because it is outside its jurisdiction. Likewise, Malaysia feels it is not their responsibility because they are not citizens. Human children who are in such a position, then just waiting for the concern of individuals or non-governmental organizations/NGOs.

The presence of NGOs in such social conditions manifests the ideal role of NGOs. Humaidi explained that the functions of NGOs include: First, increasing poverty, both in cities and villages, due to the consequences of implementing structural adjustment policies that result in unemployment, elimination of government subsidies, and the collapse of the social security system. Second, the increasing conflict and public disorder throughout Indonesia during the transition to democracy makes the presence of NGOs relevant because they are institutions that have access to grassroots organizations and are committed to marginalized groups. Third, it relates to the escort of NGOs to discourses such as Good Governance. NGO activists usually have better experience and knowledge, both theoretical and operational, than the bureaucratic apparatus, so education is carried out for the community and the bureaucratic machine, as has been seen recently [9].

3.1. NGO Humana

Humana Sabah is an NGO registered in Malaysia but understood to be fully managed by two Danish Citizens, one of whom is the Danish Honorary Consul and Permanent Resident of Malaysia. Humana Sabah has also received local and foreign grants from the EU delegation to Malaysia, Unicef, HSBC Foundation, CIMB Foundation, Hap Seng Foundation, RSPO, Indonesian Consulate General in Sabah, and many others to fund their activities in Sabah. Humana Child Aid Society Sabah, based in Bandar Sri Perdana,

Lahad Datu, is a registered NGO in Malaysia to provide education to school children, those who do not have proper documentation and otherwise cannot attend government schools. In Sabah, most students are stateless children and children living in oil palm plantations with their foreign parents [10].

Humana Child Aid Society is an NGO in Malaysia initiated in 1991. Humana provides education to children who do not have access to school. Humana provides teaching for 12,000 children in Sabah plantations and other remote areas. In the beginning, Humana was supported by the Corporate Foundation, but now Humana's primary support comes from plantation companies in Malaysia [11].

Humana aims to promote, provide and operate a learning center in Sabah, especially for children living on plantations and undocumented children from other countries. Humana collaborates with plantations in Sabah to provide education for children with permission from the Malaysian Ministry of Education. Humana has four missions in carrying out its duties. The first mission is to reduce child labor in the plantation sector so that, in the end, there is no child labor. Humana's second mission is to provide a holistic education for children from kindergarten to grade 6 elementary school.

It shows that the right to education can be fulfilled. The third mission is further development through educational programs, including sports and arts. The fourth mission, with the existence of Humana, can support sustainable development launched by the United Nations to contribute to sustainable development in Malaysia in the field of education [11]. Humana is mainly funded by monthly contributions received by oil palm plantations. Therefore, Humana indirectly promotes the development of sustainable palm oil plantations by providing an educational center in Sabah. It can help reduce worker turnover on plantations because workers have confidence in their children's education. A stable workforce can result in higher productivity for plantations [12].

Humana has a program to provide education for children in Sabah. Teachers at Humana use child-centered tools and methods such as songs, visual aids, and group exercises to promote participatory learning. Students are also given an increased awareness of the resources of savings by keeping a certain amount of money in a savings box. Most of these Humana students come from the stateless and marginalized sector or are children of plantation workers. Meanwhile, some teachers represent marginalized groups and migrant workers [13]. In the end, the plantation has the advantage of having this Humana.

3.2. NGO Sabah Bridge

Sabah Bridge is the name of an NGO founded by teachers in Malaysia from Indonesia. The teachers sent by the Indonesian government came from various regions to provide proper education for children in the palm oil fields of Sabah and Sarawak, Malaysia. Sabah Bridge was established to be a kind of bridge for PMI children in Sabah Malaysia and its surroundings to continue their education at the high school level in Indonesia. Another goal is to raise and return PMI children in neighboring countries with unclear statuses and bleak futures. Sabah bridge also aims to develop the potential of every field child in Sabah Malaysia to learn about education in Indonesia [14].

The background of the birth of Sabah Bridge can be said to be a concern for contract teachers from Indonesia who teach and know the condition of IMW children in Sabah. The following is the statement of the Chairman of Sabah Bridge for the 2022-2024 period.

From the word chosen, Sabah Bridge was originally a movement when we were initially in Sabah as educators from the Ministry of Education and Culture. They served at the Indonesian School of Kota Kinabalu (ISKK) and CLC, called the Community Learning Center. This CLC is spread in various recognized places in Sabah besides the Indonesian school in Kota Kinabalu. So at that time, we had the same concern about the children's education in Sabah. What if we see them? It's not enough if they only reach the junior high school level; seeing the graduation rate that is getting higher every year, that's where we started facilitating these children to be able to continue to the next level.

The task of contract teachers from Indonesia is to teach PMI children for a maximum of 5 years in Malaysia. Their job is to educate SLP-level children whose names are ISKK and CLC. The delivery of these contract teachers started in 2008.

When was the NGO Sabah Bridge founded, who was the initiator, and how did it operate? The following is a statement from the board of Sabah Bridge:

The Sabah Bridge was established on December 10, 2014, as an initiative of several educators who have contracted from the Ministry of Education and Culture. It aims to provide services for the children of migrant workers who cannot get an education in Malaysian schools. Departing from concern with the status of children after graduating from junior high school/CLC, we try to facilitate these children to continue to the next level of education. In the beginning, at that time, 2015 and 2016 only sent a few. We encourage only about 27-28 students. Then it increased yearly to 72 to 262 students in 2017-2018. In 2019-2020 the number will reach 600 to 650 students.

Sabah Bridge helps guide the PT for those interested in continuing to college. From year to year, it has successfully sent several children from various corners of the field to high school and vocational education in Indonesia, especially on the island of Java. Not only that, but Sabah Bridge also helps children after graduating from high school. High school graduates who are not accepted are directed to return to their hometowns in Indonesia, not to return to Malaysia. The following is a statement from one of the Sabah Bridge Public Relations officers.

The children of IMW are economically the same as those of the underprivileged, with mothers who work in palm oil whose income for one month is felt even less so that they borrow to buy necessities. With that background, perhaps encouraging the children that these children should get and find scholarships to help the family's economy and change their parents' fate in Sabah. And the last hope is the same; we teach these children not to return to Sabah, ladies and gentlemen.

The guidance provided by Sabah Bridge, among others, facilitates them with tutoring for college entrance tests. Motivating experienced people to grow the desire to go to college. Sabah Bridge also positions itself as a place for PMI children to continue their education. The Sabah bridge also functions as a home for IMW's children.

Initially, Sabah Bridge was private to private in bridging IMW children to continue their studies at the high school level in Indonesia. In other words, it is NGO to NGO. The senior high schools targeted for receiving IMW children are private schools with dormitories. All IMW children live in the school, which is free of charge. The following is the story of one of the administrators of Sabah Bridge:

But in this case, the children who came to Indonesia were initially sent to foundational schools, most of which were private. Then we tried to find a school that could provide them with internal scholarships to lighten the burden. But later this year, in 2019-2020, the government intervened.

3.3. The Role of Humana and Sabah Bridge

There are 3 types of NGOs in terms of their relationship with the government: 1). Government partner organizations are non-governmental organizations that carry out activities in partnership with the government in carrying out their activities. 2). Professional organization are non-governmental organizations that carry out activities base on certain professional abilities such as educational NGOs, legal aid NGOs, journalist NGOs, economic development NGOs, etc. 3) opposition organization are non-governmental organizations that carry out activities by choosing to be a counterweight to government

policies. This NGO activities to criticize and supervise the continuity of government activities [15], [16] [17], [18].

The forms of roles that have been contributed by the NGO Humana and Sabah Bridge to the education process for IMW’s children can be listed as follows.

TABLE 1: Roles assigned by the NGO Humana dan NGO Sabah Bridge.

No	Field of Activity	Humana	Sabah Bridge
1.	Education level	Elementary school (6 years)	Senior high school and university
2.	Human resources	Malaysian practitioners	Indonesian (former) teachers
3.	Curriculum	Malaysian	Indonesia
4.	Working area	Malaysia	Malaysia dan Indonesia
5.	Time of establishment	1991	2014
6.	Sources of funds	Foreign donors, Malaysian palm oil companies	Indonesian teachers and former teachers, private schools
7.	The number of children who have been assisted	More than 20.000	More than 2.000
8.	Type of NGO	Professional	Professional and partnership

The data above illustrates that both NGOs have a fundamental role in marginalized communities. Thus, the role of NGOs as government partners is clear. [19] conclude that there are two suitable relationship models to describe the pattern of relationships between NGOs in Indonesia and the government. The first is a collaboration/cooperation relationship; in this kind of relationship, the government considers that working with NGOs is beneficial. NGOs and the government stand on an equal and equal footing. The second model is a relationship that is containment/ sabotage/ dissolution, where the government sees NGOs as a challenge, even a threat.

4. Conclusion

The existence of IMW children in Sabah Malaysia is the basis for the emergence of NGOs that aim to help their education. There are 2 NGOs that have contributed to the fulfilment of IMW’s children’s education rights, namely NGO Humana and Sabah Bridge. NGO Humana provides educational facilities for IMW’s children for elementary school. Humana is supported by local resources that care about the plight of marginalized children. Palm oil companies are also asked to become donors instead of corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds. The establishment of Humana far preceded the Indonesian

government's concern for IMW children. Humana was founded in 1991; the Indonesian government only established SIKK in 2008 with minimal capacity.

The NGO Sabah bridge emerged after the Indonesian government's program to send contract teachers to Malaysia. Contract teachers from Indonesia were assigned to provide education after KCIS was established in 2008. Teachers from Indonesia were the initiators and fillers for the NGO Sabah Bridge. The goal of Sabah Bridge is to help IMW's talented and intelligent children to be able to get an education to a higher level, namely high school and even college. Until now, the NGO Sabah Bridge has functioned as a bridge for IMW's children to attend high school and university levels in Indonesia.

Seeing the very positive role of the two NGOs for marginalized communities, it is proper for the state, through the government, to appreciate NGOs. Even further, according to the impression that has been happening so far, the government should partner with NGOs, not against them.

Conflict of Interest

We, all the 5 (five) authors, declare that there is no conflict of interest related to the writing of this article.

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