

IBBY-Yamada Fund

Project reports 2024

IBBY Malaysia

Bibliotherapy for Undocumented Children in East Malaysia

Training for Future Trainers



Every child has the right to become a reader

Final Report: IBBY-Yamada Fund 2024 Project - MALAYSIA

BIBLIOTHERAPY FOR UNDOCUMENTED CHILDREN IN EAST MALAYSIA: A TRAINING FOR TRAINERS



1. Introduction

According to some reports, one out of every three people in Sabah is undocumented. This amounts to about one million individuals with no proper legal identity which means that Sabah has [the highest stateless population](#) in Malaysia.

The challenges faced by stateless and undocumented individuals in Malaysia are severe and multifaceted. Citizenship status is crucial

for accessing basic rights, yet many are deprived of legal identity, making them invisible and excluded from society. Stateless individuals and undocumented migrants struggle to access essential services like education and healthcare. Bureaucratic and discriminatory policies make it difficult to obtain identity documents, leaving children of stateless parents without birth certificates, further limiting their opportunities. These communities also face social stigma, with the media portraying them negatively, fueling xenophobia and resistance from the public and politicians. The uncertainty of their status and the lack of legal recognition create daily hardships, reinforcing their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse.

The project "Bibliotherapy for Undocumented Children in East Malaysia: A Training for Trainers" was implemented as an advanced workshop under the IBBY-Yamada Fund 2024. This initiative aimed to equip teachers and volunteers at Sekolah Alternatif in Sabah and other organizations in the state of Sabah with the necessary skills to conduct bibliotherapy sessions for underprivileged children including the undocumented ones. This project was a continuation of the IBBY Yamada Project 2021, which established a reading corner at Sekolah Alternatif Tawau. The new phase expanded the scope to include teacher training and skill development.

2. Project Objectives

The original project sought to train 20 teachers and volunteers in bibliotherapy techniques, enhance the ability of educators to select appropriate books and facilitate discussions, support the emotional and psychological well-being of undocumented children through bibliotherapy, and create a sustainable model for bibliotherapy within the Sekolah Alternatif framework.

However, the response for this project was overwhelmingly positive. Instead of one workshop, two workshops were conducted with a total of 58 participants joining the training. This enthusiastic participation further strengthened the initiative, expanding the reach and impact of bibliotherapy not only in the framework of Sekolah Alternatif Tawau but also other organizations.

3. Project Implementation: Workshop

Two workshops on bibliotherapy were conducted in Sabah, focusing on supporting the emotional and psychological well-being of vulnerable children and communities through literature.

The first workshop took place on 12 and 13 October 2024 at Cottage Garden, Tawau, Sabah. It gathered 20 teachers and volunteers from Sekolah Alternatif in Tawau and Semporna, a community initiative serving undocumented children.

The second workshop was held on 8 and 9 February 2025 with the cooperation of IDS or the Sabah Institute of Development Studies at the institute's premises in Kota Kinabalu. This session expanded its reach, bringing together teachers, librarians, volunteers, researchers, and students from institutions such as the Sabah State Library, Preschool Association of Sabah, Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM) and Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

Both workshops introduced participants to the fundamentals of bibliotherapy, focusing on selecting appropriate reading materials and applying bibliotherapy techniques in various educational and community settings. Led by expert facilitators, the workshop emphasized the power of literature in promoting mental and emotional well-being across different groups. The workshops also aimed to equip participants with bibliotherapy techniques to help children express emotions, develop coping mechanisms, and build resilience. Additionally, it raised awareness about the psychological challenges faced by undocumented children and the role of storytelling in providing emotional support.

The project was implemented over a period of one year from planning to implementation, including structured training sessions covering various aspects of bibliotherapy.

The program began with an introduction and orientation, where participants were provided with an overview of bibliotherapy and its benefits, as well as an understanding of the needs of undocumented children. This was followed by an exploration of the specific challenges these children face, including emotional, social, and educational difficulties, and discussions on how bibliotherapy can address these needs effectively.

Participants received a comprehensive understanding of the principles of bibliotherapy, including its theoretical foundations and various techniques. They explored the therapeutic value of different literary genres and engaged in interactive activities such as shared reading and creative expression.

Training on book selection and evaluation was also provided, where educators learned the criteria for selecting suitable books, ensuring cultural sensitivity and representation, and evaluating literature for its relevance to undocumented children.

Facilitation and discussion techniques were a crucial part of the training, where teachers and volunteers were equipped with skills to engage children in meaningful discussions. They were trained to create a safe and inclusive learning environment, as well as use effective questioning techniques to stimulate emotional exploration. The program also focused on adapting bibliotherapy techniques to different contexts, addressing challenges in implementation, and developing strategies for collaboration among teachers and volunteers.

Practical application and role-playing exercises were conducted to allow participants to practice bibliotherapy facilitation. They engaged in simulated sessions, received peer feedback, and refined their skills through mentorship. Additionally, methods for monitoring and evaluating bibliotherapy sessions were introduced, including feedback collection, outcome assessment, and continuous improvement strategies.

Resource sharing and networking were also emphasized to ensure sustainability. Participants were encouraged to develop a resource-sharing platform and strengthen networks among educators for continued collaboration. Upon successful completion of the training, teachers and volunteers were awarded certificates, and a peer support network was established to provide ongoing guidance and professional development opportunities.

4. Project Implementation: Survey

Introduction

The survey aimed to assess participants' awareness, perceptions, and attitudes toward bibliotherapy, particularly its application in Malaysia. The questions explored the respondents' familiarity with the concept, availability of resources, and the need for bibliotherapy experts in educational and library settings.

Key Findings

Awareness and Understanding of Bibliotherapy: Many respondents claimed to have an understanding of bibliotherapy. However, a significant portion admitted to never having heard of bibliotherapy before attending the seminar, indicating that awareness levels before the seminar were relatively low. This suggests that while bibliotherapy is a known concept to some, a substantial portion of the population may still be unfamiliar with its purpose and benefits. Increasing awareness through seminars and educational programs may help bridge this knowledge gap.

Accessibility and Availability of Bibliotherapy Resources: The survey suggests mixed perceptions regarding the availability of bibliotherapy books in Malaysia. Some respondents believe that bibliotherapy books are easily accessible, while others feel that there is a lack of available resources. If many respondents disagreed or remained neutral on this issue, it could indicate a need for better access to bibliotherapy materials. Expanding the selection of bibliotherapy books in libraries and bookstores, as well as promoting digital bibliotherapy resources, could help address this concern.

Role of Bibliotherapy Experts: There was a general agreement that libraries and schools in Malaysia need bibliotherapy experts. This indicates a recognition of bibliotherapy as a specialized field requiring trained professionals who can guide its application effectively. The presence of bibliotherapy experts in educational and library settings could enhance the effectiveness of bibliotherapy programs and ensure that they are implemented correctly. Investing in specialized training programs for librarians and educators could further strengthen this initiative.

Importance of Bibliotherapy in Child Development: Many respondents agreed that bibliotherapy is crucial in helping children succeed in school. This acknowledgment highlights the role of bibliotherapy in supporting children's cognitive, emotional, and psychological development. However, responses varied regarding whether bibliotherapy should be limited to children and youth, suggesting differing views on its broader applicability. While bibliotherapy is commonly associated with young readers, it can also be beneficial for adults dealing with emotional and mental health challenges.

Implementation and Challenges: The majority expressed interest in incorporating bibliotherapy in their roles as teachers, librarians, or parents to support children's mental and emotional development. Despite this enthusiasm, responses regarding the difficulty of implementing bibliotherapy were varied, indicating that while some find it feasible, others may see challenges in its practical application. Factors such as lack of expertise, limited resources, and insufficient institutional support may hinder its implementation. Addressing these challenges through policy changes, funding, and targeted training can enhance the effectiveness of bibliotherapy initiatives.

Conclusion and Recommendations: The survey results highlight an increasing awareness of bibliotherapy, particularly after the seminar. However, there are challenges regarding accessibility and implementation. Key recommendations include increasing

awareness campaigns and training programs to educate teachers, librarians, and parents about bibliotherapy. Enhancing the availability of bibliotherapy books and resources in Malaysian libraries and schools is also crucial. Additionally, establishing bibliotherapy expertise within educational institutions and public libraries can support its effective use. Conducting further research on the barriers to bibliotherapy implementation and how they can be addressed will also be beneficial. By addressing these issues, bibliotherapy can be more effectively integrated into the Malaysian education and library system, benefiting both children and adults.

5. Project Outcomes and Impact

The project successfully enhanced the capacity of 58 participants by equipping them with practical bibliotherapy skills. The learning environment at Sekolah Alternatif is hoped to improve, with educators now more capable of engaging undocumented children in meaningful literary discussions. For other participants, it is also hoped that their skill and knowledge can be used to help support the emotional and psychological well-being of vulnerable children and communities through literature.

Furthermore, bibliotherapy sessions provided much-needed emotional support to the children, helping them process their experiences and build resilience. This initiative also contributed to the long-term sustainability of bibliotherapy practices within the school and community framework, ensuring that future generations of undocumented and underprivileged children benefit from structured and supportive literary engagement.

Additionally, various organizations have expressed interest in hosting bibliotherapy workshops at their respective institutions. For example, the Sabah State Library has requested sessions specifically for their librarians, while ABIM has proposed organizing workshops for kindergarten teachers under their supervision across Sabah. This growing demand highlights the broader impact of the initiative and the increasing recognition of bibliotherapy as a valuable tool in fostering emotional well-being through literature.

Following the success of this workshop, the Sabah State Library has also expressed interest in establishing a special collection of books suitable for bibliotherapy sessions. This collection aims to provide reading materials that can aid in the emotional and psychological healing process for children and individuals in need of support through bibliotherapy. By developing this specialized collection, the library can play a more active role in promoting bibliotherapy practices within the community, further strengthening efforts to use literature as a tool for healing and social development.

7. List of Workshop Participants

Sekolah Alternatif Semporna:

- 1.Mohd Fandi Nukizan bin Zulkifli
- 2.Nur Aina Ghalib
- 3.Nor Suhana binti Abdul latip
- 4.Sitti Suraidah binti Mustapah
- 5.Sabrina binti Ben
- 6.Sitti Suhaimah Mustapah
- 7.Jai Jericho bin Omar
- 8.Jolina binti Julkifli

9. Azhar Usman
10. Mukmin Nantang

Sekolah Alternatif Tawau:

1. Mohd Syafie Bin Mustan
2. Rudi Bin Adi
3. Muhammad Razlan Bin Lando
4. Nur Syafika Ain Binti Jusli
5. Rohini Binti Muzim
6. Surana Binti Nasir
7. Liliyansyah Binti Abdullah
8. Siti Nurlisa Binti Manning
9. Arwina Binti Andung
10. Norina Binti Rojel

Various Organizations

1. Arniana Ann Jasni
2. Maya Wimala Maradam
3. Nur Alyatul Fasiha Binti Kamal
4. Cyassie Emmanuel
5. Alleessa Angely Adabert
6. Addellyne Christie Albert
7. Farrah Nattasya Binti Eddie
8. Norfazira Binti Asnor
9. William Bin Simukol
10. Jo Ann Valerie Welliam
11. Angel Veron
12. Jasia James
13. Alfare Simon
14. Fernando Jerry
15. Shafinaz Binti Abd Latip
16. Azlineh Binti Mali
17. Qairiyah Binti Radlan
18. Nonny Chung
19. Sheiny Binti Saintim
20. Nooranisah Binti Ahmad
21. Rafiqa Binti Kamarudin
22. Wenanita Wences Angang
23. Nicole Stella Baybe Nordin
24. Velintina Binti Harun
25. Joyanisa Jubin
26. Fazilah Binti Dullah
27. Tracy Thomas
28. Tan Nyuk Yin
29. Anyros Anthony
30. Miccy Clara Isabell Masri
31. Nurfauziah Binti Lilit Suhender

32. Vironika Gumpai
33. Sofia Rumilip
34. Christine Faith Dalman
35. Mohammad Aiman Amerun
36. Nur Farah Azwanie Binti Ahjinin
37. Sitti Fatimah Binti Abd Samat
38. Cylviana Binti Johnny Joanes

8. Visual Materials

Photographs of Project Activities









Newspaper cutting

Search Results

The Borneo Post (Sabah)

Basic Bibliotherapy Workshop a success

Psychology - Social Sciences - Mental Health
13 Feb 2025

KOTA KINABALU: The Malaysia Board on Books for Young People (MBBY) and the Institute for Development Studies (Sabah), (IDS) successfully organized a Basic Bibliotherapy Workshop, attracting 50 enthusiastic participants from various backgrounds.

The workshop brought together teachers, librarians, volunteers, researchers and students from various esteemed institutions, including the Sabah State Library, Persatuan Tadika Sabah, ABIM Sabah, Cyberjaya College Kota Kinabalu, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), and IDS.

It was held on February 8 and 9 to introduce the fundamental concepts and practices of bibliotherapy, emphasizing its potential to enhance mental and emotional well-being through the use of literature.

Expert facilitators led engaging sessions that covered a range of topics, from selecting appropriate reading materials to implementing bibliotherapy techniques in different settings.

Participants actively engaged in discussions and hands-on activities, exploring how books can be used as therapeutic tools to support personal growth and emotional resilience.

A teacher from Persatuan Tadika Sabah shared, "This workshop has provided me with valuable insights and practical skills that I can use to support my students' emotional development."

The event also highlighted the collaborative efforts of various organizations in promoting mental health and well-being within the community.

"We are thrilled to see such a diverse group of participants coming together to learn about bibliotherapy. This workshop is a testament to the power of collaboration in addressing mental health challenges," said a representative from IDS.

The workshop received positive feedback from attendees. Sunday, February 16, 2025 3:24 AM (Local time)

MBBY President, Dato' Ahmad Redza Ahmad Khairuddin (centre) presents a memento to IDS CEO, Datuk Ts Dr Ramzah Dambul (left), as MBBY Vice President, Prof Dr Md Sidin Ishak (right) looks on, during a Basic Bibliotherapy Workshop at IDS Hall on February 8.