



PERSPECTIVES OF INTERNATIONAL REFUGEES IN INDONESIA

A RCA Insights Study - 2016



'Every day is the same for us'



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Reality Check Approach study has been made possible by the work of an enthusiastic team as well as the commitment and support of many. The study was undertaken by a team of local and international researchers with technical guidance from the RCA Project Technical Advisor.

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Disclaimer: The work is a product of the Indonesia Reality Check Approach Plus (RCA+) team. The findings, interpretations and conclusions therein are those of the authors.

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To request copies of the report or for more information on the report, please contact the RCA+ Project. The report is also available on the Reality Check Approach website, www.reality-check-approach.com.

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Identifying features have been removed to protect the identities of individuals photographed.



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GLOSSARY

CWS	Church World Service
GOI	Government of Indonesia
IOM	International Organization for Migration
<i>kost</i>	Boarding house like accommodation typical throughout Indonesia comprising individual rooms for sleeping, with kitchen, bathrooms, and/or common areas sometimes shared. These may be purpose-built structures, in which case they often have security staff, or may be using the rooms in traditional homes.
<i>puskesmas</i>	<i>Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat</i> , or Community Health Centre, are government-mandated public health clinics
RCA	Reality Check Approach
RCA+	Reality Check Approach project
RSC	Resettlement Support Centre, a website portal for refugee statuses
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
<i>warung</i>	a small traditional restaurant serving local food, sometimes also used to refer to smaller kiosks that sell grocery



This Reality Check Approach (RCA) insights study was carried out in May 2016. The study was intended to gather insights on the perspectives of the day to day lives of refugees currently residing in the greater Jakarta area. The study took advantage of the fact that there was a team of international RCA practitioners in Indonesia at the time. It was felt that an international team of researchers (from 6 different countries, including Indonesia) could further enrich conversations with refugees.

RCA is an internationally recognised approach to qualitative research which is regarded as an efficient and effective means to gather insights and perspectives directly from those affected. It involves highly trained and experienced researchers staying in people's homes, joining in their everyday lives and chatting informally with all members of the family, their neighbours and others they come into contact with. This relaxed approach ensures that the power distances between researcher and study participants are minimised and provides enabling conditions for rich insights into people's context and reality to emerge. The immersion approach provides researchers with opportunities to triangulate conversations with their own first-hand experiences and observations from the time spent with study participants.

This insights study¹ differed from a traditional RCA study in that it was conducted over a shorter timeframe (2 nights compared to a typical 4 nights). Other differences included that most researchers overnighted near, but not with, the study participants; brief scoping visits

were undertaken; and participant compensation was more flexible.

The study took place in five locations around the Greater Jakarta area. The research team had detailed conversations with over 72 refugees from over 10 countries including Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iran, Myanmar, Palestine, Pakistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Yemen.

Key insights from the study include that:

- » Most refugees seem to have basic information about the resettlement process, but processes are felt to be opaque and people are afraid to ask too many questions.
- » The lack of work for adults, and the general lack of education for children, puts major stresses on both individuals and families.
- » Due to the uncertainty of the resettlement process and the long journeys that people have already been through, many are reluctant to plan for life in their potential third country.
- » The informal networks of communication between refugees, particularly those from the same country/ethnic group, are the key method of support for refugees and the primary source of trusted information.
- » While people appreciate the support they are getting, most do not feel they have a close relationship with the various organizations providing formal support.

¹ This Insights Study used a specially modified Reality Check Approach (RCA) to gather insights into the day-to-day lives of refugees residing in the Greater Jakarta area in Indonesia. See pages 2 and 3 for more details.

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own	خود	cottage	کلبه
yet	هنوز	achieved	تسلیم دریافت
maybe	شاید	brought	آورد
improve	بهبود	desire	میل
would	را	as	عاند
end	پایان	prayed	دعا
forthermore	بیشتر	angel	فرشته
eyes	چشم	swap	مبادله
vampire	خون آشام	above	در بالا
rather	تر است	prey	شکار
laugh	خند		
polite	مودب		
reasons	دلایل		
guy	مرد		
nasty	تنه و زنده		
nevertheless	با این وجود		
fresh	تازه		
enjoy	لذت بردن		
street	خیابان		
lying	دروغ گو		
therefor	از این رو		

Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today





INTRODUCTION

Background

There are more than 7,000 refugees officially registered with the United Nation's High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Indonesia, and there are likely to be more who remain unregistered, especially unregistered asylum seekers. These may be families or individuals. Indonesia has 13 official refugee centers but some registered refugees are also accommodated in other areas, including in and around the greater Jakarta area. Many stay in Indonesia for years as they wait for a potential destination country, thereby putting their lives on hold. The Reality Check Approach Plus (RCA+) research team undertook this study to try to understand the day-to-day realities of these refugees- to share what it is like to *put one's life on hold*.

Indonesian Policy towards Refugees

It is our understanding that the Government of Indonesia is not a signatory to the UN Convention on Refugees but has to fulfill its obligation under International law to allow refugees to enter and seek refugee status with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Lawyers tell us there is no legal provision specific to refugees in Indonesia, but there are some laws that govern their treatment including the Indonesian Constitution which contains a right of every person to '*obtain political asylum from other countries*.' The use of the phrase 'every person' suggests it applies to foreigners as well as Indonesians. This right is mirrored in Law No 39 of 1999 on Human Rights. Furthermore the 2010 Regulation of the

Indonesian Director General of Immigration allows 'irregular migrants' to register as refugees with the local office of the UNHCR and stay in the country on a temporary basis while their refugee status claims are processed and a long term solution (third country destination) is identified for them. The Regulation also notes that the refugees have no formal legal status in Indonesia and that the cost of housing and food for registered refugees is borne by UNHCR and affiliates. The Government of Indonesia has therefore allowed the UNHCR and related agencies to facilitate the resettlement of refugees who do end up in Indonesia. UNHCR issues asylum seeker certificates and refugee cards which serve as identity documents and all refugees have to register with the Indonesian Immigration Authority. The fact that Indonesia is merely a transit point for refugees waiting for resettlement or voluntary repatriation and that refugees are not allowed to work/do not attend school means that most Indonesians are not aware that there are refugees in the country at all.

Support for Refugees in Indonesia

Along with UNHCR, the main body facilitating the resettlement of refugees in Indonesia, there are other organizations and individuals providing various kinds of support to refugees. The largest of these is the International Organization for Migration, IOM, which assists refugees throughout Indonesia and is given specific remit by UNHCR to do so. Some NGOs also provide official support in specific regions, such as the Christian organizations, Church World Service (CWS, which also assists some

refugees in the Greater Jakarta Area) and the Jesuit Refugee Service. In Cisarua, south of Jakarta, a group of refugees have started their own small learning center along with help from a small NGO called Same Skies. There are also rights-based groups such as SUAKA, the Indonesian Civil Society Network for Refugee Rights Protection. A website referred to as RSC, or Resettlement Support Center, is a simple portal where refugees can view their current status in the resettlement process.

To become a 'refugee,' people must register and be granted refugee status by UNHCR. This status recognizes that the person(s) is fleeing a situation where they may be in danger. By contrast, an asylum seeker is someone who has sought protection as a refugee, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been assessed. Asylum applications may be rejected and these people will be re-patriated. Although asylum seekers can register with UNHCR, their position is more ambiguous so in this study researchers were careful to ensure that findings discussed were coming from refugees and not asylum seekers. A few researchers did meet or hear of asylum seekers staying in their areas, but we deliberately did not include these findings.

Detention centers are run by the Indonesian Department of Immigration and are where refugees are first sent as they undergo initial verification with UNHCR. There are 13 official detention centers located throughout Indonesia. Once a refugee is verified and given official refugee status, they will be 'released' into 'community housing:' group housing organized by one of the organizations assisting refugees such as IOM, or may be allowed to organize their own housing in certain areas. Areas in Indonesia where community housing is provided for refugees tend to be nearby detention centers. Most refugees we met had lived in at least a few different community housing locations, usually in different cities. As far as we understand, these transfers are UNHCR decisions.

Refugees receive a stipend to help cover their daily expenses while they are staying in

Indonesia. We were told by refugees that this stipend is currently around IDR 3.5 million per month for a family of four and that there is a nationwide standard regardless of which city in Indonesia they are currently staying in. As mentioned above, refugees are not allowed to undertake paid labour of any kind.

Study Methodology

This Insights Study used a specially modified Reality Check Approach (RCA) to gather insights into the day to day lives of refugees residing in the Greater Jakarta area in Indonesia. RCA is a qualitative research approach which extends the tradition of listening studies and beneficiary assessments by combining elements of these approaches with actually living with people in their own homes². It can be likened to 'light touch' participant observation. The key elements of RCA are interacting with people in their own spaces and informal conversations (no note taking or specific questioning) which helps put people at ease. The combination of this with researchers' first-hand experiences leads to very high levels of triangulation. RCA also has the advantage of understanding lives in context rather than through project, programme or sectoral lenses. Taking place in people's own space rather than in public or invited space means that power distances are reduced between the study participants and the researcher and the trust and informality that ensues creates an enabling environment for open disclosure.

Why an Insights Study?

Rather than, for example, interviewing refugees or gathering people together for a focus group, the RCA process involves researchers hanging out with people and chatting over an extended period of time. Researchers did not take notes in front of people and did not ask specific research questions. Some of the refugees we chatted with are single men, but we also spent time with many families. With these families, we were often able to spend time with all members of the family, both together and separately. As much as possible, researchers also participated

2 Salmen, Lawrence F 1998 'Towards a Listening Bank: Review of best Practices and Efficacy of Beneficiary Assessments' Social Development Papers 23, Washington World Bank; Anderson, Mary B, Dayna Brown, Isabella Jean 2012 'Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving end of International Aid, Cambridge MA: CDA; SDC; Shutt, Cathy and Laurent Ruedin 2013 SDC How-to-Note Beneficiary Assessment ; Berne; Swiss Agency for Development Co-operation

in the daily activities of people such as cooking and eating together, playing games, going for walks, going to the store, etc. It is important, however, that this study be distinguished from a conventional RCA study. The key differences are:

- » **Duration of the fieldwork** - A full RCA study involves an immersion with the study families for a minimum of four nights. This study comprised two days only.
- » **Overnighting near, but not with, the study participants** - A full RCA study requires researchers to stay overnight in the homes of the study participants. For obvious reasons, the accommodation provided to refugees does not allow them to accept overnight visitors and so researchers mostly stayed nearby and spent long days with the refugees but did not overnight. Three researchers stayed with refugee families who were in rented accommodation.
- » **Pre-visit** - Conventional RCAs do not involve scoping visits. Because of the sensitive nature of this study and concerns about the willingness and ability of refugees to interact informally and freely with the research team, a scoping visit was made prior to the main study to ensure people were informed of the purpose of the study and put at ease.
- » **Participant compensation** - Normally RCA studies provide some compensation for accommodating the researchers in the form of foodstuff or other household goods, always

provided at the end of the stay. As we were not actually staying overnight with the refugee families, and the fact that many have cash and felt they wanted to demonstrate their hospitality, this was not considered appropriate. Instead researchers used their best judgment. Some were able to treat people to a meal, some chipped in on food purchases, some treated children to snacks, and some baked treats at their homes.

Study Locations and Participants

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in May, 2016. Our team of researchers consisted of 14 experienced RCA practitioners from six countries (Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Nepal, and USA). Most of the non-Indonesian researchers were in Indonesia at the time to attend the RCA International Conference. This study was done as a follow-up, taking advantage of the fact that the conference was bringing together researchers from a variety of countries. These 14 researchers were grouped into three sub teams, each led by an Indonesia-based RCA researcher. These three sub teams stayed in five locations around the Greater Jakarta Area.

Prior to the fieldwork, an Indonesia-based RCA researcher visited each of these locations to determine if it seemed possible to conduct the study at the site, also broaching the subject of the study with some refugees at the location. Although a RCA study does not 'screen' locations in advance, these pre-visits were undertaken for this Insight Study because

Study Locations

Location Code	Type of Accommodation	# of refugees	Families/Single Men	# Researchers
North homes	Rented houses	< 30	Families	3
Large kost	Kost*	> 150	Families/Single Men	4
Small kost	Kost	< 50	Families	2
South homes	Rented houses	< 75	Families	4
Male kost	Kost	< 30	Single men	1

*Kost in Indonesia are a boarding house like accommodation comprising individual rooms for sleeping, with kitchen, bathrooms, and/or common areas sometimes shared. The type of kost where refugees stayed were purpose-built, gated structures with basic security staff, individual bathrooms and shared kitchens. Some researchers noted that some of these kost may be owned by Indonesian immigration officials.

of the sensitivity of the topic and because the locations where refugees are living are not public knowledge and are not readily shared.

While some researchers spent the majority of their 2 days with one person or family, many also spent time with a number of other refugees. Some spent different parts of each day with a different group of people. In total, our team had detailed conversations with 72 refugees from 10 countries including Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iran, Myanmar, Palestine, Pakistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Yemen.

As noted above, RCA is not a theory based research method. It does not have a pre-determined set of research questions relying as it does on iterations from insights gathered *in situ* and building on a progressive series of conversations. However, as part of the briefing process for researchers, areas for conversations were developed to act as a guide to ensuring that conversations were purposive. The outcome of the deliberations with the research team are provided in Annex 2: Areas for Conversations.

Whilst researchers never take notes in front of people, they do jot down quotes and details as needed. Each sub team spent a full day debriefing from their time with refugees with either the study leader or study technical advisor as soon as they came back from their respective locations. These sessions ran through the areas of conversation (Annex 2) and required that researchers share their conversations, observations, and experiences related to these as well as expanding the areas of conversation based on people's inputs. The de-briefers were asked to be vigilant about credibility and to test and critique researchers throughout the de-brief process.

The de-briefs were recorded in detail in written and coded de-brief notes combined with other important archived materials providing detail on the refugees and where they lived.

Following completion of all the de-briefing sessions, all sub team leaders came together with the study leader and advisor. They were asked to take the position of study participants

and identify emerging narratives from their time with refugees. The study leader then used established framework analysis procedures involving three of the typical four-stage process:

- » Familiarisation (immersion in the findings),
- » Identification of themes (from the discussion with sub team leaders and from the data directly),
- » Charting (finding emerging connections).

The conventional fourth step is 'interpretation,' which we purposely eschew. The key emerging narratives from these processes were used as a basis for the report writing. Quality assurance was carried out through internal peer review with special concern to ensure the research retained positionality of people themselves.

Ethical Considerations

RCA teams take ethical considerations very seriously especially considering the fact that studies involve living with people in their own homes. Like most ethnographic-based research, there is no intervention involved in RCA studies. At best, the study can be viewed as a way to empower study participants in that they are able to express themselves freely in their own space. Researchers are not covert but become 'detached insiders.' People are informed that this is a learning study and are never coerced into participation. As per the American Anthropological Association Code of Ethics, RCA adopts an ethical obligation to people '*which (when necessary) supersedes the goal of seeking new knowledge.*' Researchers '*do everything in their power to ensure that research does not harm the safety, dignity or privacy of the people with whom they conduct the research.*'

All researchers were briefed on ethical considerations for this study and Child Protection Policies before their field visits (irrespective of whether they had previously gone through this). All researchers signed Code of Conduct on Confidentiality and Child Protection Policy declarations as part of their contracts. All data (written and visual) was

coded to protect the identity of individuals, their families and communities. As a result the exact locations and identities of people are not revealed in this report.

» Although many people spoke good English (and/or had a little knowledge of Bahasa Indonesia), some people had limited English language skills which sometimes constrained conversations.

Meeting the Refugees

Although we conducted a scoping exercise, the vast majority of the refugees with whom we spent time with did not know in advance that researchers were coming. We were prepared for the possibility that some refugees might not be interested in talking with us at all, or that we would be seen as unwelcome. Prior to the study, we were told by some parties that we should be very careful talking with refugees because they are generally not interested in talking to outsiders and that because of their situation as refugees they easily get frustrated. What we found however was quite different - most refugees were either extremely welcoming and eager to hang out, or simply unconcerned. Just two hours after a researcher met one young Afghan man, he told the researcher that, *'Most days are not easy here, but today things feel much better,'* and we felt that this type of sentiment was shared by people at all of the places we visited.

The initial meetings, often informal and on the street, in shops or *warungs*, led to meeting up with other refugees in a 'snowball' manner, often adopted by qualitative researchers (as people's friends joined conversations, as new people walked by, or as we were introduced to people by other refugees). We did not ask specific questions or take notes. We hung out with people and told them we wanted to learn about their daily lives, through experience as well as through conversations.

Study Limitations

As with other research methods, this study has a number of limitations as follows:

» The complex locations had curfews at 10 pm and considering many people did not start their days until 10 or 11 am, researchers did not have as much time with people as they would have liked.



We have organized the findings in this report around the six themes we felt people themselves highlighted as important. These themes are:

1. **Uncertainty** – especially in terms of the timelines, processes, and information that refugees have about the resettlement process
2. **Boredom** – daily activities, planning, and motivation in the lives of refugees
3. **Maintaining Identity** – for example through food and connections with home
4. **Access to Services/Facilities** – education, health and recreation provision
5. **The Importance of External Networks** – informal support systems and networks that are utilised by refugees
6. **Comfortable but Cautious** – refugee perceptions about Indonesia and their time here.

PEOPLE'S BACKGROUNDS

The refugees we spoke with, and the ones who were referred to in conversations, have been in Indonesia for an average of 4 years. Most have been assigned a destination 'third' country but for some, this has had to change following changes in policy of their destination country. The majority of refugees in the areas we visited were assigned for resettlement to the United States, with a small number identified for Canada. People told us that Australia and New Zealand, which had also been accepting refugees from Indonesia, have not been accepting more within the past year or so. Although some told us stories of relatives who

had been resettled to countries in Europe such as Norway and the Netherlands, these relatives were resettled from camps either in the Middle East or Africa. European countries were not mentioned by the refugees we spoke with as a possible destination country.

People had left their home countries for a variety of reasons. Many are ethnic (including Hazara, Rohingya, Tamil, Kurdish, and non-Arab Sudanese people) and/or religious minorities that had faced or were fearing persecution. Some of these people were fleeing open conflicts in areas such as South Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka. Others, such as the Oromo people from Ethiopia, are actually the majority ethnic group in their country but have lost major political power in their government and faced subsequent repression. Many refugees had already been living in another country for years by the time they decided to come to SE Asia/Indonesia, often as a result of sudden or renewed persecution, such as Ethiopians living in Saudi Arabia and Palestinians living in Iraq. Many Afghan people that we met had spent time in Iran before coming to Indonesia. One young Afghan man

Ethiopians in Riyadh

Some of the Ethiopian families we met had lived in Riyadh for almost 20 years, in some cases building lucrative businesses in the oil industry. In 2013, however, people explained that the Saudi government changed their policy towards Ethiopians after some other Ethiopians living there were accused of some serious crimes. After this, the Saudi government wanted all Ethiopians to leave and supposedly the police there started to indiscriminately arrest and terrorize people, particularly women.

Palestinians in Iraq

The Palestinians we met had lived, and were generally born, in Iraq. They told us that following the United States' invasion and the capture of Saddam Hussein, Shia militant groups began to target Sunni Muslims, particularly foreigners such as themselves. From Iraq, these families fled to Syria, needing to make fake passports to get across the Iraq-Syria border. These fake passports required paying anywhere from USD 150 to USD 400.

had first gone to Iran then lived on the streets in Turkey for a year before coming to Indonesia.

The refugees we met also came from a wide variety of work and educational backgrounds. Past work included a truck driver from Pakistan; an ice cream truck supplier, satellite dish technician, house painter from Palestine; a farmer and businessman from Sudan; and a jeans factory worker and teacher from Afghanistan, among others. Education backgrounds ranged from those who had left school after primary or junior high school, to those with university degrees in areas such as Management, Computer Science, and Fashion Design.

'I knew when I chose to take one of these boats there were only two options, either I arrive at Christmas Island or I give myself to the sea'

- Pakistani man, 40s

People shared with us that they had traveled to Indonesia through a wide variety of channels. Many Africans went through a transition country like Yemen, where agents helped them obtain visas and passports before departure for

Sunk Costs

Through passport and visa fees (both official and unofficial), airplane tickets, and boat tickets, many refugees had already spent thousands of dollars before ever being granted refugee status. Most of those who tried taking a boat to Australia lost at least some of the money (and quite often all of it) they paid to make these attempts. These boat costs ranged from USD 3000 to 5000, and some people had paid these amounts multiple times. Others told us about losing access to bank accounts where they had money saved, or having paid money which they thought would allow them to obtain long-term visas in countries such as Syria only to never receive the visa.

Indonesia. Those from South Asian countries such as Pakistan and Sri Lanka often came through Thailand or Malaysia. Many came to Indonesia with the hopes of reaching Australia by boat. Most people that ended up attempting the boat run to Australia did so multiple times, with trips failing out at sea (such as a boat which broke down early in the trip, forcing a turnaround), being caught by police at embarkation, or through exploitation such as boat agents who failed to follow-up or gave false information. Some refugees, including those who had attempted or wanted to go to Australia by boat, came to Indonesia by plane with official short-term visas. In general, it seemed that only the Sri Lankans and the Rohingyans (from Myanmar) arrived in Indonesia via unscheduled, illegal boats.

1. UNCERTAINTY

According to the refugees we spoke with, uncertainty is a dominant part of their everyday lives in Indonesia. People said that the process, timeline, and information for being resettled to a third country is uncertain, unpredictable, and confusing, from the moment they arrive in Indonesia. A Sudanese man who spent his initial time in Indonesia in a detention center shared that, *'After five months living in the detention center, I did a hunger strike because I didn't understand why some other refugees were allowed to leave and go into community housing when we had arrived at the same time.'*

Many people who were caught while trying to take a boat to Australia told us that they were sent to a detention center first, where they were eventually able to go through the refugee registration process. Others said they registered themselves in Jakarta. While waiting for his refugee status in a detention center in the Riau Islands, a Somali man said that, *'the officer always said "sabar, sabar!" (patience, patience) without any more explanation.'*

People told us that those who get refugee status and cards are provided community housing (generally a gated boarding house type complex referred to as a *kost* in Indonesian) or can self-arrange their own housing, meaning

that they choose accommodation on their own and pay rent. At this point, they will have to wait for two to seven years while they go through the process of interviews, a medical checkup, security check and sometimes destination country orientation (it was unclear if this was only for entry into the USA) before they finally get issued with an air ticket to their 'third' country. Many people echoed that there are unpredictable timelines for each stage of the process.

Throughout this process, people said that they are mostly just waiting for the positive news that they've moved on to the next stage. An Afghan man in Male kost got his refugee card after one year and has been waiting for more than two years for the next step. He told our researcher that he felt this is normal though, saying that he knows some people who were in Indonesia for five or six years. After waiting for two years, a young Ethiopian man said that, *'I did not expect to be waiting so long.'* He said he felt that now only Canada, USA and New Zealand are accepting refugees; *'Australia is not accepting people after Indonesia sentenced all those [Australian] people to death.'* This boy and his friends also said they believe that host countries are currently giving priority to Syrian refugees.

Many people explained to us that information about their current status in the resettlement process was not clear, and that getting additional information about this was very difficult. Perhaps partly because of this, they noted that rumors and updates about their statuses spread quickly. In particular, they conjectured and tried to analyse what factors may hinder or help the process. Some people wondered why they still had not received any updates about their status while others were concerned that a third country had yet to accept them. A Palestinian man said that he felt that, *'you don't want to have your status be "Hold" because then nothing is happening.'* We heard people debate whether families and women are prioritized over single men, or whether young people get accepted faster compared to older ones. When some were refused or had to start the process again, they tried to work out what the reasons were behind these setbacks.



Some refugees we met had purchased new suitcases as they neared the latter stages in the resettlement process in anticipation of leaving soon, although in some cases this was months ago and they hadn't received any further updates

People explained to us that the anxiety caused by this lack of clarity is a major preoccupation for them.

Many people emphasized how passive the process is and how they feel they don't really participate in any of the decisions. Some people also told us that they are worried about the possible repercussions of being proactive. *'We just say "ok" to everything because we don't want to create a problem.'* One Afghan woman said simply that, *'our life is in UN hands now.'*

Subsequently, people told us that they rely on their informal networks along with the internet for getting more information. An Afghan man in the Large kost checks his status on the RSC (Resettlement Support Center) website everyday first thing in the morning. Then he and others refugees will gather on wooden chairs under some trees in front of their building to chat about any updates. These men told us that, *'there is no one to ask'* if you are confused about the information on the website. Two Palestinian women in the Small kost asked researchers what the term *'pending'* meant as they shared their respective statuses on the website. Many of the refugees we met told us that they were unsure about some of the language used on the websites and some

even said they had trouble accessing their own information on the website.

In the Large kost we saw a call center number on an announcement board and asked a Sudanese man about this. He said that, *'we can only call on Friday between 2 and 5 pm. I called once but just waited until someone on the other side said "wait a minute..." until my phone credit ran out. It's useless to call.'* People told us the other option is to go directly to the organization's office. Another Sudanese man said it was not worthwhile to make this trip because of the transport cost and time and added, *'there will be two possible responses: first, they will just tell us to wait. Or second, they will show us our file and ask us to wait and be patient.'*

The Boss is the most experienced

In this location where many single men are living together, they tend to share a bedroom with someone else from their country. *'The officer said this is to avoid misunderstandings if we cannot communicate fluently with refugees from different countries,'* this Somali man told me.

He speaks good English and has been living in Indonesia for five years. He was just about to resettle to the US when I was there. *'I am only waiting for the visa and ticket, hoping to depart later this month.'* Other refugees often ask him about the process that he has been through in these past five years. *'I wish I had learned English earlier so I would be more comfortable talking with Americans'* was one of many tips that he shared to others.

The others refugees he hangs around with, mostly Somali but also a few other nationalities, call him *'the boss'* even though he is younger than some of the others, as he is considered the most experienced in the group and will be departing soon. From our conversations I noticed how people respected him and wished to keep contact with him after he arrived in the States.

'Who will be the boss once he leaves?', I asked a Sudanese man. *'Someone that has more experience among us will replace him,'* he said. Then he teased the boss and everyone laughed. After this the boss responded by asking the Sudanese man, *'Could you bring me a glass of water, please?'*

'Okay, boss!' the Sudanese man said as he ran to the kitchen.

- Researcher in Large kost, Field Notes

In the Large kost, Small kost and South homes locations, people told us that refugee officers visit the community housing once a month but only for giving allowances. *'They come*

for a short time and not inside [the complex or home] like you.' In these three locations, people noted that the interaction between refugees and the officers is limited to queuing in front of an officer's desk or in a special room. People said that during this time if you try to talk to the officer yourself there are security personnel who that won't let you. A Sudanese man told us that, *'they will try to do it as quickly as possible because otherwise everyone will be asking them a lot of questions.'*

Many people have experienced being moved around from one community housing to another in different cities as they wait for resettlement. A seven year old Afghan boy told us that, *'we have to move because they [refugee organization] tell us to move.'* Though he felt that moving around is part of the adventure, his 20 year old brother said that he's tired of it. In the end though, people often compared their current situation to the situation in their home country such as a Somali man who said that, *'I am better than those left in my country.'*

People noted that the uncertainty extends to their relationship with the refugee organizations. They do not know the officers personally and told us that it's often a different person each time they are contacted. Even when people do interact with an officer, people explained that it remains impersonal. For example, one person in South homes said that sometimes people from the refugee organization come with things like hair cutting scissors and other supplies such as beads for making small vases but that they quickly leave after dropping off the supplies.

Perhaps one of the hardest parts for these lives on hold is that people feel like they have no answers. As one Sudanese man said, *'You cannot say for sure (about your future) until you get on the plane.'* A Sri Lankan family who had received their Canadian visas seven months ago were so excited that they immediately went out and bought new suitcases. However, they were still waiting for their plane tickets and think their file has, in their words, *'fallen to the bottom.'* They believe that Canada has the slowest procedures and now regret having had this country *'chosen'* for them.

Even for those with a plane ticket, uncertainty still lingers. One Afghan man said that since he got his ticket he doesn't want to play sports because he is afraid that if he gets hurt it could affect his departure. An Afghan boy in Large kost who already had a ticket to the USA in his hands said *'I do not know what is waiting for me in the USA.'* He did not know about the kind of jobs that are available but did believe he would have some support for the first six months, including food, shelter, and English lessons. People had different perceptions about what kind of support would be provided after resettlement, with some saying that support would be provided for the first three months but others telling us it would be for five years. Some people even said that if you're going to the U.S., the amount of support depended on which state you were going to. Others worried about having to pay back the money for their plane tickets, which some mentioned needed to be done for the U.S. Some worries were influenced by stories of refugees who had already left. One young Afghan man said that he has a friend who went to Australia *'and then after one year he committed suicide because he felt very lonely.'* One Pakistani man put it this way: *'Life will start from zero at the time I arrive there.'*

2. BOREDOM / LACK OF MOTIVATION

Almost immediately after meeting this young Afghan man, he told me about his main issue. 'My people are working people. We miss work. I miss Iran because I used to work there'

- Researcher in Large kost

As refugees in Indonesia are not allowed to work, daily life for most refugees consists of hanging around where they stay and preparing/eating food. One Palestinian man told us that, *'Every day is the same for us, we have nothing to do'*. His friend put it another way: *'Now, I'm a professional sleeper.'* The result of this lack of activity is a general feeling of boredom which



Men often wake past 9am and many spend much of their day hanging out and chatting

hangs over people, becoming an increasing burden the longer they are here.

Life without work

Men in particular told us that not being able to work is very difficult for them. *'I am a man, I should work,'* said a Palestinian man in his 40s. The future aspirations of a Pakistani man in his 50s and a Sudanese man from Darfur in his late 20s centered around being able to work again rather than resettlement itself. This Pakistani man said that, *'It's ok if I just stay in Indonesia as long as I'm allowed to work because then you can really start your life.'* Many people also voiced concerns that they had become lazy during their time in Indonesia, and that they were worried about being able to work like they had previously. *'What if I don't know how to work like I used to?,'* asked a young man who used to work in a jeans factory in Afghanistan. A Palestinian man said that he has a friend who

Achmad's Routine - just passing the time

Achmad wakes up around 9 or 10 am to make some coffee or tea. When he wakes up he thinks about the possibility that the refugee organization will call him with some news. He prefers to spend most of his time in the room. He makes a small breakfast of boiled potatoes, tomatoes, and homemade bread then takes a nap. After he makes a late lunch of Pakistani bread and a beans curry or potatoes and eats with two younger Pakistani boys. In the afternoon he chats on his phone with other Pakistanis in Indonesia. In the evening, he goes for a walk with the Pakistani boys to hang out in front of the one of the supermarkets to drink coffee and chat about Pakistan. He usually goes to sleep after midnight. He looks at each day as, *'one day has passed and nothing from them [refugee organization].'*

- Researcher in Large kost, Field Notes



In some of the locations, men pass their time playing dominoes

died after 1 year in his new country because he was, *'suddenly working so much and having to think again.'*

Although people were on the whole quite positive about being in Indonesia, they shared that the empty days are hard to deal with. With the lack of activities, many of the people we spent time with said they don't wake up until the late morning or even around noon, often going to sleep past midnight after watching movies on TV. Researchers at multiple sites found that if they arrived any earlier than 11 am they would find some still asleep. Most people said that they ate their first meal around 11 or 12

Madiha's Routine - keeping up with language studies, and TV

The first thing Madiha does when she wakes up at 10 am each morning is turn on the TV. She keeps the TV running in the background as she makes coffee and wakes her husband and son. Once everyone is awake and she finishes cleaning her two-room unit, they eat breakfast - usually eggs and Baloni (Afghan bread) that she makes on Mondays and which lasts the week. Most of her afternoons are spent in the room, where she teaches her young son how to read Arabic as she wants him 'to be in touch with his roots.' The family eats lunch at 2 pm, after which she watches four Indonesian TV soap operas back-to-back. She says she is practicing her Bahasa Indonesia by listening to the actors on TV and copying their mannerisms. On the days she does not brave Jakarta's public transportation to go to a language center for English and Bahasa Indonesia classes, she gets other interested women in the compound together at 6 pm and tutors them on hairdressing and makeup; or sits outside the house chatting with other Afghan women. After dinner, she watches cartoons with her four year old son, who usually goes to bed around 10 pm. Once her son is asleep, she watches a few more programmes on TV before going to bed around 1 am.

- Researcher in Small kost, Field Notes

noon, sometimes eating again in the afternoon before eating dinner around 8 or 9 pm.

In addition to hanging out, food, and watching TV, one of people's main activities is simply checking the RSC website where they can view their current status in the resettlement process. One young man said he *'checks the RSC website 20 times a day.'* Many people we spoke with wanted to show us their status on this website, sometimes quite early on in conversations. Where they are in this process has become part of their current identity.

Organized activities

The most common organized activity we came across were some bead classes for women where they learned how to make various items like vases out of large beads. In some cases, we were told these classes were led by refugees themselves, and one woman said that they also buy their own beads to do this. Some appreciated having this activity although one woman said, *'What's the point of making all these if we can't sell them.'* A similar activity that we heard about in just one location was a make-up and hair styling class where the materials were provided by one of the refugee organizations with the classes being taught by some of the refugee women. Besides a few refugees who seemed to be volunteering as English teachers, such as one Sudanese man in the Large kost, people did not mention anything similar to the Refugee Learning Nest in the Bogor area³ or any kind of larger organized program to get refugees involved in specific activities.

'We feel a lot of tension. Family tension, going tension, staying tension'

Afghan man, 43

More than simply boredom, the lack of work was seen as a knock to the pride and dignity of men in particular. As a Palestinian man said, *'I am not providing for my family. How can I help my family like this?'* This was a contributing factor to one issue that was mentioned over and over again: stress. Many of the men we

³ Founded in 2015 by refugees for refugees, this centre offers education to nearly 60 children aged 6-18. Over twenty volunteer teachers, refugees themselves, support the centre which is largely self-funded except for a small seed grant from an NGO.



One of the common organized activities for refugee women were bead classes

spoke with told us about the stress or tension that they feel and struggle with, including both single men and fathers. Some of the men we hung out with spoke of others who have *'gone a bit crazy, too long here.'* Some told us that this stress makes it difficult for them to sleep. One Iranian man sits outside his room until 3am smoking because he has trouble sleeping. A Palestinian man said that, *'Instead of sleep, I'm thinking. I don't do anything [during the day] so when I lay down I think - what I am going to do? What to do for my children, their education. What will we do?'*

Limited recreation opportunities

Many of the parents we spoke with told us that their children lack safe and larger spaces to play in, and that they worry about this particularly since their children are not in school (see Section 4). One of the sites where we stayed has a large field nearby where people can play sports, but there are few families staying in this location. In one of the quieter residential locations, younger refugee boys and men would play football sometimes with Indonesian youth in the area, although some of the refugee mothers said they would prefer they didn't. African mothers in particular shared that they are worried about their boys, who they say are bigger than the Indonesians, accidentally hurting the other youth. They worry that any kind of incident could result in their community here not accepting them, or have negative consequences for their status as refugees. In another location some Indonesian people noted that the African boys can be rough with other kids. Two of the other sites where refugee families live are located in busy

neighborhoods, which makes it more difficult to let their children play outside. A father in one of these locations said he contacted the refugee organization about this because he felt there isn't an appropriate place for children to play, but said that there was no response.

Watching TV, movies, and using the internet with a laptop or smartphone were noted as the main sources of recreation for people. People often watched TV and movies through the internet and many used the internet to connect with friends and other refugees on Facebook and other social media. One young Afghan man told us that he was so bored when he first arrived in Indonesia that he would just watch TV all day long, *'You can watch TV for 7 days straight but then you will be sick.'* Although refugees are not restricted from going around or traveling outside of their areas, most felt that it was better to stay close by as they shared that they are afraid to have anything happen which might hurt their chances of resettlement. One young Ethiopian man also noted that, *'we have no money to do something to relax.'*

Sometimes the cure for people's boredom was to create more immediate family responsibilities. A family with 10 children told us that, *'having a baby helps pass the time and gives focus.'* A Somali woman noted that she got married and had a baby *'because I had nothing to do.'*

Increasing demotivation

'Waiting so long you get demoralized and you lose everything'

- Somali man, 25

Some of the adults we spoke with said that they would like to go to school or study again after resettlement, but many told us that they were unsure about what would actually be possible and what they would be able to do later on for work in their new country. The most common responses in conversations about what people might do in their new country were variations of, *'I'll do anything'* and *'I can do many things.'* People liked to ask our researchers about the kind of jobs they thought were available in these countries. On the whole, our researchers felt that people did not have much idea at all about

what options might be available in their country of resettlement and that this was influencing their lack of motivation to plan or prepare. Besides learning English, very few people we met were using their time in Indonesia to study or prepare for their future lives in their third country.

One person who was preparing, a young Afghan man who was teaching himself French by watching lessons on YouTube, said he was scheduled to be resettled to the French region of Canada. He has also been reading a lot of books and taken some online courses. He said he became addicted to books when he was staying at a refugee area in the Riau Islands because there weren't other young people around so he had a lot of time by himself.



This person was trying to make their own Farsi - English dictionary

One researcher noted that it seemed that those people who were the closest to leaving were less willing to share about their aspirations because of a fear of jeopardising their departures (i.e. 'something' might happen and it could still be much longer before they actually leave). This anxiety and fear, along with the general uncertainty of their situations, is influencing how people think about possibilities for their futures.

'But we want to treat you like a guest'

The people I was hanging out with seemed to enjoy treating us as guests, no matter how much we tried not to be given special treatment. With every new group of people I met, they would offer us food and drinks, and want us to sit down and eat with them. Each time I tried to offer to go for a walk and treat them to lunch outside, they would refuse and insist that I have some of their food.

- Researcher in South homes, Field Notes



Many of Middle Eastern and South Asian families we met regularly cooked traditional meals like Biryani

3. MAINTAINING IDENTITY

One of the most striking aspects of the refugees' lives in Indonesia was food. The refugees we spent time with were cooking and eating mostly the same foods that they had eaten in their home countries, adding that this was important to them. Although many expressed a liking for Indonesia, most added that they didn't really like Indonesian food. Our researchers felt that actually most hadn't tried eating much Indonesian food. These traditional meals for many of the ethnicities included homemade flatbreads and potatoes. Sri Lankans prepared food that researchers felt was similar to Indonesian food, but with more spices. One researcher was surprised when he shared his first meal with his Palestinian family to find traditional homemade flatbread, falafel, and hummus all being served. When the researcher shared this surprise with the family, they said *'well of course, this is our food.'* It turned out that this particular family had carried with them to Indonesia a pressure cooker, large toaster oven, small charcoal grill, and a grinder for making falafel. This family was also able to maintain their traditional diet with particular help from a relative in Dubai who often sent large care packages with items like dates and other dried fruits, traditional sweets, and herbs and spices.

Refugees used local connections as well to get particular foods. One Afghan would travel to Bogor every month to buy basmati rice from another Afghan man living there, and periodically bought fresh milk from other



Many refugees were making their own traditional breads, including this man who uses his rice cooker

Afghans in the area where he stayed. In another location, fresh milk (100 litres worth) was brought to people by another Afghan living in Bogor. The yeast that one of the Palestinian families was using for their flatbread also came from someone in Bogor. These appear to be homegrown businesses targeted directly for refugees. One of the Ethiopian families we hung out with had even managed to make their traditional injera bread, although without the same sour flavor that they said it 'should' have. After noticing the Afghan man a researcher was spending time with eats potatoes and flatbread for every meal, he asked if he got tired of eating this every day. The answer, however, was no.

Food was a key way in which people maintained their identities and their connection with their home countries and past lives. Although meals were often simple, people shared that not eating their traditional foods was simply not a consideration, even if it meant spending more money or going out of their way for a particular food item or ingredient.

Personal pride was another important factor for maintaining identities. The vast majority of the refugees we met came from working, middle class backgrounds and in some cases had higher educational backgrounds as well. When researchers tried to treat people to a snack, a small meal or help pay for something as a sign of appreciation, people invariably tried to refuse. In one location, after being treated to an ice cream cone from a local shop along with five other refugee children, a Palestinian boy asked his father why this researcher should have to pay instead of him. Although the ice

cream cones only cost about US 10 cents each, the researchers felt that the two fathers seemed somewhat disrespected.

'Sometimes we lock the door and dance to Ethiopian music'

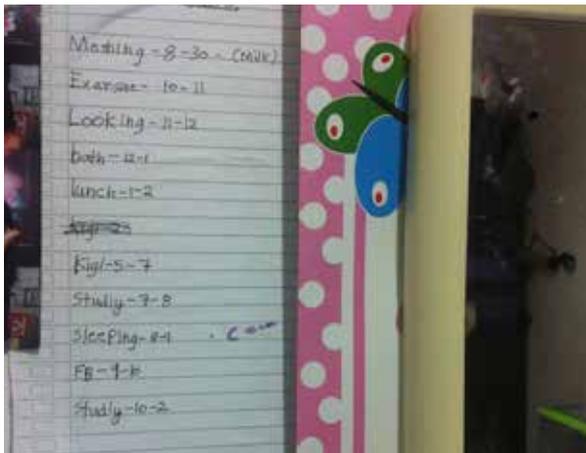
- Ethiopian men, 20s

Along with being the main source of support and information for refugees, the internet is another way people stayed connected to their home country. An Ethiopian RCA researcher noted that while the group of Ethiopian boys she spent most of her time with were eager to hear from her about the situation in Ethiopia, it turned out that they were actually already aware of most current events in the country. Among the other refugees, there were children who watched cartoons with Arabic subtitles on YouTube, some who listened to their local music, and still others who would check in on current events and news about their home country or their 'tribe.'

'Getting a passport provides me with an identity'

- Afghan woman, 30s

For those without a passport, those who have difficulty getting a passport (such as the Rohingya people and people from Darfur, among others), or those with mostly unrecognized passports such as the Palestinians, people told us that this lack of 'official' identity was an additional stress and that they looked forward to the opportunity to get a visa and a new passport. When talking about visas with a Palestinian man, he showed our researcher his daughter's Palestinian passport and birth certificate. He noted that although she has these documents, they hardly bring any benefit. Our researcher also noticed that on the girl's birth certificate, the nationality field was left blank.



Without regular school, this 9 year-old girl made her own daily schedule

4. ACCESS TO SERVICES

Refugees in the Greater Jakarta Area are provided some access to education and health services through the various refugee organizations, but people told us that this access varies by location and in some cases the official policy or processes were unclear, even within one location.

Access to Education

Overall refugee children are not attending formal classes or school, although we did hear of one child who was apparently attending a local Islamic school. Some people said they were told their children are not allowed to attend Indonesian schools. In one location, people explained that the reason they were given by the refugee organization was because the lessons are in Bahasa Indonesia. *'But they will learn it,'* said one of these parents. Our researchers also observed that some children could actually already speak some Bahasa Indonesia. In the end, access to education for children was limited and mostly informal, including specially organized classes and access to language centers. These informal classes or lessons often lacked sufficient teachers and physical facilities. In a number of the locations people told us that some of the teachers are not very good in English and that both the teacher and students often resort to using Google Translate. Our researchers also noted that children's participation or progress in classes was not tracked as they moved from one place in Indonesia to another.

'You don't realize how I am losing my precious time'

- 15 year old refugee, now 4 years out of school

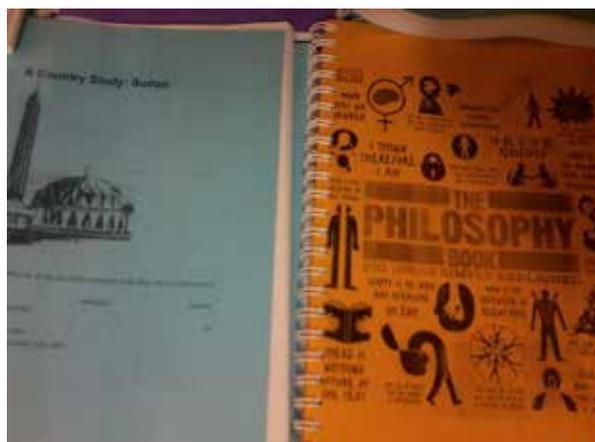
The lack of formal education is toughest on refugee teenagers, who face particularly uncertain futures. Out of school for an average of 4 years, they face the prospect of, for example, sitting for junior high school exams when they are already college-aged. They will have difficult decisions to face about whether, and how, to continue their education or whether to attempt to directly enter the workforce in their new country while potentially lacking minimum qualifications. We found teens to be the most difficult group to chat with, and they often spent the majority of their time inside their rooms. One teenager we spoke with briefly is 17 and the oldest of four children in his family. He plays video games in the dark all day, with the lights off and the curtains to the small window drawn. His mother shared with us that he only comes out of his room to grab food, not talking with anyone. His father told us that while he was learning photography before they came to Indonesia, now he has lost his motivation. Our experiences related to teenagers was a stark contrast to the younger children. Despite having limited spaces for playing outside and often limited toys besides parents' smartphones and tablets, younger children happily played with each other and many told us they were excited to have new people around while we visited.

Large kost had the most organized and regular education-related activities of any of the locations we visited. People told us that there are regular classes (daily for children) at the complex they live in organized by one of the

Schedule for Children : Monday & Wednesday	
Time	Participants
08.00 - 10.00	Children (6 years old - 8 years old)
10.00 - 12.00	Children (9 years old - 13 years old)
13.00 - 14.00	Toddler (4 years old - 5 years old)

Schedule for Adult : Friday	
Time	Participants
08.00 - 11.00	Adult (18 years old - above)

A lesson schedule for Bahasa Indonesia classes in one of the locations



One location had a small library with study books

refugee organizations which include studying English along with Math, Physics, and Biology. The classes are taught by Indonesian teachers in English. The mornings are allocated for children, midday for teenagers, and afternoons for adults. An Afghan man questioned the subjects for his level, saying that *'I am 40 years old man, why do I need to learn physics?'* Our researchers noted that there seemed to be around seven people per class, and people explained that each age group gets 2 to 3 hours per day. While some people said that they appreciated having the classes, as mentioned above, some were disappointed that the teachers cannot speak better English, with some boys saying that they *'already have better English than the teacher.'* When a researcher asked some children in the Large kost about what they were learning in class, their response was, *'books.'* *'About what?'* the researcher asked. *'Books about books,'* they responded.

English classes were made available in some form for all of the refugees we spoke with, although not necessarily conducted where the refugees were staying as in the Large kost. Many people in all locations shared that they feel learning English is important. *'I really focus to learn English because it will open opportunities for me'* (Sudanese man, 20s). An Afghan man who was illiterate before he arrived in Indonesia said that he believes English is key to succeeding in the US. Still, the motivation for actively learning English was not strong for everyone, even if they noted its importance. Some told us that, *'we don't have the patience for learning English'* while others voiced worries such as an Afghan mother who said that she

worried about not being able to communicate in the resettlement country. A young Afghan man who will resettle to the US soon said that, *'I regret not to learn English more, but I will learn the language when I arrive there.'*

In the South homes location, people said that some were attending English classes twice a week near where they are living while some children in one area of this location were being taught Bahasa Indonesia and Math by a much loved older Indonesian woman. An Afghan father was also teaching English to others for free while a couple of people here and at the Small kost said they had at times hired private tutors for their children, but they shared no details about this.

Refugees in the Large kost, Small kost and South homes locations told us that they could also attend English classes for free at certain language centers but these generally involved an hour of transport each way and money was needed for the transportation costs. In the North homes location, refugees could attend classes at the refugee organization's language center which included English and Math classes but some young men told us that, *'it's only for children under 16 years old.'*

Access to healthcare

Many people told us that they have a designated hospital where they can receive free treatment, and that this is organized by the refugee organizations. The details of this support varied quite a bit between locations and we heard about the following variations across the different locations we visited:

- » North homes - One family said that you can contact the refugee organization after you visit a clinic or hospital for reimbursement.
- » Large kost - A few people told us that they should contact the refugee organization first before going to the hospital.
- » Small kost - People said the hospital they can visit is 1 to 2 hours away depending on traffic and can cost IDR 200,000 in transportation costs for a

return trip.

- » Male kost - One man explained that you need a referral letter from the refugee organization before visiting the *puskesmas*.

For those that mentioned needing a referral letter, it was shared that this could be a problem for more serious cases as the response from the refugee organization would not be immediate. One young Afghan man said that after badly dislocating his shoulder playing volleyball he needed to wait until the following day to be taken to a hospital. Many people shared that their first response to a health issue is simply to buy something at the local mini market or visit the *pukesmas*, where they could get reimbursed later by the refugee organization.

There was no mention of particular support for family planning. We were told that the allowances for babies and children have been reduced recently and a Sudanese father said that *'now we have to compromise'* to fulfill their baby's needs with limited cash in hand.

5. IMPORTANCE OF EXTERNAL NETWORKS

While refugees said that they *'feel detached from official information'* and that the formal systems of support were either not very useful, impersonal, or difficult to utilize, informal support systems were varied and wide-reaching. The internet and smartphones are key to this support, with some researchers noting that people *'use their smartphones for everything'* (researcher in South homes) or that some people *'used Facebook for hours every afternoon'* (researcher in Male kost).

'If someone has any update, everyone knows about it'

- Researcher in Large kost

People shared openly with other refugees about changes in the status of their resettlement process through the internet and word of mouth. While one researcher was chatting with a Palestinian man in the Small kost, an Afghan



Like many refugees, this man spends afternoons checking and sending messages to friends on Facebook

woman walked by and mentioned that she had just received a Facebook message from Afghan refugees in Medan saying that they had received their departure schedule and would be leaving for the USA in July. This news quickly passed by word of mouth to other people living in Small kost. People added that they share their status updates with others in their location, and with us while we were visiting, in order to ask questions about what different messages and words meant (for instance the question about what *'pending'* meant mentioned in Section 1). In particular, those with good English skills were often asked by other refugees to interpret or explain updates from the various organizations.

People's networks were also often a big reason why they had ended up in Indonesia in the first place, and in addition learnt how to become registered as refugees. An Ethiopian man who had used an agent to fly to Indonesia from Djibouti said he, *'was referred to a local agent in Indonesia'* who directed him to a refugee organization and linked him up with other Ethiopians in the area. The older Afghan man in the South homes said he had come to Indonesia after meeting other Afghan refugees in Malaysia who had heard (through their own networks) that Indonesia was a good country for refugees to go. This sentiment, that Indonesia is a good country for refugees, was echoed by others such as a Pakistani man. Upon arriving by boat, he told us that other refugees helped him register. When we asked what people meant by Indonesia being a *'good country for refugees,'* some told us that this meant they would not be treated badly and that there weren't *'too many refugees'* in Indonesia. It is also these informal networks which have led most people to stop trying to reach Australia by boat from

Indonesia, with many saying simply that *'you can no longer do this.'*

Remittances and gifts

'Take two steps ahead and you need money in Indonesia'

- Somali man, 20s

Although registered refugees do receive a stipend every month, people told us that it was insufficient (particularly families). A Palestinian father said, *'it lasts for maybe 20 days'* and refugees from a variety of countries, including this family, also received remittances sent from abroad by relatives and friends. People told us that they collected this money from either the post office or Western Union, and that their refugee card helped them access these services. *'No need to pay back, we help each other.'* While no one noted any particular expectation that this money needed to be paid back, some told us that they were eager to begin working in their third country so that they could start to send money back to others. A young Afghan man noted that *'my family has given me a lot of money but so far I still can't give anything back.'*

In addition to remittances, many families also receive care packages from relatives consisting of food and food ingredients (such as spices) along with other goods like clothing.

6. COMFORTABLE BUT CAUTIOUS

While people struggle with the monotony of their days and the uncertainty of their futures, overwhelmingly they told us that overall they are comfortable in Indonesia. *'It is a good place'* and *'Indonesians smile all the time'* were common comments about Indonesia and its people, including those who spent some of their early days in the country at detention centers. A young Afghan man who initially told our researcher some bitter stories about his time in a detention center, which included him injuring an Indonesian officer, later went on to say that *'Indonesian people are very good.'*

Some Muslim women refugees said that they like being in Indonesia because of the increased personal freedom. For example, an Ethiopian teenage girl told us that whereas she was mostly confined to their home while living in Saudi Arabia, here she can walk around the neighborhood on her own, even in the evening. She and her mom can also go to the market on their own without needing a male companion, as they had needed before. Some Iranian women shared that Indonesia is a relaxed Muslim country and that they can wear *'whatever they like here.'* Although local sellers in some of the locations said that they rarely see many of the refugees going around the neighborhood, our researchers were surprised to find that many were quite fluent in Bahasa Indonesia. Some had even picked up phrases in local languages where they had stayed at some point during their time in Indonesia.

'We are not responsible for your life... did I bring you here?'

- told to a refugee by an organization's officer

Although comfortable in Indonesia, on the whole refugees live cautiously - wary of doing anything that might *'rock the boat.'* An older Pakistani man who told us that he used to travel a lot in Pakistan but doesn't really go anywhere now said that, *'I'm afraid to go outside the rules.'* He said he felt that if he did *'go outside the rules'*, either purposely or without knowing, the responsibility for anything that might happen would fall on him and the refugee organizations would not be able to help. People also mentioned that they felt that they shouldn't ask too many questions about their status, because they didn't want to do anything that might affect the various steps in their resettlement process. One Afghan man said that he was often told by officers that, *'You are safe here. You are a refugee, ok? Be patient.'* An Afghan woman who helps other families by babysitting said she is afraid to take money for this because she *'might get kicked off the list.'*

For Ethiopian families in particular, this caution extended more so to concerns about personal safety. Although they did not tell us that they felt unsafe, one mother said that it is more secure not to travel around too much. Another mother

mentioned that she feels her family is always under surveillance, and the older daughter talked about how she is very conscious of being stared at when she walks around. An Ethiopian man in his 20's said that, *'all it takes is one child calling the police and saying that these people are doing something wrong and then we can be taken to some detention camp on some island.'*

Some refugees told us that it would be alright to stay in Indonesia indefinitely, although for one Ethiopian family this was simply because they had no expectation of being moved to a third country. We also chatted with others who said that they would like to try to come back to Indonesia a few years after being resettled and having saved up some money to perhaps open up a business here. One young Afghan man perceived that his ability to speak both Indonesian and English (which he expected to improve in the US) would open up business opportunities in Indonesia, although he didn't yet have any ideas about what kind of business. Another young man shared with us that he would save money for the first four years in the US so that he could move back to Indonesia. He said that he has a girlfriend here and wants to set up a business in Banyuwangi (a town in East Java). He told us that with USD 20,000 one can set up a small business.

Although there was some minor tensions between refugees and Indonesians, such as some Indonesians in the South homes location telling us that refugee men would make noise until late at night outside their houses, overall refugees and Indonesians said relations are good. Refugees added that they got along well with each other, despite often living in very close quarters. In Small kost, we were told about small complaints such as some men getting angry about children being too loud as they play and some mothers not liking the time others spent in the kitchen. As one mother put it though, *'we have to get along.'*



The following implications emerge from our conversations with refugees in the Greater Jakarta area and are presented from their perspective rather than an external normative perspective:

» **The need for clear, transparent information about the steps involved in the resettlement process.** While there are no doubt things outside of the control of UNHCR and the other refugee organizations, a general and wide-ranging lack of information and clear explanations about the resettlement process create additional stress and anxiety for refugees. Refugees tell us they generally understand the basic steps in the process, but they come to these understandings through experience and from information they receive from other refugees. While the RSC website is a useful portal, it is scant on specifics, general information, and explanations. Information about the status of refugees, either through the RSC website, email, telephone, or by an officer is conveyed with the briefest of information and often uses language that refugees find ambiguous or unclear. Refugees end up sending a lot of emails to the refugee organizations asking for status updates, for example when something is 'pending' or they have been told to 'just wait.' This is no doubt frustrating for both refugees and those officers at refugee organizations who continuously receive these messages.

» **Refugees do not appear to have a primary case officer who remains their main point of contact during their time in Indonesia.** This exacerbates the information void that is already felt. Clearer information and a permanent primary contact whom the refugees know to some extent and feel comfortable with could improve this situation. Having a particular 'buddy' or mentor, whom refugees could go to for questions about their status but also about general things related to their lives in Indonesia would also help in easing the uncertainty that refugees feel and could go a long way in helping refugees better understand their status at different points throughout the resettlement process.

» **There is a lack of activities available for refugees to participate in.** Refugees in Indonesia are not allowed to work, leaving a clear gap in people's daily lives, particularly for men. People explained that the problem was not necessarily about supplementing income but rather the dignity of work and filling their time usefully and productively. This lack of activity may also create a norm of lethargy which will make it even harder to adjust when people finally move to their 'third' country. The organized activities we came across, such as bead and makeup classes, were targeted to women. Although in these cases people appreciated having something else to do, many were looking for more

engaging activities and activities which would provide them with job skills for the future. There is little clarity on whether they are allowed to set up their own voluntary schemes e.g. to teach or coach others.

» **Refugees have little idea about what work opportunities might be available for them in their 'third' countries,** and rely on information from friends and other refugees who are already in these countries. This becomes just another unknown for people which contributes to the general demotivation and uncertainty. With more information on the types of work they may be able to avail, refugees will likely find their own ways to prepare (e.g. distance learning, peer education amongst others) as they have access to internet, have diverse skills sets and may have funds to pay for training.

» **More education options for children and young people are needed,** particularly those which would more closely mirror regular formal schooling. Children were either attending periodic short classes, sporadic tutored instruction mainly geared to learning English, or in some cases not attending classes of any kind. Teenagers are particularly at risk of losing their opportunity for future jobs and/or further formal education by prolonged absence from formal schooling. Replication of the Resource Learning Nest in the Bogor area would seem to be one potential model, with the added benefit that it would provide opportunities for refugee parents to be involved and feel valued as volunteer teachers. Additionally, more clarity is needed about the possibility for refugee children's to attend Indonesian schools with further examination of the obstacles which might be preventing this from happening.

» **Children lack safe areas for play,** particularly as refugee children are not attending regular schools. Currently, children living in kost complexes use

hallways, stairways, and the small paved parking areas in front of the complexes for playing. These complexes are located along trafficked roads, and parents are concerned about the potential dangers for children playing on their own outside of the complex itself.

» **More serious consideration needs to be given to the provision of mental health support.** Four plus years in a position of uncertainty and with limited ways to occupy one's time is an extremely difficult situation for many people's mental health. The counselling which appears to be currently available to refugees requires people to take their own initiative, is available during limited timeframes, and requires people to travel potentially long journeys (1+ hour on average).

ANNEX 1: STUDY TEAM

Study Writers

Steven Ellis (USA)
Rizqan Adhima (Indonesia)

Technical Advisor

Dee Jupp (UK)

Team Members

Large Kost

Rizqan Adhima (Indonesia)
Gloria Aduo Fori (Ghana)
Salman Mehdi (Bangladesh)
Tony Dogbe (Ghana)

Small Kost

Aria Gautam (Nepal)
Steven Ellis (USA)

Male Kost

Iqbal Abisaputra (Indonesia)

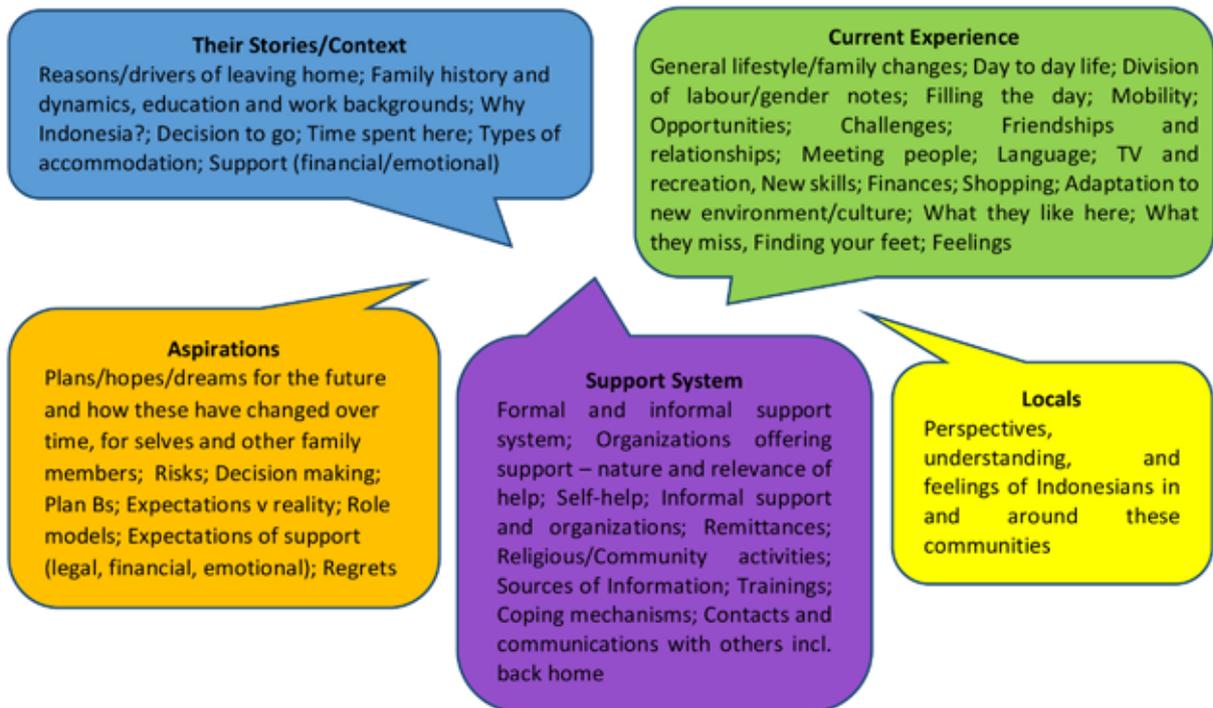
North Homes

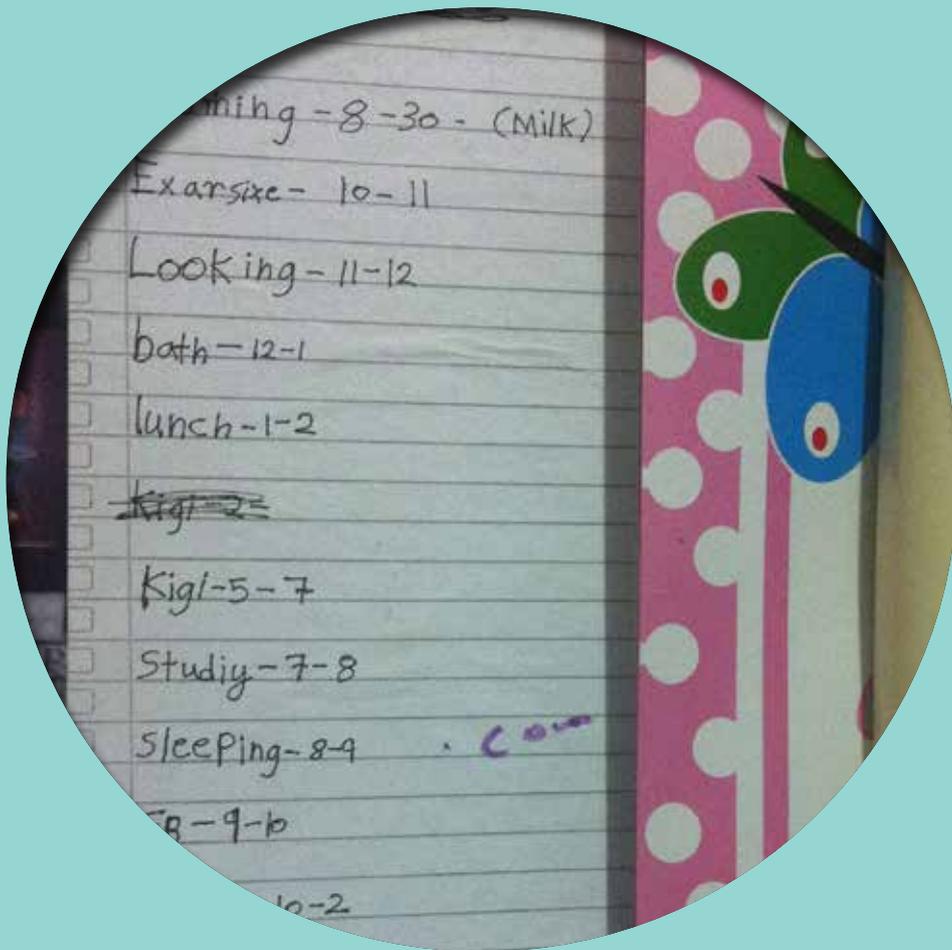
Kiros Berhanu (Ethiopia)
Senait Teame (Ethiopia)
Tazin Rahman Ananya (Bangladesh)

South Homes

Pandu Ario Bismo (Indonesia)
Beatrice Sarpong (Ghana)
Begum Nurjahan (Bangladesh)
Neha Koirala (Nepal)

ANNEX 2: AREAS OF CONVERSATION





This RCA Insights Study was conducted in May 2016 with a team of international RCA practitioners from six countries including Indonesia. The study aims to provide insights into the day-to-day lives of refugees currently residing in Indonesia and waiting for resettlement. The study took place in five locations around the Greater Jakarta Area. Through informal interaction with these families and individuals, researchers sought to understand their experiences.