

Beyond limbo, building lives: livelihood strategies of refugees and asylum seekers in Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

Refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia face a protracted and precarious wait to secure solutions to their plights. Indonesia is not party to the Refugee Convention and does not give refugees basic rights or the option of local integration. Resettlement to a third country, once the main durable solution that people waited years to attain, has become increasingly unlikely. In late 2017, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) began informing refugees that most would never be resettled.¹ With the volatile situations in their home countries making voluntary return untenable for most, refugees are left with no choice but to try to build a life, without rights, in Indonesia. Without the right to work, vulnerability, poverty and dependency are rife. Support from local organisations is limited and around 40 per cent of the 13,800 refugees and asylum seekers are without any assistance.² This research focuses on the refugees and asylum seekers who have settled independently in urban areas and looks at how they create their lives in a 'transit' country that lost its transience. Beyond physical deprivation, the prohibition on work creates forced immobility, a limbo that breeds feelings of being stuck in-between,³ waiting for life to begin.⁴ Along with understanding how people are surviving, this paper also addresses how the inability to work interacts with individuals' sense of purpose and agency. It looks at livelihood activities to identify how initiatives that encourage self-reliance, skills development and empowerment help refugees to create solutions for themselves and foster the belief that life is, once again, moving forward.

Keywords:

Indonesia, limbo, work rights, livelihoods

1 Topsfield, J., 2017. *Most refugees in Indonesia will never be resettled: UN refugee agency*. The Sydney Morning Herald, [online] 31 October. Available at: <<https://www.smh.com.au/world/most-refugees-in-indonesia-will-never-be-resettled-un-refugee-agency-20171031-gzbzhh.html>> [Accessed 9 December 2017]; UNHCR, 2017. *Comprehensive solutions for persons registered with UNHCR in Indonesia*. [pdf] Available at: <<https://www.unhcr.org/id/wp-content/uploads/sites/42/2017/10/Poster-on-%20Comprehensive-Solutions-ECHO-Oct-2017.pdf>>.

2 UNHCR, 2017. *Global trends – forced displacement in 2017*. [online] Available at: <<http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2017/>> [Accessed 24 June 2018].

3 Missbach, A., 2015. *Troubled transit: Asylum seekers stuck in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.

4 Taylor, S. and Rafferty-Brown, B., 2010. Waiting for life to begin: The plight of asylum seekers caught by Australia's Indonesian solution. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, [e-journal] 22(4), pp. 558–592. [Accessed 21 September 2016].

1 Introduction

Indonesia was once purely a place of transit, a stop on the way to countries where refugees and people seeking asylum could access basic rights and rebuild their lives, either by travelling onward to Australia or waiting to be resettled.⁵ Australia's deterrence policies mean that getting on a boat southward bound in an effort to reach the country's shores is no longer an option – people seeking asylum would either be turned back or sent for processing at an offshore camp on Nauru. At the same time, the main resettlement countries – Australia and the United States – have introduced more stringent policies, the former no longer taking in refugees from Indonesia who arrived after July 2014 and also cutting places for those who came before,⁶ and the latter slashing its overall resettlement quota by more than half.⁷ With resettlement no longer an option for most,⁸ and rights restricted – refugees are not allowed to work, they face barriers to education and there is no pathway to citizenship – the 13,800 refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia are stuck in limbo,⁹ unable to go forward or back and prevented from being productive in their prolonged state of transit.

This study identifies the livelihood strategies of refugees and asylum seekers in urban areas of Indonesia's Java island, namely Jakarta and two cities in Bogor Regency – Cisarua and Cipayung. It considers the ways refugees create their lives in a country that was supposed to be a temporary place to live but where most end up living indefinitely due to the lack of durable solutions available. When months stretch to years, and there is no legal right to work, how do refugees survive? What risk factors make these people vulnerable and what strategies boost resilience and restore dignity? In this context, characterised by uncertainty and absent basic rights, refugees and asylum seekers are left with no option for moving forward with their lives and instead survive on handouts (if they can access assistance), slide into homelessness and poverty, pursue whatever means they can to make ends meet or accept assisted repatriation from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This research looks at how livelihood activities such as volunteering, training or income-generating opportunities help refugees overcome the structural constraints of their environment, reduce their vulnerability and re-establish the belief that life is moving forward.

Without the right to work, dependency, poverty and vulnerability become entrenched factors of daily life. In addition to the material constraints of being barred from establishing livelihoods that would enable refugees to provide for themselves, there is the issue of wasted skills and the fact that people are forced into listlessness. This paper seeks to identify how the inability to work interacts with forced migrants' sense of purpose and agency. Looking at livelihood activities offers insight into the influences of initiatives that encourage self-reliance, skills development and empowerment in a context where there is little scope for pursuing life goals. By doing so, the research reveals the ways in which people are attempting to create solutions for themselves and make the best of difficult situations – turning despair into action and action into agency.

In summary, the main livelihood strategies identified through this research are: seeking assistance and getting remittances (financial capital), income generation (human capital) and community support (social capital). Among interviewees, financial assistance was limited and aside from a few of the 'luckier' participants who were receiving remittances or able to access assistance from organisations, most were struggling to get by. People used their language, teaching or artisanal skills, where possible, which allowed them to form networks and build doorways to donations, in-kind support and mutual assistance. The participants with strong social networks, whether with other refugees, Indonesians or expats, made through learning centres, religious congregations or charities, were best able to provide for themselves. Having opportunities to participate in society helped refugees to form relationships, provided incentives to learn Bahasa Indonesia and ultimately boosted resilience by establishing more places that they could turn to ask for help. The importance of volunteering, vocational training and livelihood activities in overcoming the stifling feelings of being stuck in limbo, by creating meaning through action, was very apparent. Without access to livelihood activities, and avenues to learn and grow professionally, socially and emotionally, people languish. Refugees lose their sense of purpose and have too much space for hopelessness to seep in, leaving them vulnerable to depression. While no one can deny the paramount needs of food and health, the importance of food for the health of the mind should not be overlooked, as it is a critical part of the ability to maintain a livelihood. By allowing access to livelihoods through work rights, both bodies and minds can be fed, to the benefit of the individual and the host society. This paper considers both the material and mental implications around refugee livelihoods, highlighting the power of self-reliance to both provide and uplift.

1.1 Key definitions

Livelihood: The author defines livelihood as the capital that refugees strive to secure and maximise and the activities they undertake to meet their needs on a sustainable basis with dignity. This definition of livelihood is formed through

5 Tan, N., 2016. The status of asylum seekers and refugees in Indonesia. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, [e-journal] Available at: <<https://academic.oup.com/ijrl/article-abstract/28/3/365/2599186?redirectedFrom=fulltext>> [Accessed 6 March 2018].

6 Australian Government DIBP, 2014. *Talking points: resettlement cut-off date for refugees in Indonesia*. [pdf] Available at: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/AccessandAccountability/Documents/FOI/20151203_FA150200596-documents-released.pdf> [Accessed 6 August 2018].

7 Gelardi, C., 2018. *Here's how many refugees the US has accepted in 2018*. Global Citizen, [online] Available at: <<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/us-accepted-refugees-2018/>> [Accessed 8 September 2018].

8 Ibid 1.

9 Ibid 3.

an amalgamation of those put forward by Chambers and Conway (1992),¹⁰ De Vriese (2006, p. 1)¹¹ and Al-Sharmani (2004, p. 2).¹² By combining pre-existing ideas, the most apt definition, in relation to this paper, could be captured.

Livelihood activities involve 'acquiring the knowledge, skills, social network, raw materials, and other resources' necessary to meet collective or individual needs.¹³ These activities and initiatives foster self-reliance by creating access to training and skills development or income generating opportunities. Income generating activities are carried out informally because of the insecure legal status of refugees in Indonesia.

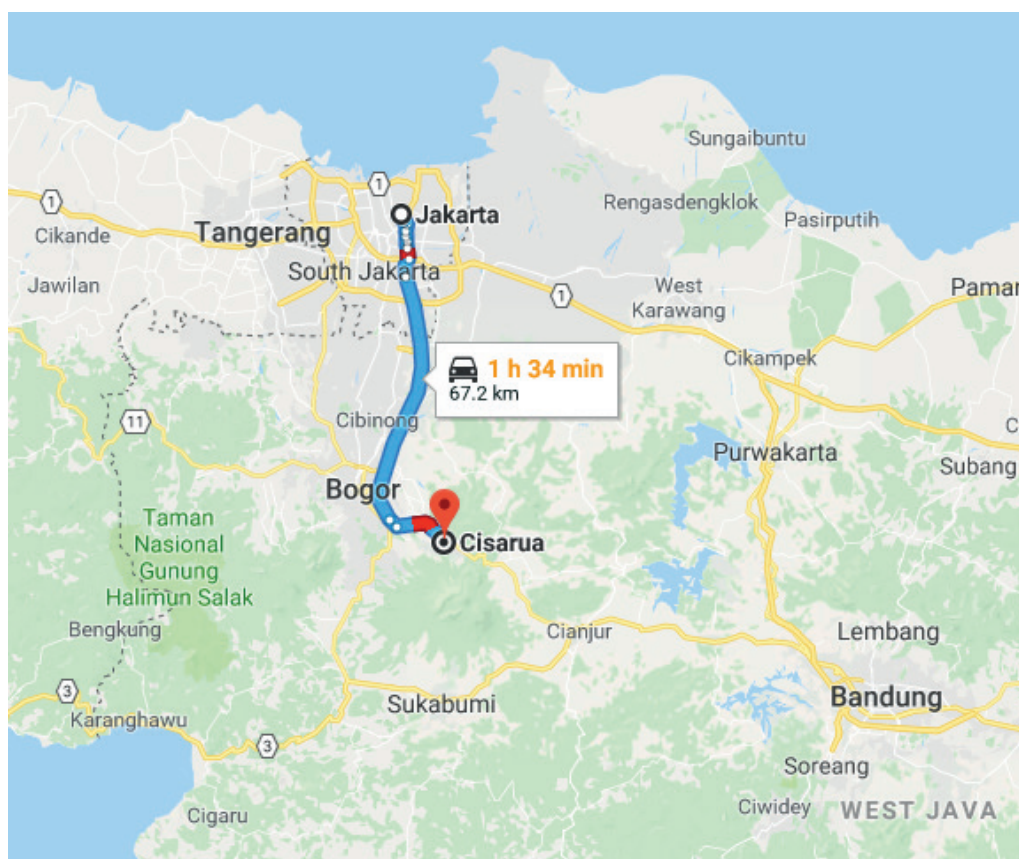
Self-settled refers to living independently, without financial support or accommodation from organisations in Indonesia. While this paper focuses on refugees living independently it also includes some discussion around financial assistance.

Vulnerability refers to an individual or household's capacity to cope with risks and stresses.¹⁴

A note on terms

This paper looks at the livelihood strategies of refugees and asylum seekers, however, to avoid repetition, both groups are referred to sometimes as refugees, forced migrants and the forcibly displaced. It should also be noted that, generally speaking, refugees and asylum seekers are treated the same in Indonesia.

1.2 Methodology



(Google Maps, 2018)

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews with refugees and asylum seekers during two weeks of field work carried out in July 2018, and also with several expert informants over Skype and WhatsApp calls between June and September 2018.

10 Chambers, R. and Conway, G., 1991. *Sustainable rural livelihoods: practical concepts for the 21st century*. [pdf] Available at: <<https://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/sustainable-rural-livelihoods-practical-concepts-for-the-21st-century>> [Accessed 27 June 2018].

11 De Vriese, M., 2006. *Refugee livelihoods: A review of the evidence*. UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, [pdf] Available at: <www.unhcr.org/4423fe5d2.pdf> [Accessed 17 June 2018].

12 Al-Sharmani, M., 2004. *Refugee livelihoods: Livelihood and diasporic identity constructions of Somali refugees in Cairo*. [pdf] Available at: <<http://www.unhcr.org/en-au/research/working/410909d54/refugee-livelihoods-livelihood-diasporic-identity-constructions-somali.html>> [Accessed 22 July 2018].

13 UNHCR, 2014. *Global strategy for livelihoods: a UNHCR strategy 2014–2018*. [pdf] Available at: <www.unhcr.org/530f107b6.pdf> [Accessed 15 May 2018].

14 GLOPP, 2008. *DFID's sustainable livelihoods approach and its framework*. [pdf] Available at: <www.glopp.ch/B7/en/multimedia/B7_1_pdf2.pdf> [Accessed 7 March 2018].

In preparation for field work, the snowball sampling method was used. Service providers and social groups were contacted to request their assistance facilitating interviews with forced migrants. A few meetings were arranged this way. Once in Indonesia, initial participants made introductions to others. Additionally, visiting centres where activities for refugees were carried out, and spending time there, allowed for further introductions and requests for interviews. Participants were given an information sheet about the research to read and the opportunity to ask questions before signing the consent form. A total of 16 interviews with refugees and asylum seekers were carried out: 10 interviews were in-depth, lasting for between one and two hours, and six were more ad hoc, generally about 30 minutes long. Follow-up questions were asked over encrypted WhatsApp messages when clarification was needed. Most interviews were audio recorded and transcribed but some were documented with the use of field notes.

The interview questions were broken into three sections: brief background, life in Indonesia and involvement in livelihood activities. Beyond understanding education or work history, questions about the past and reasons for flight were not raised to avoid triggering traumatic memories. For this reason, the data collection approach does not take into account the transnational dimensions of an individual's experience. Semi-structured interviews allowed for specific questions with an emphasis on life now, challenges and dreams for the future, while also leaving space for participants to talk about what was important to them. The study's focus on understanding daily lives, struggles and hopes meant that people were very willing to be involved in the research, and to have the opportunity to communicate their hardships.

Interviewees were predominantly living independently as urban refugees. However, one of the participants was under IOM support and two received UNHCR financial assistance due to vulnerability. Of the participants, two-thirds were engaged as volunteers or students in various education and livelihood initiatives. Most rented rooms or apartments, and five were sleeping on the streets near Kalideres detention centres, in Jakarta, in hope of getting IOM assistance. Participants were based in Jakarta and also two cities in the mountainous Bogor region, Cisarua and Cipayung. Of the interviewees, 75 per cent were living in Jakarta. This bias is due to the author falling sick during the second week of field research, which hindered the capacity to conduct interviews in Cisarua and Cipayung.

The interviewees were adults between the ages of 22 and 35. In their home countries, participants were: students at both high school and university level; young professionals; merchants; and mothers. The research did not strive to be representative; instead, in order to gain insight from a variety of viewpoints, a broad demographic sample, in terms of origin countries, was sought. Participants were Hazaras from Afghanistan and Pakistan, along with nationals of Somalia, Ethiopia and Iran. Of the 16 interviewees, 11 were female and five were male. The reason for this skew towards female participants is that a female interviewee facilitated five interviews with women from Somalia and Ethiopia. In Indonesia, 24 per cent of refugees and asylum seekers between the ages of 18 and 59 are female.¹⁵ The sample, therefore, does not reflect the gender make-up of refugees in Indonesia.

Of the 16 interviewees, 10 had refugee status and six were still waiting for either their refugee status determination (RSD) interview or to learn the outcome of the interview. The participants waited between eight months and two and a half years between registering with UNHCR and getting their RSD interview. One participant got news of her refugee status just two weeks after the interview, while another was still waiting three years later. Most commonly though, people got their result within several months of their RSD interview. Five participants had been in Indonesia since 2013 and the most recent arrival was 2017.

In addition to interviews with refugees and asylum seekers, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Indonesia-based experts, including staff from UNHCR, IOM, three non-government organisations (NGOs) supporting refugees, a sociocultural anthropologist and a human rights lawyer. A grounded theory approach to data analysis was adopted, involving ongoing interaction with data and no predefined notion or expected outcomes.¹⁶ All interviews were transcribed and coded manually. They were printed out, colour-coded for themes and then analysed.

Outside of doing formal interviews, the researcher spent time with refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia, visiting three different learning centres, staying in the home of a family of Afghan asylum seekers for a few days, chatting about life over coffee or a meal and delivering a story writing workshop to refugees, which allowed for interaction on a more informal basis rather than in an interview setting designed purely for requesting information. This participatory approach allowed for field observations to complement the primary data collected through interviews. Rodgers refers to this as 'hanging out' and describes it as 'a reminder of the informal and everyday nature of the interactions and processes that allow us to generate information'.¹⁷

1.3 Analytical framework

In studying the livelihood strategies of refugees on the island of Java, Indonesia, it is crucial to first place situations of these people in context and look at how policies and processes interrelate with access to assets, vulnerability and strategies pursued. Vulnerability is a central issue for people who have been forced to flee their countries and is

15 Interview with UNHCR Public Information Officer Mitra Salima Suryono, 6 June 2018, Skype.

16 Cho, J.Y. and Lee, E.H., 2014. Confusion about grounded theory and qualitative content analysis: similarities and differences. *The Qualitative Report*, [e-journal] 19(64), pp. 1–20. Available at: <<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR19/cho64.pdf>> [Accessed 28 September 2016].

17 Rodgers, G., 2004. 'Hanging out' with forced migrants: Methodological and ethical challenges. *Forced Migration Review*, [pdf] 21, pp. 48–49. Available at: <<http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR21/FMR2119.pdf>> [Accessed 9 March 2018].

intricately linked with their ability to create and access livelihoods.¹⁸ A livelihood framework helps to conceptualise the many complexities of livelihoods and provides structure in assessing the key components. While it is not specifically stated which framework is most suited for studying refugees' situations,¹⁹ this study applies the commonly used UK Department for International Development (DFID) model – the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF).²⁰ The SLF adapts a definition of livelihoods from Chambers and Conway: 'A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living.'²¹ It has been applied in the field of forced migration by authors such as Korf,²² Young and Jacobsen²³ and Ali and Saeed.²⁴ The framework gives importance to the perspectives of those being studied, is holistic in nature, addresses macro–micro links (how policies affect people) and can be applied to local settings.²⁵

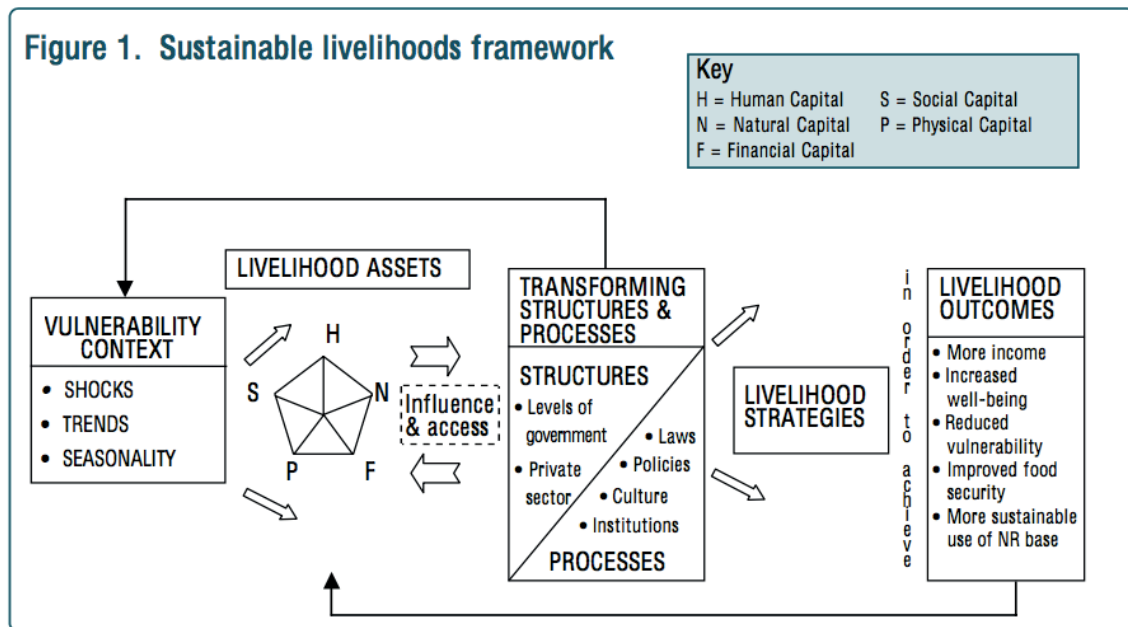


Figure 1: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (DFID, 1999).

The SLF clearly outlines the different dimensions of a person's livelihood: the vulnerability context, their livelihood assets – human, social, financial, physical and natural – transforming structures and processes (and how they interact with livelihood assets), strategies pursued and livelihood outcomes. According to the framework, the five types of livelihood assets are as follows. Human capital refers to the skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health that enable people to pursue livelihood strategies and achieve livelihood outcomes. Social capital is the social resources people draw on, their networks and connectedness and relationships of reciprocity. Physical capital comprises basic infrastructure and producer goods needed to support livelihoods. Financial capital refers to the financial resources that people have access to (excluding earned income), for example, savings and remittances. Finally, natural capital relates to the available resource stocks, like land and water. As this is only relevant when seeking to understand rural livelihoods, it will not be discussed any further, but is mentioned here to reflect the SLF.²⁶

This study's approach to livelihood analysis looks at the activities, experiences and networks of individual refugees, rather than households. Like Al-Sharmani's article on the livelihoods of Somali refugees in Cairo, this research is concerned with the actions of individuals and how they are 'constantly working on bettering circumstances and

18 Jacobsen, K., 2006. Refugees and asylum seekers in urban areas: a livelihood perspective editorial introduction. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, [e-journal] 19, pp. 273–286, <<https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article-abstract/19/3/273/1571296>> [Accessed 6 September 2016].

19 De Vriese, M., 2006. *Refugee livelihoods: A review of the evidence*. UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, [pdf] Available at: <www.unhcr.org/4423fe5d2.pdf> [Accessed 17 June 2018].

20 Department for International Development, 1999. *Sustainable livelihoods guidance sheets*. [pdf] Available at: <<https://www.enonline.net/dfidsustainableliving>> [Accessed 8 March 2018].

21 Ibid 14.

22 Korf, B., 2004. War, livelihoods and vulnerability in Sri Lanka. *Development and change*, [e-journal] 35(2), p. 275 [Accessed 6 May 2018].

23 Young, H. and Jacobsen, K., 2013. No way back: Adaption and urbanisation of IDP livelihoods in the Darfur region of Sudan. *Development and Change*, [e-journal] 44(1), pp. 125–145 [Accessed 6 May 2018].

24 Ali, D. and Saeed, A., 2012. Sustainability of the livelihood strategies of the internally displaced residents of Soba El Aradi settlement in Khartoum State, Sudan. *Ahfad Journal*, [e-journal] 29(2), pp. 60–82. Available at: <<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=303d94ba-85f3-4779-8b52-0496ad9f490f%40pdc-v-sessmgr05&bddata=JnNpdGU9ZWRZLWxpdmU%3d#db=a9h&AN=95408304>> [Accessed 7 May 2018].

25 Kollmair, M. and Gamper, St., 2002, cited in ibid 14.

26 Ibid 20.

possibilities for themselves and their families and communities.²⁷ While interviews inevitably led to discussion of other actors, living arrangements, support networks, etc., the starting point was the individual, rather than the household, to reflect a focus on the strategies of the individual to meet all of their needs. Furthermore, it is through the eyes of the individual that we can attempt to grasp how livelihood activities interact with one's sense of purpose and agency; two things that are frequently challenged, if not lost, when the future is uncertain and an individual is restricted in carrying out 'normal' activities associated with living a full life – like working, studying or getting married.

1.4 Contextualising the conversation on refugee livelihoods

Sustainable livelihoods, self-reliance and urban refugees

Sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance are now high on the agenda when it comes to refugee assistance.²⁸ The fact that more than half of the world's displaced persons live outside of camps, dispersed in urban settings, making aid distribution untenable,²⁹ combined with the reality of diminished donor interest in supporting situations of protracted displacement,³⁰ has given rise to the realisation that refugees should be 'assisted to assist themselves.'³¹ UNHCR defines self-reliance as, 'the ability of an individual, household or community to meet essential needs and to enjoy social and economic rights in a sustainable manner and with dignity.'³² As UNHCR's policy agenda shifts away from encampment and the agency seeks to find alternatives to detention, there is an emerging awareness of the need to create policies and systems to support refugees in urban settings and to foster self-reliance.³³ As De Vriese expresses, 'Education and training should not be seen as ancillary but vital, primary and no less important than the provision of food and health care.'³⁴ To tackle the reality of situations of prolonged displacement, service providers have recognised the need to look beyond the provision of immediate assistance during initial displacement, to creating a protection framework that promotes dignity and agency and which strengthens the capacity of refugees to confront the challenges that arise during all stages of displacement and that build resilience on the pathway to durable solutions. Such an understanding requires taking a broader look at protection, beyond physical security to a rights-based approach that includes access to livelihoods.³⁵

The ability of refugees to become self-reliant, however, is often thwarted by host states who prefer to treat them as guests and prevent local integration into their societies.³⁶ Host governments can be concerned that integration would lead to competition for resources and strain state services.³⁷ Refugees, globally, are often blamed for societal problems and branded as social and economic burdens,³⁸ and yet their efforts to pursue enterprise that would enable self-reliance are curtailed by the withholding of work rights. As Horst highlights, 'refugees are typically seen as vulnerable victims at best and costly burdens at worst.'³⁹ These depictions fail to take into account that refugees are actors who possess skills and who are looking for solutions not only in order to meet basic needs but also to have dignified and productive lives.

In summing up the Indonesian Government's approach to refugees, 'benign neglect' is the most apt description.⁴⁰ A long-awaited Presidential Regulation was introduced in 2016, which provides a definition of refugees, for the first time creating a status separate to illegal immigrants.⁴¹ The decree introduces guidelines for search, rescue, reception and management of refugees. And while it represents welcome progress in refugee protection, it does not establish rights to work, health and education and instead 'formalises Indonesia's position that the only options offered to refugees

27 Ibid 12.

28 Omata, N., 2012. *Refugee livelihoods and the private sector: Ugandan case study*. Refugee Studies Centre, Working Paper Series p. 3. [pdf] Available at: <<https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/refugee-livelihoods-and-the-private-sector-ugandan-case-study>> [Accessed 6 March 2018].

29 Jacobsen, K., 2014. Livelihoods and forced migration. In: E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, G. Loescher, K. Long and N. Sigona (eds.) 2014. [e-book] *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch.1, p. 11. Available at: <<http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199652433.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199652433?rskey=B2napd&result=1>> [Accessed 4 September 2016].

30 Jacobsen 2005, cited in ibid 28, p. 3.

31 Ibid 29, p. 6.

32 UNHCR, 2014. *Global strategy for livelihoods: a UNHCR strategy 2014–2018*. p. 7, [pdf] Available at: <www.unhcr.org/530f107b6.pdf> [Accessed 15 May 2018].

33 Ibid 11, p. 7.

34 Ibid 11, p. 21.

35 Ibid 11, p. 6.

36 Ibid 29, p. 104.

37 Lyytinen, E. and Kullenberg, J., 2013. *Urban refugee research and social capital: A roundtable report and literature review*. ALNAP, p. 12. [pdf] Available at: <<https://www.alnap.org/help-library/urban-refugee-research-and-social-capital-a-roundtable-report-and-literature-review>> [Accessed 14 May 2018].

38 Horst, C., 2006. *Refugee livelihoods: continuity and transformation*. International Peace Research Institute, Oslo. p. 16 [pdf] Available at: <<https://academic.oup.com/rsq/article-abstract/25/2/6/1546054?redirectedFrom=fulltext>> [Accessed 22 May 2018].

39 Ibid.

40 Interview with anonymous NGO worker, 7 September 2018, Skype; Missbach, A. and Sinanu, F., 2011. 'The scum of the earth'? Foreign people smugglers and their local counterparts in Indonesia. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, [e-journal] 30(4), pp. 57–87. Available at: <www.CurrentSoutheastAsianAffairs.org> [Accessed 6 May 2018].

41 Adiputera, Y., Missbach, A. and Prabandari, A., 2017. Indonesian cities and regencies may be asked to shelter refugees – will they comply?. *The Conversation*, [online] Available at: <<http://theconversation.com/indonesian-cities-and-regencies-may-be-asked-to-shelter-refugees-will-they-comply-82734>> [Accessed 3 May 2018].

are resettlement or repatriation. Integration – even on a temporary basis – remains out of the question.⁴² Despite considerable progress in Indonesia, poverty is still widespread among the population, and there is a perception that allowing refugees to work could create competition for jobs.⁴³ For instance, in March 2017, the immigration department's spokesperson, Agung Sampurno, was quoted in a media article, saying that it was unlikely refugees would be allowed to work anytime soon because this would take away from Indonesian citizens:

I think this is a big step, to allow them [refugees] to work. We can give protection for the refugees, we accept them to come here...but talking about giving them work is another thing. How can we give them a nice place to stay and at the same time, our people still in some areas don't have proper housing or even eat three times a day? So I think it's quite difficult, but it isn't our decision to make [to let them work]. It's up to our legislation to make that decision.⁴⁴

Without the option of working, however, refugees are left with a dilemma: rely on handouts, which may eventually disappear, adopt negative coping strategies that come with inherent risks, endure grinding poverty or accept the IOM's repatriation deal and return to the dangerous situations they fled.

Adiputera and Prabandari highlight that the 'entrepreneurial character of refugees, if harnessed well, can go a long way in benefiting the local economy'.⁴⁵ They also put into perspective the possibility that refugees' access to the labour market could affect access for Indonesians, pointing out there are 11,266 refugees of working age, negligible when considering that in 2016, there were 131,544,111 Indonesians in the labour force, with a 5.33 per cent unemployment rate. Additionally, they emphasise the benefits of creating avenues for host-refugee relations and shifting away from the handout model, which fuels social unease. Even though financial assistance given to the most vulnerable refugees is 'barely at subsistence level', a perception of unfairness exists because they have not earned it.⁴⁶

The need for self-reliance is particularly pertinent in protracted situations where there are no durable solutions in sight. A collation of expert views and study of relevant literature by Lyytinen and Kullenberg highlights that the 'adaptive process of informally but permanently settling in urban areas might have to be considered as an addition to the traditional "three durable solutions" (integration, resettlement, repatriation)'.⁴⁷ This point is acutely relevant when considering the situation in Indonesia, where, for most, none of the three traditional durable solutions are available and refugees have no choice but to find solutions for themselves, in whatever manner they can, in a context where rights are restricted and support is limited.

UNHCR Indonesia's Public Information Officer Mitra Salima Suryono said that without access to livelihoods, refugees are reliant on charities and that 'being able to take part in livelihood opportunities that can give people some small income is the only sustainable way'.

I mean the needs are so huge and its growing, mostly as a result of the global refugee crisis, so we need to think about something that is more sustainable and that can only be achieved if refugees are allowed to have livelihood opportunities, and as much as we can see that the government understands the situation, we are just not there yet, we are not yet anywhere close to getting rights to work or easy livelihood opportunities for the refugees, not yet. But the positive side is that they don't say it's impossible.⁴⁸

UNHCR takes the approach of advocating for refugees to do work that enables them to earn a small amount of money to better care for themselves and their families while also benefiting local communities.⁴⁹

What we're advocating is actually activities that will benefit the refugees and Indonesians so it's like making homemade items or being involved with family business, like for instance if Indonesians have a hair salon, we have many refugees who are very talented in hair styling or in becoming beauticians, so what we are hoping is that these kind of refugees to be allowed to work in local business so that Indonesians who own the business get benefit and at the same time refugees can also have a stipend or a transportation cost or something to help them with their livelihood.⁵⁰

42 Missbach, A. and Tan, N., 2017. *No durable solutions*. Inside Indonesia, [online] Available at: <<http://www.insideindonesia.org/no-durable-solutions>> [Accessed 30 April 2018].

43 Gutierrez, N., 2017. *Wasted lives: The unbearable wait of refugees in Indonesia*. Rappler, [online] Available at: <<http://www.rappler.com/world/regions/asia-pacific/indonesia/bahasa/englishedition/163539-refugees-resettlement-jakarta-unhcr>> [Accessed 10 April 2018].

44 Sampurno in *ibid*.

45 Adiputera, Y. and Prabandari, A., 2018. *Addressing challenges and identifying opportunities for refugee access to employment in Indonesia*. Institute of International Studies, Universitas Gadjah Mada, [pdf] Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BRM_fiDabssUmuoAGfUVZTj1gohoMhTb/view> [Accessed 20 August 2018].

46 Missbach 2017, cited in *ibid*, p. 9.

47 *Ibid* 37, p. 13.

48 *Ibid* 15.

49 *Ibid* 15.

50 *Ibid* 15.

Livelihood activities to restore dignity and agency

Losing assets and being prevented from re-establishing them has clear economic implications, but there are also ‘psychological or cultural’ impacts, which Cernea describes as ‘a psychological downward slide of...confidence in society and self.’⁵¹ Building on this notion that livelihood assets go beyond a means of providing basic needs is a quote from Bebbington:

Assets should not be understood only as things that allow survival, adaptation and poverty alleviation: they are also the basis of agents’ power to act and to reproduce, challenge or change the rules that govern the control, use and transformation of resources.⁵²

Recognising that the ability to participate in society and build capital contributes to our confidence and life satisfaction is important at the outset, as these factors are interwoven with livelihood outcomes. As Papadopoulou-Kourkoula evidences in her book, being in a state of prolonged transit leads people to feel ‘neither here nor there’, with the ‘in-between’ characterised by uncertainty and anxiety.⁵³ Without the possibility of integrating, ‘transit is frequently time being wasted with the rebuilding of the migrant’s life put on hold.’⁵⁴ Similarly, Missbach found that being unable to forge ahead or turn back leads refugees to report losing their ‘dignity, identity and confidence.’⁵⁵ The work of these authors illustrates that being stuck in-between, unable to pursue life goals, has implications that go beyond the physical to include the psychological. Feeling stuck, powerless and in a permanent state of limbo has been associated with negative physical and mental health issues.⁵⁶ Hoffman draws a link between prolonged uncertainty, insecurity and feelings of powerlessness with adverse psychological effects, highlighting how employment ‘builds a sense of competence and self-worth’ and how not being able to work contributes to ‘boredom and depression.’⁵⁷

This research sought to gain insight into how involvement in meaningful activities, which contribute to a sense of purpose and agency, helps refugees in Indonesia to fend off the negative feelings that come with being trapped in transit. Like Allsopp, Chase and Mitchell’s findings in Britain,⁵⁸ and Manjikian’s in Canada,⁵⁹ this author found that pursuing activities and projects helped refugees overcome, to varying degrees, the overwhelming sense of limbo. Sampson, Gifford and Taylor shine a light on agency and how refugees proactively engage in activities that give them a sense of purpose and a notion that life continues to move, even if they are ‘stuck.’⁶⁰ They build on the work of other scholars looking at forced migrants’ ‘proactive existence’⁶¹ and reconceptualising transit as ‘enabling freedom for initiative.’⁶² Like their study, which concentrates on the ‘making of a life’, this research looks at how refugees seek avenues to carry on with their life journeys, and transcend their involuntary immobility by pursuing meaningful activities – in essence how they move beyond limbo and build lives as best they can in constraining circumstances.

51 1997, cited in *ibid* 29, p. 102.

52 1999, cited in de Haan, L. and Zoomers, A., 2005. *Exploring the frontier of livelihoods research*. p. 32, [pdf] Available at: <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.0012-155X.2005.00401.x>> [Accessed 9 March 2018].

53 Papadopoulou-Kourkoula, A., 2008. *Transit migration: The missing link between emigration and settlement*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 86.

54 *Ibid*, p. 14.

55 *Ibid* 3, pp. 240–241.

56 Mountz, A., 2011. Where asylum-seekers wait: feminist counter-topographies of sites between states. *Gender, Place & Culture*, [e-journal] 18(3), p. 388. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0966369X.2011.566370>> [Accessed 8 May 2018]; Brown, T., 2017. After the boats stopped: Refugees managing a life of protracted limbo in Indonesia. *Antropologi Indonesia*, [e-journal] pp. 34–50. Available at: <<http://journal.ui.ac.id/index.php/jai/article/view/8755>> [Accessed 6 May 2018]; *ibid* 52; Hoffman, S., 2011. Living in limbo: Iraqi refugees in Indonesia. *Refuge*, [e-journal] 28(1), pp. 14–24. Available at: <<https://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/36085/32755>> [Accessed 5 October 2018].

57 Hoffman, S., 2011. Living in limbo: Iraqi refugees in Indonesia. *Refuge*, [e-journal] 28(1) pp. 21–22. Available at: <<https://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/36085/32755>> [Accessed 5 October 2018].

58 Allsopp, J., Chase, E. and Mitchell, M., 2014. The tactics of time and status: young people’s experiences of building futures while subject to immigration control in Britain. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, [e-journal] 28, pp. 163–182. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feu031>> [Accessed 6 July 2018].

59 Manjikian, L., 2010. Refugee ‘in-betweenness’: A proactive existence. *Refuge: Canada’s Journal on Refugees*, [e-journal] 27(1), p. 55. Available at: <<https://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/34355>> [Accessed 9 March 2018].

60 Sampson, R., Gifford, S. and Taylor, S., 2016. The myth of transit: the making of a life by asylum seekers and refugees in Indonesia. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, [e-journal] 42(7), pp. 1135–1152, <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369183X.2015.1130611>>.

61 *Ibid* 59.

62 Oelgemöller, C., 2011. ‘Transit’ and ‘suspension’: Migration management or the metamorphosis of asylum-seekers into ‘illegal’ immigrants. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, [e-journal] 37(3), pp. 407–424. .

1.5 Indonesia context



(Feerick.co, 2018)

This study comes at a time when the need for access to livelihoods for refugees has never been more acute. The reason for this is two-fold. First, in late 2017, UNHCR announced that most refugees will never be resettled, changing the context in a dramatic way, as previously resettlement was the main durable solution for refugees in Indonesia. Second, as of March 2018, IOM support is no longer a possibility for new arrivals, leaving refugees and asylum seekers with very few options for obtaining assistance for their basic needs. Unless resettlement countries revise their policies, what was once a temporary, albeit prolonged, stay in a 'quintessential transit migration country'⁶³ is likely to become permanent for many. The fact that refugees have no choice but to stay in Indonesia, indefinitely, means that research on livelihood strategies and how self-reliance and skills development opportunities help to build resilience in this precarious environment will become increasingly important. Research of this nature is also necessary to highlight the critical need for access to long-term solutions, whether through renewed resettlement places offered by Australia and other countries, or a protection status within Indonesia that allows refugees to work to support themselves.

For two decades, Indonesia has been a transit point for people fleeing conflict and turmoil in Middle Eastern countries, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, and seeking onward travel by boat to Australia or a safe place to await resettlement.⁶⁴ In 2008, there were about 700 refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia.⁶⁵ By 2010, the number of people of concern to UNHCR was almost 3,000.⁶⁶ In 2013, Australia began its Operation Sovereign Borders to 'stop the boats', cutting the passage by turning vessels carrying asylum seekers back to Indonesia, and causing a bottle neck of people trapped in transit.⁶⁷ There are currently some 13,800 refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia.⁶⁸ The three traditional durable solutions for refugees are voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement.⁶⁹ For most, returning to where they fled from is not an option. A weak protection framework and no possibility of local integration, linked with a full set of basic rights, in Indonesia, means refugees place all their hopes on being resettled to a third country and wait years for this chance to re-establish their lives and livelihoods.⁷⁰ That 'in-between' stage – in-between the horrors of the past and realising dreams of a secure future – which was always protracted, has become increasingly prolonged. For many, it is no longer 'a brief sojourn on the way to somewhere else' but rather a 'potentially permanent state of precariousness'.⁷¹ The reality of reduced resettlement options is linked with policies in resettlement countries.⁷² Australia cut places for

63 Hugo, G., Tan, G. and Napitupulu, C., 2014. *Indonesia as a transit country in irregular migration to Australia*. Australian Population and Migration Research Centre, [pdf] 2(3). Available at: <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/hugo-centre/.../APMRC_Policy_Brief_Vol_2_3.pdf> [Accessed 14 May 2018].

64 Tan, N., 2016. The status of asylum seekers and refugees in Indonesia. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, [e-journal] Available at: <<https://academic.oup.com/ijrl/article-abstract/28/3/365/2599186?redirectedFrom=fulltext>> [Accessed 6 March 2018].

65 Church World Service, 2008. *Capacity building and income generating activities Indonesia*. [pdf] Available at: <<http://www.unhcr.org/en-au/publications/operations/4ad730af9/indonesia-capacity-building-income-generating-activities-success-story.html>> [Accessed 26 September 2018].

66 Ibid 56 Brown 2017.

67 Schloenhardt, A. and Craig, C., 2015. Turning back the boats: Australia's interdiction of irregular migrants at sea. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, [e-journal] 27(4), pp. 11–24.

68 Ibid 15.

69 UNHCR, 2003. *Framework for durable solutions for refugees and persons of concern*. [pdf] Available at: <<http://www.unhcr.org/3f1408764.html>> [Accessed 2 September 2018].

70 Ibid 3.

71 Ibid 60, pp. 1135–1137.

72 Brown, T., 2018. *Doubt over refugees living in Indonesia*. The Jakarta Post, [online] 2 February. Available at: <<http://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2017/02/02/doubt-over-refugees-living-in-indonesia.html>> [Accessed 16 February 2018].

refugees from Indonesia by about 50 per cent between 2013 and 2017, down to 433, and in 2018 resettled just 84 people.⁷³ With reduced resettlement options comes the need for refugees to create the fullest life possible in Indonesia, because without any other options, life in Indonesia is the foreseeable future.

Total refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia (March 2018)	13,840
Refugees	9,795
Asylum seekers	4,045
Countries of origin (May 2018)	
Afghanistan	55%
Somalia	11%
Iraq	6%
47 other countries (including Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Palestine, Iran, Sudan, Pakistan)	28%

(Interview with UNHCR's Mitra Salima Suryono; UNHCR, 2018)

Refugees and asylum seekers can be divided into different groups based on their living arrangements and the level of support provided by non-government organisations. Nearly 40 per cent are without any form of assistance from UNHCR or partners.⁷⁴ Around 5,000 live independently, mainly in the Bogor region and Jakarta.⁷⁵ In August 2018, the IOM was supporting 8,845 people, including those in immigration detention.⁷⁶ UNHCR, through its implementing partners Church World Service (CWS), Yayasan Sayangi Tunas Cilik (Save the Children's local NGO partner) and Catholic Relief Services, provides support to between 300 and 400 of the most vulnerable people such as single mothers, unaccompanied and separated minors, the elderly and the disabled.⁷⁷

While the Indonesian Government takes a largely tolerant approach toward refugees and asylum seekers,⁷⁸ it has not acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. Refugees are not afforded legal rights, such as the right to livelihood, which are provided for in Articles 17, 18 and 19 of the Convention.⁷⁹ However, those seeking protection are able to access RSD procedures through the UNHCR, and are given a card that legitimises their presence in the country while their case is assessed.⁸⁰ After initial registration with UNHCR, getting an interview can take between eight months and two years.⁸¹ Before the recent change of messaging from the UNHCR regarding resettlement, refugees would commonly wait five years or more in the hope of securing a severely limited resettlement place.⁸²

Given that Indonesia is 'only a transit country' with no opportunity for permanent local integration,⁸³ refugees are struggling to survive there for prolonged periods unable to work, without access to services and with only limited support from organisations. For years, refugees have been surrendering themselves to detention centres in order to access shelter and food.⁸⁴ Before 2018, the only way to access IOM support, funded by the Australian Government, was

73 UNHCR, 2018. *Resettlement data finder*. [online] Available at: <<http://rsq.unhcr.org/en/#OpE0>> [Accessed 20 September 2018].

74 Ibid 2.

75 Interview with Jesuit Refugee Service staff member, 23 July 2018, Skype.

76 Interview with IOM's Patrik Shirak, 3, 6, 7 August 2018, email.

77 Ibid 15.

78 Ali, M., Briskman, L. and Fiske, L., 2016. Asylum seekers and refugees in Indonesia: Problems and potentials. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, [e-journal] 8, pp. 22–42. Available at: <<https://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/mcs/article/view/4883>> [Accessed 11 May 2018].

79 UNHCR, 2011. *Promoting livelihoods and self-reliance: operational guidance on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas*. [pdf] Available at: <www.unhcr.org/4eeb19f49.pdf> [Accessed 25 March 2018].

80 Taylor, S. and Rafferty-Brown, B., 2010. Difficult journeys: accessing refugee protection in Indonesia. *Monash University Law Review*, [e-journal] 36(3), pp. 138–161. Available through: University of London online library <<http://onlinelibrary.london.ac.uk/>> [Accessed 21 September 2016].

81 UNHCR, 2016. *Indonesia factsheet – December 2016*. [pdf] Available at: <<https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/unhcr-indonesia-factsheet-december-2016>> [Accessed 25 March 2018].

82 Ibid 80; Fortify Rights and Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK, 2016. *Everywhere is trouble*. [pdf] Available at: <<http://www.fortifyrights.org/downloads/EverywhereisTrouble.pdf>> [Accessed 6 September 2016].

83 Sampurno in Cochrane, J., 2018. *Refugees in Indonesia hoped for brief stay. Many may be stuck for life*. The New York Times, [online] 26 January. Available at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/26/world/asia/indonesia-refugees-united-nations.html>> [Accessed 16 February 2018].

84 Brown, T. and Missbach, A., 2017. *Refugee detention in Indonesia*. Lowy Institute, [online] 12 May. Available at: <<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/refugee-detention-indonesia>> [Accessed 7 February 2018]; Baskora, Y., 2018. *Asylum seekers, refugees stranded in Indonesia's immigration detention centres*. Jakarta Globe, [online] 26 January. Available at: <<http://jakartaglobe.id/news/asylum-seekers-refugees-stranded>>

by being admitted to a detention centre, registered by immigration and then referred for assistance after spending an uncertain period of time in detention.⁸⁵ This arrangement was part of the Regional Cooperation Agreement, a trilateral deal between Indonesia, the IOM and Australia 'to provide care and voluntary repatriation of intercepted irregular migrants'.⁸⁶ However, the Australian Government announced it will not support refugees who register after 15 March 2018 in an 'attempt to stem the flow of these irregular migrants to Indonesia'.⁸⁷ At the time of fieldwork, in July 2018, around 300 refugees were sleeping on the streets outside the Kalideres immigration detention centre; one third of these had arrived before the cut-off date and were waiting to be relocated to community housing by IOM.⁸⁸ This policy shift represents a move away from a process of incentivised detention. With no more IOM support to new arrivals and the incentive for detaining refugees gone, in 2018, detention was being phased out. A JRS Indonesia staff member explained that refugees and asylum seekers are no longer being detained as that would mean the Indonesian Government would have to pay for food and healthcare and so 'detention is phasing out, it's ending, which is a good thing'.

What remains to be answered is what the about 5,000 asylum seekers and refugees living off their savings should do in regards to ensuring basic shelter, food and healthcare once their savings are spent. We, including the local governments, need new, creative and compassionate ways to ensure these basics.⁸⁹

In 2018, between January and October, the number of forced migrants IOM was supporting in detention dropped by 78 per cent to 755.⁹⁰ While the move away from detention is a positive development, it reflects a cruel irony – the fact that refugees can no longer access IOM support through detention means that this critical lifeline has been taken away, and without any alternatives in place, refugees are left in desperate circumstances.

indonesias-immigration-detention-centers/> [Accessed 1 February 2018].

85 Interview with Roshan Learning Center's Brandon Baughn, 29 June 2018, Skype; *ibid* 75; Interview with sociocultural anthropologist Realisa Masardi, 29 June 2018, Whatsapp.

86 Hirsch, A. and Doig, C., 2018. Outsourcing control: The International Organization for Migration in Indonesia. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, [e-journal] 22(5), pp. 681–708. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13642987.2017.1417261?journalCode=fjhr20>> [Accessed 2 August 2018].

87 Lamb, K. and Doherty, B., 2018. *On the streets with the desperate refugees who dream of being detained*. The Guardian, [online] 15 April. Available at: <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/15/on-the-streets-with-the-desperate-refugees-who-dream-of-being-detained>> [Accessed 28 April 2018].

88 Interview with Ture, 6 July 2018, Jakarta.

89 *Ibid* 75.

90 Interview with IOM's Patrik Shirak, 28 October 2018, email.

2 Research findings

2.1 Vulnerability context

Before we look at livelihood strategies, the biggest challenges that participants identified, as well as their views on life in Indonesia and how they are living (their physical capital), are presented briefly below.

Shelter, food and clean water

In Jakarta, a few of the participants lived in boarding houses with private rooms and communal living spaces, known as *kos*. The amount paid for rent ranged from 500,000 IDR to 2,100,000 IDR⁹¹ per month depending on the location. Five interviewees were sleeping on the streets outside of Kalideres detention centre in an effort to register with immigration and be referred for IOM assistance. At the time of fieldwork, they had been there for at least a few months. One of them came before the 15 March cut-off, had registered and was awaiting relocation, and the other four participants came after and remained for lack of any alternative. They spoke of hunger and scarcity of clean drinking water. These participants ate only what charitable individuals and organisations donated to them. 'The hardest part is the hunger. Sometimes people bring us food, sometimes not.'⁹² There was no free public toilet. Interviewees said the toilet cost 5,000 IDR to use and the shower 10,000 IDR.⁹³ Ahado, a mother of four children and pregnant with a fifth, said she could only shower one child each week using donations people gave her and told her children to save any donations they got for using the toilet. 'Since I arrived in Jakarta until today, my life is very difficult. I don't get enough to feed and support my children and myself.'

At the time of revising this paper for publication, in April 2019, time on the street had stretched to more than one year, and Ahado had given birth to a healthy baby. Her family still sleeps in a tent near the detention centre.

Hasan lives in IOM accommodation and gets an allowance of 1,250,000 IDR⁹⁴ each month. Before that, when he still had some savings, he lived in various share places to minimise costs, sometimes with 10 people to a room, and paid between 200,000 IDR and 350,000 IDR⁹⁵ per month on rent. Two of the participants paid their rent with support from UNHCR. While this financial assistance kept them off the streets, it was well below the minimum monthly wage for a full-time worker in Jakarta, which is about 3,648,000 IDR.⁹⁶ Cibado gets 1,000,000 IDR⁹⁷ per month from UNHCR, via Catholic Relief Services. Half of this went on rent and electricity. 'For the first part of the month I can eat okay. But from the 20th until the 1st [when the next payment comes through] I only eat one time per day.' Ayana, who is caring for two children on her own, gets 1,400,000 IDR⁹⁸ per month. One million of this went on rent and electricity. 'The children are very often without food,' she said. 'We eat one time a day. Sometimes, when there is nothing I ask my Indonesian neighbour to help feed my young son, just him. My daughter and I just drink water.' When Ayana can't afford to buy water, she boils it from the tap. 'Sometimes it gives the children stomach aches and my son has been hospitalised for diarrhea.' Access to clean drinking water, given that you cannot drink the tap water in Indonesia, was a big issue for people with limited funds. Xaali explained that the cost of living was rising, while refugees' resources were declining, meaning essentials were becoming harder to afford, making life gradually more difficult and 'pushing refugees to live in the street, lose their faith or sell their body'. Additionally, the lack of money for water, food and transport acted as a barrier to education and participation at both local public schools (where access has been facilitated) and the refugee-run learning centres.

In the Bogor region where the rents and living costs were cheaper, participants rented small apartments for between 1,300,000 and 1,800,000 IDR⁹⁹ per month. All four participants from Bogor were living independently from remittances. For them, lack of rights to work and education, along with limited prospects for resettlement, were the biggest challenges.

Lack of rights

Themes of uncertainty and deprivation arose again and again. Xaali summed up her challenges, 'For my future, there is no light, there is no way I follow now to get my future...I hope in the future that I will get a better life than this, to cover my needs, to make my own decisions, to have a family.'

Despite the hardships faced in Indonesia, participants said living there was still preferable to the deadly threats they dealt with in their home countries. That was except for two refugees. For Dorakhshan, the lack of access to work or education made it feel like being killed slowly in Indonesia. The same for Kohinoor, who said, 'I'm safe. But it's gradual death, every day. It's worse than being killed in a day, you get tortured every single day, it's even worse. I'd rather die in

91 About 50 to 210 AUD. All figures to follow are approximate, at the rate of 10,000 IDR = 1 AUD, for ease of reference.

92 Interview with Azita, 6 July 2018, Jakarta.

93 50 cents and 1 AUD.

94 125 AUD.

95 Between 20 and 35 AUD.

96 364.80 AUD.

97 100 AUD.

98 140 AUD.

99 130 to 180 AUD.

one day and not go through this.’

Medical needs

Medical issues were also raised as a major challenge. While refugees could access community health clinics, *Puskesmas*, for free, they would need to pay for anything beyond basic first aid. An NGO referral system exists, which all urban refugees are eligible to access, however, due to limited budget, the system focuses on emergency and life-saving interventions and, outside of that, health and budget assessments are undertaken and the cases put forward to UNHCR for consideration.¹⁰⁰ Refugees with difficult pregnancies as well as those needing appendicitis surgeries, for example, have benefited from this referral system. However, for non-urgent medical needs, there is a gap. One participant, suffering from stomach pains, was given paracetamol at *Puskesmas*, and with no relief borrowed money to visit the hospital and get treatment for gastritis. One woman needed an operation stemming from injuries she sustained in Somalia and said the hospital could not help her because it would require a bone specialist, so she was getting by on painkillers. Two women sleeping in tents on the street outside Kalideres were pregnant and spoke of not being able to eat properly to support their babies’ growth. They have since given birth to, reportedly, healthy babies. Asali, a mother of six, also at Kalideres, said she was sick from stress and worried about the mental health of her husband.

2.2 Livelihood strategies

The main livelihood strategies identified through this research, which will be discussed below, revolve around: financial capital (seeking assistance and getting remittances); human capital (income generation); and social capital (community support).

2.2.1 Financial capital: Savings, remittances and assistance

Savings, where participants had some, lasted between a few months and two years. As Hadi explained, ‘When we were leaving for Indonesia, we sold everything. After paying to get here we still had savings to use for our survival. Expense without income is like bankruptcy, you will end up with zero money. It lasted a couple of months.’ All seven Hazara participants, both from Afghanistan and Pakistan, went straight to the mountainous Bogor region when they arrived, most commonly Cisarua, which Hadi described as a ‘mini-Afghanistan’. Two of the participants moved to Jakarta when their savings ran out and sought to be detained so they could access IOM assistance. The five interviewees who remained living independently in Bogor relied on remittances from relatives overseas who had either already been resettled in Australia or would send what they could, when they could, from their home countries. The amounts ranged from roughly 2 million to 10 million IDR per month.¹⁰¹

In terms of financial assistance, IOM has been the main provider and continues to assist those within its caseload before March 2018. One participant was receiving IOM assistance. Because their rent was covered by IOM, the financial allowance given was enough to get by reasonably comfortably. As mentioned, this support is not available to new arrivals. Other financial assistance programmes are only able to help small numbers of people. UNHCR provides support to between 300 and 400 of the most vulnerable refugees.¹⁰² Two participants received UNHCR support but it was well below a living wage and they still struggled to get by (as discussed in the vulnerability context section above). About 300 forced migrants are able to access financial assistance for shelter, food and healthcare through programmes run by the Jesuit Refugee Service and Roshan Learning Center.¹⁰³ None of the interviewees were benefitting from these programmes.

2.2.2 Human capital: Income generation

Teaching stipends and travel allowances

The participants showed resilience in using their skills, knowledge and abilities to seek out activities that would help make ends meet. At the same time, doing anything that had the appearance of work was very much avoided and the interviewees were careful to emphasise the voluntary nature of their livelihood activities. Sociocultural anthropologist Realisa Masardi explained that at the various learning centres, volunteer teachers and managers are given what is referred to variously as a travel allowance, incentive or stipend. Without these travel allowances it would be difficult to attract volunteers, from refugee backgrounds, who would have to spend their own limited resources in order to volunteer their time.¹⁰⁴

At two learning centres in Jakarta, volunteer teachers and managers, from refugee backgrounds, were given a daily travel allowance. For some, this can stretch a little beyond transport costs to help with basic needs. In the Bogor region, there are several learning centres. Travel allowances varied between them; for example, one gave its volunteer teachers a monthly allowance and another per class.

100 Ibid 40, interview with anonymous NGO worker.

101 200 to 1,000 AUD.

102 Ibid 15.

103 Ibid 75; ibid 85, Interview with Roshan’s Brandon Baughn.

104 Ibid 88.

Teaching, in a volunteer capacity, at the UNHCR shelters for unaccompanied and separated children, operated by CWS in Jakarta, allowed 13 refugees and asylum seekers to access a stipend for each class taught.¹⁰⁵ Xaali, who teaches regularly, was able to save the stipend to cover her rent, electricity and water, with a little left over. And while that was critical in keeping a roof over her head, she said, 'my food is not guaranteed, my medical is not guaranteed'. As well, if there were holidays or she got sick, covering rent was difficult. Xaali said that if she could get 2,300,000 IDR¹⁰⁶ per month, she could afford to have a normal life and buy things like shampoo and body lotion, everyday items for most that are currently luxuries beyond reach for Xaali.

English classes for friends at home

Another livelihood strategy, for those who have a good grasp of English, is to offer private language lessons to friends and neighbours. Elaha, a teacher at one of the learning centres, said she would give classes at her home and get donations of whatever people could afford. Similarly, Kohinoor teaches English to her friend's children. More and more young people are opening private classes for their friends, where they sit together, informally, and the teacher may get donations, their transport covered or mutual self-help.¹⁰⁷

Translators

Another livelihood opportunity for people with language skills is to volunteer as translators with different organisations such as UNHCR, CWS, JRS and IOM during legal aid and RSD interviews, as well as house visits to assess the assistance needs of vulnerable people. Over the last few years, around 70 refugees have benefited from an interpreter training programme run by JRS.¹⁰⁸ However, the demand for interpreters is less than the number of people desperate for the opportunity to get a travel allowance.¹⁰⁹ Ture, who completed the JRS training and has been in Indonesia for almost four years, was still hoping to get some interpreting time.

Selling items at markets and online, donations and gifts in kind

The risk of arrest and ruining chances for resettlement meant that most refugees avoided selling things outside of their own communities, as this form of income-generation was too public and made people even more vulnerable.¹¹⁰ However, trade and bartering within communities – such as making bread, other kinds of food, clothing, haircutting and styling – was reportedly common.¹¹¹ This was done carefully though:

You can't really price things, people give you whatever they want, otherwise it is considered business relations and it's going to put you in trouble so you have to be very cautious. People don't say they sell things, they make things and trade. It's up to them if they want to swap for money or help you out for something. This is pretty common. But it's only among people who have the skills or the tools to make it.¹¹²

There are some groups selling handicrafts at markets. However, this is still risky because of the uncertainty surrounding livelihood activities where income-generation is involved.¹¹³ One participant tried selling pastries at markets in an effort to support herself. She would sell 100 pieces for 5,000 IDR each and earn 300,000 IDR¹¹⁴ profit. However, she received a warning letter from immigration and had to stop. 'Many people have skills, mechanic man, cooker woman, babysitter. I have more skills to survive but I am not allowed, that is the problem.'¹¹⁵

Selling online was one strategy for overcoming the visibility of income-generating activities that made refugees vulnerable and also for getting around legal barriers. When money generated from online activities by refugees was sent to an Indonesian bank account, where an Indonesian acted as the business owner, and the money was then donated back to the refugees involved, the activities were reportedly not considered illegal.¹¹⁶ One interviewee was able to generate income this way. An initiative called Beyond the Fabric also takes this approach. A group of women makes pants and clutches, which are then sold online in Australia and overseas through the non-profit label, with the money channelled back to refugees as donations.

This method, of selling on behalf of refugees and then donating the money back, or offering in-kind support, was also used by an organisation called Indonesia for Refugees (IFR). Twice a month, IFR provides the resources for refugees to

¹⁰⁵ Church World Service, 2018. *A hopeful start for new refugee teachers*. ReliefWeb, [online] Available at: <<https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/hopeful-start-new-refugee-teachers>> [Accessed 24 June 2018]; Interview with Xaali, 4 July 2018, Jakarta.

¹⁰⁶ 230 AUD.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid 85, interview with sociocultural anthropologist Realisa Masardi.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid 75.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid 105, interview with Xaali.

¹¹⁰ Interview with human rights lawyer Trish Cameron, 20 June 2018, Skype; Interview with Hadi, 4 July 2018, Jakarta; *ibid* 3, p. 101.

¹¹¹ Interview with Kaspar, 9 July 2018, Jakarta; Interview with Kohinoor, 9 July 2018, Jakarta, *ibid* 98, *ibid* 3, p. 101.

¹¹² *Ibid*, interview with Kohinoor.

¹¹³ *Ibid* 110, interview with human rights lawyer Trish Cameron.

¹¹⁴ 50 cents and 30 AUD.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid* 105.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid* 111, interview with Kohinoor.

make soaps and then sells the soaps on behalf of the refugees for 50,000 IDR¹¹⁷ per bar, giving those involved in-kind donations of items such as tables, chairs, sewing machines and wheelchairs.¹¹⁸ The organisation also started an initiative where refugees recycle old linen from hotels by making it into laundry bags and uniforms for the hotel. 'Proceeds of the sales of final products to participating hotels are given back for the livelihood of refugees.'¹¹⁹ Refugees can accept donations, it is not considered as work.¹²⁰

2.2.3 Social capital: Community and mutual assistance

Community and social networks are everything; from providing a source of comfort, to sharing a plate of food, to contributing to living expenses. The participants with strong social networks, whether with other refugees, Indonesians or expats, made through learning centres, religious congregations or charities, were best able to provide for themselves. This is consistent with Lyytinen and Kullenberg's point that social capital is the 'one factor researchers have found most relevant for refugees' success in urban settings.'¹²¹ Horst's assertion that social capital is key to gaining access to other forms of capital was also reflected in this research, when considering that in order to access donations, or gifts in-kind, as discussed above, refugees would need to have support networks – they would need to know people and know about groups and initiatives through knowing people.¹²²

Kohinoor, an Iranian refugee, encapsulated the significance of social capital in accessing other forms of capital when she said:

Surviving here really depends on people's kindness. There are people in the Indonesian community who might be willing to help you out, so you might do something for them and if they want they will help you in return. There is no fixed payment ever but if you do something for someone, they might be able to help you out back, it might be financial, it might be in-kind support...it can be any kind of help...And it really depends on the language skills you have to be able to communicate with people; if you can't communicate with people, how are they going to know what your needs are?

Three participants spoke of expat friends who helped them whether by giving money or in-kind support. It was making an effort to lead a productive life and be part of society that allowed these participants to form connections through their activities. Hadi, a young Afghan, said his networks meant people were there for him, whether to help when he needed it or support him to integrate and navigate life. 'There are people who don't have this and they struggle a lot in Indonesia.' A young woman in Cisarua, Elaha, had a close relationship with her Afghan neighbour who would often bring over a plate of food from the meals she had made. Likewise, when Elaha was making bolani, a stuffed-bread dish, and a friend dropped by, she was quick to pass them a plate to take with them. Elaha also spoke of asking a resettled refugee for a loan to pay her rent one time.

Social capital within refugee communities will be explored more in subsequent sections, which look at the learning and activity centres where refugees come together to learn, teach, socialise with and support one another. This next part looks at social capital with Indonesian networks.

There is not widespread recognition among Indonesians of who refugees are or the fact they live in Indonesia.¹²³ Refugees are generally not differentiated from other foreigners.¹²⁴ One interviewee highlighted how local people, seeing refugees as foreigners and not recognising their challenges, charge them more assuming that because they are foreigners they must have more money than Indonesians. A CWS study on urban refugees, including in Indonesia, found that expanding income-generating possibilities allowed refugees to develop networks that helped reinforce positive refugee–host relations.¹²⁵ Work opportunities would create avenues for social relations, thereby increasing interaction between refugees and Indonesians, facilitating understanding and friendship and acting as an incentive for forced migrants to invest in learning Bahasa Indonesia.¹²⁶ Being able to speak Bahasa Indonesia allowed some of the participants to negotiate better prices and build relationships with their Indonesian neighbours who acted as sources of support. These interactions allowed refugees to develop their language skills further, which helped them to feel more connected to Indonesian society and more able to seek assistance. Participants, in general, spoke highly of Indonesians who they described as 'friendly' and 'kind'. 'The people here treat me good, they leave me in a peaceful way.'¹²⁷ Three Somali women in Jakarta said they would ask their Indonesian neighbours for food sometimes. One said her landlord is like a mother. Homeless refugees shared their experiences of Indonesians giving donations of food, water and money.

117 50 cents AUD.

118 Interview with IFR co-founder Cassia Tandiono, 12 August 2018, email.

119 Ibid.

120 Ibid 15.

121 Ibid 37, p. 17.

122 Ibid 38, p. 11.

123 Ibid 110, interview with human rights lawyer Trish Cameron; *ibid* 3, p. 105.

124 Ibid 45, p. 8; *ibid* 111, interview with Kohinoor.

125 Church World Service, 2013. *Accessing services in the city: The significance of urban refugee–host relations in Cameroon, Indonesia and Pakistan*. [pdf] Available at: <<https://cwsglobal.org/accessing-services-in-the-city/>> [Accessed 6 May 2018].

126 Ibid 75; *ibid* 45, p. 9.

127 Interview with Cibado, 5 July 2018, Jakarta.

Xaali said that Indonesia brought her a peaceful life and that despite the lack of life progress, sometimes she was ready to accept Indonesia as her first country because she slept without fear at night.

2.3 Purpose, agency and access to livelihoods

While the Sustainable Livelihood Framework does not delve into the more abstract concepts of purpose and agency, one of the initial research questions was, 'How do livelihood activities interact with an individual's sense of purpose and agency?' This question reflects a concern with the feelings attached to being able to pursue livelihood activities. Findings related to this question are offered below.

Being involved in livelihood activities, whether volunteering as a teacher, learning a new skill or seeking income-generating opportunities, gave refugees something meaningful to do with their time, which, in their state of limbo, would otherwise seem like time wasted. Being able to share skills and contribute to their communities allowed participants to regain a lost sense of productivity in their prolonged state of transit. For Ayana, an Ethiopian refugee, learning English at a centre was transformative; it gave her 'fuel to keep going, to go forward' and a respite from the stresses of her life. 'This is the first time I have picked up a pen and I can say that I truly understand the value of education. Now I am reading and preparing for my lessons and my mind is open, and step-by-step, if I keep going, everything will be okay.'

For most participants, the learning centres and livelihood activities were a way to punctuate their days, be part of supportive communities, restore dignity and regain a semblance of normalcy. Elaha said teaching gives her a sense of purpose. 'If I stayed at home I would get very sick from all the stress of not being able to control my life. Because I am busy it is beneficial for me.' Elaha and Omid, both Hazara asylum seekers living in Cisarua, said they stayed in their rooms for months when they arrived, without anything to do, before they found out about the learning centres and started attending. 'I feel very good now that I'm involved with the school. There is so much joy and you become like a family.'¹²⁸ For Hadi, being involved with a learning centre gave him motivation and a sense of satisfaction that at least he wasn't wasting his time 'sitting at home doing nothing'. Ture, who was a professional before fleeing Ethiopia, said that volunteering allowed him to use his mind and share with others, which was good for his 'heart' and his 'health'. 'When you cannot use your skills, your life becomes tired.'

Among some of the interviewees, keeping busy was a conscious tactic in staving off depression and anxiety and preventing too much space for hopelessness to seep in. For Hasan, volunteering as a teacher was a way to keep his mind occupied. Rather than giving him a sense of purpose, the activities were a way of forgetting, at least for a while, that he had no sense of purpose. He said two people he knew committed suicide in 2017, succumbing to the frustration of having nothing to fill their days and not seeing a future worth living for. 'I'm afraid of that so I decided to keep myself busy.'

I can't go forward and I can't go backward. I'm stuck here. I can't do anything. I don't feel very well. I wish I could go back but I can't go back also. This is a place where I just tolerate the situation but don't know how long it's going to take and how can I tolerate this situation. We have no power. Our future depends on other people and that makes me very sad. Our purpose depends on other people. Maybe you make decisions for yourself but I can't do it, other people make decisions for me.

While most participants interviewed were involved with the various learning centres and livelihood projects being carried out, speaking about their friends, interviewees discussed how people coped with their situation by sleeping all day and staying up all night. This is both to avoid the boredom of having nothing to do, as without money for transportation, refugees could not get to the learning centres, and also for lack of food. Cibado, a Somali refugee, who lived in a *kos* with Ethiopians, Somalis and Indonesians, said that her housemates, who were refugees, did not receive any support because they were single men and so they would sleep all day, eat one meal at 5pm and then stay up all night.

It was clear that the learning centres and livelihood projects gave participants, at best, a sense of purpose and, at the very least, a distraction from the lack of control they had over their lives. This finding, of the importance of volunteering, vocational training and livelihood activities in overcoming the stifling feelings of being stuck in limbo, by creating meaning through action, is consistent with the research of authors discussed in the literature review.¹²⁹ This paper builds on their work, demonstrating that livelihood activities – whatever they may be – play an instrumental role in counteracting the stifling feelings that come with being stuck in limbo. Dorakhshan underscored this point, saying that people suffer mentally when they have nothing to do and that livelihood activities were good for her health. 'These activities give me a sense of purposes. Thank God I am having something to do. My friends who are doing nothing suffer from depression.' Without access to livelihood activities, and avenues to learn and grow professionally, socially and emotionally, people languish. Other researchers have also discussed how, without access to educational and livelihood opportunities, refugees in Indonesia feel stuck and hopeless.¹³⁰ Hasan, who could meet his basic needs through financial support from IOM, struggled with the feeling of having no future. 'Sometimes we all say we are not

¹²⁸ Interview with Omid, 12 July 2018, Cisarua.

¹²⁹ Ibid 58, p. 177; ibid 59, p. 55; ibid 56, p. 388.

¹³⁰ Ibid 3; ibid 4; ibid 60; ibid 57, p. 22.

human, we are like animal, we just eat and sleep. We only eat and sleep. ' This theme also emerged from Sampson, Gifford and Taylor's study.¹³¹

These findings demonstrate the mental anguish that comes from not being able to harness skills and pursue professional goals. When refugees are not allowed to work, the impact goes beyond physical deprivation to include 'a psychological downward slide of...confidence in society and self'.¹³² While no one can deny that the needs for food and health are paramount, the importance of food for the health of the mind should not be overlooked, as this is a critical part of being able to access livelihoods. If someone is depressed for lack of anything meaningful to do with their time, their health will inevitably suffer. As illustrated above, even the refugees who can provide for their basic needs suffer from the feeling of having no future because they are not able to exercise agency and find purpose through work. By allowing access to livelihoods through work rights, both bodies and minds can be fed, to the benefit of the individual and the host society. And while the global refugee protection agenda has moved beyond provision of basic needs during initial displacement to one which promotes dignity and agency,¹³³ the literature on refugee livelihoods is still young when it comes to holistically considering both material and mental implications. This study contributes to the conversation and highlights the power of access to livelihoods to both provide and uplift.

The sense of hopelessness and powerlessness was palpable among some of the participants. Two-thirds of participants were holding onto hope of resettlement. Losing that hope was not an option, because without basic rights, resettlement was the only way their hardships could end. Initially, Kohinoor thought that getting her refugee card would change her circumstances and end the daily struggles, but years later, and with increasingly stringent policies in resettlement countries, the reality was dawning on her that she may be in limbo for a very long time. 'I can't get my head around that, that I'm going to stay here with no rights forever.' The Iranian woman said that being allowed to work would alleviate the burden. While most saw resettlement as their only hope for a decent life, five interviewees said they would be satisfied to live in Indonesia if only they could work to support themselves. By being prevented from using their skills they were forced into poverty and left to languish in the heaviness of limbo. Ayana, a single mother of three children said:

I have many skills like cooking and child minding. If I was able to work, I could provide for my children, I could give them a good life but I am not allowed to work. The situation here is not changing. There are people who have been here since 2012 and they are still waiting. I don't know where this life is going.

When it comes to assisting refugees in Indonesia, the focus right now is on training and upskilling.¹³⁴ While initiatives that foster creativity, learning and growth are positive and worth encouraging and resourcing, until refugees are allowed to apply these skills to accumulate capital, they will not be able to support themselves now or in the future. Moreover, without the chance to apply newly-learned skills, they will be lost. For already skilled people who are unable to practice, they fall behind the developments in their areas of expertise.¹³⁵ Adiputera and Prabandari make a compelling case for encouraging self-reliance, saying it would enable refugees to contribute to society, whether in Indonesia, a resettlement country, or by allowing them to build capital so they are better equipped to reconstruct their lives in their home countries, should a time come when it is safe to return.¹³⁶

2.4 Livelihood outcomes and vulnerability

In the past, refugees who have worked openly, for example, selling souvenirs at the roadside, baking bread or working at a market stall, have been arrested and sometimes detained.¹³⁷ An Afghan refugee running a grocery store in Cisarua was reportedly arrested and imprisoned in 2017.¹³⁸ There have also been raids on refugees working in restaurants.¹³⁹ Enforcement when it comes to refugees working informally could best be described as unpredictable and inconsistent. While one refugee interviewed was able to sell handicrafts at markets without any issue, another interviewee said they received a warning letter from immigration after selling food at a market. A young Afghan interviewee said they were too scared to risk working in case it ruined their chances of resettlement. This view was held by many of the participants, while others continued to earn small amounts informally, faced with the dilemma of getting in trouble or going hungry. Elaha said, 'what else can I do?' A Somali woman sleeping on the streets, Ahado, said she had many skills that she could use: 'If I get the opportunity to work, I can cook in a restaurant, work in a beauty salon, sell fruits at the market, become a maid, I can do many things.' Her 10-year-old daughter chimed in at this point with, 'My mother can do everything.'

Unsurprisingly, the restriction on work leads to poorer livelihood outcomes and increased vulnerability. While certain

131 Ibid 60.

132 Ibid 51.

133 Ibid 11.

134 Ibid 110, interview with human rights lawyer Trish Cameron.

135 Ibid 3, p. 103; Ibid 57, p. 22.

136 Ibid 45, p. 3.

137 Brown, T. and Missbach, A., 2017. *Refugee detention in Indonesia*. Lowy Institute, [online] 12 May. Available at: <<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/refugee-detention-indonesia>> [Accessed 7 February 2018]; ibid 43; ibid 110, Interview with Hadi.

138 Ibid 110, interview with Hadi.

139 Ibid 85, interview with sociocultural anthropologist Realisa Masardi.

livelihood activities involved risk that in some ways increased people's vulnerability – namely income-generation that was conducted outside of the protective sphere of an NGO – for the most part, livelihood activities reduced vulnerability and improved livelihood options and outcomes by boosting refugees' access to capital – financial, human and social.

Livelihood activities like volunteering as teachers and interpreters for different organisations, or making things to sell, help refugees to secure shelter and cover, to a certain extent, their basic needs. However, these opportunities are limited at present and are only able to benefit a relatively small number of people. Allowances or stipends given to volunteer teachers and interpreters were all that some of the participants had to rely on. While far from comfortably covering expenses, these at least filled gaps here and there, and allowed them to travel to the various activities, playing a critical role in enabling them to be productive and to build and engage with social networks. Lyytinen and Kullenberg highlight the significance of social networks succinctly, saying they act as safety nets 'based on reciprocity and solidarity, and include material and emotional support' that is critical 'given forced migrants' exclusion from formal safety nets, such as public services and government social assistance programs'.¹⁴⁰ There is a link between the lack of resettlement options, limited support and refugees taking it upon themselves to meet the needs of their communities with what little resources they have.¹⁴¹ The above point highlights that despite the immense barriers they face, refugees will do whatever they can to create a sense of normalcy, and seek opportunities to live as everyone should be able to live – with dignity.

When people are forced into a state of protracted transit, unable to work or integrate, the pursuit of human and social capital – of learning new skills, using existing ones, interacting, feeling a part of something, rather than being on the fringes of society – create meaning and purpose that can fend off, to a varying extent, the feelings that come with idleness, of being completely stuck and powerless. With restrictions around livelihood options for refugees currently, it is really the accumulation of social and human capital that acts as the biggest help in improving livelihood outcomes. For the interviewees involved in livelihood activities, gaining new skills and being surrounded by supportive communities acted as a shield against succumbing to the hopelessness of not being able to pursue life goals and having no future prospects. Without the refugee-led initiatives, and activities of non-profits, people would have nothing to do except stay in their rooms, immersed in the stress of having limited resources and little control over their destinies. When people have no hope and no options, they are forced to pursue negative coping strategies, whether sleeping all day and becoming more depressed¹⁴² or choosing to sell their bodies rather than starve.¹⁴³

140 Ibid 37, p. 21.

141 Brown, T., 2018. Building resilience: The emergence of refugee-led education initiatives in Indonesia to address service gaps faced in protracted transit. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies* 11(2). Available at: <<https://aseas.univie.ac.at/index.php/aseas/article/download/1972/1911>> [Accessed 12 January 2019]; Grabska, K., 2006. Marginalisation in urban spaces of the global south: Urban refugees in Cairo. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, [e-journal] 19(3), p. 303. Available at: <<https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article-pdf/19/3/287/4470352/fel014.pdf>> [Accessed 17 June 2018].

142 Ibid 110, interview with human rights lawyer Trish Cameron.

143 Ibid 45, p. 6.

3 Conclusions and recommendations

This research was intended as a snapshot of the situation for refugees in Java, Indonesia and aimed to shine a light on how forced migrants are living in their prolonged state of limbo. It sought to understand livelihood strategies and how livelihood activities interact with vulnerability, sense of purpose and agency as well as livelihood outcomes. Interviews with 16 refugees and people seeking asylum were the main source of analysis. However, interviews with several expert informants, as well as field observations, and a detailed review of existing literature served to enrich and triangulate the data. The Sustainable Livelihood Framework provided key concepts such as vulnerability context and the various types of capital, which were applied in both the data collection and analysis phases, helping to guide the creation of questions, and make sense of the many factors that influence strategies and outcomes.

In summing up, then, how should we understand the livelihood strategies of refugees and asylum seekers in Java, Indonesia?

When the right to work is not granted, and refugees do not have savings, receive remittances or get financial assistance, they are really only left with three options: endure homelessness and hunger, accept IOM repatriation and return to the dangerous situations they fled or draw on their social networks to pursue activities that will hopefully allow them to scrape by.

Before March 2018, refugees and asylum seekers who were in this position surrendered themselves to immigration detention and were referred to IOM for material support, funded by Australia. That possibility is no more. The research participants fell into four categories: getting remittances, receiving financial assistance, homeless and relying on donations and finally, pursuing livelihood strategies that involved human and social capital to try and make ends meet and stay off the street. These livelihood strategies, around teaching and interpreting, mutual assistance, in-kind donations, making things and bartering, were characterised by their limited opportunities and unreliable outcomes. Sometimes refugees could get by okay and sometimes they struggled to find enough to eat and to afford drinking water. Even the most resilient refugees live with daily uncertainty and are forced to go without. And the heaviness of having no rights weighed on them, too, the feelings of hopelessness sinking in during quiet moments.

It is not possible to separate the material and emotional implications of being stuck in transit. This is illustrated by the interviewees who are involved in livelihood activities and learning centres, who say that being productive gives them a sense of purpose, and that without these activities that provide avenues to advance their skills, keep their minds active and engaged in learning, punctuate their days and be surrounded by supportive communities, they would struggle mentally to come to terms with the lack of control over their lives and the relentless waiting for a more meaningful life, where they could enjoy basic rights. The refugee-led initiatives that have sprung up, to fill the gaps and provide activities and learning opportunities, are transformative places that glue communities together, and prevent people from slipping too deeply into the despair that comes with waiting for life to begin.¹⁴⁴ Those who do not have the resources or language abilities to attend the learning centres go without this much-needed respite. Sleeping all day was a common tactic to avoid having too much space filled with nothing to do and nowhere to be. The feelings of powerlessness and loss of identity that are linked with life in limbo where refugees have little control over their daily decisions and long-term fate, lead people to languish.

Going back to the beginning of this paper, the words of UNHCR's Mitra Salima Suryono ring true: 'Giving livelihood opportunities is the only way to sustain their lives here, while they are waiting for a more permanent solution.' Without being able to create livelihoods, refugees will continue to suffer, and the skills they could be contributing to Indonesian society will be wasted. A JRS Indonesia staff member articulated well the case for allowing refugees to work:

By allowing them to work refugees would be contributing to the economy and maybe at the end of the day creating more opportunities, creating new jobs, accessing new markets because they have networks back home, and actually giving refugees something to do and a reason to integrate because work in our lives is the way of being part of society, it is contributing to your community to your society to your nation but also taking part in social life; most of it is done through work in our adult life and so it would be a positive step.¹⁴⁵

Lyytinen and Kullenberg note about urban refugees globally that they 'are present and surviving and their struggle could be transformed into a win-win situation.'¹⁴⁶ More research is needed on urban refugees in Indonesia and how they can integrate with and contribute to host communities. Recent research by Adiputera and Prabandari, referenced throughout this paper, is instrumental in this regard. The lack of access to livelihoods results in physical deprivation and a loss of direction, leading to suffering. This suffering could be remedied if refugees were allowed to use their skills to provide for themselves and to exercise their agency.

The right to work should be granted. In recognising the gravity of such a recommendation for the Indonesian Government, and acknowledging the insight of experts in Indonesia that granting the right to work is a way off, the following recommendations speak to building the pathway to work rights and providing legal clarity and certainty around access to livelihoods, while also creating more livelihood opportunities.

144 Ibid 4.

145 Ibid 75.

146 Ibid 45.

To alleviate concern about unemployment rates among Indonesians and market impacts, a list of job sectors that the government would let refugees work in, initially, could be created. The Indonesian foreign ministry's Vinsensius Shianto wrote last year that it would be difficult for the government to allow refugees to work, 'Yet, if we are willing to accommodate them based on humanitarian concerns, the key solution is to find a particular sector in our labor market where there is a gap in supply and demand, so the refugees could fill it with their unique expertise, like teaching foreign languages. In order to do that, the government should work together with business leaders and civil society.'¹⁴⁷ In line with this thinking, and in building the pathway to work rights, research could be carried out into areas of skills shortage in Indonesia, and programmes could be established that connect refugees with markets where their skills are needed. Vocational training and internships could then focus on matching skillsets with market shortages.

Creative industries where refugees could add value through cultural capital could be explored. A work permit would help provide clarity. This would encourage entrepreneurship by reducing the risk factors associated with legal uncertainty in setting up initiatives or employing refugees. Providing legal certainty would also pave the way for Indonesians and refugees to establish businesses together. Moreover, if refugees were allowed to open businesses, they could create jobs for Indonesians, fostering positive host–refugee relations. In Kampala, the capital of Uganda, 21 per cent of refugees run a business employing at least one other person and 40 per cent of those employees are citizens of the host country.¹⁴⁸

Addressing the assistance needs of urban refugees comes with distinct challenges, for example, accessing people who are often trying to become invisible, and also the fact that displaced people in urban settings generally face similar challenges to the urban poor.¹⁴⁹ More research is needed into the possibilities and potentials for urban refugees in Indonesia around access to livelihood opportunities and projects designed to benefit both refugees and Indonesians. A pilot programme that allows refugees with skills in cooking, sewing and hair-styling, for example, to be matched up with Indonesian businesses and receive a stipend, could be tested. This stipend should meet the minimum wage so that it doesn't lead to exploitation and job competition. Incentives, such as a small investment in equipment, for willing businesses could be considered. That way, small local businesses benefit and refugees have an avenue to support their livelihood. These programmes could also be extended to vulnerable Indonesian participants.

Selling home-made items at local markets should be decriminalised. Research could be done into the types of things refugees would like to make and sell and see how this might impact existing stall-holders. It is possible, if not likely, that what refugees are producing, or would like to produce, is traditional to their origin countries, like local cuisine or garments, that would appeal more to other refugees and Indonesians with a disposal income interested in buying something different, and therefore would not lead to direct competition. In Uganda, where work rights are granted, refugees in rural and urban areas created their own activities and economic spaces within host communities, leading to interdependence rather than rivalry.¹⁵⁰

It should not be left to Indonesia alone to integrate asylum seekers. A combination of durable solutions is needed. This means Australia stepping up instead of turning its back on the issue. A few years ago, Australia announced it would not resettle refugees from Indonesia who arrived after 1 July 2014, and also cut resettlement places.¹⁵¹ A government document, released under a freedom of information request, notes this policy measure was expected to lead to a decrease in the number of asylum seekers travelling to Indonesia.¹⁵² However, since then, the number of asylum seekers and refugees in Indonesia has increased by almost 25 per cent.¹⁵³ Australia should show solidarity and responsibility sharing with its neighbour and resume resettlement of refugees from Indonesia.

There is great potential for international donors to support the refugee-led initiatives in Indonesia that have sprung up, filling service gaps, and creating hope, purpose and meaning in people's lives. Without these initiatives keeping people active, allowing them to use their minds, and building a sense of community, it's likely that mental health issues would become much more widespread, particularly given that mental health services in Indonesia are limited. Funding to support refugee-led initiatives in filling these gaps is critical. An organisation called Refugees & Asylum Seekers Information Centre is a key example of a refugee-led initiative doing tremendous work to help the most vulnerable, facilitating access to health services including eye check-ups, establishing a mental health self-help journal and distributing care packages.¹⁵⁴

It remains to be seen, with resettlement no longer the main durable solution and the IOM no longer able to support new arrivals, whether action will be taken by the Indonesian Government to allow refugees to become self-reliant and give legal clarity around livelihoods for the forcibly displaced. Further investigation into how this might best be facilitated is necessary. In the meantime, there is no alternative except for individuals, charities and grassroots initiatives to test the

147 Shianto, V., 2018. Employing refugees in Indonesia: Is it possible? *The Jakarta Post*, 11 June [online], Available at: <<https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2018/06/11/employing-refugees-in-indonesia-is-it-possible.html>> [Accessed 13 January 2018].

148 Collier, P. and Betts, A., 2017. Why denying refugees the right to work is a catastrophic error. *The Guardian* [online]. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/22/why-denying-refugees-the-right-to-work-is-a-catastrophic-error>>.

149 Ibid 11, pp. 16–18.

150 Ibid 28.

151 Ibid 6.

152 Ibid.

153 Roberts, G., 2014. Indonesia says Australia has created a burden after decision to cut resettlement intake of asylum seekers. *ABC*, [online] Available at: <www.abc.net.au/news/2014-11-20/indonesian-minister-says-australia-has-created-a-burden/5904714> [Accessed 6 September 2018].

154 RAIC, 2018. Homepage. Available at <<http://raicindonesia.org>>.

waters of what is allowed, finding creative ways that comply with laws but still enable refugees to feed themselves and support their families. This route, though, will undoubtedly bridle entrepreneurship with fear and uncertainty. Legal clarity (i.e. the right to work) will mean the creativity, skills and potential that exist among forced migrants can flourish, along with the people themselves, to the benefit of the society they have no choice but to call home.