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Indonesia as a Transit Country in Irregular Migration to Australia

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This paper is one of a series of occasional papers produced as part of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's Irregular Migration Research Programme (Research Programme).

The Research Programme is intended to strengthen the evidence base on irregular migration, and is built on research framed in an open, inquiring manner that is objective and non-partisan. More information about the Research Programme can be found at:
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The Occasional Paper Series aims to provide information on, and analysis of, specific irregular migration issues of relevance to Australia, within a broader migration and/or global context.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The paper is based on fieldwork undertaken in Indonesia between 2012 and 2014. This included a survey of 119 IMAs intending to reach Australia examining their experiences, motivations and intentions. Additionally, several key informant interviews were conducted throughout Indonesia with people involved in the migration process or industry.

2. Often migrants cannot move directly to their intended final destination because they lack the appropriate documentation or are not able to meet the entry requirements of that destination. Countries of transit are an important element in the growing complexity of international migration, especially for asylum seekers and others engaged in irregular migration.

3. Indonesia is a quintessential transit migration country. Its strong historical linkages with, and migration flows between the Middle East, has established it as an important transit hub for facilitating corridors of movement between Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The connections which have been established between Indonesia and Malaysia are especially important, particularly as a migration pathway for IMAs intending to reach Australia.

4. Indonesia's function as a transit point for asylum seekers and irregular migrants who have Australia as an intended final destination is not new. The country was an important transit point, along with Malaysia and other parts of Southeast and East Asia, for the wave of Indo Chinese boat people in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

5. Before taking the final boat trip to Australia, intending IMAs reach Indonesia in several ways. Some fly directly to Malaysia and enter on a tourist visa, before traveling to Indonesia clandestinely by boat – a corridor of movement which builds off the well-established international labour migration between Indonesia and Malaysia (much of it undocumented travel or involving illegal workers). Some travel directly to Indonesia, especially those who can obtain a 30-day tourist visa on arrival. Others move initially to Thailand which has long been a hub for trafficking in the Asia region.

6. The migration industry plays a crucial role in facilitating movements. In Indonesia, it is a large, multilayered network which is opportunistic, flexible and becoming increasingly professionalised. It involves international criminal organisations, agents, subagents and sub-subagents working embedded in major cities and local communities who work in both legal and illegal migration. Almost all asylum seekers rely, to some extent, on people smugglers at some stage of the process, if not throughout the movement to Australia. People smugglers do not arrange the complete journey from the origin country to Australia, but usually one or more of the legs of movement. During the course of migration, corrupt officials help facilitate onward movements. Migration is also influenced and financially supported by the social network of the potential movers and the extent to which they have family and friends in Australia.

7. The majority of surveyed migrants in Indonesia rated the living conditions as bad or very bad, and many were concerned about restrictions placed on their movement or ability to communicate with people on the outside when in detention. Importantly, the social networks of asylum seekers evolve with the progression of their migration. Transit time spent in Indonesia is similar to that spent in previous transit countries, with most respondents staying less than a month before continuing their migration to the next destination. While a majority of respondents indicated that they did not intend to irregularly onward migrate to Australia – preferring instead to wait to be resettled – lengthy refugee status determination processing times and the feeling of being trapped in a state of limbo may be drivers of onward irregular migration to Australia. Despite the uncertainties of transit migration, surveyed migrants indicated the importance of sending remittances back home. A strong desire to be resettled in Australia was displayed by three-quarters of respondents, and while seeking protection was

the underlying factor, economic reasons were also important, highlighting the multifaceted and complex nature of migrant decision making.

8. Smugglers and individual operators based in Indonesia play a significant role in the final leg of asylum seeker journeys to Australia. Almost two thirds of respondents made arrangements for the journey to Australia while transiting in Indonesia. The Indonesian-Australian segment of their journey tends to be the most expensive leg of their migration.

9. A lack of migration governance in the region means that irregular migration and transiting is likely to be on an ongoing challenge.

1. BACKGROUND —THE IRREGULAR MIGRATION RESEARCH PROGRAMME

In August 2012, the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) established an Irregular Migration Research Programme (Research Programme) to identify and address the knowledge gaps in irregular migration research, with a particular focus on placing Australia's experience in a broader global and migration context. An underlying principle of the Research Programme is that the research be framed in an open, inquiring manner that is objective and non-partisan.

The Research Programme has been established as a multi-layered and integrated program including in-house research and analysis, commissioned research, a small grants programme, a multi-year research partnership arrangement with the Australian National University and a series of occasional papers.

The first occasional paper, *Establishing an Evidence-Base for Future Policy Development on Irregular Migration to Australia* (Koser and McAuliffe, 2013), identified specific research gaps in the Australian context and made recommendations about how to fill these gaps, drawing on international experience. In the first occasional paper, the authors highlighted the lack of research in Australia (and limited research internationally) on migrant decision making, recommending that further research be undertaken on decision making particularly as it relates to leaving origin countries and choosing a destination.

This occasional paper has been produced from research which was commissioned under the Department's Irregular Migration Research Small Grants Programme – one tier of the broader Research Program. The Irregular Migration Research Small Grants Programme supports the broader Research Programme through the commissioning of research which offers insights into the drivers, determinants, and decision-making of irregular migrants.

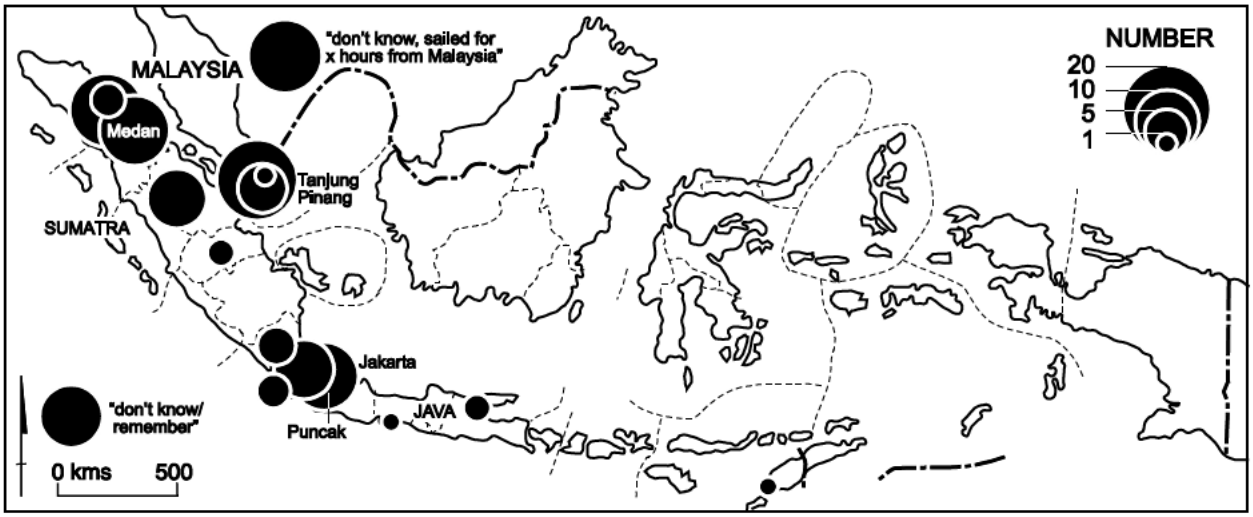
2. INTRODUCTION

One important element in the growing complexity of international migration is the increasing role of countries of transit. While migration is usually conceptualised as a direct movement from an origin to a destination, in some contemporary migrations, movement trajectories can extend over long periods of time and a number of intermediate locations before a final destination (planned or unplanned) is reached. This is especially the case for asylum seekers and irregular migration. Transit countries are increasingly significant in the migration process, yet the bulk of migration research is focused on the destination, and to a lesser extent, the origin country.

Several Asian countries are playing increasingly significant transit roles. This paper focuses on one example – Indonesia, which is a transit point for most maritime asylum seekers and irregular migrants seeking to land on Australia's northern shores.

The paper is based largely on a field studies undertaken in Indonesia between 2012 and 2014. The centrepiece was a survey of 119 intending IMAs for Australia. They were located in Indonesian detention centres or were living in the Indonesian community located in Medan, Tanjung, Pinang, Jakarta, Kupang and in Puncak, a former colonial hill station area located in the mountains to the south of Jakarta (Figure 1). A structured questionnaire was used and asked questions about IMA's characteristics, their experience of migration, motivations and intentions relating to moving to Australia. In addition, a substantial number of key informant interviews were conducted throughout Indonesia with people involved in the migration process or interacting with the immigrants in the transit situation.

Figure 1: Indonesian Intending Asylum Seekers: Arrival Location and Place of Interview of Respondents to Survey



3. TRANSIT MIGRATION IN ASIA

One of the defining characteristics of the new global international migration regime is that the dominant paradigm of one-off movement for permanent settlement has been replaced by the transnationalism model involving migrants having major commitments to more than one country and continuing patterns of movement between countries.

Transit migration can be seen as part of a global situation in which international migration has become more complex than the 'assimilation narrative' (Ley and Kobayashi, 2005) in which migration is seen as a one off, more or less permanent, displacement from an origin to a single destination and the process of adjustment to that destination. There are now elements of coming and going between origin and destination, temporary and circular migration, migration to third, fourth and more countries and diaspora linkages between origins and destinations.

It is important to note the strong association of transit migration with two important forms of international migration in the contemporary world: forced migration (especially refugee and asylum seeker movement but also that associated with disasters); and irregular migration.

Most forced migrants are not able to move directly to a place of permanent resettlement due to the largely unplanned and unanticipated nature of the move and the sudden circumstances which precipitate the move. Accordingly they often move to a temporary haven which Kunz describes as a 'midway to nowhere' situation to emphasise the precariousness, uncertainty and temporariness of their stay there.

Often migrants cannot move directly to their intended final destination because they lack the appropriate documentation or are not able to meet the entry requirements of that destination. This is especially the case where the destination is an OECD nation with sophisticated border entry controls and highly controlled migration systems. Australia is such a case where a combination of its island geography, isolation, highly developed immigration bureaucracy and institutions and modern technologies of surveillance means that it can control very effectively the number and characteristics of immigrants.

A country of transit can be a point where irregular migrants can arrange their entry to their intended destination but it is also one of the places where they are at risk of repatriation.

4. THE INDONESIA CONTEXT

Indonesia in many ways is a quintessential transit migration country in that it meets almost all of the defining characteristics of a transit country. These include:

- Its intermediate geographical location between the Middle East, Africa and Asia on the one hand, and Australia. It is comparable to Turkey and Russia being located on the edges of Western Europe has meant that they have become important transit locations for irregular migrants from Asia and Africa and the Middle East Intending to enter Europe.
- Its archipelago geography, comprising more than 3,000 islands, presents virtually unlimited opportunities to enter Indonesia by boat without detection.
- Its strong historical linkages, involving centuries of population movement and settlement, with the main origin countries in South Asia and the Middle East of many groups seeking to enter Australia and seek asylum.
- Its complex contemporary migration system which not only involves important flows to the origins of asylum seekers and the other transit nations involved in their movement but has seen the development of a substantial migration industry.
- A system of government in which corruption and bribery play a significant role which opens up possibilities, not only for staying in Indonesia, but also in facilitating onward migration.

It is the world's fourth largest country by population and despite recent rapid economic growth and fertility decline, it has a substantial labour surplus, especially of low skill, low educated workers. Accordingly, there has been significant emigration with the largest group being low skilled temporary contract labour migration.

The importance of Malaysia and the Middle East is especially important in creating migration corridors and linkages which have played a role in the contemporary movement of transit migrants with an intended destination of Australia. Malaysia and the Middle East are significant origins of immigrants to Indonesia as well as destination of emigrants.

The importance of these migration flows in establishing corridors of movement along which asylum seekers and irregular migrants can move needs to be stressed. The connections which have been established between Indonesia and Malaysia are especially important. The Malaysia-Indonesia leg of the migration of IMAs intending to go to Australia is an important part of the migration process.

A key issue is that undocumented migration remains substantial, especially to Malaysia. While this process is complex, it has a number of elements which impinge on the movement of irregular migrants

and asylum seekers using Indonesia as a transit nation with the intention of moving to Australia (Jones, 2000). Some of the major features are as follows:

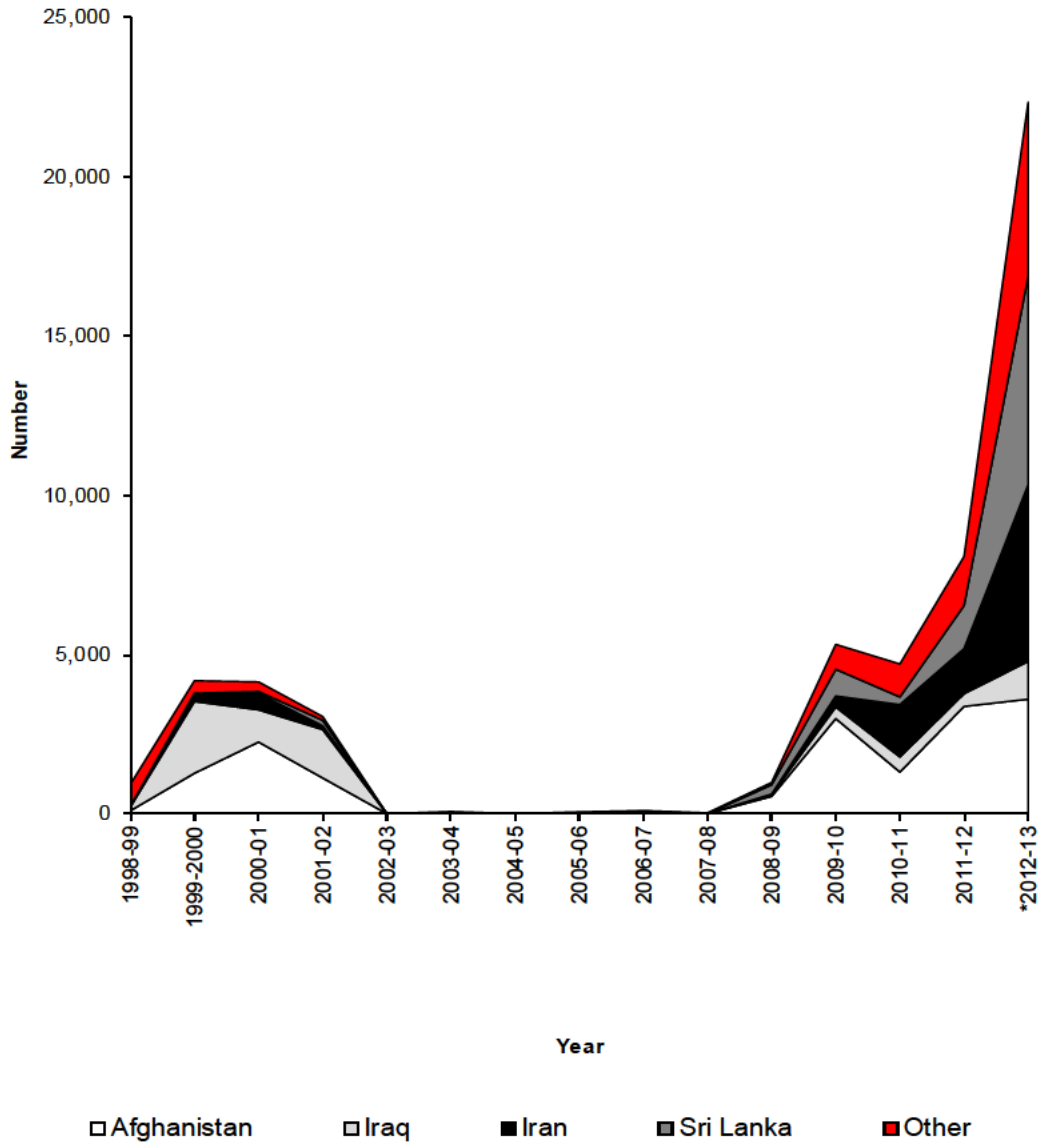
- There are strong family, community and agent networks linking Malaysia and Indonesia which facilitate migration.
- A strong 'industry' has developed with multiple stakeholders at a range of levels ranging from the local to the international.
- There are a multiplicity of sea routes and coastal embarkation and disembarkation points in Malaysia and Indonesia.
- There is complicity of government officials in the irregular migration in both countries.
- Most of the movement, especially irregular migration, involves maritime journeys, much of it using erstwhile fishing boats and there is substantial involvement of fishermen.

5. IRREGULAR MARITIME MIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA

The avenue of irregular entry which has attracted most attention is unauthorised boat arrivals on Australia's northern border. These IMA arrivals are not clandestine. They seek to be detected by authorities so they can claim refugee status.

Figure 2 shows that in recent years it is Afghanistan which has been the major source of asylum seekers with Iran, Iraq and Sri Lanka also being significant. In 2011-12 Sri Lankan Tamils have made up an increasingly large proportion of asylum seeker arrivals with more than 1,500 arriving in 2012 before August – seven times the number in the previous year (Hodge, 2012). There is a predominance of males among asylum seekers although the proportion of females increased from 5.7 percent in 2008-09 to 16.8 percent in 2010-11 (DIAC, 2011, 27). The largest group are young adults aged 18-40 (68.3 percent) although children aged 17 or less comprised 21 percent (DIAC, 2011, 28).

Figure 2: **Australia: Irregular Maritime Arrivals by Origin, 1998-99 to 2012-13**
Source: Australian Government, 2012, 89; DIAC, 2013b



*2012-13 refers to the period up to 31st May 2013

6. INDONESIA AS A TRANSIT COUNTRY FOR INTENDING IMAs TO AUSTRALIA

Indonesia's function as a transit point for asylum seekers and irregular migrants who have Australia as an intended final destination is not new. Indonesia was an important transit point, along with Malaysia and other parts of Southeast and East Asia, for the wave of Indo Chinese boat people in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s (Lander, 1996; Missbach, 2013).

Figure 3 presents results from a study by the Indonesian Directorate of Immigration of 40 Iraqi asylum seekers. This shows a pattern of initially flying to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia and then moving to Indonesia through multiple channels.

The survey respondents' countries of origin are compared in Table 1 with the birthplace/ citizenship composition of IMAs arriving in Australia over the 2011-13 period. The bulk of respondents were from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. Among these groups, only Sri Lankans have large numbers

that sail directly from their homeland to Australia (Jayasuriya and McAuliffe, 2013; Hugo and Dissanayake, 2014).

Figure 3: Trajectories of Movement of 40 Iraqi Asylum Seekers, 2008

Source: Unpublished map supplied by Directorate of Immigration, Jakarta, Indonesia

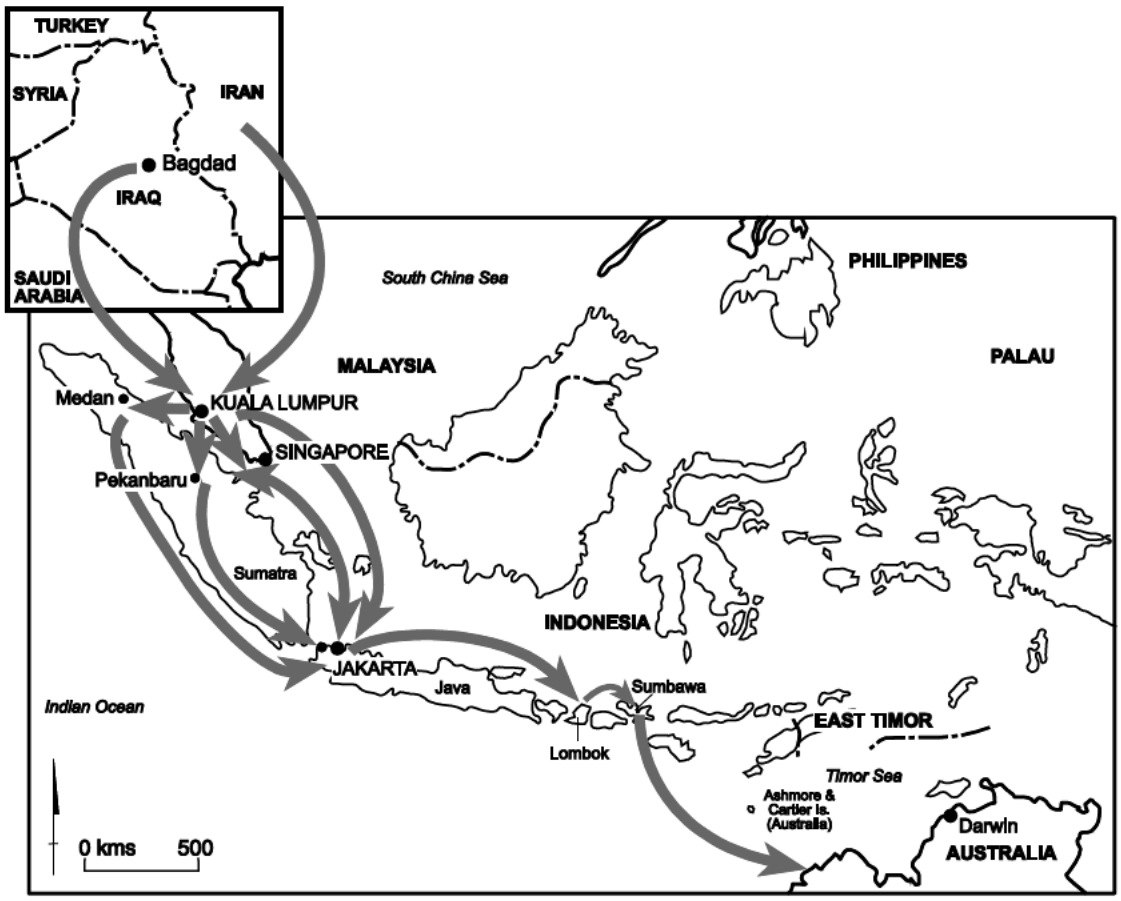


Table 1: Birthplace of Survey Respondents compared with IMAs in Australia, 2011 to 2013

Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010, 2012; DIBP, Irregular Migration Research and Analysis Section

Note: *Survey figures are based on birthplace; IMA figures are based on citizenship.

**IMAs from Myanmar and Palestine are considered stateless. Published statistics are not available for these groups.

Birthplace/ citizenship*	Survey		Total IMA 2011 to 2013	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Afghanistan	65	52.8	8,480	20.0
Sri Lanka	26	21.1	8,676	20.5
Myanmar	15	12.2	Not available**	
Iraq	7	5.7	2,293	5.4
Sudan	4	3.3	547	1.3
Iran	3	2.4	12,011	28.3
Palestine	2	1.6	Not available**	
Somalia	1	0.8	391	0.9
Total	123	100.0	42,386	100.0

All of asylum seekers surveyed flew initially to Malaysia as 'tourists' since Malaysia offers visas upon arrival to nationals of more than 60 countries, especially those with Islamic populations, in order to facilitate tourism (Missbach and Sinanu, 2011, 73). From Malaysia they travel to Indonesia which is the taking off point for the final leg – a boat trip to Australia. These corridors of movement have become well established and a complex industry of interconnected agents has developed along the route to facilitate the migration from Malaysia to Indonesia. Many asylum seekers from the largest origin, Afghanistan, move initially to camps in Pakistan from where they negotiate with a people smuggler. Some asylum seekers travel directly to Indonesia, especially those like Iranians who could obtain a 30-day tourist visa on arrival. The removal of this visa has seen this direct flow to Indonesia dry up and Iranians now travel via Kuala Lumpur. Some asylum seekers also move initially to Thailand which has long been a hub for trafficking in the Asia region (Skrobanek, Boonpakdi and Janthakeero, 1997). Many of the asylum seekers arriving initially in Malaysia, then travel to Indonesia clandestinely by boat.

There is substantial boat traffic between Indonesia and Malaysia and an established migration industry linking them, with more than 2 million Indonesians working as international labour migrants in Malaysia, many of them undocumented (Hugo, 2011b; Jones, 2000). In many cases the people smugglers, who the asylum seekers negotiate with in their home country, only get them as far as Malaysia or Indonesia and it is then up to the asylum seekers to negotiate a passage to Australia with agents based in Malaysia, or especially, Indonesia.

The borders of Malaysia and Indonesia present little problem to asylum seekers as they seek to make their way to Australia. Certainly, they are at risk of detection and detention as well as experiencing exploitation at the hands of unscrupulous agents, police, officials and other groups in Malaysia and Indonesia.

The majority of survey respondents who transited in Indonesia entered illegally. Excluding respondents who unintentionally arrived, a significant 90.7 percent (n=88) of respondents indicated that they entered illegally compared with 9.3 percent (n=9) of respondents who entered legally. As Table 2 shows, the main reason for entering Indonesia illegally as indicated by 84.1 percent of respondents was due to the fact that they were not able to travel legally.

Table 2: **Reasons for Entering Indonesia Illegally (n=88)**
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010, 2012

	Afghanistan (n=61)		Sri Lanka (n=6)		Myanmar (n=11)		Others (n=10)		Total (n=88)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Formal means of travel were impossible/banned	52	85.2	3	50.0	11	100.0	8	80.0	74	84.1
Other	28	45.9	1	16.7	1	9.1	2	20.0	32	36.4
Proper entry would be rejected at the border	24	39.3	4	66.7	0	0.0	3	30.0	31	35.2
I didn't want to be sent back to my country	9	14.8	2	33.3	1	9.1	0	0.0	12	13.6
No time to get proper documents	8	13.1	1	16.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	9	10.2
I lost my genuine documents	0	0.0	1	16.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.1

Other	Afghanistan (n=11)		Sri Lanka (n=5)		Myanmar (n=5)		Others (n=4)		Total (n=25)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I was following the arrangements made by my smuggler	14	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	100.0	16	50.0
My status in last country of residence was illegal- perpetuating the illegal nature of my journey	14	50.0	1	100.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	16	50.0
Common to enter illegally	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Moreover, the shift towards illegality for those who began their journey legally usually occurred when entering or exiting Malaysia. Entering Indonesia illegally is also partly linked to the proportion of respondents who anticipated likely rejection by immigration authorities if they attempted to enter through formal channels (35.2 percent). A visa restrictions index on the freedom of travel for citizens of each country (Henley and Partners, 2013) ranked Myanmar and Sri Lanka lowly on its index at 86 and 88 respectively (out of 93)[1]; Afghanistan in particular was ranked lowest in the world at 93. Further, these countries are exempt from obtaining the 30 day visa on arrival (VOA) which would make travelling to Indonesia an onerous if not impossible process. The hard line taken by the Indonesian government was highlighted in 2013 when Iran had their access to the 30 day VOA privilege removed. Up to then, Iran was the only major source country for asylum seekers with access to the 30 day VOA (Brown, 2013).

Further clarification with respondents revealed that clandestine entry was to avoid deportation to their home country as they did not have to risk being rejected by immigration officials at the airport. The role of smugglers is again noted with a small number of respondents (n=16) indicating that they were only following their smuggler's instructions to enter Indonesia illegally, again this seemed to be more prevalent for Afghan respondents. For some, their illegal status continues to pervade throughout their journey while others seek to enter undetected in order to avoid deportation back to their home countries if they were rejected at formal entry points; a strategy which appears to be quite efficient.

As shown in Figure 4 below, the majority of respondents (93.2 percent) who deliberately entered Indonesia illegally did not encounter any border control or immigration authorities. This not only highlights the likely success of undocumented entry into Indonesia, but also perhaps is indicative of a less than efficient border control.

Figure 5 shows the mode of transport used by respondents entering Indonesia. As anticipated, 86.6 percent of all respondents entered Indonesia on a raft/boat followed by 12.6 percent who travelled by air.

[1] There were joint rankings which explain why there were only 93 rankings in the index.

Figure 4: **Encountering Border Control/Immigration Authorities When Illegally Entering Indonesia (n=88)**

Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010, 2012

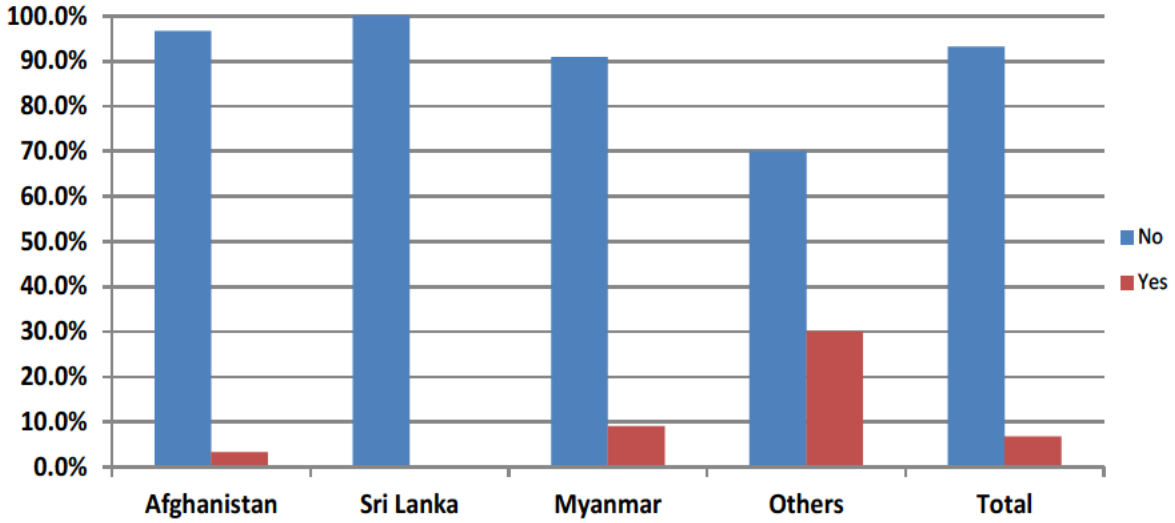
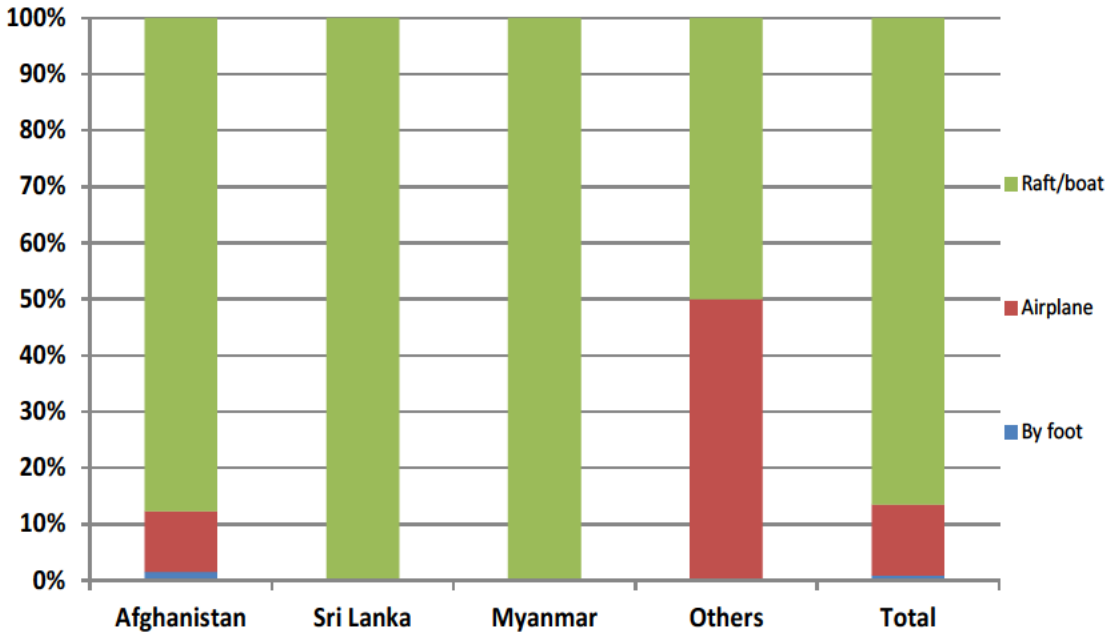


Figure 5: **Mode of Transport Used to Enter Indonesia (n=119)**

Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010, 2012



Sumatra plays a significant role in receiving asylum seekers. When combined, over half of respondents (57.7 percent) indicated that they disembarked somewhere in Sumatra. Clearly, Sumatra, an island situated in Western Indonesia is of close proximity to Malaysia with the Strait of Malacca along its North-eastern shore separating it from the Malay Peninsula. This corridor of movement is well established and a complex industry of interconnected agents has developed to facilitate migration along this route. In addition to asylum seekers, illegal workers constitute another part of irregular migration occurring in this region with 200,000 to 300,000 Indonesian workers working in Malaysia estimated to have bypassed the regular migration channels in 2008 (Ford and Lyons, 2011, 109).

There are elements of corruption with accounts of Malaysian people smugglers working together with the Indonesian navy to facilitate the return of undocumented Indonesian migrant workers (Ford and Lyons, 2013, 216-217). Such examples contribute to the blurring of boundaries between legitimate and illegal practices which have led to the 'aspal' route, a greying of the illegal nature of labour migration of Indonesians to Singapore and Malaysia (Ford and Lyons, 2011). In this context, it is easy to see how smuggling operations can flourish in the Riau Islands and other locations along the north-eastern shores of Sumatra and how they are a magnet for asylum seekers using Indonesia as a transit point.

7. THE ROLE OF THE MIGRATION INDUSTRY

It is important to acknowledge, however, that while it is possible to recognise some movements as being totally forced or voluntary, many migrations contain elements of both (Hugo, 1996). In the case of asylum seekers coming to Australia, while for most the major reason impelling their migration was insecurity and fear of violence or war and conflict in the origin countries, there were clearly also elements of choice involved in the decision making process. Whether or not people move is clearly influenced by the social network of the potential movers and the extent to which they have family and friends in Australia. This is important from both the perspective of supply of information regarding the destination and assurance of support at the destination, but also the financing of the move itself. The nexus between the community in Australia and asylum seekers is important. Asylum seekers are in constant contact with their Australian contacts before and during the migration process often using mobile phones.

However, it is crucial to recognise the pivotal role of the migration industry. Agents are a very important element in the asylum migration process. Very often the agents are of the same nationality or ethnicity as the asylum seekers themselves. Almost all asylum seekers rely, to some extent, on people smugglers at least at some stage of the process if not throughout the movement to Australia.

In most cases it seems that people smugglers do not arrange the complete journey from the origin country to Australia but one or more of the legs of movement. The overall picture which emerges is not of an integrated international structure of tightly linked elements between origin and international destination but one described by Missbach and Sinanu (2011, 66) as 'loose, temporary, acephalous networks' and by Içduygu and Toktas (2002, 46) as 'a loosely cast network consisting of hundreds of independent smaller units which cooperate along the way'.

Government officials and police in transit countries also play a role in the networks. Missbach and Sinanu (2011, 74) point out that there is a contrast between Malaysia and Indonesia in this respect:

> 'Unlike in Malaysia, where asylum seekers face massive repression by the local police and immigration authorities even if they hold UNHCR documents, the Indonesian authorities normally accept these documents'.

Throughout the corridors of movement corrupt officials appear to be a key element in the people smuggling process.

The dangers that many asylum seekers face cannot be underestimated and the personal tragedies that so frequently occur not only must be an important part of the narrative of asylum seekers, they can and do influence policy. It does need to be said also, however, that these corridors of movement do contain networks of support and communication which facilitate and support the migration.

In examining the role of the migration industry, however, it is crucial to recognise a number of its characteristics:

a) That it did not arise in Indonesia the 1990s purely to facilitate IMAs destined for Australia. It has a history extending over centuries.
b) The migration industry with Indonesia is very large and multilayered with the involvement of international criminal organisations down to large cities with agents and local communities with subagents and sub-subagents.
c) There is a high level of complicity of government and government workers at all levels.
d) It is often linked to legal migration with many agents being involved in both legal and illegal movement.
e) It is interlinked with family and regional networks.
f) It operates for both internal migration within Indonesia as well as international movement.
g) It is extremely flexible with workers in the industry able to diversify in other activity if demand for their services in one area of migration should dry up. Accordingly, the industry can be very quick to respond to new opportunities and it cannot be killed off by destroying one avenue for undocumented migration (Munro, 2011).
h) The industry is embedded in local communities.
i) The industry has strong linkages with the fishing industry.
j) The migration industry has very strong, long historical connections with the Middle East and Malaysia which have been utilised in facilitating the flow of intending IMAs.
k) In most cases there is not a single agent but migrants and intending migrants are passed through networks of agents at different points and often with new payments at each point.
l) Co-ethnics play a key role and in the case of asylum seekers often working together with Indonesian colleagues. Some of the co-ethnics are unsuccessful former asylum seekers. The pre-existing Arab community in Indonesia has been the anchor around which these co-ethnic agents have developed.
m) It is becoming an increasingly professionalised.

The chains of migration industry connections reaching to the areas which intending IMAs come from or pass through is an important element in understanding the movement of asylum seekers and irregular migrants. The connection with Malaysia is of particular importance since most intending IMAs initially come to Kuala Lumpur. The migration industry has 'seeped into' and penetrated state institutes in both Malaysia and Indonesia.

8. LIFE IN TRANSIT

There are around 10,000 asylum seekers and refugees currently in Indonesia registered with the UNHCR and IOM.

Table 3 lists the ratings of respondents on their living conditions in Indonesia. As shown below, more respondents rated living conditions to be bad or very bad, than good or very good. A combined 60.5 percent of respondents compared with about one-fifth of respondents (21.9 percent) indicated living conditions to be either good or very good.

Table 3: Rating of Living Conditions in Indonesia by Respondents (n=119)
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012

	Afghanistan (n=65)		Sri Lanka (n=26)		Myanmar (n=12)		Others (n=16)		Total (n=119)	
Very good	1	1.5%	0	0.0%	1	8.3%	2	12.5%	4	3.4%
Good	9	13.8%	7	26.9%	2	16.7%	4	25.0%	22	18.5%
Neither bad nor good	12	18.5%	2	7.7%	5	41.7%	2	12.5%	21	17.6%
Bad	21	32.3%	10	38.5%	4	33.3%	2	12.5%	37	31.1%
Very bad	22	33.8%	7	26.9%	0	0.0%	6	37.5%	35	29.4%

Respondents were also asked to reflect if their access to basic services and, as Table 4 shows, most respondents scored positively with over 90 percent having access to food, electricity, housing and drinking water. In comparison, access to health services was comparatively lower as reflected by 84 percent of respondents. Although only one-third of respondents (33.6 percent) reflected that they had access to education,[2] this could to some extent be a reflection of the reluctance of asylum seekers who feel that sending their children to Indonesian schools to learn Bahasa Indonesian was counterproductive, as they had no recourse to permanent settlement in Indonesia.

Table 4: Access to Services, by Nationality (n=119)
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012

	Afghanistan (n=65)		Sri Lanka (n=26)		Myanmar (n=12)		Others (n=16)		Total (n=119)	
Food	60	92.3%	26	100.0%	12	100.0%	16	100.0%	114	95.8%
Electricity	61	93.8%	25	96.2%	12	100.0%	15	93.8%	113	95.0%
Housing/ accommodation	59	90.8%	26	100.0%	10	83.3%	14	87.5%	109	91.6%
Drinking water	58	89.2%	26	100.0%	12	100.0%	13	81.2%	109	91.6%
Health services	54	83.1%	23	88.5%	12	100.0%	11	68.8%	100	84.0%
Education	17	26.2%	11	42.3%	6	50.0%	6	37.5%	40	33.6%

Respondents were also asked to indicate any negative experiences or abuses that they might have had while in Indonesia. As Table 5 shows, just under one-third of respondents (29.4 percent) indicated that they did not have any negative experiences or abuse, however for those that did, they were mostly concerned about restrictions which were placed on their movement or ability to communicate with people on the outside when in detention. Some 37 and 32 percent of all respondents indicated that at some stage, their freedom to move and to communicate was fully denied; followed by 24.4 and 23.5 percent of respondents with partial restrictions. Although examples of violations such as verbal/psychological abuse, physical abuse, 'confiscation' of money and personal possessions were less common, they were still reported by a significant number of respondents.

[2] This must be considered in light of the fact Indonesia is not a signatory of the Refugee Convention in which article 22 stipulates the provision of public education. However, IOM as well as NGOs such as Church World Services (CWS) do provide English language courses as well as basic skills training which to some extent addresses this issue (UNHCR, 2014; JRS, 2012, p. 60), further Australia, as part of its Regional Cooperation Agreement (RCA) with Indonesian government and IOM, does fund.

However, by and large, it would appear that respondents were mostly affected by the limitations placed on their freedom to move about and to communicate with people outside of detention centres.

Table 5: Negative Experiences/Abuses Experienced by Respondents (n=119)
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012

	Afghanistan (n=65)		Sri Lanka (n=26)		Myanmar (n=12)		Others (n=16)		Total (n=119)	
Freedom of communication totally denied	25	38.5%	12	46.2%	2	16.7%	5	31.2%	44	37.0%
Freedom of movement totally denied	20	30.8%	13	50.0%	1	8.3%	4	25.0%	38	31.9%
None	23	35.4%	1	3.8%	3	25.0%	8	50.0%	35	29.4%
Freedom of movement partially denied	12	18.5%	10	38.5%	5	41.7%	2	12.5%	29	24.4%
Freedom of communication partially denied	14	21.5%	9	34.6%	3	25.0%	2	12.5%	28	23.5%
Verbal/psychological abuse	12	18.5%	5	19.2%	1	8.3%	2	12.5%	20	16.8%
Physical abuse	12	18.5%	2	7.7%	3	25.0%	2	12.5%	19	16.0%
Money and personal possessions were 'confiscated'	13	20.0%	3	11.5%	2	16.7%	1	6.2%	19	16.0%
Was searched roughly	8	12.3%	2	7.7%	1	8.3%	3	18.8%	14	11.8%
Imprisonment without charges	5	7.7%	5	19.2%	-	-	-	-	10	8.4%
Asked for bribes to be treated well	3	4.6%	2	7.7%	-	-	-	-	5	4.2%
Documents were seized without permission	2	3.1%	1	3.8%	-	-	1	6.2%	4	3.4%
Forced to engage in activities against will	1	1.5%	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.8%
Work without wages	1	1.5%	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.8%
I was not paid accordingly for work	1	1.5%	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.8%

Respondents were also asked to indicate if they had any contact with Indonesian locals. As Figure 6 illustrates, two-thirds of respondents (67.2 percent) did not socialise with any local Indonesians, this was followed by 18.5 percent of respondents who socialised on occasion, and 14.3 percent who socialised on a regular basis.

By and large then, the majority of asylum seekers are quite isolated from local Indonesians. However, the social networks of asylum seekers evolve with the progression of their migration. Other migrants and detainees were cited as major sources of information by respondents which illustrates how asylum seekers establish useful social networks with other migrants and asylum seekers. Moreover, their travel companions from one transit-point to the next usually comprised of newly acquainted fellow asylum seekers who can be valuable sources of information which again underlines how information gathering and sharing can improve in transit as asylum seekers learn en route.

Figure 6: **Socialising with Local Indonesians (n=119)**
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012

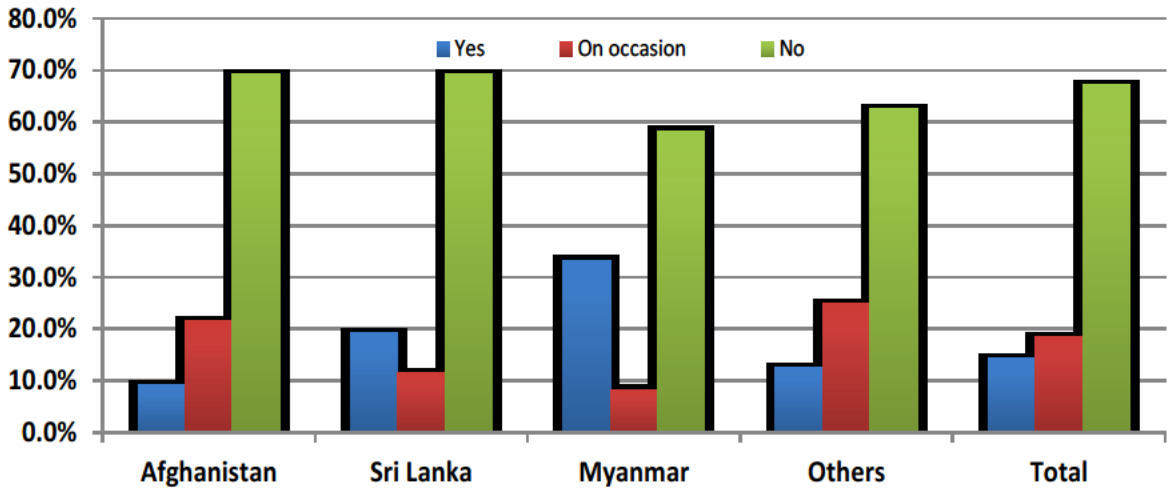
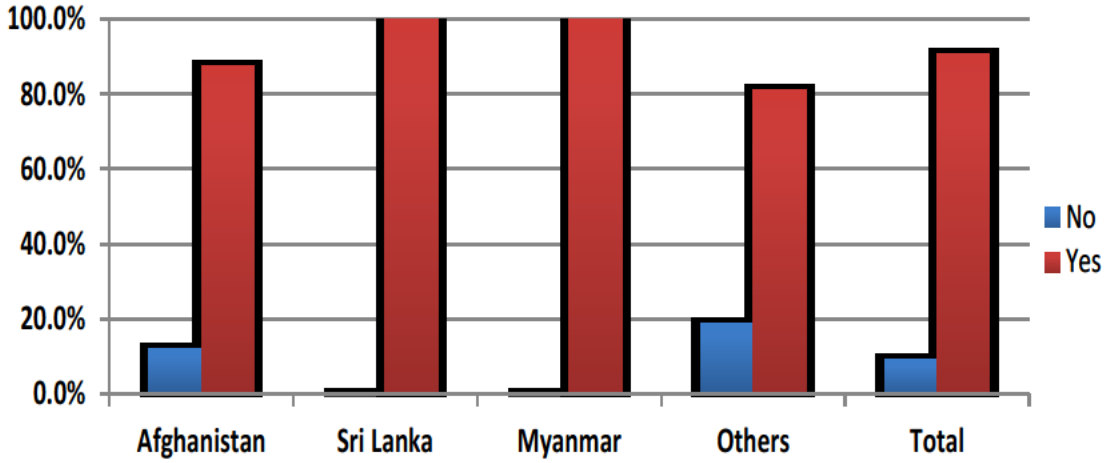


Figure 7: **Have you applied for Asylum in Indonesia? (n=119)**
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012



Respondents were also asked to indicate what their status was in Indonesia and if they intended to irregularly onward migrate to Australia. As Figure 7 shows, the majority of respondents (90.8 percent, n=108) had applied for asylum in Indonesia. Of this proportion, only 3 respondents had their applications rejected while the remainder were approved or still pending. This proportion of respondents were then asked to state the reasons which would motivate them to irregularly onward migrate despite their asylum claims being approved or awaiting determination. As Table 6 shows, the majority of respondents (86.7 percent) indicated that they did not intend to irregularly onward migrate to Australia and were adamant that they would wait to be resettled. However, it is suspected that most of this group of respondents were likely to have impressed this on the field researcher for fear of any recourse that might jeopardise their asylum applications.

Table 6: **Reasons for Irregularly Migrating to Australia (n=105)**
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012

	Afghanistan (n=55)		Sri Lanka (n=25)		Myanmar (n=12)		Others (n=13)		Total (n=105)	
Don't intend to escape	45	81.8%	24	96.0%	12	100.0%	10	76.9%	91	86.7%
Long wait for status determination	8	14.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	7.7%	9	8.6%
Other	6	10.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	15.4%	8	7.6%
Long wait for resettlement	3	5.5%	1	4.0%	0	0.0%	1	7.7%	5	4.8%
Want to go to a specific country of asylum	4	7.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	7.7%	5	4.8%
Other	Afghanistan (n=6)		Sri Lanka (n=0)		Myanmar (n=0)		Others (n=2)		Total (n=8)	
Poor conditions in detention centre (bad treatment/stressful)	5	83.3%	-	-	-	-	1	50.0%	6	75.0%
Registered so as to be safe and I wouldn't be harassed by authorities	1	16.7%	-	-	-	-	1	50.0%	2	25.0%

However, it is worth examining the reasons that would motivate these respondents to further their illegal migration to Australia. As anticipated, a small number of respondents stated that a long wait for the determination of their asylum status (n=9) and/or a long wait for resettlement (n=5) would be a catalyst to irregularly onward migrate to Australia. Refugee status determination has been characterised as a period fraught with uncertainty, frustration and anxiety. Lengthy processing times, empty promises, perceived unresponsiveness of unofficials were mentioned. Asylum seekers feel trapped in a state of limbo whereby children are deprived of an education and adults denied gainful employment (Taylor and Rafferty-Brown, 2010a, 157-159; 2010b, 561, 573). The indefinite nature of this process has been argued as a driving force behind those who elect to irregularly onward migrate to Australia as they 'are acting out of a strongly felt need to end this limbo, even at the risk of death' (Taylor and Rafferty Brown, 2010b, 561).

A small number of respondents (n=5) also indicated that they were only interested in a specific country of asylum, which at this stage is Australia. Indonesia was a desirable location to apply for asylum, as its UNHCR division was perceived to have faster processing times in terms of status determination and the resettlement of refugees. Respondents who indicated that they only wanted to seek refuge in Australia were motivated by opportunities to receive an education, train or upgrade their skills and find employment. Additionally, some respondents also reflected that, through family reunification, they would, in the future, apply for their family members to join them in Australia.

Under other reasons, poor conditions in detention centres were likely to encourage some respondents (n=6) to irregularly onward migrate to Australia. Conversely, a very small number (n=2) indicated that Australia was their primary destination and that registering with UNHCR was simply to obtain their attestation for safety reasons and avoid harassment from the Indonesian authorities; a strategy similarly reflected in a recent DIPB study (McAuliffe, 2013, 27).

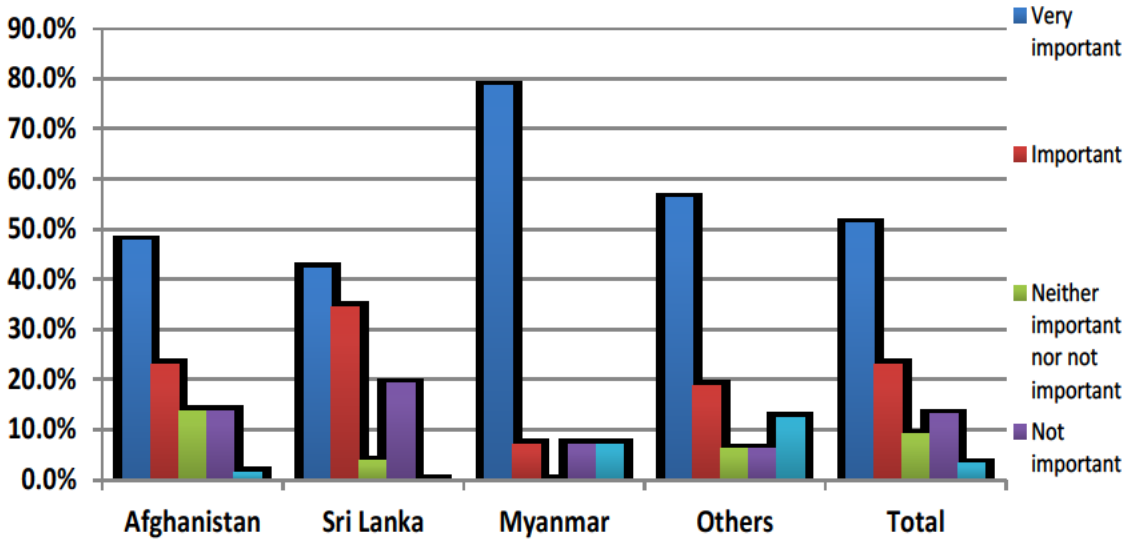
Respondents were also asked to state their sources of financial support whilst in Indonesia. Given that asylum seekers and refugees do not have any rights to employment in Indonesia, it is unsurprising to see in Table 7 that none of the respondents had a full time job, and only a small minority (n=2) had a part-time job.

Table 7: Source of Financial Support in Indonesia (n=119)
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012

	Afghanistan (n=65)		Sri Lanka (n=26)		Myanmar (n=12)		Others (n=16)		Total (n=119)	
Full time job	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UNHCR/IOM	51	78.5%	25	96.2%	12	100.0%	11	68.8%	99	83.2%
Money in hand	49	75.4%	4	15.4%	5	41.7%	8	50.0%	66	55.5%
Family and friends abroad	11	16.9%	3	11.5%	-	-	2	12.5%	16	13.4%
Other NGOs	4	6.2%	1	3.8%	-	-	-	-	5	4.2%
Part time job	-	-	-	-	1	8.3%	1	6.2%	2	1.7%

On the other hand, the majority (83.2 percent) were reliant on support from UNHCR/IOM. Over half of the respondents (55.5 percent) also indicated that they had some money in hand and a small number relied on remittances from family and friends overseas (n=16) and from NGOs (n=5). However, despite the lack of employment or income, respondents underlined the importance of sending remittances back to their home country as illustrated in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8: Importance of Sending Remittances to Family Back in Home country (n=121)
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012



Just over half of respondents (51.2 percent) indicated that it was very important for them to send remittances back to their respective home countries and 23.1 percent felt that it was important to do so. Less than one-tenth (9.1 percent) stated that it was neither important nor unimportant to do so. This reflects pressure of financially supporting their families at home and repaying debts incurred in funding their migration which fuels the likelihood of irregular onward migration to Australia.

Respondents were asked the reasons that would encourage them to remain in Indonesia if the Indonesian government permitted permanent resettlement. Table 8 shows one-fifth of respondents

(20.2 percent) indicated that they were motivated to further their journey and had no desire to remain in Indonesia. Conversely, 40.3 percent of respondents indicated that friendly Indonesian locals were a positive factor for remaining in Indonesia.

Although seeking protection was the underlying factor behind the selection of Australia as their final destination, economic reasons were also important in their decision making process. As much as the main reasons for transiting in Indonesia were to flee from conflict and to live in peace, it does not necessarily mean that economic reasons were not relevant.

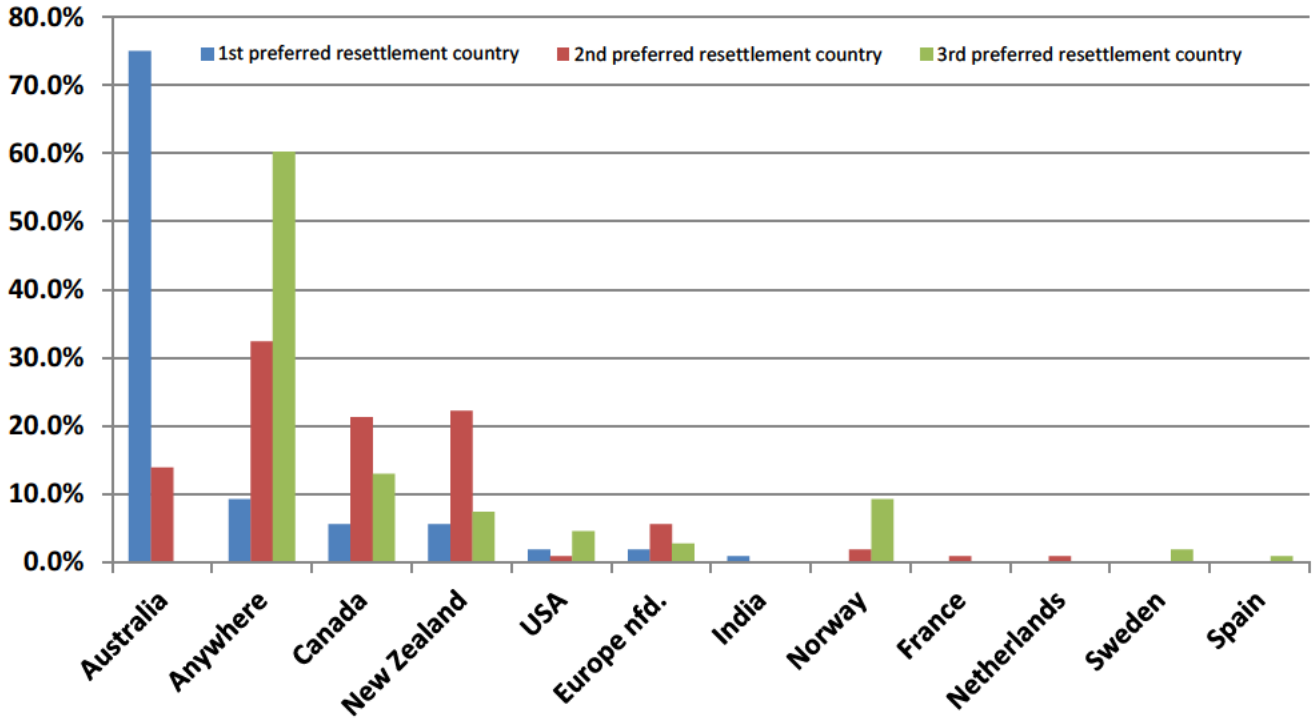
Table 8: Reasons Encouraging Settlement in Indonesia (n=119)
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012

	Afghanistan (n=65)		Sri Lanka (n=26)		Myanmar (n=12)		Others (n=16)		Total (n=119)	
Friendly locals	22	33.8%	15	57.7%	6	50.0%	5	31.2%	48	40.3%
It is a peaceful country	24	36.9%	12	46.2%	7	58.3%	4	25.0%	47	39.5%
No particular reason	23	35.4%	4	15.4%	-	-	4	25.0%	31	26.1%
I don't want to stay in Indonesia	11	16.9%	3	11.5%	4	33.3%	6	37.5%	24	20.2%
Lack of money to continue my trip	-	-	4	15.4%	5	41.7%	-	-	9	7.6%
Other	5	7.7%	-	-	3	25.0%	1	6.2%	9	7.6%
Low cost of living	2	3.1%	4	15.4%	1	8.3%	1	6.2%	8	6.7%
Too tired to continue my journey	2	3.1%	3	11.5%	2	16.7%	-	-	7	5.9%
I was/am well adjusted	1	1.5%	3	11.5%	1	8.3%	-	-	5	4.2%
A good job	0	0.0%	2	7.7%	3	25.0%	0	0.0%	5	4.2%
Other	Afghanistan (n=5)		Sri Lanka (n=3)		Myanmar (n=0)		Others (n=1)		Total (n=9)	
Marriage to a local	2	3.1%	1	3.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	2.5%
Indonesia allows refugees to live in the community	3	60.0%	2	66.7%	-	-	1	100.0%	6	66.7%
Indonesia is an Islamic country	2	40.0%	1	33.3%	-	-	-	-	3	33.3%

9. NEXT STEPS OF TRANSITING MIGRANTS

Analysing preferred destinations for resettlement shed light on the decision making process of asylum seekers and assists in understanding or deconstructing the categories of asylum seekers or economic migrants attached to this particular group of migrants. Respondents who applied for asylum in Indonesia (n=108) were asked to state the countries which they would like to be resettled in and Figure 9 indicates their first, second and third choices.

Figure 9: **Preferred Countries of Resettlement (n=108)**
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012



A strong desire to be resettled in Australia was displayed by three-quarters of respondents (75.0 percent) indicating Australia as their first choice while nearly one-tenth (9.3 percent) indicated that they would be happy to be resettled anywhere in the world. Remaining respondents stated Canada (5.6 percent), New Zealand (5.6 percent), USA (1.9 percent), Europe-not further defined (1.9 percent) and India (0.9 percent) were the other preferred first choices.

It is fair to assume that most respondents, at this near final stage of their migration (i.e. transit in Indonesia) would nominate Australia as their preferred location. However, if respondents were asked this question before they commenced their journey, or at the early stages of their migration, Australia might not be as prominent.

However, beyond Australia as the most preferred destination, the willingness to be resettled in any country (as reflected in their second and third choices) and the fact that only a small proportion of respondents had second and third choices suggests that attempts to dichotomise genuine from non-genuine refugees are perhaps too simplistic.

Respondents reflected mixed reasons for leaving their respective home countries and for choosing Australia as a destination. While reasons relating to protection and escape from conflict and persecution can overlap with factors associated with employment, education or simply the opportunity to lead a better life, it would appear that for many respondents, the principal characteristic of a preferred resettlement country is to seek protection.

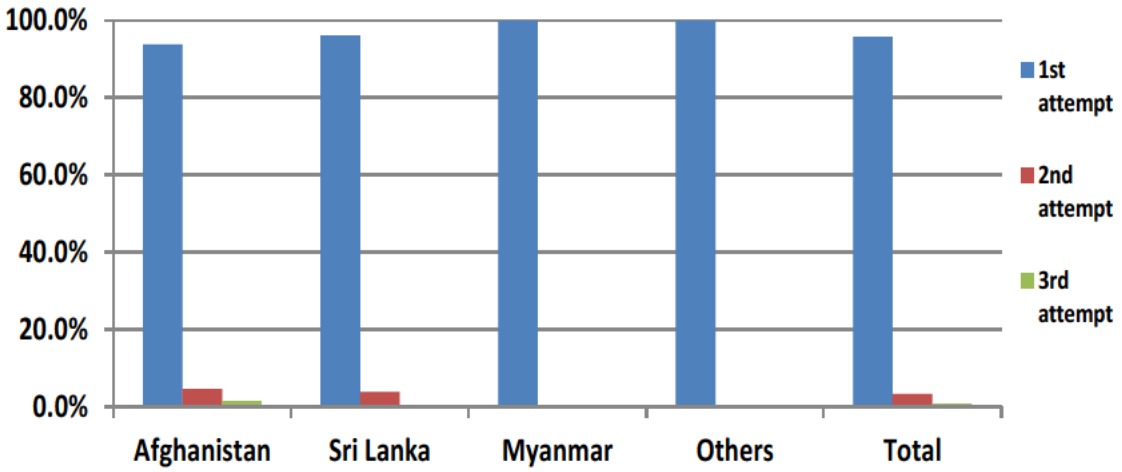
> 'Any country that can guarantee freedom' SL05TP1
>
> 'Any country, even Indonesia' SL04TP1
>
> 'Canada, Australia, New Zealand. They are the same [in terms of safety, freedom and opportunities]' AF03TP2

'Anywhere that I can get education and freedom' AF10TP2

10. ONWARD MIGRATION FROM INDONESIA

Figure 10 shows that a small number of Afghan and Sri Lankan respondents have attempted this journey more than once. Irregular migration is a very costly affair and Myanmarese respondents are probably the least likely to be able to afford multiple attempts. Overall however, it is evident that most respondents (95.9 percent) have only attempted to make their way to Australia once.

Figure 10: Number of Attempts to Australia (n=121)
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012



When it comes to making arrangements for their journey from Indonesia to Australia, it is clear that smugglers have a crucial role, as Table 9 below shows. One-third of respondents (32.8 percent) engaged the services of smugglers with 16.8 percent of all respondents transiting in Indonesia engaging with a local smuggler only, 14.3% engaging with their previous smuggler and local smuggler (i.e. same network) and a small number (1.7 percent, n=2) who used a smuggler based outside of Indonesia along with a local smuggler.

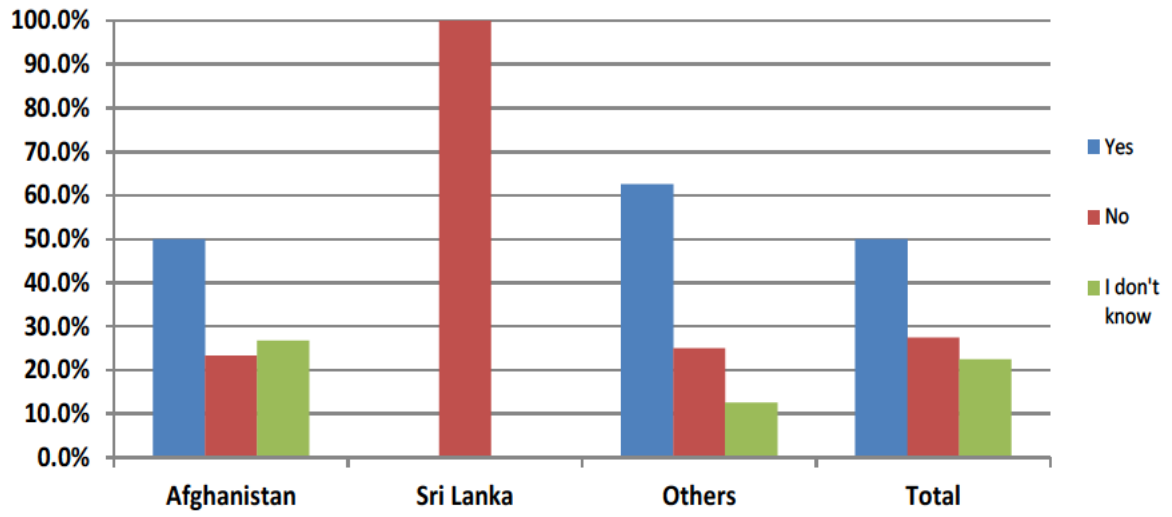
It would seem that almost two thirds of respondents (64.7 percent) made arrangements for the journey to Australia while transiting in Indonesia. Smugglers and individual operators based in Indonesia are significant in the final leg of an asylum seeker's journey to Australia. The sample size does warrant caution and while the findings are certainly not conclusive, it does suggest that while transnational smuggling networks can be quite efficient in getting asylum seekers to Indonesia, asylum seekers have to be resourceful in negotiating the final leg of their passage to Australia with smugglers based in Indonesia.

Table 9: Stakeholders Assisting with Migration to Australia by Nationality (n=121)
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012

	Afghanistan (n=65)		Sri Lanka (n=26)		Myanmar (n=12)		Others (n=16)		Total (n=119)	
Previous and local agent	11	16.9%	1	3.8%	-	-	5	31.2%	17	14.3%
Myself	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6.3%	1	0.8%
Family/relative/friend migrating with me	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Family/relative/friend in Australia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Family/relative/friend abroad	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Family/relative/friend in Indonesia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Family/relative/friend at home	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Smuggler in Australia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Smuggler abroad and local smuggler	2	3.1%	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1.7%
A local smuggler Only	17	29.2%	1	3.8%	-	-	2	12.5%	20	16.8%
Smuggler at home	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
A smuggler (unknown location)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
I don't know	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Haven't arranged anything due to detention	33	50.8%	24	92.3%	12	100.0%	8	50.0%	77	64.7%
Was resettled by UNHCR	2	3.10%	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1.70%

Independent units/individuals/local service providers are crucial. As Figure 11 shows, half of respondents (n=20) who managed to make arrangements to travel to Australia engaged the services of an Indonesian local (i.e. local service provider) to assist with some aspect of their journey.

Figure 11: Intending IMAs to Australia: Use of an Indonesian Local to Arrange Passage (n=40)
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012



Overall, considering that the mean cost of respondents' overall migration to Australia to be USD $10,310, it is clear that the Indonesian-Australian leg of their journey tends to be the most expensive part of their journey.

Asylum seekers usually have a 'contract' or an agreement of sorts with smugglers in case their migration to Australia was unsuccessful as indicated by the majority (70 percent, n=28) of respondents who used a smuggler as indicated in Table 10.

Table 10: Contract or Agreement with Smuggler for Failed Migration to Australia (n=40)
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012

	Afghanistan (n=30)		Sri Lanka (n=2)		Others (n=8)		Total (n=40)	
Yes	9	30.0%	0	0.0%	3	37.5%	12	30.0%
No	21	70.0%	2	100.0%	5	62.5%	28	70.0%
	Afghanistan (n=21)		Sri Lanka (n=2)		Others (n=5)		Total (n=28)	
Work in Australia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Full or partial return of money for failed migration	1	4.8%	0	0.0%	2	40.0%	3	10.7%
Payment upon successful migration	3	14.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	10.7%
Down payment and finalisation upon success	8	38.1%	2	100.0%	1	20.0%	11	39.3%
Payment managed by third party based on outcome	11	52.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	11	39.3%
Agent will attempt to resend the migrant between 1-3 more times	12	57.1%	0	0.0%	3	60.0%	15	53.6%

Respondents were also asked how long they had to wait in Indonesia before embarking on their journey to Australia. As Table 11 shows, a combined 42.5 percent (n=17) shows that most respondents tended to transit in Indonesia for 4 weeks and less compared with a combined 30 percent (n=12) who transited for a longer duration ranging from 4 to less than 24 weeks. Overall, the waiting times in Indonesia are similar to those in previous transit countries in Malaysia and Thailand, with most respondents spending less than a month before continuing their migration to the next destination.

Table 11: Duration of Time Spent in Indonesia Before Departing for Australia (n=40)
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012

	Afghanistan (n=30)		Sri Lanka (n=2)		Others (n=8)		Total (n=40)	
Less than 1 week	4	13.3%	-	-	1	12.5%	5	12.5%
1 to < 2 weeks	3	10.0%	-	-	2	25.0%	5	12.5%
2 to < 4 weeks	6	20.0%	-	-	1	12.5%	7	17.5%
4 to < 8 weeks	3	10.0%	1	50.0%	-	-	4	10.0%
8 to < 16 weeks	4	13.3%	-	-	2	25.0%	6	15.0%
16 to < 24 weeks	1	3.3%	-	-	1	12.5%	2	5.0%
I don't know	9	30.0%	1	50.0%	1	12.5%	11	27.5%

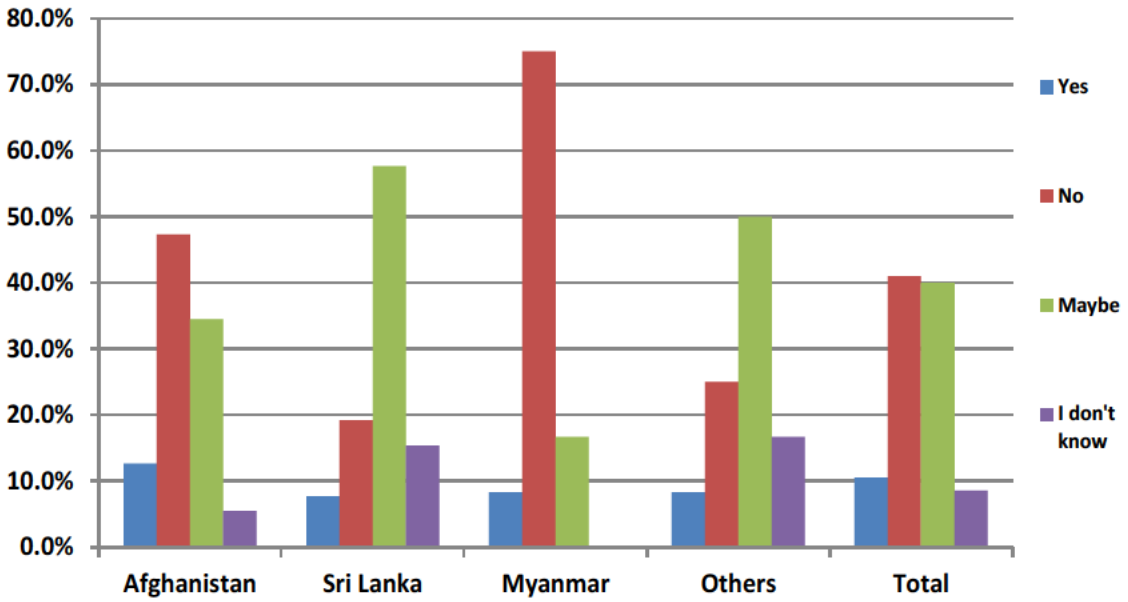
In general, the majority of the [embarkation] locations stated by respondents in Table 12 below tended to be around East Java and the Lesser Sunda Islands in South Eastern Indonesia, evidently favoured launching points due to their close proximity to Australia.

Table 12: Location Where Respondents Departed for Australia (n=40)
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012

Location of departure	Province	Frequency	Percent
I don't know	-	15	37.5%
x hours of drive from Jakarta	-	5	12.5%
Kupang	East Nusa Tenggara	5	12.5%
Surabaya	East Java	3	7.5%
Lombok	West Nusa Tenggara	3	7.5%
Jakarta	Jakarta	3	7.5%
Mataram	Central Java	2	5%
x hours of drive from Bogor	-	1	2.5%
Sumbawa Island	West Nusa Tenggara	1	2.5%
Cilacap	Central Java	1	2.5%
Bali	Bali	1	2.5%

Respondents were asked if they had any intentions to return to their home countries after resettlement in Australia. As Figure 12 shows, only a small number of respondents (10.5 percent, n=9) intended to return to their home country compared with 41.0 percent who did not. This indicates that there is a possibility of some refugees even after resettlement in Australia, would voluntarily return to their home countries in the future.

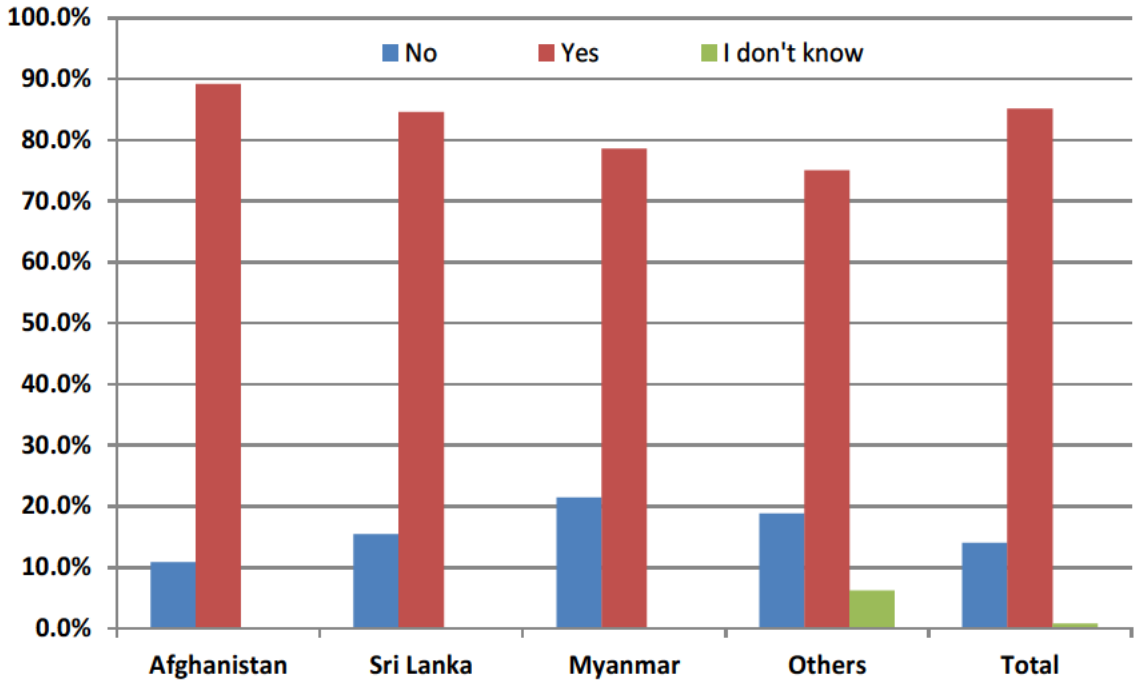
Figure 12: Intention to Return to Home Country After Resettlement (n=105)
Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012



Some 85.1 percent of respondents (n=103) in Figure 13 below who indicated that in spite of negative experiences they have had with irregularly migrating, they would still have migrated even if they knew of the difficulties before leaving their home countries.

Figure 13: **Would They Still Have Migrated if They Had Known of the Difficulties of Irregular Migration? (n=121)**

Source: Transit Migration Survey, 2010; 2012



11. GOVERNANCE ISSUES IN INDONESIA

In response to the increasing importance accorded border issues in Indonesia, one of the super-ministries (POLHUKAM) – involving the justice police and foreign affairs minister – has set up a people smuggling desk and unit. This is part of a plan to adopt a 'whole of government approach' in this area. Despite this high level initiative, the unit does not yet have any operational capacity and needs to rely on the Directorate General for Immigration, which has little influence.

12. CONCLUSION

The concept of transit migration is problematic conceptually and politically, but it refers to a phenomenon of increasing significance in the Asian region where migration is both a cause and effect of rapid economic growth. However, in several countries in the region, governance issues, lack of institutional and human capacity, excessive rent taking and transaction costs dilute migration's potential positive developmental impacts. In this context irregular migration and transiting is likely to increase in scale and impact.

The study found that the majority of respondents would enter Indonesia illegally, often by boat. There were a variety of reasons for this, but the main factor was simply due to the fact that they were not able to travel legally. Their migration status might have been irregular from the beginning of their journey but some shifted from a regular or irregular migrant in Thailand or Malaysia and perpetuated their irregular status as they enter Indonesia. Some respondents also reflected that entering illegally was a deliberate strategy as they wanted to avoid detection at official ports or channels so as to eliminate the possibility of being deported straight back to their home countries. The porous borders of Indonesia are further underlined as the majority of asylum seekers who entered illegally were unable to do so undetected. Moreover, respondents indicated that the Riau Islands and parts of Sumatra were their landing points – areas where Indonesian labour migrants are also smuggled to and

from Malaysia and Singapore which continues to highlight the challenges in addressing the arrival of asylum seekers in Indonesia.

Life in Indonesia as indicated by respondents is generally poor. Although respondents had access to services, the quality of education and housing was poor. The majority of respondents were also quite isolated and did not socialise with Indonesians. Asylum seekers might be open to settling in Indonesia, however, with poor living conditions, indefinite processing and resettlement times, and negative experiences, asylum seekers will continue to seek ways to continue their migration to Australia.

When it comes to onward migrating to Australia, it was found that while smugglers continued to play a significant role, their networks seem to be weaker in Indonesia. Respondents transiting through Thailand and Malaysia often used the same network of smuggler whereby the previous smuggler used to travel from their last transit-point to Malaysia would arrange for another smuggler in Malaysia to assist with the migration. However, there were fewer respondents who used the same network of agents in Indonesia. This is not only indicative of weaker transnational smuggling networks in Indonesia, but also underlines the importance of independent smugglers as well as independent units or local service providers assisting with other aspects of the migration.

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