

# Access to Work Crucial for International Refugees

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The number of refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia continues to increase. Data from the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stated there are over 14,405 refugees and asylum seekers. They are from Myanmar, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Somalia, and others. A third of this number live in 13 detention homes of the Immigration across Indonesia, another third in Community House funded by International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the rest is mingling with the local community.

"In 2017, Institute of International Studies of Faculty of Social and Political Sciences UGM (IIS Fisipol UGM) did a study on the refugee due to the increased number while their chance to live in a third country is decreasing. IIS initiated to contribute and give solution to the problem," said Atin Prabandari, M.A, during the launching of paper on *Policy for Access to Work for Refugees in Indonesia* at Faculty of Social and Political Sciences UGM on Friday (29/6).

According to Atin, the main problem was that refugees do not get their rights such as education and job as they are not Indonesian citizens. Under the current regulations, it's possible that the refugees have to live for 25 years here without access to education and work.

"In cooperation with the UNHCR Chapter South of Asia, IIS seeks possibilities to open work access

to the refugees,” said the International Relations lecturer.

Another lecturer, Yunizar Adiputera, M.A, said despite Indonesia not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or 1967 Protocol, the Indonesian government has made progress by issuing Presidential Decree No. 125 Year 2016 on International Refugees. Unfortunately, the Decree has not given significant impact as it has not addressed the basic problems of refugee crisis. For example, the decree has not regulated the right of refugee for work and education.

"The unavailability of access to work and education would obviously pose disadvantages to the refugees as they may have to wait for 25 years to be transported to the country of destination," he said.

Meanwhile, Fransisca Dwi Indah Asmiarsi, National Program Officer of Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), welcomed the plan from academics to help resolve the matter. She admitted access to work was crucial for the refugees to support their lives. She explained the budget cut from the IOM had made it more difficult for the refugees to meet their daily needs.

Fransisca added that refugees who live and mingle with the society have bigger chance to be welcomed and live independently. The local community have learned that refugees are different from tourists. The mingling between the refugees and local community has also brought economic benefits due to the rental business and groceries shops that are opened.

Fransisca also mentioned the problem that some refugees had asked to live in the detention homes, but rejected due to over-capacity. Then they had to build tents at the yards because they no longer have money and completely dependent on the detention homes and international organisations. This is where access to work for refugees became crucial, she emphasised.

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