

Building Bridge in Liminality: Education for Children Refugees in Transiting Country

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Abstract

July 2019, UNHCR reports that 13.863 international refugees and asylum seekers are transiting in Indonesia urban areas while waiting for the outcome of their resettlement applications to a third country. Most refugees have been transiting in Indonesia for more than three years in which they are living under the liminality of movement and basic rights such as the right to work and getting an education. 29% of refugees in Indonesia are children refugees, and only 643 children refugees enroll in Indonesian schools. The global refugee crisis has prolonged the transiting period in which some refugees score a seven-years-period of waiting for resettlement. The situation of not being engaged in formal education raise the concern of the children refugees' human security that is their current wellbeing and their future opportunities.

This study analyzes the situation of education of children refugees in a transiting country that is Indonesia. It sees how under the liminalities refugees and relevant organizations provide education to children and how the education answers the needs of the children refugees. The study answers the question of how to negotiate the need for contextual education for children refugees with the availability of education in the transiting country. Considering that education is always contextual with local and national values as its core knowledge, educating children who are not going to be residents of the country in the future begs a reflection of the purpose of education. Does engaging in the formal education of the transiting country secure the human security of children refugees? Does a non-formal and tailor-made education be a proper solution?

The study uses qualitative methodology. Data collecting methods are in-depth interviews and field observations to refugees living in three urban cities of Indonesia that are Jakarta, Bogor, and Makassar. The study concludes that even though Indonesian school might not provide children refugees with contextual knowledge needed in their resettlement country, engaging in the Indonesian schools will benefit children refugees with opportunities of self-development, social skills, and basic knowledge. Moreover, engaging children refugees in Indonesian schools will expose the local and refugee communities with multiculturalism that will be influential in building a more inclusive society.

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