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**Children and Families on the Move:
Stateless Children of Migrants in the Asia-Pacific Region**

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Children at risk of statelessness are a growing population worldwide. Children who lack legal documentation are often described as stateless. The world community has become increasingly active in efforts to gather accurate information and reduce the incidence of this global phenomenon. On one hand, rights advocates and child-focused organizations are concerned about undocumented children's lack of ability to exercise basic rights. On the other hand, stateless children are a concern for organizations within states with mandates to reinforce national borders, promote national security and prevent 'aliens' from making claims on citizen services including social protection, education, and health care.

A population of children at high risk of statelessness are the offspring of mothers and fathers who migrate across international borders for work without official documentation or who remain in a country without legal authorization. The world is facing unprecedented levels of mobility and migration, and this increasing flow of workers from

rural to urban areas and across country borders has deep and profound impacts for children and youth.

With international migration on the rise, growing numbers of migrant children are born and raised without legal affiliation to a nation-state. Stateless children are a highly diverse population: their lack of documentation may be the result of myriad conditions and considerations, including various parental decisions, family transitions, and wider cultural, political and economic conditions. Statelessness can lead to a range of trajectories and outcomes. Some reasons that Indonesian children are stateless are: (1) they crossed borders illegally with their parents and do not have legal documents in the receiving country; (2) their births are not registered in their home communities; (3) they may have migrated independently without documentation.

The research team exploring this topic is focusing on children of Indonesian mothers and fathers involved in undocumented labour migration. The project seeks to understand parents' decision-making regarding birth registration for their child.

Research to date has tended to emphasize costs and accessibility of birth registration facilities as major factors shaping why mothers and fathers do or do not register their children at birth, in Indonesia and elsewhere. The current study looks beyond cost and convenience to identify other factors shaping parental decision-making affecting statelessness among children of undocumented international migrants. Among factors that are explored by the team working on this topic are:

- Multigenerational undocumented migration in the family, community, or region;
- Migrant labour precariat;
- Cultural patterns especially marriage practices that affect documentation and migration
- Patriarchal values and associated affects on decisions about both registration and mobility;
- Access and costs of birth registration; documentation practices and false documents
- Confusion with birth registration procedures;
- Poor socialization around birth registration;
- Local level reputation – both stigma and honour.
- Motivation and confusion promulgated by middlemen involved in migrant labour recruitment and movement

Leslie Butt and Jessica Ball are lead investigators in pilot research is currently underway in Lombok and Sulawesi in Indonesia. They are joined by collaborator Harriot Beazley, a lecturer in Human Geography at the University of the Sunshine Coast in Australia, Nurul Ilmi Idrus, a lecturer in Anthropology at the University of Makassar, Sulawesi, and Stella Utomo, Women's Studies, University of Mataram, Lombok. Field work is being coordinated by Untung Waluyo, a lecturer in Education at the University of Mataram, Lombok. The Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives is coordinating communication about the project as part of its Migration and Mobility program (Brief explanatory video:

<http://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/capi/migration-mobility/home/children-migration/index.php>.)

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KEY RESOURCES

ECDIP Publications, Presentations and Reports

Ball, J., Butt, L., Beazley, H., & Fox, N. (2014). *Advancing Research on “Stateless Children”: Family Decision Making and Birth Registration among Transnational Migrants in the Asia-Pacific Region*. University of Victoria, Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives, Working Paper Series in Migration and Mobility. (539 KB)
>> Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives, University of Victoria

Ball, J., Butt, L., & Beazley, H. (2014). *Children and families on the move: Stateless children in Indonesia*. Preliminary field research report, Lombok and Jakarta. (886 KB)

Readings

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Butt, L. (2014) *Migration, mobility and transnational families: new priorities for the Asia-Pacific*. CAPI Working Paper 2013-1. Victoria, BC: Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives, University of Victoria.
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