

A top-down view of several children sitting around a large white sheet of paper on the floor, engaged in drawing. The paper is filled with various school-related illustrations. In the center, a large school building with a clock tower is drawn in red and brown. Surrounding it are numerous school supplies: a globe, a microscope, a clock, a backpack, a calculator, a ruler, a compass, a pencil sharpener, a pair of scissors, a kite, a bell, a magnifying glass, a book, a pencil case, and a small figure of a child. Some children are actively drawing with colored pencils and markers. The scene is brightly lit, and the children's hands and heads are visible at the edges of the frame.

ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES FOR  
REFUGEE CHILDREN AND  
YOUTH IN PEKANBARU  
RIAU, INDONESIA

TENGGU NILA FADHLIA

LEMBAGA PSIKOLOGI TERAPAN

UNIVERSITAS ISLAM RIAU

# WHO ARE WE?



Lembaga Psikologi Terapan (LPT), or in English: Applied Psychology Institute



Established in 2007



Function as community service unit of Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Islam Riau



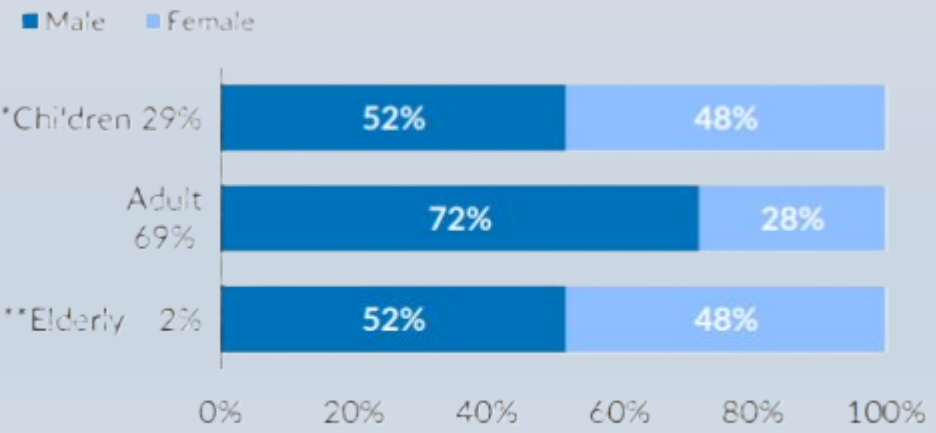
Located in the central of Sumatra Island, western part of Indonesia

# REFUGEE DEMOGRAPHICS IN INDONESIA PER SEPTEMBER 2024



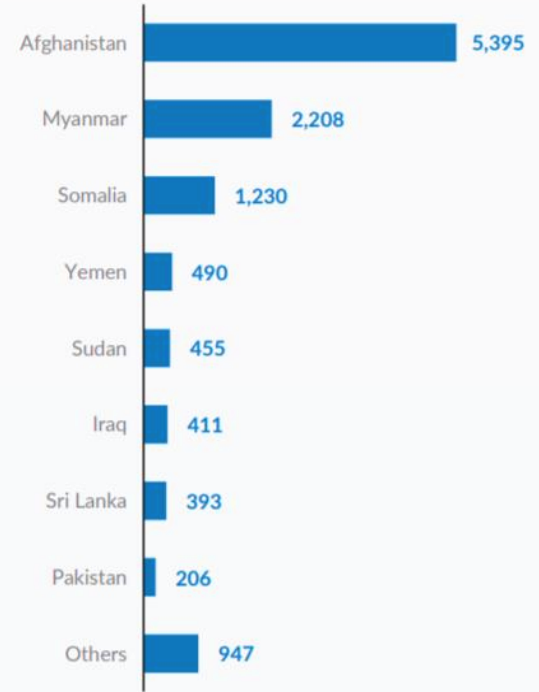
**Total Population**  
11,735 Individuals  
(6,548 Cases)

Population based on Age and Gender



\*Between 0-17 years old \*\* Above 60 years old

Population based on Country of Origin



# Locations of Persons Registered with UNHCR



The Government of Indonesia-UNHCR host country agreement has been in place since 1979.

Picture from UNHCR Report, November 2024

# LIFE AS A TRANSIT REFUGEE



Dealing with  
uncertainty



Limited resources  
of life



Forced to build  
temporary survival  
strategies



For refugee children,  
the main problem is  
limited opportunity of  
education



Mostly refugee  
children in Indonesia  
do not have access to  
public school

## LPT REFUGEE SERVICE

The background of the slide features a row of white paper cutouts of human figures holding hands, set against a soft green gradient background. The figures are arranged in a line, with some in the foreground being more prominent than others in the background.

- LPT started to serve refugees and asylum seekers in 2016 in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
- The refugee stay is supposed to be temporary since Indonesia is not a signatory of the 1951 refugee convention.

# LPT REFUGEE SERVICE

Clinical  
assessment

Individual &  
group  
counseling

Psychoeducation

Child  
developmental  
therapy

Psychosocial  
group  
intervention

# REFUGEE CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Almost 30% of total refugee population in Indonesia are children



Refugee children are prone to various mental health problems as the effect of migration (Javanbakht, Rosenberg, Haddad, & Arfken, 2018)



Other problems facing by refugee children and youth (Schwartz et al, 2021):

Difficulty in expressing emotions

The ability of socialize

Build friendships

Adapt to new environment



WHY CHOOSING  
ARTISTIC  
ACTIVITIES FOR  
REFUGEE  
CHILDREN?

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Taking part in artistic activities and cultural participation benefits health and wellbeing (Clini et al, 2019).

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Artistic activities and cultural participation including music, art making, theatre, dance, museum, and heritage activities (Clini et al, 2019).

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Art provides a non-threatening environment for refugee children and youth to express emotions and feelings, that can lead to a sense of relief (Annous et al, 2022).

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Art can help refugee children and youth articulate their ideas when traditional communication methods fall short (Annous et al, 2022).

# WHAT HAVE WE DONE WITH REFUGEE CHILDREN AND YOUTH?



# ORIGAMI AND DRAWING



# THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE



A group of Afghan children and teenagers posed before their performance on stage.

They initiated the idea of performing on stage and ended with choosing theatrical act.

All of them never performed before, but excited to do so.

# THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE



# CROCHETING/ KNITTING



- After some group discussions, we opted for crocheting/ knitting.
- This group of Afghan female adolescents was fond of knitting then.
- Doing it in a group would benefit their social skills.
- We “produced” some new teachers from the initial group and expanded to several additional groups to other shelters as well.

# CROCHETING/ KNITTING



- Initially, the knitting session was taught by a refugee woman to a group of refugee teenagers.
- This refugee woman suffered from depression, but engaging in the art teaching activity helped her to alleviate the symptoms.
- It was one kind of therapeutic activity for her in complement to her counseling session.

# ART PRODUCTS






# THE BENEFITS FOR REFUGEE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Empower participants by developing their sense of ownership in the project.
- Help children regain routine in the middle of irregularity and uncertainty.
- Improve mood and increase the experience of positive emotion by having something to look forward to and something to do.
- Learn social skills: the opportunity to overcome social isolation and build a social network
- The possibility of self-expressing without having to articulate their feeling, as children with traumatic experiences find it difficult to verbalize their feelings.
- Reducing negative thoughts by keeping oneself busy, preventing one's mind from dwelling on the slow progress of resettlement cases.
- Evidence-based knitting: it a positive impact on people suffering from depression and posttraumatic stress disorder because 'the movements involved in knitting are bilateral, rhythmic, repetitive, and automatic'. It enhances the production of serotonin and increases the positive mood (Cuypers *et al*, 2012).

## KEY LESSON LEARNED

That arts participation would enhance wellbeing by allowing participants to form meaningful relationships based on trust and mutual support (improving social well-being) and enhance self-esteem and self-confidence (increasing personal well-being).



Artistic activities in a group helps foster a sense of community, enhancing communication and cooperation.



The importance of involving refugees in selecting activities that resonate with their needs.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENT



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