MIGRATION AND SOCIAL COHESION

Our research explores issues of social cohesion and migration from inter-personal and intergroup interactions to social and economic dynamics at the national and international level. With over 80 academics and more than 50 graduate research students in the faculty working in social cohesion and migration, we are at the forefront of research into the mechanisms of building and sustaining stronger, more resilient communities. Since 2010 we have collaborated with 67 national and international partners to deliver more than 100 projects valued over $10 million. Practical applications of this research include informing policy making, contributing to debate and reporting on trends in social cohesion both here in Australia and internationally.

MIGRATION AND REGIONAL STABILITY

This theme concerns issues of regularisation of migration and border policing. Under this theme, we examine the political, cultural, societal, historical and economic causes of migration and irregular migration in the Asia Pacific Region and world-wide. We explore Australia’s relations with its regional neighbours, and Australia’s role in regional stability and globally and examine the factors associated with post conflict/disaster resolution and community reconciliation.

Our research aims to identify and explain safer migration pathways and to draw attention to institutional changes that will lead to minimisation of harm related to irregular migrations. A particular focus of this research endeavour is on gender, labour migration, irregular migration and mobility and how these shape and influence economic stability of the region.

Additionally, we explore the narrative of migration and irregular migration, in particular media messaging and discourse and examine the impact this has on the stability of the region. Other research in this area explores how climate change influences mobility and ultimately issues of security for Australia and regionally. Our researchers collaborate with government and community organisations, law enforcement institutions and the media to deliver insights into safer migration pathways. Projects under this theme have helped to: explain causes, pathways and responses to people smuggling in Indonesia; undertake social and historical study of Australia-Indonesia attitudes and relations; explain impact of globalisation on policing of internal borders; examine decision making of irregular maritime arrivals in Indonesia; and by studying professional services explain how migration reshapes labour markets.

CASE STUDY OVER LEAF: INFORMATION CONSUMPTION AND DECISION MAKING OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS IN INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA
Compared to any other region in the world, South East Asia has the largest volume of irregular border crossings. However little is known about the importance and impacts of irregular migration. These border crossings have become far more hazardous and lethal than in the past, and the female share of those crossing borders irregularly has grown dramatically.

The study, consisting of two research projects, was conducted to strengthen the evidence base to inform policy and operational deliberations at government level on gender and irregular migration journeys in the region with implications for Australia as a destination country.

The first research project was completed in 2015 with the publication of the Occasional Paper ‘Information consumption and decision making of irregular migrants in Indonesia’. With a focus on irregular Afghan and Iranian migrants in transit in Indonesia, this research provides a deeper and more detailed understanding of the motivations of irregular migrants surrounding their migration decisions.

From interviews with a total of 140 irregular migrants (including 30% female participants), the project analysed the patterns of information consumption and decision-making in five key embarkation sites in Indonesia, which informed the migrant’s decisions about onward journeys, including to Australia.

The second research project, ‘Women’s decision-making and information sharing in the course of irregular migration’ was completed in 2016 and the Occasional Paper produced is currently under review for publication. With a focus on stateless Rohingya women migrants in transit in Malaysia, this research maps women’s decision-making and information sharing during migration journeys from Myanmar, through South East Asia and onwards, including to Australia. For this study research data was collected through 350 surveys and 35 interviews.

Conducting this research with irregular migrants in Indonesia and Malaysia enabled the research team to analyse information consumption and migration decisions in situ. It therefore offers a detailed and accurate account from the methodology employed because of the temporal and geographical proximity to the actual information consumption and decision making patterns.