

■ Research Note

The Lack of Childcare as a Housing Problem:
Evaluating the Role of Rusunawa Public Rental Housing as Transitional Housing for
Low-Income Families in Batam City, Indonesia

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Abstract: Rusunawa (low-income public multi-family rental housing) is deemed to be the best solution for housing provisions for low-income families in Batam. The Batam local government has made Rusunawa available as transitional housing for low-income families. The government expects them to save up income while living in Rusunawa and purchase and move to a house. The government touts Rusunawa as a successful program based on its high occupancy rate. However, our survey of Rusunawa family households shows that 70% earn monthly income less than Rp. 4,000,000—the official poverty line—and are unable to save money, which is also true of 80% of households with children. Our research finds that many child-rearing households just have one earner, with the wives taking care of their children instead of seeking employment. Such single-income conditions and the consequent economic demise result from a lack of childcare, traditionally provided by family members in Indonesia, but not available for Rusunawa families, most of whom migrated to the island city of Batam from their hometowns. Rusunawa families need to live in two-earner households, even while raising children, to be able to earn enough to save and purchase a house. In conclusion, we call for the establishment of childcare programs in Rusunawa.

Keywords: Rusunawa, low-income families, public transitional housing

I. Introduction

Housing is one of the most basic of human needs. Adequate housing is more than a roof over a person's head; it has a substantial influence on a person's quality of life, dignity, and productivity (UN-HABITAT, 2006a; Ibem, 2011). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its third session on December 10, 1948, stated that “all governments have an obligation in the housing sector, for instance, by creating ministries of housing or agencies that write the housing policies, enact the programs, plan the projects, and allocate the funds.” It is the responsibility of governments to guarantee adequate and affordable housing for every citizen.

In Indonesia, the right of every citizen to possess housing is acknowledged in Article 28H of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945 (2nd amendment, August 18, 2000): “Each

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person has a right to a life of well-being in body and mind, to a place to dwell, to enjoy a good and healthy environment, and to receive medical care.” Act No.1/2011 on Housing and Settlement states, “Every Indonesian citizen should live in a decent and affordable settlement within a healthy, safe, harmonious, organized, integrated and sustainable environment.”

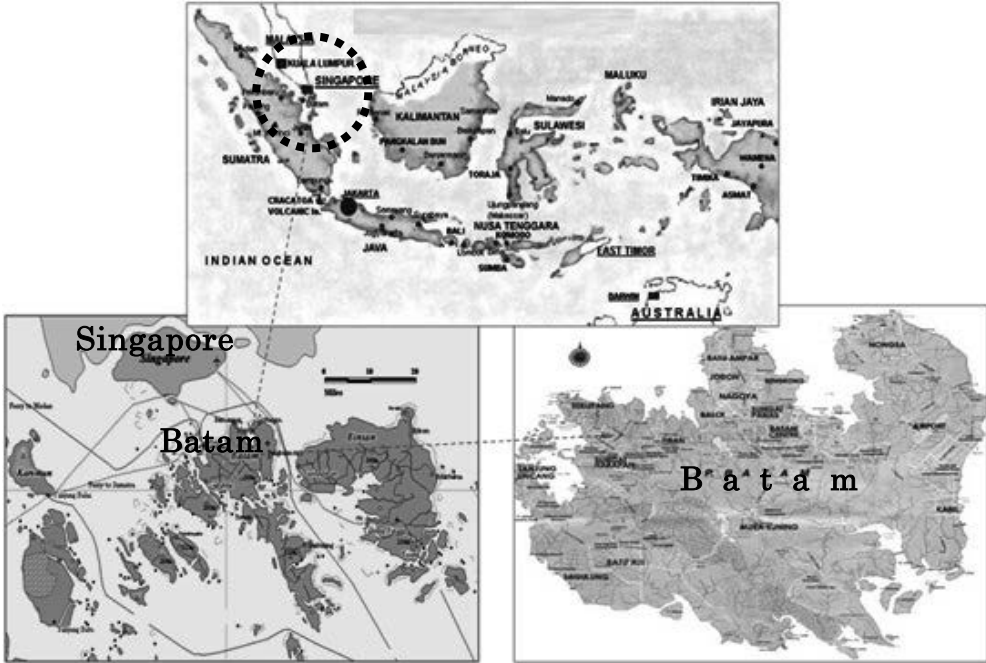


Figure 1: Map of Batam Island

The government of Indonesia has implemented several programs to overcome the country’s housing problems, particularly for low-income people. Through one of these programs, the government provides low-cost multi-family housing, called Rumah Susun, or simply Rusun, in urban areas. The two types of Rusun are low-cost rental Rusun (Rusunawa) and resident-owned Rusun (Rusunami). The Rusun development program aims to prevent the growth of slums and the incidence of squatters; provide decent homes for low-income people; enhance land efficiency and effectiveness in urban areas; and create a healthy, harmonious, and sustainable housing environment (Act No.20/2011 on Rumah Susun).

The Rusun and especially the Rusunawa were deemed the best solutions for housing provision for low-income people in urban areas, given the high prices of houses and the scarcity of land. The central government launched the 1,000 Tower Rusun program in 2007; it aimed to build 1,000 Rusunawa and Rusunami multistory buildings for low-income people in 10 populous cities by 2012 (Apriansyah, 2010). The program did not achieve its goal; the government had only built approximately 13% of the buildings by the targeted year.¹⁾ Nevertheless, the government still continues administering the program.

Batam city was selected as one of the 10 cities to participate in the central government Rusun development program. Batam is an island city in Riau Islands, Kepri Province, Indonesia, located only 20 km south of Singapore (Figure 1). Batam is a growing industrial city with rapid population

growth. The population growth has largely been fomented by high numbers of domestic migrants arriving from other regions all over Indonesia, largely to work at factories. Based on 2015 data from Batam Statistics Bureau, the population tripled during 1999–2014, with an 8.6% average annual population growth rate. Such a rapid influx of people has made Batam a unique migrant city island, filled with young workers living away from their hometowns and villages, detached from their families and relatives. The family unit is otherwise essential for everyday life in Indonesia, particularly in terms of raising children.

Due to the rapid urban growth, Batam has been struggling with housing problems, particularly the incidence of squatter settlements, which are near industrial areas and major sources of labor supply for factories and related services. A squatter settlement is called Rumah Liar (illegal housing) in Batam. It is difficult to find accurate and up-to-date numbers for the squatter settlements in Batam city. In 2001, 57,000 houses were illegal (Maureen, 2008). Based on data from the Batam Development Board (Bappeda), 20,250 illegal houses were emptied in 2006 (Maureen, 2008). Then, 43,000 illegal houses were counted in 2012 (Batam City Planning Agency, 2015), indicating no significant reduction in the numbers of squatters.

In an attempt to mitigate rising housing problems, the Batam city government built 76 twin-block units²⁾ of Rusun as of 2014: 74 units of Rusunawa and two units of Rusunami (Batam Dalam Angka 2015). Two types of Rusunawa can be observed in Batam: Rusunawa for single residents and Rusunawa for married or family residents. The room sizes range from 21m² to 27m². The Batam government defines Rusunawa as temporary housing with a relatively low rental cost,³⁾ and expects that low-income residents can save up income while living in Rusunawa for three years, the officially allowed length of stay (renewable twice), so that they can purchase a house and move from Rusunawa.

The government claims that Rusunawa has played an important role in public housing provisions for low-income people in Batam. The government assumes that Rusunawa has been successful in Batam, with an average occupancy rate of approximately 85%, even though many resident candidates face long waiting lists in certain locations.⁴⁾ However, the success of the Rusunawa program should not be measured only by occupancy rates but also by the extent to which the program achieves its policy goals. Our research pays special attention to the role of Rusunawa as transitional housing for low-income families. Specifically, we question to what degree living in Rusunawa helps low-income families successfully move to adequate housing after leaving Rusunawa; this means they would purchase/own their housing where they could support family living.

In his master's thesis research, Apriansyah (2010) interviewed several former Rusunawa residents in Batam City and investigated where they moved to after leaving Rusunawa. He found that all the interviewed former residents had successfully purchased and moved to their own homes. The author subsequently concluded that Rusunawa policy is effective in its transitional housing role. The same research, however, revealed interesting statistics relating to the existing low-income Rusunawa households: approximately two thirds of the household members surveyed stated that they were unable to save money. His analysis on former and existing Rusunawa households presents

rather contradictory stories in evaluating housing policy. The analysis of former residents relied on a qualitative interview method with a snowballing approach to find the interviewees, which is understandable because it is difficult to find a reasonable sample size of former residents since the local housing authority does not track the households after the residents leave Rusunawa. However, the results may not be totally generalizable.

Therefore, we examine the economic/living conditions of Rusunawa family households to discern whether they are able to save enough money to successfully move into and purchase appropriate housing when they leave Rusunawa. Thus, we evaluate the effectiveness of Rusunawa public housing policy as a transitional housing program for low-income families in Batam.

II . Methods

This descriptive research adopted both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The primary data was obtained by interviewing Rusunawa residents based on a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire had both closed- and opened-ended questions. Most of the qualitative questions were opened-ended in order to obtain the pure aspirations and initiatives of the residents without any intervention from the interviewer.

From our survey results, we present the following selected results relevant to our question: the basic household profile, the previous residence, reasons to move to Rusunawa, social and economic conditions, the childcare situation, obstacles to work for wives, preferences for future housing, and expectations for policy support.⁵⁾

The research focus is on family households living in Rusunawa buildings managed by Pemko Batam, the city government of Batam.⁶⁾ These Rusunawa buildings were selected for survey targets for several reasons. First, Rusunawa in Pemko Batam is officially for family households only. Second, they are managed by the local government; thus, our results will directly provide recommendations for public housing policy improvement. Third, Pemko Batam has 30 twin-blocks, representing more units of Rusunawa than any other Rusunawa management organizations in Batam. Thus, it could represent the conditions of all Rusunawa in Batam city. At a full occupancy condition, the 30 twin-blocks can accommodate 2,592 households. For the sample size of this research, the



(Photos taken by Ikhlas in 2016)

Figure 2: Rusunawa Sites for Questionnaire Survey

survey was conducted in February 2016 with 180 respondents living in Pemko Batam Rusunawa buildings in two locations: 90 households each who lived in the “Muka Kuning 1” area and “Tanjung Uncang 1” area (Figure 2).⁷⁾

We used convenience sampling in this research because many of the household members were at home when the surveys were distributed. This method was implemented at both Rusunawa locations. Most of the respondents were housewives because the husbands (as the heads of the households) were at work.

III. Results and Discussion

III.1 Household Profile

Table 1 summarizes a basic profile of the 180 family households/householders (179 husbands and 1 wife), and Table 2 presents more basic information subdivided for husbands and wives in our survey data. Of all the family households, 82.8% have at least one child, and the rest are couple households. They are young family households with the average age of husbands 32.6 years old and wives 30.5 years old. The average length of living in Rusunawa so far is 2.8 years old, which is shorter than the official first three-year contract duration.⁸⁾ Many residents are migrants from various regions of Indonesia. For the husbands, 93.3% came from outside of Riau Islands province, 50% from other provinces in the Sumatra region (except Riau Islands), 32.2% from the Java region, 2.8% from the Sulawesi region, 1.7% from the Kalimantan region, and 6.7% from Eastern Indonesia regions.

III.2 Previous Residence and Reasons to Move to Rusunawa

As for residence prior to Rusunawa, 22.8% of the households (householders) answered that they moved directly from their hometown to Rusunawa to work in Batam; most of the others came from other residences in Batam. The most notable figure is that over a quarter of the households lived in slums (or as squatters) prior to moving to Rusunawa. To put this result in a positive light, the Rusunawa housing policy is working to help low-income slum residents access proper housing and thus mitigate the demand for slum development, which is one of the central policy goals. Or, looking from another viewpoint, we could also say that Rusunawa was not as entirely occupied by former slum residents as might have been assumed since many other residents moved from residences in the formal private housing market: 23.9% from single-family rental houses and 18.3% from rental rooms in single-family rental houses.⁹⁾ The participants suggested that the biggest disadvantage of living in Rusunawa was limited unit space (66.7%).

Other housing-related results of this survey (Ikhlas 2016) show that the main reason for households to move to Rusunawa is the proximity to the workplace (31.1%), followed by marriage (22.8%). The biggest advantage of living in Rusunawa is that it was cheaper than living in their previous settlements (63.3%). We would also add that the term “cheaper” indicates not only cheaper rental cost but also cheaper transportation cost because the workplaces of most residents were close

Table 1: Household/Householder Profile

Household sample size	180
% with child(ren)	82.8%
Average length of stay in Rusunawa	2.8
Average length of stay in Batam	7.4
Place of Origin (%)	
Riau Islands Province	6.7%
Sumatera region (except Riau Islands)	50.0%
Java region	32.2%
Kalimantan region	1.7%
Sulawesi region	2.8%
East region (NTT and NTB)	6.7%
Residence prior to Rusunawa	
Hometown	22.8%
Squatters/Slums	27.2%
Single-family rental houses	23.9%
Rental rooms in single-family houses	18.3%
Relatives' or friends' house (no rent)	2.8%
Cooperate dormitory	2.2%
Others	2.8%

Table 2: Basic Profile of Husbands and Wives

	Husband	Wife
Person sample size	179	180
Average Age (years)	32.6	30.5
Educational Attainment		
Less than High School	14.5%	20.0%
High School graduates	81.0%	78.3%
College graduates	4.5%	1.7%
Full-time housework (%)	0.0%	81.1%
% who are employed	100.0%	18.9%
Type of primary job (% of employed)		
Work in private sector	82.7%	85.2%
Self employed	13.4%	14.8%
Work in public sector	3.9%	0.0%

to Rusunawa; 58.9% lived within a 10-minute commuting distance. As for the disadvantages, limited space had the highest percentage (66.7%), followed by no land for cultivation (18.9%).

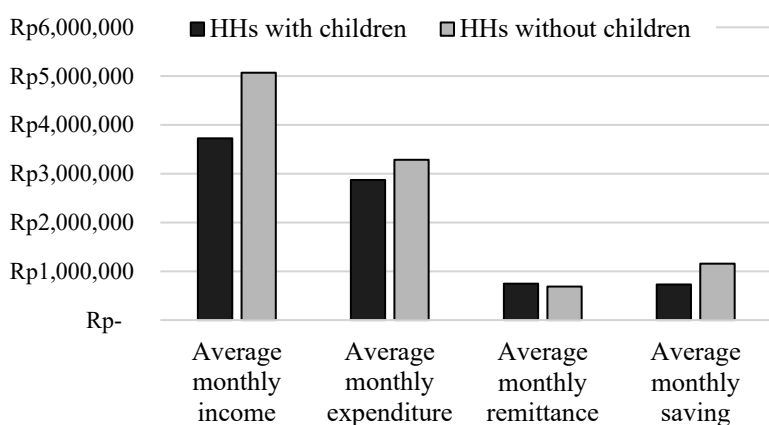
III.3 Socioeconomic Conditions

As Table 2 shows, over 80% of the husbands and the wives have educational attainment higher than graduating from high school (12-year education level). Considering the fact that Indonesia has a 9-year compulsory educational system, many Rusunawa residents are not necessarily uneducated. They are clearly the working poor, as all the householders (husbands) are employed, and even 13.8% have a secondary job. Their average monthly household income is Rp. 3,957,174, less than Rp. 4,000,000, which is the official poverty line for low-income households as defined by the Ministry of Public Works and Housing (MPWH Regulation No.20/2014) and the required household income to be eligible to live in Rusunawa in Batam. In our survey data, approximately 70% of the households earned monthly income less than Rp. 4,000,000, 23% earn higher than Rp. 4,000,000¹⁰⁾ because they seemed to have increased their incomes since being admitted to Rusunawa. Our question is whether their household income is high enough to save income so that they could move to proper housing by the time they move out of Rusunawa.

Table 3 and Figure 3 present the income and spending levels of our sample households. The key element that affects the economic conditions of Rusunawa families seems to be whether they have a child or not. The majority of the households (83%) have at least one child; their economic conditions are daunting compared to the households without children. The average monthly income

Table 3: Economic Conditions of Households

	Households without children	Households with children	Total
Sample size	31	149	180
Average monthly income	Rp 5,070,621	Rp 3,723,188	Rp 3,957,174
Average monthly expenditure	Rp 3,286,194	Rp 2,870,275	Rp 2,941,906
Average monthly remittance	Rp 685,714	Rp 746,000	Rp 724,359
Average monthly saving	Rp 1,156,250	Rp 729,630	Rp 888,372
% able to save money	51.6%	18.1%	23.9%
% two earners	64.5%	12.8%	21.7%

**Figure 3: Income, Expenditure, and Saving Conditions of Households**

they have children; it sounds even worse when you think it is natural to assume that those couple households without children will likely have children soon.

III.4 Childcare Conditions and Obstacles to Work for Wives

Our results suggest that the central factor that causes the economic demise of Rusunawa households is that most of them have just one earner with a solo breadwinner husband and a full-time housewife. Of our sample households, only 12.8% of the households with children are two-earner households, compared to 64.5% of those without children. In many cases, households change from two earners to one once children are born because of the lack of childcare. The wives are often solely responsible for taking care of the children.

Of 149 households with children, the majority of couples (93.9%), mostly wives, take care of their children by themselves. For other households, 1.7% rely on informal childcare services, 0.6% formal childcare, and 0.6% grandparents in Rusunawa. We found some households who do not live with their parents; the children live in boarding schools (1.1%) or with grandparents in their hometowns (2.2%).

Of 146 full-time housewives, 88.4% answered that they used to work (Figure 4); 55.8% had quit their jobs because of getting pregnant and/or having child (Figure 5). When asked if they wanted to work if possible, 87% of them said they wanted to work (Figure 6); 40.4% showed interest

of households with children is Rp. 3,723,188, 26.6% less than that of households without children. As for expenditures, the households with children spend only 12.7% less than those without children, and they even send 8.8% more remittance money home. Consequently, their average monthly saving is Rp. 729,630, 36.9% less than the savings of those without children. Only 18.1% said they were able to save money, compared to 51.6% for those without children (23.9% in total). We could say that, with or without children, many low-income Rusunawa households cannot save money, but that the situation is worse if

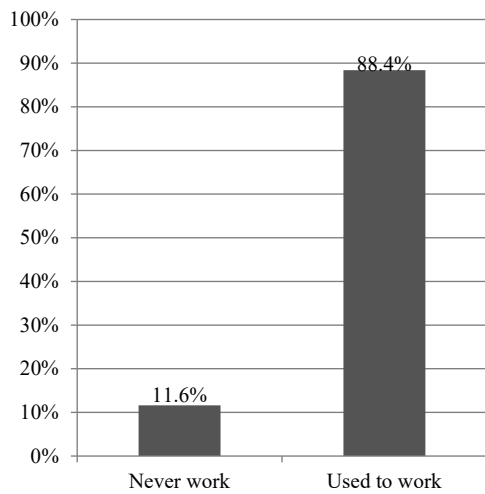


Figure 4: Previous Work Experience of Full-Time Housewives

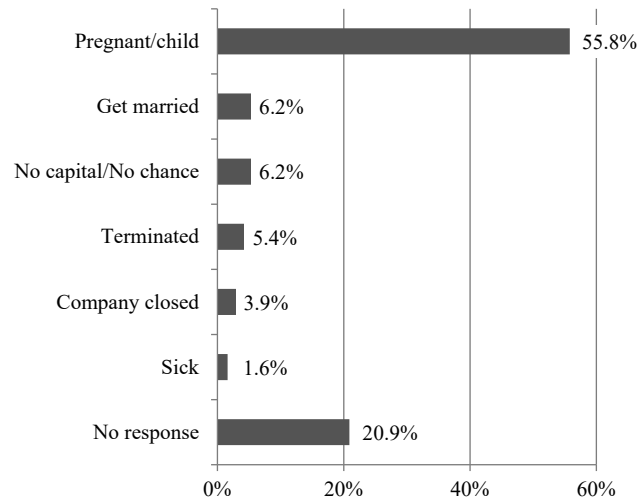


Figure 5: Reasons that Full-Time Housewives Quit Jobs

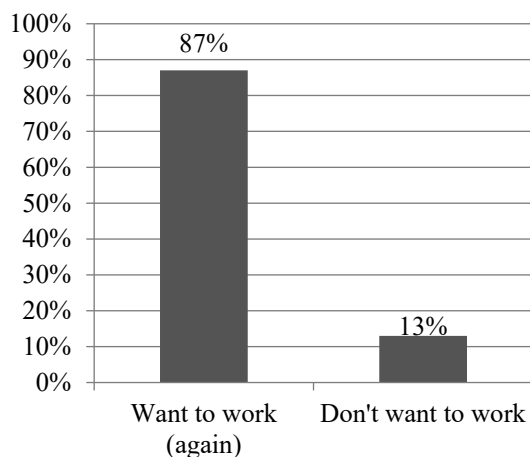


Figure 6: Willingness of Full-Time Housewives to Work (Again)

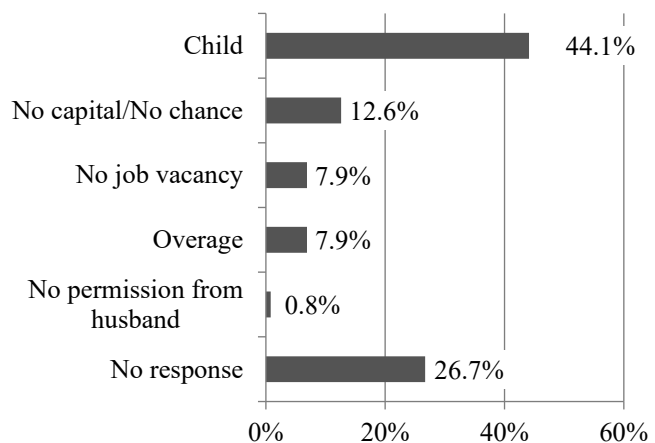


Figure 7: Obstacles of Full-Time Housewives to Work

in working in the private sector, and 21.2% had their own businesses. However, as Figure 7 shows, 44.1% stated that children were an obstacle to getting a job, followed by 12.6% who said they had no capital and no chance for doing business.

Despite the strong desire of housewives to work, they are not willing to rely on others to take care of their children. Formal day care services are not yet conventional or popular in Indonesia; thus, they are not widely available. Regarding formal childcare services, some mothers commented that it was too expensive, they did not trust it, and they were too far away from their Rusunawa. It could be why some households with working mothers choose informal childcare close to Rusunawa because they are more trustable and relatively cheaper.

III.5 Preferences for Future Housing and Expectations for Policy Support

Figure 8 presents the preferences of our sample Rusunawa households for future housing

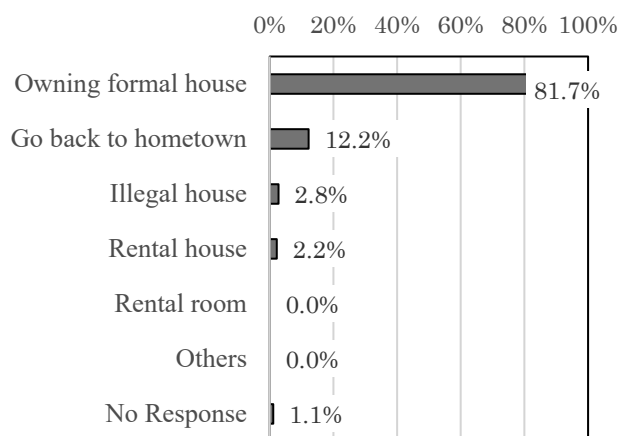


Figure 8: Preferences for Future Housing

after the residents move out from Rusunawa. Most of the households (81.7%) prefer to own housing, with comfort being the main reason. It is notable to find some people answered that they planned to move to illegal houses. The main reason was that they were not able to purchase a house. Also, a significant percentage of households planned to build or buy a house in their hometowns (12.2%) because they did not plan to permanently stay in Batam. Some stated that the price

of housing in Batam was too expensive. To answer the question, “Is it possible for you to purchase a formal house after leaving Rusunawa,” 60% answered “No,” 30% said “Yes,” and 10% did not answer. This self-evaluation sounds plausible when they are faced with their saving conditions and formal market prices of housing; according to the data by the Ministry of Public Works and Housing (2014), the standard housing price in Riau Islands (Kepulauan Riau) province is Rp. 125,000,000. Some left comments such as “the interest rate of mortgage is too high” and “prefer to buy vacant land to build a house.”

As for possible economic support from the government (open-ended question), many (38.9%) stated that they needed subsidized stable foods, and some stated that they needed job/business opportunities for housewives, which could be done at home while they were taking care of children. When it comes to government support for helping them own housing, 17.2% answered subsidized houses, 12.8% said subsidized land, and some wanted reduced interest rates and no down payments—but over 50% did not comment.

IV. Conclusions

From the key findings of this research, it could be concluded that Rusunawa is not successful in playing the transitional housing role for low-income family households. Even though the majority of respondents admit that the rental cost is cheap, it is still hard for them to save money to purchase a house.

The facts show the following:

1. Low-income family residents have difficulties saving money for purchasing a house if they have only one earner and a single income. They primarily have single incomes because the mothers (housewives) have to focus on taking care of their children in this migrant island city, away from their hometowns and their families and relatives.

2. Interestingly, most of the housewives actually want to work to help their husbands earn more money, but the main obstacle is about who will take care of their children. They cannot invite family or relatives to live together in Rusunawa to take care of their children because of the limited

room space and stricter rules compared to those of other settlements (e.g., slums). The majority of the housewives do not want to send their children to childcare due to expensive costs, low trust of childcare, a location too far away from Rusunawa, the lack of knowledge or low popularity of formal childcare, or a culture in which mothers (or their family members, such as grandparents, aunts and sisters) take care of their children rather than let them be nurtured by other people.

V. Recommendation for Future Work

Government should create some programs and schemes for Rusunawa family households. Some alternative solutions are proposed:

1. Provide childcare services.

Childcare is the most important facility that should be available for those in Rusunawa. Two kinds of childcare could be provided. First, childcare could be managed by the local government with low costs or subsidies. The parents would be more likely to trust such a service managed by the government. The childcare should also be located in Rusunawa to avoid commuting time and cost. Second, if the government encountered obstacles due to a lack of funding or caregiver personnel, it could allow/encourage/subsidize the Rusunawa community to support the program. The facility could be managed by Rusunawa residents themselves so that the wives could go to work while other wives took care of their children. More low-income Rusunawa families could be helped by this public-private partnership scheme. In this sense, future research should focus on the needs of Rusunawa families for childcare services.

2. Provide supporting facilities and empower the housewives.

It looks imperative that low-income Rusunawa households should have two earners or double incomes (wives also need to work) to succeed while living in Rusunawa. Wives could work informally at Rusunawa itself when it is difficult for them to work as a formal external worker. The future study of Rusunawa policies could focus on how to empower Rusunawa housewives to earn extra money by doing activities within Rusunawa.

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[Notes]

- 1) Pangihutan Marpaung, Deputy of Formal Housing at Ministry of Public Works and Housing (<https://finance.detik.com/properti/d-1890824/program-1000-tower-rusun-warisan-jk-cuma-terrealisasi-13>)
- 2) In Batam, one unit of Rusun is generally built in a twin shape with two identical buildings of four to five stories, called twin blocks. One building consists of 80 or

96 rooms.

- 3) The rent ranges from Rp. 195,000 to Rp. 240,000 per month, which is 5%–6% of the income when monthly income is Rp. 4,000,000.
- 4) Based on an interview with Mr. Agung Fithrianto, Head of Housing and Settlement Division, Batam City Planning Office, conducted in April 2016.
- 5) More detailed results are available in the thesis by Ikhlas (2016).
- 6) In addition to Pemko Batam, BP Batam (known as the Batam Industrial Development Authority/BIDA), the Social Insurance Administration Organization (BPJS), Perumnas (National Housing Authority), and Real Estate Indonesia (REI) manage Rusunawa.
- 7) Detailed description and comparative analysis of these two locations are included in the thesis by Ikhlas (2016).
- 8) Though renewable up to two times or for 9 years in total.
- 9) To our local knowledge, little multi-family rental housing is available in Batam.
- 10) 7% did not answer questions about their income.

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住宅問題としての保育環境の不備
—インドネシア・バタム市における低所得家族世帯向けの移行住宅としての
ルスナワの役割の評価—

イクラス イダル、式 王美子

【要旨】バタム市においては、ルスナワ（公営賃貸集合住宅）は低所得家族世帯のための最適な住宅供給政策とみなされている。バタム市政府はルスナワを低所得世帯の移行住宅として提供しており、住民はルスナワに居住する間に貯金し、住宅を購入、期限内に退去することが期待されている。バタム市はその入居率の高さから、ルスナワを成功施策であると誇る。しかし、本研究におけるアンケート調査では、70%の家族世帯の月収が貧困基準となる4,000,000ルピアを下回り、貯蓄できていないことが明らかになった。この数字は、子育て世帯では80%に達する。多くの子育て世帯では、夫が一家の大黒柱で妻が専業主婦の片働き世帯である。そのような片働きという世帯状況と厳しい家計状況は、ルスナワにおける保育環境の不備に要因がある。インドネシアでは、家族や親戚で子育てをするのが一般的であるが、故郷を離れバタム市に移住したルスナワ住民はそのような家族による援助が得られない。ルスナワの子育て世帯が住宅購入資金を貯蓄し、一般住宅に移行するには、子育て中も共働きでありつづける必要がある。結論では、ルスナワにおける保育施策の必要性を論じる。

キーワード：ルスナワ，低所得家族世帯，公営住宅