

# The Understanding of Indonesian Passport Holders in Tackling Emergency Situations while Overseas (Case Study: Safe Travel Application)

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## ABSTRACT

Facing emergency situations in overseas is somehow challenging, particularly considering the whole setting of one's surroundings is alien (including cultural and social context, legal system, and language) and lack of one's support system to be accessed to back up for help. Thus, it is important for citizens who travel abroad to be able to tackle the situations and equip themselves with a certain preparation. In 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been handling over 43,000 cases. The number has almost doubled from that in 2019 (24,465 cases). This study aims to examine the understanding of Indonesian passport holders in tackling emergency situations abroad, focusing on the participants' usage of Safe Travel Application. Safe Travel Application is a tool developed by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs to cope with the ministry main objective which is to protect Indonesian citizen overseas. The participants are composed of 71 Indonesian passport holders above 18 years old. This research applies a quantitative method using an online survey as the instrument. The survey consists of 8 systematic-questions (6 closed-ended questions and 2 open-ended questions). The data was analysed with cross-tabulation data analysis. The result shows that 70% of the participants contacting Indonesian embassy in emergency situations, whereas the other 10% and 8% agree to call friends and the local police instead. However, the result also presents that neither 66.2% of the participants save Indonesian local embassy number before travelling abroad, nor 69.2% of them download Safe Travel application on their phone. Correspondingly, 91.5% of participants do not even know about the Safe Travel application.

**Keywords:** *Citizen Protection Abroad, Access to Public Service, Emergency Preparedness.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia has been undergone diplomatic protection towards the rights of Indonesia citizens for years and the efforts are increasingly being carried out during COVID19 pandemic situation because of limited mobility and higher risks of life threat. It is an unprecedented challenge for Indonesia government compared to the situation before the pandemic. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Retno Marsudi, said that the pandemic had increased the number of cases handled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs throughout 2020, from 24,465 cases in 2019 to more than 43,000 cases in 2020. Compared to 2018, with 16,903 cases, the increase was as many as three times to 2020 [7].

However, this challenge has not undermined the government's efforts to continue optimizing the protection of Indonesian citizens abroad, both in the

distribution of half a million basic food packages to Indonesian citizens affected by the pandemic, and the efforts to open transportation access for the repatriation of Indonesian citizens (including the repatriation of 26,791 Indonesian sailors and 1,114 members of religious congregation from 13 countries worldwide). The Foreign Minister also stated that the number of Indonesian citizens affected by COVID19 reached 2,283 people, of which 1,562 had recovered and 161 passed away, and the rest were still undergoing treatment [7].

Although the restriction regulations due to the pandemic are still ones of the biggest challenges in protecting Indonesian citizens abroad, ministry of foreign affairs will continue to increase its capacity and readiness to respond to the needs of Indonesian citizens abroad. To answer this challenge, the Foreign Affairs Minister mentioned the importance of developing a protection system according to the latest needs and conditions by

utilizing digital technology to simplify and accelerate Indonesian protection services.

To provide easy access for Indonesians to acquire diplomatic protection in overseas, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched Safe Travel Application in 2018 as a form of advanced technology usage in order to maximize the protection of Indonesian citizens abroad. Safe Travel Application is created and developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia containing practical information needed by Indonesian citizens who will be or are currently abroad with a variety of needs (holiday, study, working, business, etc.). Through this application, Indonesian citizens are able to access information on destination countries which includes: time differences, security condition, local laws and customs, immigration requirements, health, services at the Indonesian Embassy, Indonesian cuisine, and places of worship. Indonesians who register their trips abroad through Safe Travel, will get notifications in the form of appeals, suggestions, and warnings related to the country of visit. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also provides access to service information such as lost passport service by following the instructions and requirements in the application to obtain a replacement document. Last but not least, Safe Travel Application has an emergency button that can be used to ask for quick help in a life-threatening situation by sending locations, record videos and call the nearest Indonesian Embassy and report the user's situation.

Safe Travel Application has been designed in such a way to provide easy-access protection for all Indonesian citizens abroad, and it is expected that the app information reaching wider population of the prospective travellers. This study aims to find out the level of understanding of the prospective travellers relating to Safe Travel Application and to discover whether the prospective travellers know how to handle the emergency situations while in overseas.

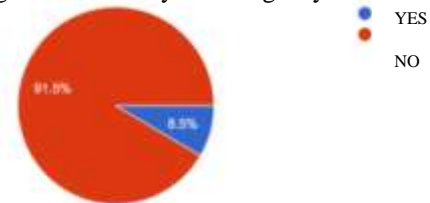
**2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research is conducted by quantitative method with online survey as the instrument. The data is extracted from 71 participants, with characteristics: Indonesian passport holders and ages above 18 years old. The participants' characteristics are chosen because the adult Indonesian passport holders are assumed to be former or future prospective travellers and are allowed to travel and tackle emergency situation alone in overseas. The survey consists of 8 systematic questions (6 closed-ended questions and 2 open-ended questions). The raw data is analysed with cross-tabulation data analysis. The classified data are also compared to any related theories, concepts, principles, literatures, and journals.

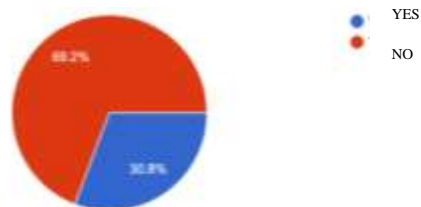
**3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**3.1. Participants' Understanding on Safe Travel Applications**

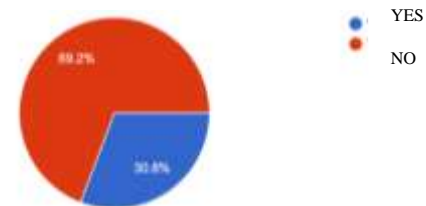
From 71 participants who took part in this study, 64 of them (91.5%) revealed that they did not know Safe Travel Application. Furthermore, for those who answered knowing Safe Travel Application, 69.2% of them admitted that they did not download the app on their cell phones and correspondingly has a little understanding on the features offered on this app including the availability of emergency button.



**Figure 1** Participants' familiarity about Safe Travel Application



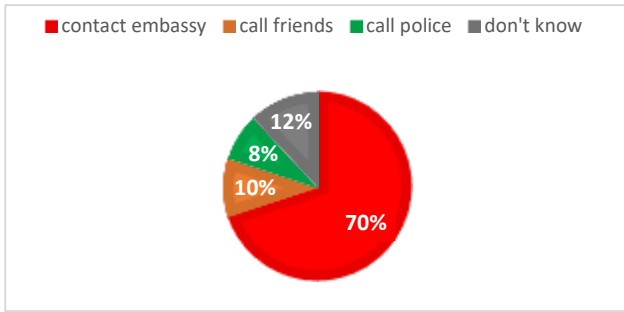
**Figure 2** Level of Downloading the App (for those who know the app)



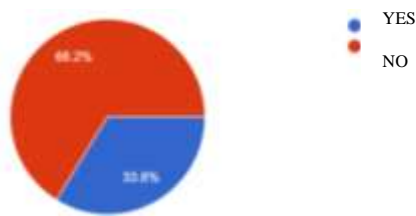
**Figure 3** Participants' familiarity on features of Safe Travel Application (for those who know the app)

**3.2. Participants' Understanding on Tackling Emergency Situations Overseas**

The result shows that 70% of the participants answered that contacting Indonesian embassy is the choosing action while in emergency situations, whereas the other 10% and 8% chose to call friends and local police instead. However, the result also presents that neither 66.2% of the participants save Indonesian local embassy number before travelling abroad nor 69.2% of them who know the app and downloading Safe Travel application on their phone. Correspondingly, the 91.5% of all participants do not even know about Safe Travel application.



**Figure 4** Participants’ Choosing Actions in Emergency Situations



**Figure 5** Participants’ Saving Indonesian Embassy Contact Number

**3.3. Broadening App Publication Capacity**

The findings indicate that the familiarity of Safe Travel Application among Indonesian passport holders is very low considering only 8.5% of the samples being familiar with the app. There are two reasons that may cause this condition. Firstly, the current method of publication may not effective enough to increase citizens’ awareness on the importance of having safe international travel that may impact on the escalation of the app usage. Secondly, the app publicity may be lacking coordination and cooperation with other related institutions that may help spreading the information thoroughly.

This seems to be an alarm for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be more incessant in disseminating information regarding Safe Travel Application for wider community. The app socialization has to be taken seriously and massively because the usage of the app is one of the most effective methods for Indonesian travellers to receive protection from the Indonesian government, and some of the protections are only able to be acquired by government not individuals. Thus, it is very essential to have a handy-way of keeping touch with the embassy in order to easily request access for the diplomatic protection.

As Indonesians have the rights to be protected by their government, thus, the rights to get informed regarding the app is also an integral part of receiving the rights as Indonesian citizens. The effectiveness of safe travel applications in providing protection for Indonesian citizens has been proven by several cases such as the one of the exploitations of Indonesian ship captain and sailors

of a Taiwanese cargo vessel in 2019, which was rescued on the coastline of Pinay, Malaysia. The Director of Protection of Indonesian Citizens and Indonesian Legal Aid (PWNI & BHI) of Ministry of Foreign Affairs admitted that there are challenges in providing protection to Indonesian in overseas especially for crew foreign vessels because the ministry doesn’t have accurate data of crew members and some go through illegal procedure, and in some cases the ministry received the data only when the problems occur, which is too late. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, more than 2,978,446 Indonesians are abroad. The majority of them (2,825,939 people) are migrants and the rest are students and crew ship members. Besides, there are 18 million Indonesians travelled abroad for tourism purposes, including religious tourism (pilgrimage) [1].

If Ministry of Foreign Affairs has limitation of sources or resources in publishing the app, the ministry may consider alternative measures that are most likely effective and low-budget in order to ensure the broadening publication is feasible. In addition to the alternative measures to be taken into account, the developer is also suggested to build cooperation with agencies that link directly to prospective Indonesia travellers such as immigration offices and travel agents. Thus, unlikely a random publication, the result of the cooperation is right on the target audience of Safe Travel Application.

As the institution that works hand in hand for a better public service of Indonesia, building a cooperation with Indonesia Immigration will benefit both parties. On one hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is able to make sure that the majority of potential travellers, Indonesian passport applicants, may receive the information about Safe Travel Application since the immigration offices have 125 branches in almost every sub-district of Indonesia. On the other hand, the cooperation between these two governmental agencies will also bring immigration passport service into another level of services, a human-right based service. The service that incorporates increasing awareness on emergency preparedness as well as educating their costumers on their privilege as Indonesians to obtain diplomatic protection rights from Indonesian representatives abroad, with a quick access through Safe Travel Application.

**3.4. Accessibility of One’s Rights and Supports from Country of Origin**

The protection of citizens abroad is a common issue in international law and the country of nationality is entailed to facilitate this protection for its citizen as a part of protecting its state. This is in accordance with the basic principle of diplomatic protection in which, “Whoever ill-treats a citizen indirectly injures the State, which must protect that citizen [5]”. Thus, the principle that a State

was entitled to protect a national injured abroad became a central feature of diplomatic protection.

A range of protection mechanism is carried by the country of nationality including 'diplomatic representations, mediation, arbitration, negotiation, judicial action (usually in the International Court of Justice) and economic measures. Some powerful countries would also include the use of force in this list [11]'.

In Indonesia, there are several legal bases used relating to the protection of Indonesian citizens abroad. The main legal base is the fourth paragraph of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic Indonesia that states "Then from that, to form an Indonesian state government that protects the entire Indonesian nation and all of Indonesia's bloodshed..[12]". The second legal base is the 1961 Vienna Convention concerning diplomatic relations between countries, one of which regulates the protection of citizens abroad [13]. The third one is the Act of the Republic of Indonesia Number 37 of 1999 on foreign relations, particularly in Chapter V, which regulates the protection of Indonesian citizens by Indonesian representatives abroad [16]. In addition to the three, it is the Act of the Republic of Indonesia Number 39 of 2004 that regulates the protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers abroad [17]. Lastly is the most specified one, which is the Regulation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Number 4 of 2008 concerning citizen services at Indonesian representatives abroad [20].

As a concrete formulation of the protection of Indonesian citizens abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Division of Services for the Protection of Indonesian Citizens and Indonesian Legal Aid (BHI) abroad conveys the types of protection provided by the government in the form of: 1) Protection of the rights of Indonesian citizens and Indonesian Legal Aid (BHI) abroad, 2) Protection of the rights of Indonesian citizens and their legal assistance in the civil, criminal, and manpower sectors, 2) handling of requests for protection of Indonesian citizens and Indonesian Legal Aid (BHI) abroad, 3) Handling requests of protection of Indonesian citizens and Indonesian Legal Aid (BHI) abroad, 4) consultation on the protection of Indonesian citizens and Indonesian Legal Aid (BHI) abroad, 5) Assistance of problematic Indonesian citizens, 6) Submission of information on the development of cases of Indonesian citizens and Indonesian Legal Aid (BHI), 7) Assistance in repatriating problematic Indonesian citizens to their areas of origin, and 8) Assistance in repatriating the bodies of Indonesian citizens to their areas of origin [18].

The lack of familiarity on the Safe Travel Application not only the matter of failing to perform the diplomatic

protection for individuals in early stages, but also the failing to provide the public service accessibility that has been guaranteed and regulated by the Act of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2008 on Public Information Disclosure [14], the Act of the Republic of Indonesia Number 25 of 2009 on Standards of Public Information Service [15], and the Regulation of the Information Commission Number 1 of 2010 on Standards of Public Information Service [19].

Furthermore, the diplomatic protection provided for the citizens may not completely enforced since interests concerned are not entirely fulfil and consular can't completely perform their functions, which are 'to exercise the right of protection in respect of their nationals by virtue of express provisions of treaties, customary rules of international law, or the assurances of most-favoured nation treatment [2].'

### ***3.5. Building Emergency Preparedness Culture Locally and Internationally***

The findings also present that although participants understand typical actions to be taken while facing emergency situations abroad, only a few of them make preparation plan to prevent, to avoid, and to reduce risks caused by the hazardous situations. Two of precautionary actions that are taken as the sample of this research are saving Indonesian embassy contact number and downloading safe travel application. That the result shows only a few of participants do the preparation plan as mentioned above, there is an indication that the level of preparedness of Indonesian passport holders for emergencies abroad is still lacking. Thus, it is essential to build emergency preparedness culture among Indonesians starting from the embedded mindset in facing domestic emergency, that then will impact in strengthening their international emergency preparedness capability.

As Indonesian is prone to natural and man-made disasters since geographically located on the Pacific Ring of Fire (an area with a high degree of tectonic activity), mostly surrounded by waters, and huge international traffics, culturing and building emergency preparedness mindset will develop the whole setting of resilience, the resilience on disasters and crisis at home country and the resilience while travelling outside of the country. Preparedness and education are considered to be the most important parts of disaster and emergency management, and it is the key in reducing casualties, personal injury and damage from disasters [4, 8, 9, 10]. The awareness and preparedness education will encourage people's ability to pin point the hazards they may face, so that they will know in advance what specific preparations must be made before, during, and after crisis.

Furthermore, training and building emergency preparedness culture are supposed to be done in multilevel contexts including at home, community, school, workplace, colleges, universities, public officials and professional levels. Similarly, 'to get the message across, there are different approach that will help encourage the citizens to get involved in preparedness programs: 1) partnership with local community emergency response teams; 2) Holding a build-an-emergency-kit party, 3) Host workshops on designing a financial first aid kit; 3) involving the local media in the planning process; 4) Hosting evacuation workshops; 5) Providing relevant disaster preparedness information on department/ agency website; 6) Partnership with schools to have discussions with students about disaster preparedness; 7) Partnership with local merchants to set up emergency kit display area in their store; 8) Set up awareness booths at local festivals/fairs/community events [3].'

### ***3.6. Precautious Actions as Emergency Preparedness Kit during International Travel***

For most of people, traveling abroad is one of happiest experiences in their lives. Thus, overseas emergency may be the last thing that comes in their minds. Unfortunately, overseas crisis does occur occasionally in all shapes and sizes, ranging from natural disaster to political upheaval, from an accident/ illness to the victim of crime. So, having a fun yet safe travel experience should be the balance. To achieve this purpose, simple precautions and outlining potential emergencies before traveling can put travellers' mind at ease.

There are a number of precautious actions can be done as emergency preparedness kit during international travel [6]. First of all, travellers need to check their travel requirements for the trip that can be incorporated to their itinerary. They have to make sure that they secure their passport, visa, and money/credit/debit cards. Also, it is better to avoid entering some places/countries that are suggested by the government not to be visited. Second, travellers need to let the embassy know that they are there. Registering at the embassy ensures that travellers' whereabouts are well-noted and eventually with the information the embassy know how to contact the travellers and their family in case of emergency. Third, keeping informed is another precaution that can be done. It includes being informed on current issues of the country, memorising embassy address and contact number, memorising travellers' accommodation address, their phone number, and their international host parent/colleague/roommate/advisor's number. If the embassy provides an easy way to contact and receive all of the information such as through a mobile application,

then it is a good choice. Fourth, staying out of troubles is wise decision for travellers' safety. It is recommended not get involved in anything like protests, demonstrations, national crisis even though it seems quite tempting. Lastly, if bad things happen to travellers, they should contact the local embassy immediately so that the embassy can locate medical assistance or legal representation on travellers' behalf.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the discussion above, it is clear that the familiarity of Safe Travel Application among Indonesian passport holders is considered to be very low. On the one hand, the results may indicate that the publication carried out by the Ministry may not effective enough to raise awareness among citizens about the importance of having safe international journeys and eventually get the app widely-installed. On the other hand, it seems that the lack of publication may also be caused by poor coordination and cooperation with other related institutions. Thus, it is recommended that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the app developer can enhance and enlarge their publication capacity to reach wider prospective traveller communities. This is also seen as an effort in strengthening the Ministry capacity to protect Indonesian citizen as being mentioned as their top priority.

Widening their publication capacity may be in form of building cooperation with related agencies such as Immigration Offices, travel agents, Department of Labour and Population Mobility. The Forms of cooperation can be designed in a low-budgeted program, such as providing those agencies with standing or wall banners to be posted at their offices and distributing brochures about safe travel applications to be given to their customers.

In addition, the results also suggest the importance of building awareness and culturing emergency preparedness among Indonesian travellers starting from local empowerment that will bring a great cause to individual capacity and resilience on handling emergency situations both in home country and overseas.

Travellers with strong emergency preparedness capacity equipped with right emergency response strategy can prevent or mitigate casualties in myriad ways. Also, the capability may ensure that Indonesian Travellers can weather a crisis safely and comfortably overseas. Being prepared may not prevent a crisis, because emergencies of varying types, scales and consequences still occur, but being prepared can limit life, economic and societal loss. One of the emergency preparedness effort is by ensuring responders have the right equipment/resource available such as Safe Travel App, money, food and medicine, etc. During this



challenging time, with the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, educating our community about the importance of emergency preparedness can strengthen our community protection in many ways.

As emergency preparedness during international traveling, there are a number of precautions actions can be taken by international Indonesian travellers to ensure their journey is fun and safety. They are checking Indonesian travel requirements for the international, avoiding entering some dangerous places/countries, letting the embassy know their whereabouts, keeping informed with local current issues, staying out of troubles, and memorising important address and numbers including those of travellers' international address and number, the embassy address and number, and their international host parent/colleague/roommate/advisor's number. Having an easy access to all of these features, such as the one that is offered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Safe Travel Application) will be a handy, good choice.

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