

The Impact of Excessive Placement Fees on Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) And Their Families

Report of Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) in Limbangan village, Losari subdistrict, Brebes district, Central Java, Indonesia February 2010

Feminist Participatory Action Research



Asosiasi Tenaga Kerja Indonesia or Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers (ATKI) and ATKI Limbangan



Women know their lives best! They know their strengths. They know what they want changed. In Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR), women research the issues that affect their own lives in order to bring about needed change. As a community, they analyse their stories and talk about what actions they will take and what needs to be changed. As opposed to traditional research, women are active participants in the research process; they are not ‘researched on’.

FPAR requires a certain attitude - one that believes women can steer change; one that embraces and values the complexity of women’s lived experiences; and one that highlights the strength and resourcefulness of women in the face of disempowering and discriminatory circumstances.

This FPAR initiative follows an FPAR process facilitated by the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) in 1999 and 2000 which worked with several groups to explore what trafficking was and how it manifests in women’s lives. Ten years on, GAATW and like-minded anti-trafficking advocates have come to the FPAR process again, this time looking at how trafficking is connected to broader parts of women’s lives - to their experiences of gender, migration and their work.

GAATW conducted a methodology learning workshop with NGOs and Self-Organised Groups (or groups led by members of the target group themselves) in the Americas, Africa, Europe and Asia in 2009. Researchers went back to their communities, or to the communities they work with, and acted as catalysts for the FPAR process. Research groups included: the Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya (FIDA-Kenya); Legal Resources Center - Untul Keadilan Jender Dan Hak Asasi Manusia (LRC-KJHAM) in Indonesia; Asosiasi Tenaga Kerja Indonesia-Jakarta or the Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers (ATKI-Jakarta); Self-Empowerment Program for Migrant Women (SEPOM) in Thailand; RESPECT Netherlands together with TRUSTED Migrants and the Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers in the Netherlands; Researchers Noushin K and Fereshteh in Canada; Akina Dada wa Africa (AkiDwA) in Ireland, La Strada Moldova; Movimiento De Mujeres Unidas (Modemu) in the Dominican Republic; Sociedade De Defesa Dos Direitos Sexuais Na Amazônia (Sodireitos) in Brazil; and Centro de Apoyo Aquelarre (CEAPA) in the Dominican Republic.

At the end of this FPAR process one Self-Organised Group said: ‘This is a feminist process’. The anti-trafficking sector has often been accused of determining what’s best for women ‘for their own good’. This initiative seeks to counteract that idea by documenting how women are steering change in their communities. We are proud to share their knowledge and their stories of resilience, hope and strength.

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ACRONYMS

AMCB	Asian Migrants' Coordinating Body
ATKI	Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers or Asosiasi Tenaga Kerja Indonesia
BMI	buruh migrant Indonesia or Indonesian migrant worker
BNP2TKI	<i>Badan Nasional Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia di Luar Negeri</i> or the National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers
FGD	focus group discussion
FPAR	feminist participatory action research
FPR	People's Struggle Front
GAATW	Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women
GFMD	Global Forum on Migration and Development
HK \$	Hong Kong dollars
IDR	Indonesian rupiahs
IMW	Indonesian migrant worker
LBH	Legal aid institute
MI	Madrasah Ibtidaiyah
MYR	Malaysian ringgits
NT \$	New Taiwan dollar
PJTKI	<i>Perusahaan Jasa Tenaga Kerja Indonesia</i> or Labor Service Company of Indonesia
PKK	Government program for women, family welfare movement or women's groups for family welfare education
PT	Agent
RELA	Malaysian paramilitary civil corps who are given authority to arrest undocumented migrant workers
UMKN	Usaha Mikro Kecil & Menengah/Micro Small & Medium Enterprises

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People from the village of Limbangan in Indonesia have been migrating for work since 1985 and the number of migrant workers from the village continues to rise sharply. From government data, 1502 people (out of a total village population of 8,501) worked abroad in 2008 and 1605 people from January to June 2009.

ATKI is a mass organisation led by Indonesian migrant workers to establish recognition and protection for migrant workers' rights in Indonesia and around the world. The organisation was created by migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong for migrant workers in destination countries but has since expanded their work to reach prospective and former migrant workers in Indonesia as well.

In Limbangan, ATKI wanted to explore the financial and other impacts of labour migration policies and recruitment agency/employer practices on Indonesian migrant workers. In collaboration with Limbangan village residents and GAATW, ATKI initiated feminist participatory action research to achieve three objectives: *first*, to share experiences among families of migrant workers and women migrant workers who had returned to Indonesia; *second*, to analyse the findings with migrant workers and their families to identify the systemic root causes of problems affecting migrant workers; and *third*, to encourage action among migrant workers' families to address the problems brought about labour migration and experienced by migrant workers and their families. The research process included forming the research team, observing village characteristics impacting migration and returnee's experiences, written and visual documentation of the research process, 5 focus group discussions among prospective and former migrant workers in the village, diary writing by researchers, in-depth interviews and storywriting by research participants.

Limbangan has shifted from a rural community to a migrant worker sending enclave due to a combination of macro factors (such as environmental change), micro factors (urgent family economic needs) and political factors (Indonesian government's reliance on labour migration as an economic strategy). Labour migration from Limbangan has increased as environmental changes have impacted traditional livelihoods. Livelihoods in Limbangan have traditionally relied on marine agriculture but increasing sea abrasion due to development has decreased the ponds available for farming.

Women have typically played important roles in marine agriculture and have been affected by decreased pond farming options. In the village, women also grappled with the concept of feminism and ultimately defined feminism within Limbangan as something that could increase participation in various aspects of life and improve women's position within the family so that women could work equally with their husbands for their family's welfare.

In this context, migration becomes an economic survival strategy, typically done by mothers, sisters and daughters - research participants often stated specific family financial needs (e.g. debts, illness, education, weddings) as a reason for working abroad. Labour migration still presents a risk. Migrant workers' remittances are the 2nd largest source of revenue for the Indonesian government. Despite migrant workers' enormous economic contributions, the Indonesian government has not developed laws or measures that adequately protect the rights of migrant workers. Rather, government policies have focused on maximising revenue from workers' job-seeking and travel activities (e.g. workers must pass through a separate airport terminal and pay a number of fees). In some cases, there was a strong link between trafficking, discrimination in destination countries,

the practices of recruitment agencies and brokers and government migration policies that protected the interests of recruitment agencies and brokers at the expense of migrant workers.

One way revenue is maximised from migrant workers are the excessive work placement fees deducted over several months from each migrant workers' contract, supposedly for agency services (in many countries, Indonesians must use a recruitment agency to access work abroad). From ATKI's discussions with Limbangan villagers, excessive work placement fees increased risk for workers and their families. Some families of migrant workers had to pay excessive amounts for the safe return of a migrant worker, such as when undocumented workers were sold to traffickers by immigration officials, or when excessive work placement fees and illegal charges resulted in migrant workers' returning with no earnings. When workers were unable to return home with their earnings (due to employer abuse, illegal charges, etc.), migrating to another country for work became an ongoing necessity.

At the end of the 5th focus group, research participants decided to continue meeting monthly to discuss issues and solutions for migrant workers and their families. This included contributing their voices, songs, poetry and stories at a local International Migrants Day celebration where they launched their new group, ATKI Limbangan chapter. Participants are also planning to use their monthly discussion group as an information centre for prospective, current and former migrant workers and their families. ATKI hopes to continue using FPAR methodology to reach other migrant worker sending communities in Indonesia.

CHAPTER I: ABOUT ATKI

The Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers or Asosiasi Tenaga Kerja Indonesia (ATKI)

ATKI is a mass organisation led by Indonesian migrant workers. ATKI works to establish recognition and protection for migrant workers' rights in Indonesia and around the world. In this struggle, ATKI raises awareness, mobilises Indonesian Migrant Workers and fights for the emancipation of all migrant workers.

ATKI invites all Indonesian Migrant Workers to unite in upholding the human rights and protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers.

The first ATKI chapter was established in Hong Kong in 2000. ATKI is a founding member of the International Migrant Alliance and a member of other international, regional, and national alliances such as the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW), Asian Migrant Coordinating Body (AMCB), and People's Struggle Front (FPR).

ATKI - Indonesia

The ATKI Indonesia chapter was established in May 2008 to facilitate communication and disseminate Indonesian Migrant Workers' ideas and challenges. ATKI Indonesia also acts to bridge potential and returnee migrant workers in the Indonesian migrant rights movement with the Indonesian migrant rights movement in Hong Kong and Macau.

ATKI Indonesia's main activities include:

1. Conducting research on the rights of migrant workers and their families;
2. Managing our information center through our website <http://ATKIJAKARTA.CMSINDO.COM> ;
3. Providing services and case management of shelter homes for migrant workers, returnee migrants, prospective migrant workers and their families; and
4. Collaborating with allies to promote and defend the rights of Indonesian migrant workers Indonesia;

ATKI's work is based on principles of independence, freedom of initiative, recognition of equality and unity in our struggle.

ATKI's motto

1. **Awaken:** ATKI works to raise awareness among Indonesian Migrant Workers about their rights through various educational activities with the help of campaign members at large. The rise of migrant workers' awareness about their capital is to support the struggle for the rights and welfare of migrant workers and their families.
2. **Mobilise:** ATKI believes that only with the militant struggles of migrant workers in which all can participate is the ultimate way to capture and preserve the rights and welfare of migrant workers and their families.
3. **Organise:** Our struggle must be coupled with a solid organisation. Therefore ATKI the organization acts as the main bridge in supporting the struggle for the rights and welfare of migrant workers.

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CHAPTER II: BACKGROUND

Research Objectives

First, to *share* experiences among families of migrant workers and women migrant workers who had returned to Indonesia after working abroad. Sharing experiences was important in order for migrant workers' families to grasp the extent of migrant workers' struggles, to understand the amount of familial support migrant workers need and to foster solidarity within the community.

Second, to *analyse* the findings with migrant workers and their families. With migrant workers' families, ATKI tried to draw a thread among the various experiences that were shared. The hope was that families of migrant workers would understand the common causes of problems affecting all migrant workers and understand the root causes resulting in family members becoming migrant workers.

Third, to *encourage* migrant workers' families to get involved in addressing the problems brought about by labour migration and experienced by migrant workers and their families.

Research Themes

Migration Resulting from Labour and Economic Development Policies

Rich countries' desire for market expansion, cheap labour and new natural resources has been one of the drivers of migration since colonial times. In Indonesia, workers have been migrating to Singapore since before World War. The services of Indonesian domestic workers cost less than labour from wealthier countries. Under President Suharto's New Order regime, the government increased foreign access to Indonesian resources. The government encouraged foreign investment and started providing raw materials, cheap labour and new markets for developed countries.

During 1979-1989, the demand for Indonesian workers to the Middle East increased rapidly due to the oil boom in the region. The increase in world oil prices resulted in greater wealth for oil-producing countries in the Middle East which led to a greater demand for migrant labour. From the total number of Indonesian workers working abroad, more than 50% have plans to go to the Middle East region for work, mainly Saudi Arabia for now¹. During the 1990s, the number of Indonesians migrating for work began to increase. For example, in 1993, Indonesian workers represented the third largest group of migrant workers working in Hong Kong. In 1994, Indonesians became the second largest group of migrant workers in Hong Kong, after the Philippines

In addition to an increase in the number of Indonesians working abroad, there has also been a change in the gender balance of migrant workers. In the 1970s, there were more men migrant workers than women with a ratio of 3:1. In the early 1990s, the numbers of women working abroad have increased two-fold. Even today, more than 70% of Indonesian migrant workers who work abroad are women².

The increase in the numbers of Indonesian women working abroad is connected to various Indonesian government policies. Investment policies greatly increased space for foreign investors expanding their businesses in Indonesia, particularly in the plantation, large-scale agriculture and mining sectors. Many rural women then lost their jobs as large companies took over control of rural land. The loss of livelihoods in rural and local villages

¹ BNP2TKI data statistic

² BNP2TKI data statistic

necessitated migration as a survival strategy. Migration was considered a last resort due to the difficulties of finding a job in urban areas and job competition.

Indonesia's Labor Export Policy

Labour migration depends on two related but opposing factors. It is about the relationship between labour demands for migrant workers from recipient countries and the supply of migrant labour from sending countries. This maintains inequality between recipient and sending countries. Employing migrant workers allows recipient countries to maintain their wealth.

In Indonesia, migration policy has been used as an important economic tool since the Suharto period. The large numbers of potential migrant workers coupled with the national economy's lack of development has made labour migration an attractive option for the Indonesian government to overcome its economic difficulties. *First*, labour migration would prevent unrest caused by unemployment, population pressures and social problems. *Second*, it compensates for Indonesia's weak economic base. For many people in government, business in exporting of labour provides a channel for corruption, collusion and manipulation.

The Indonesian government has systematised sending Indonesians abroad for work as one of the programs to increase the rate of economic development. An example is Presidential Instruction No. 3 (2006) on Package Investment Climate Improvement Policy. In the Instruction, the President instructs staff to make policy changes; one of which is Law No. 39 (2004) on Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers Abroad. This Instruction was followed by Presidential Directive No. 6 (2006) on Reform Policy System for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers. With this Presidential Directive, the government seeks to increase business opportunities for employment services by eliminating barriers to sending Indonesian workers abroad. In other words, the government is deliberately trying to double the workers sent abroad to obtain economic benefits from the remittances sent by migrant workers to their families.

This framework encouraged the development of the National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers (BNP2TKI). The agency's function was to implement the government's labour export policy by boosting the number of Indonesians sent abroad and increasing state revenue. The agency has been weak in improving labour protection for migrants.

Impact of Work Placement Fees on Migrant Workers and Their Families

Since the 1990s, the Indonesian government has set Hong Kong as one of the placement states for Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMW). The number of IMW working in Hong Kong has increased every year. IMW also have to compete for work with migrant workers from the Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and other countries.

This has led to the establishment of various IMW mass organisations in Hong Kong to fight for migrant workers' rights, including ATKI. After the organisation was created, ATKI Hong Kong carried out a campaign focused on underpayment of migrant workers. A 2005 survey of 2,772 IMW revealed the extent of the problem. 100% of the IMW surveyed reported having their salary deducted for 7 (seven) months or HK \$21,000. Job competition with migrant workers from other countries also negatively impacted IMW. Agencies promoted IMW to Hong Kong employers as a cheaper solution for their domestic work needs. Like a commodity, Indonesian migrant workers represented good quality at the lowest price.

According to Hong Kong government regulations, every employer of migrant domestic workers must fulfill three requirements: (1) employers must pay for all worker's expenses

from pre-departure until the worker has arrived at the employer's house, (2) employers must provide a salary of HK \$3,580/month, and (3) employers shall provide workers with one day off every week and red dates (i.e. national holiday).

In order to profit from IMW, Indonesian recruitment agencies manipulate these requirements to maintain demand for IMW among employers in Hong Kong. *First*, the employer provides a salary of HK \$1,800/month, plus a HK \$12,000 placement fee to the agency. A salary of HK \$1,800/month means that IMW salaries are deducted for 5 months from the first two years of employment or for HK \$8,900. So if calculated, placement fees must be paid to the *agency* for almost HK \$21,000. *Second*, employers can still provide a salary in accordance with the government rules of HK \$3,580/month. However in this scenario, IMW are required to bear the cost of the HK \$21,000 placement fee herself by having her salary deducted for 7 months from the first two years of their working lives. In fact, many IMW who pay HK \$3580 for 7 months, end up paying HK \$1800/month from their 8th month of work until the end of their contract.

With the above payment systems offered, the employer can save up to HK \$30,720. If the worker is provided with the government regulated salary, the employer must pay HK \$3,580 for 24 months or HK \$85,920. If the employer uses an Indonesian recruitment agency, employers only need to pay HK \$1,800 for 24 months or HK \$43,200 plus the HK \$12,000 agency fee for a total amount of HK \$55,200. With this practice, employers can save HK \$30,720 over 2 years.

The high cost of placement is set by Indonesian government policy. Based on Law No. 39 (2004) on the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers Abroad, every IMW who works out of the country must pass through the Labor Service Company of Indonesia (PJTKI). This policy is called the *one exit door policy*. Every migrant worker wanting to work abroad must go through PJTKI. If this is not done, the worker is regarded as an *illegal* worker.

The high cost of placement fees is also due to the lack of clarity about the rules for placement fees in each placement state where Indonesians are working. In accordance with Law 39 (2004), the government is obliged to publish a large provision for the placement fee in each placement state. But this is still minimal and disorganized.

The issue of excessive placement fees has been raised in campaigns and struggle by ATKI and other migrant worker organisations. Due to the problems arising from excessive placement fees to more and more migrant workers, recruit and returnee migrant workers must fully understand this issue. This was the main theme for ATKI's feminist participatory action research in Limbangan, Losari district, Brebes of Central Java, Indonesia.

Research Methodology

Feminist participatory action research (FPAR) methodology was used:

- ♦ to teach women how to reflect on their lives and the lives of other women,
- ♦ to collectively analyse the commonalities among women's experiences,
- ♦ to provide educational alternatives and raise critical awareness about the systemic roots of the difficulties experienced by women migrant workers and their families,
- ♦ to engage participants more actively in the social justice aims of this research,
- ♦ to encourage women to work with other women and girls towards social change, and
- ♦ to ground our social change goals in the real experiences of women.

Our research process included the following:

Forming the Research Objectives

Research objectives were informed by ATKI's research and advocacy work on issues impacting women migrant workers and their families. Research objectives were clarified in discussions amongst the research team, with research participants and with GAATW.

Forming the Research Team

Zubaidah (Ida) and Triana were selected within ATKI to coordinate this feminist participatory action research project. Triana has been with ATKI Indonesia for 2 years, mostly helping with advocacy work. Ida joined ATKI Indonesia in 2008 mostly to help in administration. Vonny Linayanti, an ATKI Hong Kong member, conducted much of the background material and represented ATKI during GAATW's 2009 feminist participatory action research learning workshop. Dewi Nova Wahyuni (Nova), the GAATW International Secretariat (IS) Asia Regional Officer also provided guidance and assistance on FPAR methodologies and the research process. Nova emphasised four important aspects for the process: (1) integration with local residents, especially the research participants, (2) initial mapping of the social, economic, and cultural characteristics of the village including an analysis of the policies affecting the livelihoods of local residents, (3) the use of focus group discussions, and (4) data analysis.

Observation of the Research Location

The research team made a series of research trips to the village where the research was conducted. Integration in the research location was an important part of the research. Before the study began, researchers observed the location to get a brief overview. This included observing the geographical characteristics of the village layout and the geographical contours affecting rural communities and their livelihoods. To obtain this data, the research team conducted interviews with village leaders and several people in the Limbangan village. Mapping the village's transportation facilities was also an important part of this initial observation to allow the team to reach several locations without difficulty.

Another focus of observation was the social conditions and cultural characteristics of the villages. The research team wanted to integrate well with the residents and so wanted to be able to position themselves according to the village's prevailing culture.

Documenting the Research Process

Data was collected throughout the research process in order to record the entire journey of research, including initial observation of the location, during focus groups, and after the research had been completed. This included collection and documentation with photographs, files, documents, meeting notes, field notes by the research team and interview recordings.

Researchers' Diary and Reflections

As part of the FPAR methodology, researchers kept diaries for researchers' self-reflections throughout the process and the success and obstacles experienced by researchers throughout the project.

Focus Group Discussions

A total of 5 focus group discussions (FGD) were held. Each focus group discussion involved a different theme: The 1st focus group involved introductions by participants and introduction to the FPAR project; the 2nd focus group involved mapping the economic, social, and cultural conditions of the villages; the 3rd focus group discussed the migration

process and participants' perceptions around migration; the 4th focus group discussed the migrant work placement fee and its impact on migrant workers' families; and the 5th focus group concluded with a discussion on what we can do together to overcome the problems faced by research participants during the migration process.

Individual In-depth Interviews

Using individual in-depth interviews was important to explore data and information that wasn't expressed during focus group discussions. Individual in-depth interviews provided a safer space for participants who were embarrassed to talk about the bad migration experiences they had.

Story Writing

ATKI researchers wanted to encourage a culture of story writing. Researchers also worked hard to explain the importance of writing down stories whether participants had successful or unsuccessful migration experiences. Participants wrote their own personal stories about their migration process. Some participants were helped by their families in writing their stories. Writing their stories became an important way for participants to get closer with their families as family members grew to understand what former migrant workers experienced during the process of migration. Writing also ensured that stories would not be forgotten. Research participants also became more confident after writing their stories down.

Research Location

Geography

Limbangan Village, Losari district, Brebes is a low-lying area with a soil crumb texture that is very suitable for planting crops such as rice, potatoes, peppers and onions. The majority of people in Limbangan are rice and onion farmers.

Transportation Access

Limbangan Village, Losari district in Central Java is directly adjacent to the town of Cirebon, West Java, which is the main route along the north coast of Java Island (better known as Pantura Point). As a main transportation point, it was not difficult for us to get the bus from Jakarta to Brebes, as the Brebes bus was available almost every day. From Jakarta to the Losari districts took approximately 5 hours and 10 minutes to continue the journey from the Losari district to the village of Limbangan using motorcycle taxis.



Social characteristics

Limbangan is a place of origin for many migrant workers. From the observations collected by the research team, the choice for local women to migrate for work abroad is not a new issue in Limbangan village. People in Limbangan have migrated for work since 1985 and the number of migrant workers from Limbangan continues to rise sharply. From data released by the Social, Labour and Transmigration Ministries, Brebes recorded as many as 1502 people working abroad in 2008 and 1605 from January to June 2009.

Based on these characteristics, Limbangan was an appropriate research target. In addition, the research team had two contacts of former migrant workers before the research started. Nurkholisoh (Lisa) is a former IMW who worked in Hong Kong and Sunaesa is a former IMW who previously worked in Malaysia.

CHAPTER III: FINDINGS

Focus Group Discussion 2: Mapping the Social, Economic and Cultural Conditions of Limbangan Village

History

In the past, Limbangan was part of the West Java province. Before the village was re-named Limbangan, the village was originally called the Karang Sagu, Losari district, Cirebon of West Java. Over time, Ngoro/Kanjeng had dominion over Brebes and the ruler of Cirebon made an agreement to take the village of Karang Sagu into the region of Central Java. The village of Karang Sagu changed its name to Limbangan and entered in the Central Java region.

Geography

Limbangan could be categorised as a coastal area. The village is directly adjacent to the river and the sea. In the north, the village is directly adjacent to the Java Sea. Limbangan is south of Pangabean village, east of Prapag South village and borders the Cisanggarung River to the west. Besides agriculture, many make their livelihood as pond farmers. Limbangan Village itself is a low-lying area with a soil crumb texture that is very suitable for planting crops such as rice, potatoes, peppers and onions. The main agricultural product is the onion seed. The majority of villagers are rice and onion farmers.

The road is an important support for the regional economy. The condition of roads in Limbangan had been almost entirely hollow previously. This condition became more severe during the rainy season. Streets became a muddy hole with puddles of water everywhere. The road conditions were an obstacle to transport and distribution of the village's agricultural products to traditional markets in Losari and Cirebon. As of mid-2009, the entire road in Limbangan has been paved which was welcomed by all Limbangan citizens. Asphaltting the road was partly funded by citizens' direct contributions. Government assistance was only disbursed after pressure by the local society. Presence of the paved road provided many benefits for society, including easier access to public transportation and greater distribution of agricultural products.

Social and Cultural Conditions

Educational support

Education is a basic right for every citizen and has an important significance for the improvement of knowledge and culture of a nation. Compared with other villages in the Losari district, Limbangan has a history of strong Islamic education. In Limbangan, there is only a primary school, a Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) and one junior secondary School. In October 2009, construction began on a new building that will be reserved for elementary school which was greeted positively by the community. The community also hopes the government will also increase the number of teachers in the village. Most children in Limbangan can only attend school until junior high school due to the lack of a high school in the sub-Losari district. The closest high school is in the Brebes district, a distance of approximately five miles from the Limbangan village.

Healthcare facilities

But most people in Limbangan do not have easy access to healthcare. The nearest Community Health Centre (Puskesmas) is in the Losari district and is served by only one medic, who sometimes has to serve patients elsewhere. Because health access is not optimal, many residents rely on medication sold in nearby shops for health problems. If that is not sufficient, people are treated at a hospital in Brebes or Cirebon, West Java.

Culture

Limbangan is a rural community. A sense of community, familiarity and mutual cooperation are deeply rooted among the people. Researchers also experienced when coordinating research activities in Limbangan. For every research activity, all respondents participated in preparing a variety of things including equipment for focus groups. The Limbangan village also has ongoing traditions - the usual earth alms (sedekah bumi) are held early in the year, whereas normal marine alms (sedekah laut) are a sacred event held in the early Muslim calendar. This tradition is usually conducted in each village around the same time.

Residents note that this sense of community and tradition are beginning to fade, especially among youth. Young children who are either migrating to work in cities or working abroad are impacted by urban life, and this is evident when they were return to the village. Working in the city or abroad is a sign of prestige for the community and returnees compete to show how they have succeeded. This includes improving their homes, buying expensive furniture, and wearing various kinds of jewelry.

This is not just to maintain social status. Migrants want credit for what they've done so far. Not infrequently, they hide the reality of how much pain or distress they experienced when working in the city or abroad. Starting wages are usually very small and there is also the threat of violence. A narrative from a family of migrant workers showed the struggle. At that time, the family has planning an *aqeqah* or a religious celebration usually held for a baby's birth. Having worked abroad, they felt the need to hold a festive event by inviting many neighbors. To do this, they borrowed 2 million rupiahs from a broker. Because of the guarantee given to these brokers, a family member was forced to migrate for work a month after the family *aqeqah* to pay off the debt.

Economic Conditions

Limbangan's geographical location in the northern coastal area has an influence on the livelihoods of its people. Since the 1970s, communities in and around Limbangan have depended on shrimp farming or pond farming for food crops. Altogether, there were approximately 700 hectares of ponds that were managed by the Limbangan community. The existence of the ponds supported the Limbangan economy. The community had success from pond cultivation, particularly for shrimp and milkfish. Community work was tireless and exciting. But this could not be maintained. Sea water abrasion increasingly eroded coastal areas, including the pond area.

In addition to sea water abrasion, the Cisanggarung river split in two (Old Cisanggarung River and New Cisanggarung River) which impacted the farmed ponds. Sediment formation at the river estuary helped farmers stop barrage pond water abrasion. After the Cisanggarung river split, the formation of sediment diminished. Sediment formation was also reduced due to construction in the upper reaches of the Old Cisanggarung River, with concrete buildings blocking formation of river sediment.

These ecological changes reduced the pond area available to the Limbangan community. A reduced pond area decreased the availability of pond products. Local governments did not act on this issue and permitted the situation to worsen. Pond farming became an unreliable livelihood. One by one, pond farmers switched their jobs for other work. Former pond farmers then shifted to the agricultural sector for staple foods. However, this created competition in the labour market. Unemployment resulted due to an increasingly limited jobs and an increasing number of workers.

Limbangan also did not have a good irrigation system. Rainwater was the only hope to assist farmers in planting. This meant that at most the farmer can expect a harvest when the rainy season comes. With the full support of the community, the village leaders demanded that the central and district governments build a rubber dam in the village in 1997. After a long struggle, a rubber dam was finally built. The rubber dam separated the tasteless water and sea water, so water could flood the rice fields on a regular basis.

The provincial policy for 2008-2013 identified agribusiness, agriculture, UMKN (Usaha Mikro Kecil & Menengah/Micro Small & Medium Enterprises) and labour-intensive industries as the basis for economic development. Of the 2009 and 2010 province budgets publicly available, only 5-10% of spending will go towards the agricultural sector while the Secretary Budget comprises 40-50% of direct expenditures.

The surge in Limbangan migration does not directly influence policy at the government level. However, policies that do not recognise migrant workers as a strategic issue are a problem, especially for migrant workers who return to Indonesia after working abroad. When workers return home, they have to adapt and acculturate to the changed environment that they had left behind. This is not an easy thing so empowerment programs for former migrant workers are important, at least to learn from their experiences working abroad and to prepare for their return to the working conditions in Indonesia.

The Role of Women in Production and Reproduction

Limbangan has approximately 8,501 residents. Of this amount, 4,235 are female and 4,266 are male. Women in Limbangan, like the majority of rural women, suffer discrimination in almost every aspect of life be it education, economic and family life.

Women's involvement in the production process in Limbangan cannot be separated from the economic development of the area. While agriculture is still dominated by the ponds, many women are involved in the work of skin cleaning shrimp, one of the leading results of pond products developed. As people's livelihoods have shifted away from farming ponds, women who previously worked in this sector have also shifted to working in the fields or gardens as a labourer.

The wages earned as a labourer are very small. Labourers get only 15,000 rupiahs per day. Labourers do not earn wages every day, just during the planting and harvesting seasons. Low wages and limited job opportunities in the village become the reason some women go to the city to change her luck. There are risks of working in the city with limited knowledge and skills, cheap labour being one of them. Then there is no significant difference between working in the cities and the villages. The wages are small and not enough to support family needs.

Within the family, roles are still divided unequally between men and women. This is maintained by cultural ideas that women are more appropriate for domestic work such as child care, washing, cooking, and cleaning. This contradicts the actual experience of women who have played a significant role in pond farming production processes. There is also a lack of educational community activities for women. Empowerment and Family Welfare Activities (PKK), a government program for women, is very rarely used, even when the public is encouraged to take part. One community activity is the Jami'ah study forum (such as reading al'quran) with study groups divided by age.

Focus Group Discussion 3: Migration Processes and Residents' Perceptions Of Migration, Feminism, Labour and Trafficking

Migrating as a Survival Strategy for Women Amidst Economic Crisis

Migration is one of the fundamental issues faced by women in Limbangan. Limbangan is one of the sending enclaves for migrant workers within Brebes. As mentioned in the previous chapter, up to 1,605 IMW were registered in the Brebes District's Labour Ministry in June 2009. The research team found that more than 75% of migration is by women.

According to Mbah Cireng (older woman), one of the first Limbangan women to migrate to Saudi Arabia, working abroad is not a new thing. Since 1984, Limbangan residents have worked abroad. From 1984, migrating for work in Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries is an opportunity to help the family economically. This region was an attractive option due to higher salaries (compared to village salaries) and the absence of agency salary deductions. When the economic crisis hit Indonesia in 1997, the number of migrant workers increased significantly. Loss of employment occurred in various regions, creating thousands of unemployed workers from the urban industrial sector. The low wage policy imposed by the government did not assist the economic crisis. Rather, low wages increased the burden on workers.

On a related note, the government also implemented political control over cheaper food production systems within Indonesia. Base prices for grain and rice were set by the central government. However, inexpensive food production systems in the country can only be achieved when domestic food productivity increases and are able to meet domestic food needs. Generally, a repair scheme for the overall arrangement of the food system and agricultural policy in Indonesia were needed. The economic crisis plus inappropriate government policies resulted in poverty in both urban and rural areas, including Limbangan, Brebes, and Central Java. Government policies were no longer able to hold the unemployment rate and this is led to the wave of mass migration of Indonesian workers abroad, including those from Limbangan.

The large migration for work abroad that occurred that year was not entirely voluntary. The price of basic commodities increased sharply during the economic crisis. The economic crisis and family's survival needs pushed people in Limbangan to risk working abroad. Some respondents said that if there were jobs in the country which could sustain their lives, working abroad would not be an option.

Research participants offered various reasons why most of those who migrate are women. Researchers suggested that if they were to check in every single house in the village, at least one family member would likely be working abroad.

"Because the cost of going abroad is cheaper for women than men."

"And the employment that is widely available overseas is as domestic helpers which is usually done by women."

"Employment for men is plentiful but expensive. I was in a mall but got less salary."

"There are less job opportunities in the village, especially for women after the ponds were no longer able to operate because of abrasion. We got less salary being labourers on a farm."

"If I force myself to keep working in the village, so my salary will not be enough to help meet the needs of my family, especially for my son's school cost."

Problems during the migration process

Migrant workers experienced problems from the point of departure until their return to Indonesia.

"When I got to the employer's home, the atmosphere seemed so foreign. But I'm trying to survive because it has become my choice. This time I was quite lucky because my employer was not bad to me."

"I have a different experience, when I was working abroad my female employer was jealous of me. Because of it, I was not paid for almost a year. Even when my contract was over, I tried to collect my salary but my employer didn't give it."

In November 2008, the factory where I worked was affected the global crisis. Many factories closed and sales had fallen sharply. Finally my factory had to reduce the amount of labour, and at the beginning of January 2009 there was a memo written down announcing the names of discharged employees, including me."

Based on Law No. 39 (2004), all migration processes are to be handled by the agency. Below are examples of some of the problems arising from agencies and brokers.

"The brokers do not put me with the good agency, the process is long, and I have to pay the brokers for departure."

"First of all, when I want to work abroad, I am recruited by brokers who have worked with agents. Sometimes I also have to pay registration fees to the brokers."

"After I arrived at the agency, I still have to pay a placement fee which is quite expensive."

"After several months of my stay at the training centre, I was dispatched to the destination country. Before I went to the employer's house, when I got to the airport I had to wait to be picked up by a foreign agent."

"I found the minimal salary was a problem and not in accordance with labour laws. Another issue was a levy to be paid by workers for a residence permit to the kingdom. Malaysia Shin was a big manufacturer belonging to Japan. So far, they have not been concerned about the welfare of its workers to be honest. I and my friends felt disadvantaged because of all that happened with this factory."

"On February 22, 2009, me and my friends went to Cirebon and Yogyakarta to take care of our layoff insurance. In LBH Yogyakarta, September 18th 2009, we gathered at a legal aid office to take the insurance money even though it was only 20% or 2 million rupiahs. According to the provisions, we should've gotten 10 million rupiahs. PT JAS (Jasa Advisindo Sejahtera) as an insurance broker provided millions of unreasonable reasons. But because it was a mass layoff, PT JAS suffered losses and just paid 2 million."

The government's role in protecting migrant workers was minimal or non-existent. Often, when a migrant worker complained, it was the migrant worker who was assumed to be responsible or guilty.

"Returning to Indonesia means I shall go through Special Terminal 4 for migrant workers. I began to feel uneasy for fear of these officials. Like I expected, when I got off the plane, I was asked for money by the porters. When I arrived at the office BNP2TKI, I still have to pay to travel towards home. At home I also still have to pay some money for the driver's travel. When I refused to travel and tried to report this

to the airport police, they're silent and cannot do anything. They said it was no longer their authority."

"When I worked in Saudi Arabia, I did not like it and wanted to switch employers. But when I complained to the Indonesian embassy, I was asked to try to survive for another 5 months. Then I threatened them that if I was not repatriated back to Indonesia, I would run away from my employer in Riyadh."

"When I returned to Indonesia, I was immediately taken to Special Terminal 4 for migrant workers. There I was interrogated like a prisoner. The most severe was that I could not be picked up by my family³. Each migrant worker is forced back through Terminal 4 and has to pay special travel costs that are very expensive."

Women of Limbangan Define Feminism

Discussing feminism among rural communities was not easy. It was a challenging for us as researchers to find a definition of feminism from women's perspectives in Limbangan. The word feminism was not yet familiar to the Limbangan community.

We started by looking at the division of work between men and women. We found that men are more dominant principal of everyday life, regardless of their work in the fields, trade or working in the cities. Women spent more time doing domestic work such as cooking, caring for children, washing clothes and cleaning the house. If there's time left over, watching television was one of the activities women chose. Based on this information, we started asking questions. Why is it the man who must work outside? Why do wives need to be at home, doing all the domestic work? Why men have more decision-making power? Is this the pattern? Based on these questions, participants shared their thoughts. Some said that it had always been generations of women in Limbangan who had fulfilled that role. The majority of women in the village did the domestic work. A few women worked outside the home.

As participants and research team started digging a little deeper and unraveling the history of women's participation in all aspects of village life, it was found that women actually had a very substantial role, including in pond farming production processes. Women also have a significant role in supporting family life, beyond domestic work.

Participants began to understand that gender shouldn't be a barrier to participating in any aspect of life. Participants also understood that women could increase their power within the family by recognising that a woman's role in the family was an important position. This is provided the foundation for the women's definition of feminism -feminism is an effort to raise women's position in the family, increase participation in every aspect of life and to no longer be *kanca wingking* (friends behind husband) in domestic life, but work together equally with their husbands to run the wheels of family life.

Understanding the Links Between Migration, Gender, Labour and Trafficking

From the government's perspective, migration provides an alternative or solution to the social problems within the country related to the number of unemployed people. Migration is a powerful way to solve employment problems in the midst of a national crisis. The number of layoffs increased as a result of the economic crisis, affecting workers in the urban manufacturing sector. In the countryside, women working in the agricultural sector have different wages than men. In Limbangan, a female farm worker gets 15,000 rupiahs a day while men earn 20,000 rupiahs for a day's work. These two factor explain why women became the target of labour migration programs developed by the government.

³ Most Indonesian migrant workers cannot be picked up by their family in front of Terminal 4, they are required to return home through travel services from Terminal 4.

Labour agencies and trafficking

Many agencies (PJTKI) appear to offer a service to access work abroad. However, the government's weak monitoring has influenced the emergence of 'naughty' agencies. These agencies appeared to be a labour service company but trafficked Indonesians by sending workers abroad with no clear job status or jobs that were not in accordance with the signed contracts.

Trafficking is said to be a serious problem by the government. The government created Law No. 21 (2007) on the Eradication of Trafficking in Persons. However, the government's commitment to addressing trafficking is questionable. The anti-trafficking law was developed amidst the trafficking cases that are rampant in Indonesia and the increasing migration to other countries. The rise in trafficking cases would greatly affect the government's migration programs. So the government created an anti-trafficking law to ensure that migrant worker delivery targets could be fulfilled.

Women's experiences of trafficking

Women migrant workers understand issues of migration, gender, labor and trafficking, differently when compared with the government's perspective. Government policy is a significant influence on the entire migration process.

"I was working in Malaysia as a domestic helper for 3 months. The fourth month I was sent by my employer to work to keep her own video games. When I worked there, suddenly I was arrested by RELA [Malaysian paramilitary civil corps who arrested undocumented migrant workers] and taken to jail and held for 11 months. After I was freed, I was taken by people I didn't know to Riau by ship, and there I was told dress up pretty and sexy. I was terrified and a boy who took me threatened, if I want to be free to hand over the money, 2 million rupiahs."

The above is from Khomisah's story, one of the trafficking victims that we met in Limbangan. On this issue, Khomisah did not want to tell other people. She felt this was a bitter and shameful experience that she would never forget⁴.

From these stories, we saw how the migration process created social problems for women (as the majority of migrant workers are women). Family separation was another problem for migrant workers with husbands and children. In the destination country, workers were at risk of violence and abuse.

Impact of discriminatory policies on migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong

As a recipient country for Indonesian migrant workers, Hong Kong is an example of how discrimination violates migrant domestic workers' rights. According to Hong Kong government policy, domestic workers are not officially recognised as labourers under law. With this exclusion, the Hong Kong government deliberately created a space for human rights violations to occur. Long hours, lack of holidays, below standard wages are some of the impacts of these policies.

Harm against migrant workers occurs when government migration policies do not incorporate rights protection for migrant workers. Current migration policies rely on and maintain women's inequality. What is required is an Indonesian government policy that addresses protection for migrant workers, not just placement. Furthermore, the protection rules that have been made should be implemented so the protection and fulfillment of migrant workers' rights in the migration process can be realised.

⁴ Permission was granted by Khomisah to share her story for this report.

Focus Group Discussion 4: Excessive Work Placement Fees and the Impact on Migrant Workers and Their Families

Placement fees are one of the many costs migrant workers bear during the labour migration process. Researchers collected data about placement costs in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and the Middle East. Each country has different rules regarding placement fees.

Labour Migration Costs in Hong Kong and Singapore: Lisa's Story

In Hong Kong, IMW have to pay HK \$21,000 or 25,534,128 Indonesian rupiahs. This fee is deducted from the IMW's salary for 7 months. Beyond these salary deductions, research participants such as Lisa (formerly worked in Hong Kong) also have to pay local transportation costs from Brebes to Jakarta or approximately 150,000 Indonesian rupiahs. Placement fees don't include the transportation cost from home, the cost of food during on the journey and communication costs which total 1,000,000 Indonesian rupiahs. For Lisa, there were no passport and medical fees before starting work in Hong Kong as she had worked in Singapore previously. When Lisa started working in Hong Kong, she received only HK \$580/month, a portion of the salary she was legally entitled to receive (the minimum monthly wage for domestic workers in Hong Kong is HK \$3,580/month). After her 8th month of working, her salary 'increased' to HK \$1,800/month. Indonesian Law No. 39 (2004) on the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers Abroad regulates placement more than protection for IMW. There is no monitoring of this law which allows agencies to charge illegal fees to IMW through salary deduction.

"Without too much thought, I decided to work abroad. Finally I chose to go to Singapore. A week later I found out when I was getting an employer and I immediately was called to the office to sign a contract which stated: Domestic workers won't receive salary/wages for the first 3 months of work, because fees will be deducted from worker's salary, almost 100%. Because the wage \$230 Singaporean dollars/month, but I only got \$30 Singaporean dollars/month while \$200 Singaporean dollars were handed to the agent. In that year the monthly wages converted only into 350,000 - 400,000 Indonesian rupiahs."

"Three months later I flew to Hong Kong. The first time I got a job there, I got a good employer because my job was just to keep the house while her children were in the UK for school. I was working in Hong Kong so I was supposed to get a salary of HK \$3,580. But my salary was deducted HK \$3,000/month for 7 months so I only received HK \$580/month only."

After Lisa completed her contracts and returned to Indonesia, by law she has to pass through Terminal 3 (previous name) or what is now called Terminal 4, Gedung Pemulangan Pendataan TKI (Building for Documenting the Return of Indonesian migrant workers). BNP2TKI argued this was a responsibility to protect the IMW and ensure they got home safely. Each IMW going home to Limbangan is required to use travel provided by BNP2TKI. Each IMW must pay 350,000 Indonesian rupiahs for the cost of travel from Soekarno-Hatta airport in Jakarta to Brebes, Central Java.

On the journey to home, the driver will drop by a specific restaurant with high prices where the IMW will be forced to eat. They are also forced to buy souvenirs that are sold around the restaurant. If the IMW refuses to buy anything, they will be treated badly. Arriving at the worker's home, the driver will ask the IMW to pay more than fee paid at Terminal 4. This is what we call an illegal charge because there are no rules governing expenses for the driver. In the past, Lisa has had the driver 150,000 Indonesian rupiahs.

Before Lisa worked in Hong Kong, she worked twice in Singapore. The first time she worked in Singapore, \$600 Singaporean dollars were cut from her salary for 3 months; Lisa only received \$30 Singaporean dollars/month. During her second job in Singapore, her salary was deducted \$1,400 Singaporean dollars for 7 months.

Labour Migration Costs in Taiwan: Samrotun's Story

In Taiwan, Indonesian migrant domestic workers' salaries are deducted for 8 months totaling (at the time of the focus group) approximately NT \$7,500 (Taiwan New Dollars) or 2,500,000 Indonesian rupiahs. In addition to salary deductions, IMW still have to pay what is called by the agency as savings of NT \$2,000/month for 15 months. These savings are to supposed to be returned to the BMI (buruh migrant Indonesia/Indonesian migrant worker) when the BMI's contract is completed in 24 months.

Samrotun had her salary deducted for 8 months and paid NT \$2,000 every month for 15 months (NT \$30,000 or 9,000,000 Indonesian rupiahs in total) into the agency-mandated savings scheme. However, when Samrotun finished her contract period, she only received 3,000,000 Indonesian rupiahs or a third of the savings she was owed. Samrotun still also had to pay 2,500,000 Indonesian rupiahs in agency fees and 30,000 Indonesian rupiahs for the cost of her identification card (Resident Identification Card).

Like other IMW, Samrotun returned to Indonesia through Terminal 4. After descending from the plane and into the bus at Terminal 4, Samrotun had to pay 50,000 Indonesian rupiahs to the porters. Upon her arrival in Terminal 4, Samrotun paid 350,000 Indonesian rupiahs for travel expenses. She was stopped at the same restaurant as Lisa to eat and buy souvenirs. Once she arrived at her house, she had to pay the driver an additional 150,000 Indonesian rupiahs.

"I went to PT to go to Taiwan, and I have to pay 2.5 million [rupiahs] for the broker. For the first month until 15 months, I have a salary deduction of about 20% of my monthly pay and beside that I also paid NT \$2,000 per month to BCI for savings for 15 months. After we finish the contract, we can take that money back. But the reality is different. After I finished my contract for 3 years, I only got 1/3 of my savings. Our fixed salary after 15 months is NT \$15,000."

Labour Migration Costs in Malaysia: Sunaesa, Mufla'atin, Khomisah, Umi Putikah, and Imro'atin

Malaysia is the 2nd second largest destination country for IMW after Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. IMW in Malaysia experienced non-payment, violations of work contracts, violence and even murder by employers. Out of the focus group participants, five had worked in Malaysia: Sunaesa, Mufla'atin, Khomisah, Umi Putikah, and Imro'atin. Of the 5, only Khomisah worked as a domestic helper, the other four worked in electronic factories. Whether they work as domestic workers or factory workers, IMW still have to pay high placement fees.

Sunaesa or Esa's story

Sunaesa (nicknamed Esa) chose to go to Malaysia after having unfortunate experiences working in Saudi Arabia. To work at an electronics manufacturer Esa had to pay 1,000,000 Indonesian rupiahs to a PJTKI in Jogjakarta. After passing the selection criteria, Esa paid 250,000 Indonesian rupiahs (IDR) for medical checks, IDR 750,000 for the passport fee, IDR 75,000 for the recommendation fee, and IDR 200,000 for a passport fine. Because the waiting period before departure was too long, Esa had to re-submit medical tests at a cost of IDR 125,000.

While working in Malaysia, Esa's salary was deducted 2,100 Malaysian Ringgits (MYR) or IDR 4,000,000 in total. Esa also had to pay levies or taxes for 2 years which cost MYR 2,400 or IDR 6,240,000. Esa didn't finish her contract. She only worked for 1 year and 8 months, after which she was laid off from the factory. Before returning to Indonesia, Esa trying to take care of the levies she had paid for 2 years based on her employment contract. But Esa only came home with severance pay of MYR 900 or IDR 2,340,000. Based on existing regulation, Esa should've received layoff insurance amounting to IDR 10,000,000. But the agency that brought him to Malaysia did not want to pay the insurance money entitled by Esa and 10 other workers. Together with the Legal Aid Institute (LBH) in Jogjakarta, Esa attempted to get her insurance money, at least 20% of the total owed to her or only IDR 2,000,000. On the trip back to Indonesia, Esa did not go through Soekarno-Hatta airport but through Husein Sastranegara airport in Bandung, so she did not have to travel home with the services required by Terminal 4 in Jakarta.

"On March 13th 2007, I went to PT Dian with the aim of going to Malaysia. I got a passport and paid 750 thousand. July 1st 2007, I flew to Malaysia. Because my medical check expired, I had to do another medical check again at a cost of 125,000 rupiahs. The cost for repayment was as much as 1 million rupiahs. That time I was told to sign the statement that the debt cannot be paid with rupiahs. The total number of debts are 6 million rupiahs but have to be paid with 2,100 Malaysia ringgit to pay in monthly installments of 200 ringgit per month."

"The situation didn't match the contracts that were already written and signed between workers and employers. Levies should be paid 100 ringgit per month and for the first and last month we do not have to pay levies. Cause it's been paid for 10 months the amount is 1200 ringgit for a year's stay. Most of us were not there until the end of the contract. Because if there are any labour that were there for 18 months or also there for already 21 months and me just 20 months working there. Then we were laid off while levies have been paid in full for 20 months for a 2 year residence permit. It is obviously not fair for us as workers."

Mufla'atin or Atin's story

Mufla'atin (nickname Atin) paid more to be able to work in Malaysia. Atin paid IDR 5,000,000 to the agency that took him to Malaysia in exchange for processing all documents for departure. While working there, Atin's salary was deducted MYR 2,100 or IDR 4,000,000 for 3 months.

Umi Putikah or Umi's story

Umi Putikah (nickname Umi) paid less or IDR 1,000,000 to be able to work in Malaysia. While working there, her salary was deducted for 7 months. To fight this, she and her friends gathered to do something to eliminate salary deductions. She didn't finish the 2 years of her contract as she returned to Indonesia to be married. On her return to Indonesia, Umi went through what was then called Terminal 3 (now called Terminal 4). She paid IDR 425,000 for her travel home and IDR 150,000 for the driver.

Imro'atin or I'im's story

Imro'atin (usually called I'im) paid IDR 6,000,000 to be able to work in an electronics factory in Johor, Malaysia. She received a monthly salary of MYR 900 or MYR 1,500 if she can do overtime. I'im's salary was deducted for a full 12 months. Interestingly, when I'im went through what was then called Terminal 3 of Soekarno-Hatta airport (now called Terminal 4), she had to hand over IDR 700,000 to BNP2TKI officials so she could be picked up directly by her family waiting in Terminal 2 of Soekarno Hatta airport. After working in Malaysia, I'im worked in Taiwan but returned home after 1 month because the work was not in accordance with her contract. Her contract stated that I'im was to only take care of one of her employer's houses, but I'im was asked on arrival to take care of 2 houses. To

depart Taiwan, she had to spend IDR 3,500,000.

Khomisah's story

Khomisah returned home with so much sadness because she didn't bring back any money for her family. Khomisah left Indonesia for the first time to work in Malaysia. She did not have pay a lot of money for her job in Jiran (Malaysia). The salary was only MYR 1,500. MYR 1,500 was deducted per month for 3 months. After 3 months passed, her employer asked her to maintain a business place owned by a video game master, even though her contract stated Khomisah was to work at home. Because she had changed professions, Khomisah was subject to raids by RELA (paramilitary civil volunteer corps to arrest undocumented migrants). Khomisah was imprisoned in a Malaysian jail for 11 months. After officers arranged for her departure from Malaysia through Riau, she had to deal with traffickers, who released her on the condition that her family pay IDR 2,000,000.

"I went to Malaysia, working in a home as a domestic worker. Instead of transport, my agent said my salary would be deducted for three months. That's all I did. After 3 month work as a housekeeper, because my employer also had another business, I was also employed there to guard video games. Just one week I worked there, when there was a raid by RELA. My employer was not willing to vouch for me, so I stayed in jail for 11 months.

After 11 months, thank God I got a call from the office saying I would be sent back to Indonesia. I returned by ship to Riau. Arriving in Riau, there is the officer who records the migrant workers who have just come and takes them to a quiet house. Apparently there are quite a lot of people accommodated there. Because I was confused, I asked one of the people there, why are there so many people here? The man replied, everyone here can go home when I get IDR 2,000,000. I was more confused because I did not bring home any money."

Labour Migration Costs in the Middle East: Largest Receiving Countries for IMW

Most Limbangan villagers working abroad go to Saudi Arabia and the Middle East region. Within our focus group, Esa, Suaeri, Turah, Ratinah, and other participants had worked in the Middle East. This region is attractive for migrant workers because of the Islamic cultures, and the absence of placement fees and salary deduction. Requirements are very easy - potential workers just come to PJTKI, train for 1 month, and go directly to the destination country because all of the IMW costs are borne by employers.

However, working in this region is not without difficulty. IMW who work here are treated like slaves, because they are perceived to be purchased by their employer and not entitled to rights such as holidays. IMW are still paid very low, only approximately 600 Riyals (Saudi Arabia) or IDR 1,500,000 (according to regulation, IMW are supposed to receive 800-1000 Riyals).

BMI or IMW do not get their salary deducted in Saudi Arabia. IMW do however get their salaries deducted in Bahrain. Suaeri was deceived by PJTKI who promised she would go to Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) but sent her to Bahrain instead. While working in Bahrain, her salary was deducted 80 dinars for 2 months or IDR 2,000,000. She was not paid at all from her 3rd month to her 10th month with her employer.

"I went to PJTKI office and I have to pay 600,000 rupiahs to be a migrant worker. After following the process, I was placed in Bahrain in the Middle East. I got a salary of about 40 dinars (around 1 million rupiahs). And I also have to pay 300,000 rupiahs each month for 3 months to my brokers for the placement fee."

Families Payment for Migrant Workers' Return

After migrant workers had paid large amounts to work in other countries, the families of migrant workers struggled to find money to finance the return of family members.

Financial resources came from different places. Lisa's family had to pawn their pond to pay for her departure from Hong Kong back to Indonesia. After 4 years working in Hong Kong, Lisa did not get to save money or earn income towards a house or other goals. Instead, earnings went to healthcare costs for her ill father and her sister's wedding expenses. When asked what benefits she gained from migrating, Lisa could only reply that she got lots of experience and many friends during her work outside the country. Because of high placement fees and low salaries, Lisa was not able to buy back her family's pond.

Samrotun was slightly more fortunate, her father's rice fields were still sold to pay for her return back to Indonesia. Esa, who went to Malaysia for work, did not return with a dime. Even her attempts to get layoff insurance did not produce satisfactory results and she only received IDR 2,000,000 out of the IDR 10,000,000 she was entitled to.

Among the 12 people in the focus group, all agreed that large placement fees needed to be eliminated. High placement fees had hurt their families economically - including the loss of land, ponds (and therefore their livelihood) and the family's yard. Families also suffered when parents of migrant workers became indebted to loan sharks or sponsors.

"If I have more time, I wanna struggle with my friends in Hong Kong to remove the placement fee. But now, I have the same spirit to do it here [in Limbangan] with you all."

"Yes, I think that's right. The government has to remove the placement fee. And the important thing is the Government has to make protection regulations for migrant workers."

"I thing if it can't be removed, at least reduce it [work placement fees for Indonesian migrant workers], don't make it so high so that we can build our own economic security by ourselves. Then we can eat everyday, my sons can go to school until college, and I do not have to be jobless like today."

Focus Group Discussion 5: Stringing Solutions, Troubleshooting

We knitted 2 wonderful months together in the village and shared experiences during the previous 4 focus groups. The research team held regular meetings every 2 weeks. Participants sometimes varied in what or how many meetings they attended. Some villagers weren't able to attend due to their workload. Many mothers of former migrant workers are housewives and their household responsibilities took up more of their attention. For example, Isro's mother was unable to attend a meeting because her daughter hadn't come home in 2 days because she was at her boyfriend's house. Fuaddah was unable to attend because of her child's illness. This is the portrait of women's domestic duties in this country. If some participants could not attend, the research team went to their house to know more about the reasons they couldn't participate. Also, researchers held in-depth interviews with participants who could not attend the focus groups so that they would not miss the material covered at the meeting. During in-depth interviews, we asked them about their aspirations and if they understood the issues being discussed.

What should be done to solve these problems?

Participants offered various aspirations but one important decision by the majority of them wanted focus group discussion meetings to continue. Participants hope that the regular meetings will function as an information centre for prospective and current IMW. Future meetings will also be extended to include all women in the village, whether they are a recruit, current or returnee-IMW.

"I think we can share the results with other women who will migrate."

"I think it's good if we continue our rendezvous in the future to collect our problems that are usually faced during migration and try to solve them together."

"It's important to give valid information about migration process. So if there is any women who will go abroad, they won't get like me."

"Yes, I agree with you, we have to give them valid information about their rights and how to get it. So they won't have any problem with the agency or the employer."

"How about if we invite more women returnee migrant workers to share with us? So we can know more about migrant workers' problem."

"Why we don't hold a dialogue with village government about migration?"

"I'm agree, but we first, we have to organise more people."

"The only way is we have to continue these meetings and be something like a information centre to give information for all people who will migrate."

"With the regular meetings, we hope we will be an information centre for recruit migrant workers and returnee migrant workers."

"I want to be better at holding and organising migrant worker meetings like this."

"I hope with this rendezvous we can share and join information and be able to increase our knowledge."

"I just hope that my children won't be like me, I hope she will have a better destiny."

"We just need people who are committed to building an organisation. And I'm one of them."

This information centre group will help prospective migrant workers. There are already groups of former migrant workers with experience in various countries such as Saudi Arabia, the Middle East, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. When prospective workers are assigned to a specific placement country, these groups can provide clear information. If prospective or current workers experience violence or other problems at work, these groups can provide information on where they need to go for help. If the PJTKI suggests workers to go to the embassy when they have a problem with their employer, these migrant worker groups can provide other alternatives if the embassy isn't able to help. Some participants found that the embassy does not have a significant role in addressing IMW problems. Many participants felt abandoned by their embassy when they reported their problems.

The plan is to have meetings once a month. Last December, this group held a cultural event to celebrate International Migrants Day and to declare the formation of a new migrant workers group. Among the 12 women who gathered together, some like to write. For example, Suaeri and Khomisah like to write short stories and poetry which they read at the cultural event and at meetings. Lisa, a former migrant worker who used to work in Hong Kong, donated her golden voice to enliven the event. The research participants invited women around the village and the village leader as part of a government that hopes to support their struggle in the future.

At the 5th focus group, Lisa suggested that this group have a name that is more easily recognised by the community. Lisa suggested that the group be named ATKI to make their organising easier. There is an ATKI chapter based in Jakarta that is already registered with the Department of the Interior and legitimately recognised as an Indonesian mass organization.

“Actually I want to propose to you about the name of our meetings. It's up to you, but I have a suggestion to call it ATKI (Asosiasi Tenaga Kerja Indonesia or Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers).”

For subsequent meetings, Lisa and Esa were called upon to be the motor to move the group. The researchers, as part of ATKI Indonesia, kept in communication with the group every month to guide the work of this new group. Researchers also made regularly scheduled visits according to the organisation's programme.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ATKI's Analysis of the Indonesian Government's Migration Policies

Based on the experiences of ATKI's members, many Indonesians working abroad as migrant labourers have not entirely volunteered to migrate but have felt compelled to do so, as a result of the Indonesian government's failure in providing jobs and welfare for the people. It is difficult to find work in Indonesia. The Indonesian government has implemented labour export policies. Outside of the oil and gas sector, migrant workers' remittances are the 2nd largest contributor to state revenues. Migrant workers are entitled to serious consideration by the government as they contribute substantially to the economy.

Amendment of Law No. 39 (2004) on the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers Abroad was the government's response to Presidential Instruction No. 6 (2006) to eliminate barriers to investment in Indonesia. From the government's perspective, the charges within Law No. 39 (2004) are too bureaucratic to become an obstacle to the increased delivery of migrant workers abroad. Amendment of Law No. 39 (2004) does no more than set back efforts for the placement of labour abroad. There has been much criticism of Law No. 39 (2004) particularly the imbalance between placement and protection of migrant workers. This law is more about placement and negates the protection required as the result of widespread rights violations suffered by migrant workers abroad.

The government has also industriously engaged in meetings that discuss international migration. A forum called the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) was initiated in an effort to connect migration processes with development. Wealthier countries initiated this forum to launch the idea of how the migration process contributes to a country's development. This legitimised migration as a solution to the global economic crisis. In other words, migration was seen as a positive process, contributing to development and providing benefits for all parties involved.

This assumption is not entirely true. GFMD's interests benefit only some countries. Wealthier countries in particular, wanted GFMD as a means to spread neo-liberal policies to other countries and systematise labour export schemes globally to cover the failures of neoliberal policies. This means profits will only increase for countries that receive migrant workers while sending countries of migrant workers will not receive equal benefits.

Therefore, there's a need to continually critique government migration policies so that policies are relevant to the protection of migrant workers' rights. Widespread public dissemination about migration issues, the root causes of migration, the interests behind migration, and the adverse effects of migration, is important and urgent in order to counter the illusions maintained by wealthier countries through GFMD.

Research Conclusions

Three research objectives were listed in Chapter II: (1) share the experiences of fellow returnee migrant workers and their family about their migration experiences, (2) analyse and draw conclusions about the issues pushing migration, and (3) to encourage active participation from former migrant workers and their families in addressing these issues. All targets were achieved, although there is still action needed to maximize the results.

The FPAR methodology helped us in understanding the migration process better. Although it takes a long time, the involvement of the woman's voice in this research is paramount.

Everyone involved slowly came towards one common understanding from the experiences explored and developed. That there are systemic factors pushing women to migrate despite the great risks that can occur. Everyone also understood that migration is occurring because of the lack of available employment opportunities in the country. But that doesn't mean protection can then be ignored. Rather, organisation is required as a means to push policy makers to guarantee protection for migrant workers.

"If there are job opportunities for me here, I would never want to work abroad."

"Anything good working abroad, it was still different⁵. We are far from family, away from children, and especially if we had a bad employer."

"After I decided to work abroad, work there was not like what I imagined. My employer said 'If the Indonesian government was strong, they'd protect you and would not strand you here', she said."

Women have a major role in the family's economic security - from work on the ponds as shrimp peeler workers, in the fields as farm labourers, and working abroad. All the work has helped meet the needs of family life sustain the economy of the local community.

"Because the cost of going abroad for men is more expensive, I told my husband I'll be one working abroad. I asked my mother to keep and take care of my children."

However, this responsibility has still not entirely placed them in an equal position within the household. Women, especially those that have families, are still regarded as the second person in the family. The decision-making role in the family is still dominated by men (husbands). Women still have to bear the double burden within the household, as economic providers and household caregivers. This burden is increased when women are pushed to work abroad.

The research also demonstrated various placement fee structures. Placement fees were paid in several ways - some paid cash to the broker before departure, some paid the agent through salary deductions, some paid into an agent-mandated 'savings' scheme. In countries that didn't require salary deductions (such as Saudi Arabia), IMW were treated as slaves, without a reasonable salary or other entitlements such as one day off a week.

Low rights protection those who have migrated has created a variety of problems such as exploitation, deception, physical and psychological violence, and trafficking. This is not going to stop until the government produces a policy that genuinely emphasises rights protection for migrant workers.

Recommendations

As one of the countries sending the largest number of migrant workers abroad, Indonesia has thousands of migrant worker sending communities throughout the country. The work that has been done in Limbangan, Brebes presents a starting point to develop and expand our work to reach other migrant worker sending communities.

Our recommendations:

1. Continue monthly meetings in Limbangan to discuss common issues among women
2. Develop the women's group as a migration information centre
3. Expand FPAR work to other migrant worker enclave communities, such as Madura and Yogyakarta

⁵ Migrant workers thought that working abroad was a good idea before departure, but everything was different when they arrived and started to work there.

By doing so, more knowledge is shared and community organisation expands so that women know, understand and act to change this situation.

CHAPTER V: STORYWRITING

As written by research participants themselves

Khomisah's Story: My Journey as a Migrant Worker in Malaysia

I became a migrant worker to change my life. The way it turned out was not the way I dreamed. The first time I left to work abroad, I went to Jakarta for the departure process out of the country. I gathered with friends at the shelter for prospective migrant workers while waiting for calls from abroad. For up to 3 months, I prayed that I would get a call. Soon I got a call to Malaysia and off I went, working in a home as a domestic worker. Instead of transport, my agent said my salary would be deducted for three months.

Because my employer also had another business, I was also employed there to guard video games. After just one week working there, there was a raid by RELA (Malaysian paramilitary volunteer corps that assisted police and immigration in raiding undocumented migrant workers). Because my passport said I was working as a domestic worker when I was also guarding video games, I was considered 'illegal'. I was sent to prison. There were a lot of migrant workers who were also punished. My employer was not willing to get me, so I stayed in jail for 11 months. I was lucky enough not to be tortured because I helped make food and drinks for the wardens, as well as clean up the police station. In return I got food and drinks.

After 11 months, thank God I got a call from the office saying I would be sent back to Indonesia. I returned by ship through Riau. Arriving in Riau, there was the officer who recorded the migrant workers who just came and took them to a quiet house. There were quite a lot of people accommodated there. Because I was confused, I asked one of the people there, why are there so many people here? The man replied, everyone here can go home when I get the money, IDR 2,000,000. I was more confused because I did not bring home any money. I was detained there for 2 weeks. I felt very sad because my family would not get me. During that time, we were always asked to wear sexy clothes whenever men came. I was confused, why we have to do this? After 2 weeks, I realised that we were being sold.

Then one officer at that home told me to contact my family, so I can go home. My family was very sad when they heard from me. I was also sorry because my family cannot afford to pay for my release. Where do they get money for it? Because my parents did not want to lose me, my family tried to find the money. They borrowed money here and there, any way to get back me home. After successfully getting the money, my family directly contacted the person in the house that arrested me in Riau, and the money was transferred to release me. Then later I returned home.

I felt very guilty and sad, I'm sorry for my parents. I was thinking they would be happy, but it created trouble for them instead. Once I returned, I was sent back to Java by bus. When I got home, my family was waiting with sad faces and crying. Crying because they were glad I returned home safely, although I did not bring any money. I joined in happiness having got home and being with my family. Until now, I cannot change the kindness of my parents, I always remember it. That's what made me recover from the trauma to become a migrant worker again. Now, I will do whatever it takes as long as I can make a living, which is important but doesn't torture my heart. Although my income is lower, the important thing is being in my own country.

Here's my journey as a migrant worker. Let not my friends suffer like me, becoming migrant worker! That's all, thank you.

Sunaesah's Story: The Complexity of Life as a Migrant Worker

My name is Sunaesah. My friends call me Esa. I was born in a village of Kali Rahaju in Cirebon. I lived a simple life because my parents were poor farmers. Every day I experienced fights and misunderstanding. My real father died when I was 3 years old. Then my mother remarried and they had one child together. After I graduated from junior high school, I was not getting anything at home.

On June 19th 1999 I went to PT Alfaat Nur Nisa in Jakarta with the aim of going to Saudi Arabia. I went through my neighbor's own broker. Because I was young, I still did not have ID cards so the management gave me expensive letters that cost IDR 600,000. I was at the shelter and required to start training at 9.00-11.00. My 16 friends went to PT Eka Sutra Alam at East Jakarta to join the training center. In PT Eka I was taught parenting. On June 14, I got a passport. I faced a problem because immigration officials asked for my school certificate to match the ID card made by PT management. Because I don't have any experience yet, I failed to get a passport. So the PT had been invited to solve this problem. Alhamdulillah finally finished. June 20, I got a call from the office.

After 1 week at the shelter I flew to Saudi Arabia. I and 6 friends stayed at the hotel Al Aidin Dubai. Going to Jeddah took from 12 o'clock in the afternoon to 2 pm. The employer picked me up when I arrived in Jeddah.

The new house, new atmosphere and a new country were very strange to me. One week later, my women employers indicated that the signs were less than good, although I speak Arabic. He often said dog or illegitimate person. I overlooked the abuse and the insults for 5 months. Then I tried to report the employer to Safarah (Indonesian embassy). That's when I really knew that justice is only a matter of money. They did not care about me. They even let me back into the employer's house so I thought to get the justice in my own way.

On Dec 15, 1999 at precisely 5.00 in the morning, I escaped from my employer's house when I was taking out the trash. This was a good opportunity for me and I did it, I escaped!! Then I took a taxi that belonged to Indian people and went down to the Indonesian stores. At that time I was paid by Andi Cianjur to look after her employer's children. I worked as *umroh* or an 'illegal person'. It turned out to be a better life after becoming illegal. I've know Madinah, because my employer lives there. I was given a month off once and I could hang out with my friends from Madura. The basic salary was about 1000 Riyals or IDR 2,500,000. Whereas as a legal migrant worker, I was only paid only 600 Riyals. But unfortunately I got in trouble again. My male employer seduced me. Finally I went out because of fear of unwanted things.

I was jobless for one week at the boarding house until I got a new job. This time my employer was from Palembang, Indonesia and the man was Yemeni descent. I felt at home with them. 6 months I worked with them. But apparently Khoiriyah from Ethiopia, where I worked, did not like my presence and I asked my employer to fire me. 3 days later I got another employer of Chinese descent. My female employer was a doctor and the male was a furniture worker. My Job was easy just keeping 4 children. I felt at home there because my job was just to take the kids to school and keep them when buying snacks. I felt as at home with them as with my own family.

August 2, 2001, when I was cooking suddenly I fainted and I was taken to the hospital. I was checked in the lab and I tested positive for hepatitis. August 19, 2001, I came back to the boarding house and got ready to go home to Indonesia. I wanted to go home but my condition didn't allow it. September 1, 2001, I gave myself to the Saudi Arabian

government and paid 400 Riyalse because I didn't want to stay too long in Tarhil (prison). In Tarhil I got many friends, most of them had escaped from their employers. Tarhil itself consists of 4 floors. The top floor are for prostitutes. The third floor are for thieves, the second floor is for migrant worker filing cases against their employer, and the ground floor are for migrant workers caught in the street without their ID card. For three days in jail I did not touch any food because it was raw food.

August 6, 2001 I got a call from the office to fly to Indonesia. But I was confused because the officers told me that I should not be separated from the group (10 persons). Ten people were combined in one passport so we must remain united, together. August 7, 2001, I arrived at the airport in Terminal 3 [now called Terminal 4] at Sukarno - Hatta airport. I was separated from the group because we had to be divided into 3 groups. I was forced to pay for a variety of reasons. I had a fight with Terminal officers because they forced me to bring my travel bag. But finally, after a long debate I got through it. I and 3 of my friends took a taxi to Pulo Gadung. From Pulo Gadung I took the bus to Surabaya. That night I got home. One week later I went to the doctor to treat my disease. Apparently I was not suffering from hepatitis, but tuberculosis.

I got married November 2002. On October 27, 2003 I gave birth to Amanda, my little angel. Over time my daughter was clever when she spoke and spontaneous, she wanted to get her own house. When I arrived from Saudi Arabia, my IDR 15,000,000 bought land but didn't support me financially enough to realise my daughter's desire so I left my family to work overseas. March 13, 2007 I went to PT Dian with the aim to going to Malaysia. I got a passport for 750,000. On July 1, 2007, I flew to Malaysia. Because my medical check expired, I had to do another medical check again at a cost of 125,000 rupiahs and costs for repayment as much as 1 million rupiahs. That time I was told to sign the statement that the debt cannot be paid with rupiahs. The total debt was 6 million rupiahs but to be paid with Malaysia ringgits or 2100 ringgits in monthly installments of 200 ringgits each.

July 1, 2007, at 2 pm I arrived at Puchong Selangor in Malaysia. It was the second time I migrated. On July 2, I was picked by the agency for factory work. Here I knew happiness and sadness working with many friends from many different countries. Two days I spent without burden. Work at the factory was not as difficult as I imagined but also so easy. Many interesting things that I have seen here and I wondered why the leader in my department loved other women.

In November 2008, the factory where I worked was affected the global crisis. Many factories closed and sales fell sharply. My product costumer for Hitachi in Thailand reduced the number of orders by 80%, and finally my factory had to reduce the amount of labor. At the beginning of January 2009, there was a memo written down announcing employees who were discharged, including me. I found the minimal salary was a problem and not in accordance with labour laws. Another issue was a levy to be paid by workers for a residence permit to the kingdom. Malaysia Shin was a big manufacturer belonging to Japan. So far, they have not been concerned about the welfare of its workers to be honest. I and my friends felt disadvantaged because of all that happened with this factory.

The situation didn't match the contracts that were already written and signed between workers and employers. Levies should be paid 100 ringgit per month and for the first and last month we do not have to pay levies. Cause it's been paid for 10 months the amount is 1200 ringgit for a year's stay. Most of us were not there until the end of the contract. Because if there are any labour that were there for 18 months or also there for already 21 months and me just 20 months working there. Then we were laid off while the levies have been paid in full for 20 months for a 2 years residence permit. It is obviously not fair for us as workers. Finally before I was to go home in 2 weeks, I faced the human resources

development officer and demanded levies to be paid in full. But the officer said it was not their business and told me that they only take care of workers' salary. Then I asked for help from Mr. Darsum as the owner of PT. Dian Yoga Perdana, who helped me with departure processes, and I asked Mr. Darsum to defend the fate of Indonesian labourers who were still working in the Shin Etshu factory, including salary deductions of MYR 1,734. It wasn't logical that we're getting our salary deducted if we're not getting a salary. We eat less for 2 months to pay a debt, got our salary deducted, too sad indeed. I went back to debate with Mr. Darsum but he told me to go to the embassy but my efforts did not produce anything.

I came home with the MYR 900 in severance pay and didn't get the levies I demanded. On February 20, 2009 at 10 am in the morning, me and my friends went to LCCT airport by Asia airplane till 3.30 pm. I landed at Bandung Hussain Sastranegara airport and at 12 o'clock at night I came home to my village. I'm very happy together with my children and my husband although there is a sense of disappointment that is still there.

On February 22, 2009, me and my friends went to Cirebon and Yogyakarta to take care of our layoff insurance. Before returning to Indonesia, Mr. Sahizan as human resources staff at LBH Yogyakarta, said that we were entitled to insurance. We were also given a letter of completion and employment contract which was signed by the general manager of Shin-Etshu when workers were laid off.

On September 18, 2009, we gathered at the Legal Aid office to take the insurance money although it was only 20% or 2 million rupiahs rather than 10 million rupiahs stated in the provisions. PT JAS (Jasa Advisindo Sejahtera), the insurance broker provided millions of unreasonable reasons because it was a mass layoff which would result in losses for PT JAS. The reasons of PT Bangun Askrida as consortium were also not as clear. Tonight before the insurance disbursed even PT Bangun Askrida bestowed this case to PT Bumi Putra Insurance.

Disappointed and angry. The insurance only disbursed 2 million rupiahs and that was just for 31 people. The remaining 40 people are paid out after the day of celebration [Idul Fitri or feast day]. After 1 hour PT Jas and former migrant workers accompanied by LBH agreed that PT Jas would give insurance to former migrant workers from as far away as Cirebon, Pekalongan, Purwokerto and Semarang while those who lived in Yogyakarta and its surroundings would have to wait until the end of the day of celebration. I and my friends were disappointed that our struggle and friends from LBH Yogyakarta could not get the full result.

After cases like this, the government should more wisely look at the people and how labourers fare. Honestly we felt we were not given any attention. Many injustices occurred in front of the eyes of overseas government staff, but they deliberately turned a blind eye just because of money. Many migrant workers are exploited, murdered. What were we doing wrong? Asking for protection as citizens of a country?

As people with minds, we should not be silent and just be an audience for the evil that happens in front of us. Justice belongs to all people. There are big hopes for the government to make the regulation in favour of migrant workers. Protection is urgently needed for the fate of workers in this case. And I do hope that with the many social organisations that are currently developing that this could be an inspiration for the migrant worker to keep on struggling together for our rights. Without people, governments would not be standing, and without a struggle justice will not exist.

Samrotun's Story

The first time I worked outside the country, it was in the Middle East region. At that time brokers offered me work in a supermarket in Saudi Arabia. At that time I was asked to pay 1 million rupiah. But it turned out, after getting calls from brokers two weeks later, I was not going to be working at the supermarket but in a house as a domestic worker.

At that time there was a sense of disappointment and sadness because I had no intention of working as a domestic worker. But on second I thought that I want to work there as a domestic worker because I saw my parents weren't able to meet the needs of daily life, physically and spiritually. My main aim in working abroad is to help my parents and my little brother and sister. I was the first child of 3 brothers and sisters and I felt a large responsibility towards the family.

When I arrived there, I felt sad because I was so far away from my parents and youngest sister. But day after day passed, thank God it became a habit. Living far away sometimes there is happiness and sadness, but with perseverance and patience finally I finished the contract and came home safely.

I migrated to the Middle East in 2003 after graduating high school and returned to Indonesia in 2005. After returning from the Middle East, I rested at home for 2 months. This bored me because there were no jobs. My activities were mainly eating, sleeping, and helping my parents clean the house.

After that I thought every day how to help my parents. Then there was one friend who offered me to work in Taiwan. At first I hesitated because it was not a Muslim country like Indonesia. I was afraid I wouldn't be allowed pray and fast during Ramadan. Finally I decided to work in Taiwan with the belief that everyone's destiny is not the same. Then I made all the requirements to the PT. After going to PT I got there all alone without a friend to talk to. Activities in PT is almost the same every day. Learning and learning. We were given holidays only on the weekend so our families could visit us at the shelter. It was exhausting everyday, waiting and waiting. Because of bad luck, I was at the shelter for 8 months when finally I got an employer.

In 2006 I went to Taiwan. Apparently a lot of work in Taiwan is different from the Middle East. I went to PT to go to Taiwan, and I had to pay 2.5 million rupiahs for the broker. From the 1st month until the 15th month, 20% of my salary was deducted. Besides that I also paid NT 2000/month to BCI as part of our required savings plan for 15 months. After I finished the contract, we are to get that money back. But the reality is different. After I finished my contract after 3 years, I only got 1/3 of my savings back. Our fixed salary after 15 months is NT \$15,000. In Asia I had a lighter workload was paid more than the Middle East. But I'm so tired because I worked overtime.

Finally I finished my 3 year contract and came home safely to my family. After I came back home in 2009 I got married.

Nurkholisoh's (Lisa's) Story

November 24, 2009, Limbangan

I still remember in my mind, before entering the school when I was little when there was no kindergarten or something. At that time, my family's economic conditions advanced because of my father's pond business so my brother and sisters went to high school. My older brother was even educated up to the college level in the city of Semarang.

Days turned into months and months became years until my second sister just got sick when she was in the second class of junior high school. My family's money began to decline dramatically for her treatment and recovery. Until there is not enough misfortune to come again⁶, when my mother gave birth to my youngest sister. My mother had to have an operation so she was taken to the hospital. You can imagine how this affected our family finances until finally we had to sell the chair because there was no money for the treatment fee. From the start of her illness until she was 25, my sister could not be healed and she died.

We didn't expect that the ponds would provide enough. The dam was destroyed because of the sea abrasion after going too long without care. Our family was no longer able to buy seed for the fish due to health costs for my mother and sister. And we had to be willing to lose the pond as our only hope. My first brother was in college in Semarang and could no longer continue his studies because the money had to go for medical treatment. He would have preferred to be a teacher in MI (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) same with the elementary school in the next village. Thankfully, I was in school until junior high school because of help from my brother who was a teacher. My father was jobless because there was no pond to work with. If anyone needed his help he could work. In addition to working on the pond, my father also had other skills such as building porters [i.e. construction labour].

Actually I told myself I wouldn't work abroad like my first sister. In my mind, I told myself I have to study as much as possible. However, my family is no longer able to pay for my school, we had more difficulty finding food to eat, the family debt was increasing, how could I pay for school?

I graduated from junior high school and directly registered into the shoe factory in Bekasi. I could only stand it for a month. Who can afford to work there? If I made a little mistake, they would use violence. Factory supervisors often struck us. I cursed in my heart we are both employees, but because he was a senior what did juniors do? Ah ... like in the TV soap opera story alone. Without thinking, with exactly one month's salary, I and my friends decided not to work there anymore and went home the next morning.

Arriving at home, without too much thought I decided to work abroad. At first, my family was very reluctant to let me go because I was young and had no experience before. But my heart was hard-set like a football. Finally I chose to go to Singapore because I was afraid to go to Saudi Arabia after I heard my neighbours' stories about Saudi Arabia. Although it was so hard, I left my family, leaving my brothers and sisters who were still children, leaving my sister who was still sick in bed. Earlier, my sick sister had said she wasn't sure that I could work outside of the country because I can not see anything and I have no experience. But I said I would have to do the job until the end of the 2-year contract.

Finally I went to PT to register with the brokers. Coincidentally, the brokers that brought me were related to me. I still remember the time. In October 1996 I submitted to PT Aula

⁶ This means that Lisa's family was unlucky.

Graha based in Cilimus, Cirebon West Java. There I was in the interview, when they faked my date of birth and 1980 became 1976. Four years older than the truth. After that, I gathered with other friends from the same area. At that time, the shelters were not so full with many domestic worker recruits. If I'm not mistaken, there were only about 40 people. The next day I was told to get medical checks and praise the Lord the result was "fit", there was no obstruction of anything. I spent day after day at the new place. A week later I went to Jakarta with a few friends to get a passport. On my return from Jakarta I asked for permission to go home. Thank God they gave me permission to go home for a week. I was satisfied after a week together with my family. After my leave expired, I returned to the shelter at Cilimus. I was driven by my first brother. I spent my time learning English but if I remember junior high school, I hated the English language lessons. But because this necessary, I have to improve if only a few percent.

A week later, I found out I was getting an employer and I was immediately called to the office to sign a contract which stated: Domestic workers won't receive a salary/wages for 3 months because of salary deduction and almost 100% because the total wages were \$230 Singaporean dollars but I only got \$30 Singaporean dollars a month while \$200 was handed to the agent/PT. In that year, the monthly wages converted to IDR 350,000 - 400,000.

A month later I flew with Garuda airlines. And I arrived at the Changi airport in Singapore. Because I'm a village girl who is still inexperienced, I was amazed to see the Singapore airport. The Indonesian airport I think is pretty good but not much. As I was directed before departure, my group kept waiting to be picked up by agents somewhere. Soon there came a Chinese man and he was the man that we were waiting for. With not much to say he told us to go by car. I was shaking my head the whole way, not because of a headache but so much amazement at the sight of the city that was so beautiful and clean. If Indonesia was like this, the people would not become domestic workers abroad.

Finally I arrived at the agency that I always feared. I was told to eat and rest before I was picked up by the employer. Soon, my employer came but only alone, a madam. Before I went home I was told by the agent not to rebel and to be obedient. Along the way, my employer didn't talk much. Again, because I was basically a village girl, when I took the elevator to the 12th floor, I almost fell but fortunately I held on. The first time you go into the employer's house, I was greeted by my master's family, the men employers and their children. They were very friendly. The first child was 8 years old, while the second was 3.

The first three months I felt life wasn't free, like in a prison. But it's also because of me. Therefore I must be strong to live a life so foreign to me. After three months passed, I finally got used to the situation at my employer's home. During work, I did not find a lump, fraud, or even violence. My salary was paid every month. Although there was no holiday at all during the 2 years, I enjoyed it. Because the contract didn't include it, so I didn't dare demand the right to holidays.

Earlier in my heart, I said I should not extend the contract - I had to go to school then went to a different high school. But the reality was, 3 months before my contract finished, I met a man. Although I promised not to date in Singapore, he was patient. Even when I categorically denied him, he still wanted me. Although I didn't have a day off, we met every day when I picked up my employer's children at elementary school. Since the initial meeting, we communicated often by phone and I finally fell in love with him. He was a Bangladeshi, we were both migrant workers in Singapore. My relationship still existed even if only by phone. Two years later, I finally decided to extend the contract because the employer agreed to raise my salary and include a holiday, even if only 1 day a month.

Time passed and there was no difference in my job - taking care of children, cooking, and cleaning up the house. With this 2nd contract, it was a bit freer even if for only one day a month. They did not know that I had a relationship with a Bangladeshi until the end of my contract. We were dating secretly. In November 2000, I returned to my hometown. At that time, migrant workers had to pass through Terminal 3 [now called Terminal 4] but there was no travel provided to my house. Because this was my first homecoming, I was picked up by my family in Terminal 3. At that time, my father presented his identity card so I could be taken home by my family.

On my return from Singapore, I did not do any activities other than eating, sleeping, and helping my mother take care of the house. Until finally, in February 2001, I followed the English language courses in Brebes for 3 months. After the course, in June 2001 I returned to the PT register to go to Singapore again. Actually I did not want to go to Singapore, I wanted to go to other countries to seek new experiences. But because I wanted to see my boyfriend who was still working there, so I decided to go to Singapore again.

As before, I was in the first interview and then immediately accepted. Not like before when I went to PT. Aula Graha, this time registered and recruited many more domestic workers. Thousands of people gathered into one room to go to Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Bed facilities were only a mat and a pillow. The condition of the bathroom was so bad because we had to shower together in one room. As usual, life in PT included learning and practising English and housework. One day in PT, language teachers left for a week and she handed me the responsibility to continue teaching. At PT I only stayed one month and finally I got an employer. Because of most of the migrant workers recruited were all female, some of them later became lesbians and had same-sex relationships. Most of them will go to Hong Kong and Taiwan because they've stayed too long in PT. Because many of them were far from their husbands, they finally vented their passions with other women, it was uncomfortable to see. Especially in the visiting room. If there are husbands who visit, they would even have sex there. And it is an open space. I really felt sorry for them. If only the government provides jobs with suitable wages, certainly no one would want to go abroad to work, because they automatically would prefer to stay with their families in their own country.

In July 2001, I flew to Singapore for the second time. My employer picked me up at the airport immediately. I only worked 2 weeks with this employer because I was considered ignorant. I was taken back to the agent. There, unsuspectedly, my friend who came from same PT was tortured in a room. She was asked to pull her ears and cock her leg just like primary school children who are late for class. Did she make a fatal mistake to be punished like that? Or were the agents evil? I can only bury the question because there was an employer that took me back. I only worked there for one week, proved that the employer would see how I worked just for training. But I am also grateful because I did not fit there because the house was big, two floors, and away from the crowd. Again I returned to the agent and that afternoon I got a new employer, my third employer. With this employer, I was told by the agent, he said this is the last employer and I should not leave before the salary deduction is completed. If not, I was threatened with repatriation to Batam to sell.

The way that the agent successfully bluffed really affect me. Because I did not ask to leave during that period. That time my salary was deducted for 7 months and my wage per month for \$230 Singaporean dollars/month was the same as my salary the first time I was in Singapore. As usual I only got \$30 Singaporean dollars/month. It was also detained by my employer, so in 7 months I did not receive any money.

Work conditions in the employer's home were more severe this time, because I was caring for an idiot 8 year old boy and his sister who was very naughty. Plus I have to work at 2 homes. The other home belonged to my employer's grandmother. If the grandmother is good, it may not have mattered to me, but unfortunately, she was an evil woman. Often pitting between me against my employer. As a result I often got angry but I stayed because I remembered what my agent had told me. My men employers also sometimes defended me, that's what made me survive a little. In the 8th month I was not able to stay anymore, I had to come home because there was no trust by the women employer. Whereas my men employers told me to stay until I finished my contract and my salary was going to increase two times from my salary as a reward. I could only stand there for 8 months. The longest any of their previous domestic workers survived was just 2 months. My men employers told me I was successful to threaten his 'idiot' son because that's actually the main job in that house. But I still went home because I felt I no longer fit with the women employer who was very fussy.

Finally, at the beginning of February 2002, I returned to Indonesia. Like my friends elsewhere, I stayed at home for 1 month. In March I went to Jakarta to PT PJP (Jabung Putra Perkasa), from the information I got from the newspaper. I was placed in PT PJP (Jabung Putra Perkasa) in Kebon Jeruk Jakarta Barat. I submitted the requirements I had brought from home. I was no longer directly interviewed by the manager or director of PT. As a result, I was accepted to work in Hong Kong. Although I was a child, I had worked outside of the country before so there were no significant problems. Actually, my boyfriend didn't allow me to go to Hong Kong, but I managed to persuade him. No matter, he was not my husband so he has no right to regulate my life.

On registration day, I was immediately told to get a medical check and MasyaAllah I was shocked. This is a medical check or sexual harassment because I and some friends were naked and allowed only to wear our underpants. If the doctor was female maybe it's not a big problem, but this was male doctor. Even though he didn't grope me but it was too outrageous. In my heart I screamed and struggled to report to the police but I was helpless. I was resigned as the doctor checked my heart because I wasn't wearing any clothes. In my heart I was asking whether the medical check should be like this right now? After the medical check I went straight to gather with friends and meet others with them.

PT PJP conditions at the time were narrow and ugly. They were ugly accommodations because we were just sleeping on used mats and pillows. Whenever we took a bath, we had to take it together with others because of the limited bathroom. The days spent at the shelter like the other PT included learning Cantonese and housework. After one month at the shelter I was appointed to be the leader there and help my officer record new migrant worker recruits coming every day to provide data for food rations. Almost every day, there was a flight to each placement country so there were also new entrants so eating schedules changed. Because I was the leader I was a little freer than the others.

"Three months later I flew to Hong Kong. The first time I got a job there, I got a good employer because my job was just to keep the house while her children were in the UK for school. I was working in Hong Kong so I was supposed to get a salary of HK \$3,580. But my salary was deducted HK \$3,000/month for 7 months so I only received HK \$580/month only." I was told that the first three days in Hong Kong were days off because the rules there say that Sunday is a holiday for migrant workers. I didn't experience fraud/violations from my employer and complied with existing regulations. For the first nine months I went along with a friend selling newspapers every weekend and holidays. The result was a considerable additional amount to be sent to the house. But I also had to keep alert and be ready to run when immigration officers raided the place.

One and a half years later, I joined the organisation of migrant workers in Hong Kong called ATKI. Since then I began to understand and get real information. I also learned a lot about migrant workers because the organisation also often held paralegal training, leadership training, and many other activities that benefit rather than gossip. Two years later, I renewed my contract with the same employer. This time I took care of everything themselves without the intervention of agents, because if I had to go through an agent I would have had my salary deducted again for 7 months. Whereas if I take care of myself, I only pay 10% of my salary⁷. but I also got a new experience and taking care of the visa extension was also not as difficult as I imagined.

In 2006 I finally went home. I went straight to the Yogyakarta Adisucipto airport so I don't have to pass through Terminal 3 [now called Terminal 4] at Jakarta airport. The main reason was because I was carrying goods from Hong Kong to aid earthquake victims in Jogjakarta.

So that is my experience as migrant worker abroad. Eventually I married my boyfriend from Bangladesh. Our happy little family added a new family member, a baby girl. Although we live far away because my husband is still working in Singapore but I tried to tough and resilient for the happiness and welfare of our families.

⁷ i.e. if a Indonesian migrant worker departs to Hong Kong by themselves or obtain a job directly through the employer (rather than an agency), they just have to pay 10% of their salary instead of having their salary deducted for 7 months.

Suaeri's Story

Growing up

I am Suari. I have spent almost the whole of my life as a migrant worker in Saudi Arabia. I hoped that working abroad would give me experience and solve my worldly issues, especially material [i.e. economic problem]. I was born January 10, 1984 at Brebes. I lived in a family with sufficient money and was happy with life and independent. I remembered my parent's struggles, Abdul Rosyid and Rosilah, who supported me and my 6 brothers so persistently. We tolerated their busy jobs; it reduced their love to each of us. Finally competitive world trade happened to my parents [i.e. bankrupt], so with all their efforts, my parents tried to find a better income without anyone getting hurt and with of course prayer and worship on the Power of God as the main spear of our lives.

Days passed away, months turned into years, one by one my sisters began to think about helping our parents. One of them was my big sister Sri Casri who tried to help my father's business until she got married. She was always helping our family. And my sister Eri Waeri was also planning to work overseas in Saudi Arabia our lives and her eternal happiness to build her own family. Returning home successfully from Saudi Arabia, in the middle of various conflicts in our family, my sister Eri Waeri got married.

Before 1999, my mother Rosilah passed away because of her illness. Then in 2000, both my sisters Sri Casri and Eri Waeri went back to working in Saudi Arabia. Because my family's financial situation was getting worse, I couldn't continue my studies at the high school. I'm trying to find a scholarship to help my parents pay for my study. And then my dream came true, a stakeholder of SMU (High School) 1 Losari believed in me and gave me Social Observer Network (JPS), so I got IDR 150,000 for 4 months. I was grateful for it.

During the 1st quarter, my education was going well so I could calmly follow school activities both extra-curricular and within the school. After 1st quarter exams, I managed to get 3rd Highest Rank which was great because then I can get a 4 month scholarship for IDR 180,000. At that time I wanted to be a policewoman or psychologist but that was only a false hope. Because of the conflict in my family with my father who was always changing his wife, so my achievement dropped dramatically and the school's stakeholder was very disappointed about this situation and I was sorry to have disappointed them. My final test results were even lower, and what's more, my family's conflict never abated. Finally when I graduated high school, I planned on working with my capabilities. I was offered to be the scout and coach of drum bands at a primary school in my village, but I decided to work abroad.

My experience as a migrant worker

Because of family conflict, I started to lose my mind and my brain felt it was hypnotised by the broker M.Yasin from Gebang, Cirebon, West Java. I went to PJTKI office and I had to pay IDR 600,000 to be a migrant worker. After I followed certain processes, I was placed in Bahrain in the Middle East. I got a salary of about 40 dinars or around 1 million rupiahs.

December 18, 2003 was the first time I entered Soekarno Hatta airport and left the homeland. The first day working was impressive enough with proper treatment by the family. My male employer, Rafea Ahmad Al-Muhana, from Syria and his wife, Maryam Ali Abdullah Mafyuh, from Bahrain lived in Hamad Town. I was working to keep the house and take care of 5 children. The first year of work, I started remembering life in my homeland of Indonesia. Then with all my courage I was trying to talk with my employers to provide news to my parents in my homeland, but with the busyness of each employer I did not have the opportunity to even discuss my salaries.

The hard life of the employer's family tired me and I almost hated them, but the customs of Syria (Islamic Muhammadiyah) pushed my mind about my 2 year contract. So I grew bold enough to ask them for my salary for 2 years. The more I dared, the more my employer threatened me that if I went home now, they wouldn't pay my salary. Then I gave them the opportunity to give my salary until I came home a year later. Increasingly, my employers blamed even for the slightest mistakes.

Then in 2006, I decided to go back home under any situation. Finally my employer made me a check for 500 dinars while the rest of my salary would be paid later when I got home. In mid-June 2006, I requested my employer to order a ticket for me to Indonesia. Eventually, on June 26, 2006 I flew to Indonesia. But apparently my employers took me to the airport in with very little time, so when I asked about my salary, they only said *"of course I would paid your salary, but you have to go now or you'd miss the plane"*. She only gave me 300 dinars. At that time I was only thinking to go home safely. So I said to everyone if you have a mind to work abroad you must have determination and believe in yourself to face the risks.

Arriving in this country, I landed at Soekarno - Hatta airport. The first time I entered my homeland, there were so many changes especially a special terminal for migrant workers. Its stated aim was to give the best services for migrant workers. But in reality, the policy was misused by certain stakeholders.

Having reached my village, I imagined my family would welcome me home. All my experiences as a migrant worker in Bahrain traumatised me, but my sister always gave me strength and motivated me to continue my work as a migrant worker. So one month later I went to PJTKI again with my sister Sri Casri through a more responsible broker. On August 26, 2006, I went to register at PT Sapta Saguna and I had to pay IDR 300,000. The process and services were sufficient so I hoped for a better fate. After medical checks and getting a passport, I finally flew December 18, 2006 by plane through the Suta airport to Riyadh and continued the trip to Taif. When I arrived at Riyadh airport before continuing travel to Taif, me and another migrant worker were directed to a specific room for migrant workers. In that room, there were a lot of migrant workers who had not yet been picked up their employer. They had to wait to be picked up without any food and beverage at all.

The first day at my employer's home in Taif was in a different season that I was not familiar. But my female employer, Saaf Salim Al Malki, understood my situation. However, my employers Hurray Saleh Al Malki apparently did not agree and was jealous of me. My presence was still not acceptable to the employer's family. Under these circumstances I was determined to return to the office to change employers. The employer agreed and paid my salary. I changed employers over the phone and I was accepted. Then I went to work taking care of a newborn baby. I was not comfortable with this situation. I just asked the office to give my work to someone else and finally I changed employers in the region in Riyadh. In this new job, I take care of a 80 year old grandfather named Muhammad Al Mujahid Nurah with my friend from the Philippines who will soon finish her contract. I also work together and provide adequate services to the employer.

With pretty impressive things, I was careless with all the chances. Starting from my salary that I sent to Indonesia and to the pattern of my life in Saudi Arabia, the work is less controlled by me that I'm used to. From the results of my work for half of this year, 60% of my earnings were lent to my sister Eri Wasri, 30% were set aside for savings and 30% were also manipulated by my sister Eri Wasri. I went back to my homeland with no results because the salary that I sent home was used irresponsibly by my. I am full of disappointment with such circumstances, but I accepted it with praise, gratitude and hope for more care and better decisions.

Hoping For The Best For Migrant Worker

If we often read the mass media, most of the news about domestic workers overseas and most of the problem is about violence, about the incompatibility between the contract and the actual work, or other things.

As a persons who wants to get better with experience, it would be nice if we could achieve a breakthrough and a wise solution where neither side loses. In this case I hope that the organisation of former migrant workers could motivate us to change the situation, compare the weight of problems and implement the rights and obligations that we deserve and give. Legal protection that the government promised is just a note in a thick book. This applies only if problems have already emerged. If problems arise, the Indonesian government never gives us protection of the law.

With our experiences and problems we can take advantage of this issue and our foundation to establish plans and solve migrant workers' problems. With our experience and legal protection from the government we can achieve and hope for better conditions.

