

The Role of NGO In Empowering Woman Returned Indonesian Migrant Workers In Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara

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Abstract. Central Lombok in West Nusa Tenggara Province has become one of the origin regions for most Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) in Indonesia: number five at the national level and number two at the provincial level. Most of them are women working in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. After working abroad, they returned with their earned money, but it has not been used optimally for productive activities. To assist them, PPK and Migrant CARE, as NGOs, carried out empowerment activities for those returned women IMWs. This study will convey how their life after back to home villages and empowerment activities they got through DESBUMI with the assistance from these NGOs. This study aims to enrich the discussion of the role of NGOs in empowerment activities for Indonesian return migrant workers, especially women, and to collect the best practices of the empowerment program. This study concludes some significant findings through empirical findings from interviews and FGDs.

Keywords: Women Returned IMWs Empowerment, DESBUMI, PPK, Migrant CARE, Central Lombok

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Indonesia has the second-largest migrant worker population in Southeast Asia after the Philippines, numbered six to nine million workers. Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs) or Pekerja Migran Indonesia (PMI) work in 150 countries with the top seven destination countries is Malaysia, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar [1]. Most of them work under temporary worker schemes [2], in the informal sector with low skills, mainly as domestic workers, factories labor, or sailors.

According to Bank Indonesia, IMWs contributed to the country's foreign exchange through remittances. In 2012, remittances from migrant workers amounted to USD 7 billion, making them the second most significant contributor to Indonesia's foreign exchange earnings. Their remittances in 2019 contribute around USD 11,435 billion to the Indonesian national economy [3]. Therefore, Indonesian migrant workers' remittance has a significant factor in the Indonesian economy and society.

On the other hand, one of the cycles of migration is returning. Gmelch [4] defines return migration as the movement of emigrants back to their homelands to resettle. A similar definition

is given by Russel King [5] that defines return migration as the process whereby people return to their country or place of origin after a significant period in another country or region.

There is no official yet integrated information about the number of returnees to Indonesia. Therefore, it is not sufficient to give statistical data about them. These returnees come home with hundreds of million rupiahs in savings after finishing their contract. They also demonstrate possible development potential at the local level, especially human capital, financial capital, and social capital [6]. However, the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower or Kemenaker mentioned that most IMWs have not been able to take advantage of their economic capital for productive businesses. They are tending to have a more consumptive behavior that encourages them to return to work abroad. Meanwhile, the family left behind is highly dependent on IMWs remittance without using the money to develop productive activities.

To encourage return IMWs to have a successful reintegration, Migrant CARE, with the support of the MAMPU Program, initiated DESBUMI or Desa Peduli Buruh Migran (Migrant Care Village) in 2013. DESBUMI is an empowerment program for women returns migrant workers through migrant worker groups in their village. The concept of DESBUMI is giving access assistance through pre-departure training, document handling, case handling, financial literacy, and access to government programs for alternative employment for return migrants [7]. DESBUMI protects its citizens who will (pre-departure), on-going (on working abroad), or have returned by providing integrated services.

Migrant CARE and its local partners work to improve the outcomes for migrant workers and their families before, during, and after migration. It has been implemented in 41 villages in 8 regencies in 5 provinces, such as West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, East Java, Central Java, and West Java [8]. In West Nusa Tenggara Province, Migrant CARE working together with Perkumpulan Panca Karsa (PPK) as the local partner in implementing and assisting DESBUMI in five villages in Central Lombok.

This study examines PPK and Migrant CARE's role as NGOs in empowering women IMWs and returned IMWs in Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. This study aims to enrich the discussion of Indonesian return migrant workers and women empowerment and collect the best practices of empowerment programs. This study concludes some significant findings through empirical findings from interviews and FGDs. The primary research question of this study is: what and how is the role of NGOs in empowering returned women IMWs in Central Lombok?

1.2 Definition of Empowerment

To understand empowerment programs for returned IMWs, we need to understand the concept of empowerment itself. Zimmerman mentioned that empowerment had become a vital construct for understanding the development of individuals, organizations, and communities. This concept of empowerment is becoming increasingly recognized and mainstream in many fields. Rappaport defines empowerment as a construct that links individual strengths and competencies, natural helping systems, and proactive behaviors to social policy and social change. Empowerment-oriented interventions enhance wellness while aiming to alleviate problems, provide opportunities for participants to develop knowledge and skills, and engage professionals as collaborators instead of authoritative experts [9].

Zimmerman [9] made conceptualization of empowerment processes and outcomes at multiple levels, which divides empowerment process into three groups of analysis:

- a. Empowering processes for individuals might include participation in community organizations.
- b. At the organizational level, empowering processes might include collective decision-making and shared leadership.

- c. Empowering processes at the community level might include collective action to access government and other community resources (i.e., media).

2 Case Study: Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara

2.1 Profile of IMWs in Central Lombok

From IMWs' placement data for 2017-2019 [10], 28.328 workers originally come from Central Lombok or about 28.8% of the total IMWs from West Nusa Tenggara Province. Therefore, Central Lombok is ranked 2nd after East Lombok regarding the number of IMWs in West Nusa Tenggara Province [10] and ranked 5th at the national level [1]. Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, Brunei Darussalam, and Singapore are the largest placement countries.

But most IMWs from Lombok mainly prefer to work in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. The reason is not only because of inspiration from other IMWs but also because of the fast procedure and religious reasons to perform Hajj or Umrah [11]. The moratorium on IMWs placement to Middle Eastern countries impacts the placement of IMWs in Saudi Arabia. This moratorium is carried out specifically for the informal sector, specifically domestic work as household assistants and private drivers.

Women IMWs work in the informal sector as household assistants in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, male IMWs work in the plantation sector in Malaysia. According to one of the returned IMWs in Lombok, male IMWs began to work a lot in Saudi Arabia as workers in hotels, supermarkets, and restaurants. The average remittance sent by IMWs from Central Lombok reached Rp 600 million per day. Moreover, in religious holidays (such as Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha), the remittances can go more than one billion rupiahs in a day. However, these remittances is not entirely intended for productive activities and primarily only for consumptive activities. PPK mentioned that this consumptive activity has a regional cultural basis; when a family member works abroad and has more income, there is a tradition to share sustenance with their family.

According to PPK, one of the characteristics of IMWs from Lombok that differs from those in Java is the pattern of repeated migration (remigration). They work abroad several times in several contract periods. Their main motive in working abroad is because of the family's economic condition and their very high dependence on moneylenders. To be able to work overseas, IMW usually borrows money from agents/lenders. However, to pay debts to moneylenders, the amount is two to three times the loan amount.

Therefore, the money gained in the first period of contract are mainly used to settle debts to moneylenders; then, the next period is used for IMWs plan to build houses, raise capital, family education, etc. That is why most of the IMWs from Lombok work on multiple contract periods. Another character is that in Java, only one partner usually goes to work abroad: in Lombok, the husband and wife both works abroad. Thus, their children are typically taken care of by grandmothers (either from the husband or wife).

2.2 DESBUMI and Gender Approach

DESBUMI is an empowerment program for women return migrant workers through migrant worker groups in their village by giving access assistance through pre-departure training, document handling, case handling, financial literacy, and access to government programs for alternative employment for return migrants [7]. DESBUMI protects its citizens

who will (pre-departure), on-going (on working abroad) or have returned by providing integrated services.

The purpose of DESBUMI is to embody the protection of migrant workers, especially women, started from their villages with a joint work between civil society organizations, migrant worker family communities and village government. At the village level, the emergence of DESBUMI is an innovative effort to overcome the problem of migration. This program seeks to change the paradigm of the village as a servant of citizens and the transformation of roles, and it will increase innovation towards village independence.

The reason why there are some empowerment programs which focused on women returnee only is because of the majority of Indonesian migrant workers are women or around 70% [1]. Apart from Indonesia, other countries that had a bigger number of women migrants than man are Thailand (72.6%) and the Philippines (61.9%).

2.3 DESBUMI in Central Lombok

Migrant CARE, founded in 2004, is a civil society organization focused on strengthening the migrant workers' movement as part of a social movement to realize global justice. Migrant CARE's working areas include organizing and enhancing the critical awareness of migrant workers, policy advocacy, handling cases, and legal assistance for migrant workers who experience injustice and problems [8].

Migrant CARE, with the support from Program MAMPU – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Australia, initiated DESBUMI in 2013 to support migrant workers. Migrant CARE and its local partners work to improve the outcomes for migrant workers and their families before, during, and after migration. They have expanded its network and evidence-based advocacy to increase the protection of migrant workers from the grassroots to the national level [7]. It has been implemented in 41 villages (currently active in 36 villages) in 8 regencies in 5 provinces, such as West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, East Java, Central Java, and West Java [8].

Migrant CARE cooperates with PPK in the implementation of DESBUMI in Central Lombok. Until 2020, there are six groups in five DESBUMI in Central Lombok which PPK assists. The DESBUMI was formed in two stages, initiated in 2014-2015, such as Nyerot Village, Jonggat District (2 groups), Darek Village, Southwest Praya District (1 group), and Gerunung Village, Praya District (1 group). Then, DESBUMI was also initiated in other villages in 2017, such as Gemel Village, Jonggat District (1 group), and Pringgarata Village, Pringgarata District (1 group).

2.4 Profile of Perkumpulan Panca Karsa (PPK)

To understand the empowerment activities of women returned IMWs in Central Lombok, we need to know PPK as the local partner and implementor of the empowerment program. PPK was previously known as Yayasan Perkumpulan Karsa (YPK) which was founded in 1988. The reason for its establishment was the issue of gender inequality against women. They create various programs to empower women, especially how women can be actively participating in the development, support the economy, express opinions, and speak through organizations. YPK in the 2000s changed its form into an association and brought issues of change, advocacy, empowerment, mentoring, and so on to adapt to the issues raised.

As an association, PPK consists of administrators, members, cadres, and Community Organizers (CO). Three strategic and core issues of PPK include the protection of migrant workers, women's empowerment, and child protection. The program's primary focus is to encourage policy advocacy, case assistance and economic empowerment activities, and the

capacity of migrant workers. Especially for economic empowerment, PPK provides services for women to present business ideas, have a market network, improve product quality and product presentations, and encourages women's cooperatives. PPK also assists women to actively participate in household aspects and development through participation in meetings at the village level.

PPK becomes more active in the migrant workers' issues when they have collaborated with Migrant CARE, one of the national NGOs concerned about migrant workers. PPK assisted the returned IMWs groups in DESBUMI regarding improving life-skills capacity, raising awareness of safe migration issues, motivation, networking, and product and economic business skills. PPK also helps the advocacy process support policies for the protection of migrant workers, economic empowerment (including cooperatives), and skills improvement. They also support and encourage the returned IMWs to care more about migrant workers issues. To make the migrant workers issues as a common problem, PPK invite the community to commit to overcoming the problem of migrant workers and care more about the conditions in the village. If something happened to the migrant workers from their village, it will give impact in their village as well.

Through various training provided by Migrant CARE, PPK, and other partners, DESBUMI members are encouraged to raise their awareness to make decisions, participate in decisions making process, and decide what is good for them. In the beginning, women returned IMWs was encouraged to play a role in the family in expressing opinions, being recognized, and playing an economic and social function. This can be started with access to education. To provide gender education, PPK use the approach by giving reinforcement and understanding to women and inviting the men to discuss and negotiate in building awareness related to gender issues. Thus, when women are given knowledge, men are also aware of gender roles in the household and a clear division of roles between men and women.

2.5 The Role of PPK in Empowering Women Returned IMWs

Since 2012, Migrant CARE, with the support from the MAMPU Program, cooperate with PPK to implement the empowerment program for women returned IMWs. PPK found that their empowerment program has more constructive concept, planned and clear goals to be achieved. PPK as Migrant CARE's local partner through the DESBUMI program in Central Lombok, helped establish returned IMW groups and organizations in villages to provide social services to the IMWs community. Since 2014 to 2020, there have been six groups in five DESBUMI in Central Lombok.

During the empowerment program implementation, the role of PPK in assisting the DESBUMI and its groups is as follow:

a. Better Administration and Data for Safer Migration

Before the implementation of DESBUMI, villages authority did not have an apparent bureaucracy and administration in managing documents for prospective migrant workers. Therefore, PPK, together with the IMWs group, invites villages to commit together to meet the needs of IMWs and provide services at the village level. In addition, villages are encouraged to have data on the mobility of migrant workers in their villages; IMW candidates, IMW who are working overseas, have returned from leave, and IMW who already returned to the village. This mobility data is updated regularly by members of the DESBUMI group and is carried out door to door.

b. Better Awareness on IMWs Issues

In addition, previously, the village did not care enough and knew about the cases and problems experienced by IMWs from their village. Through DESBUMI, PPK helps educate and

make village authority aware of IMW problems and cares and is responsible for dealing with cases. IMWs' issues are not personal but have become public problems and are the shared responsibility of various parties. It has been enacted in the Law 18 of 2017 related to IMW protection, in which protection should be starts from the IMWs origin village.

c. Tackling the Human Trafficking Issues from The Village

Previously, sponsors/ agents/ brokers were free to recruit potential migrant workers in the village. However, with this law, villages are the front gate in protecting IMWs, and villages are required to be active in providing information and safe migration services. In the five villages assisted by PPK, IMW administration and documentation became more organized. And villages are encouraged to have village regulations that strengthen efforts to protect IMW from the village.

d. Village Support through Budget

Another village support for IMWs is a budget for DESBUMI group activities. Villages need to prepare, initiate, and provide budgets for DESBUMI activities, just like other village institutions such as PKK and Karang Taruna.

e. Networking

PPK also assisted DESBUMI in Central Lombok to network at the local, provincial, and national levels (BP2MI). PPK will distribute the information to the IMWs group network about various training programs held by the Manpower Office, BP3TKi, and BP2MI. PPK cadres and members of the DESBUMI group are also active in managing IMW organizations at the village, sub-district, and district levels. The DESBUMI group is also directed to be independent and can process or handle IMW cases/problems.

f. Formation of Cooperative for Economic Empowerment

The DESBUMI group is also expected to synergize with other organizations in economic empowerment activities by forming cooperatives. The formation of these cooperatives to answer prospective IMWs who need money to go to work abroad and overcome the practice of moneylenders in the village. Cooperatives of women returned IMWs in Central Lombok have grown quite significantly in recent years. The existence of this cooperative helps the development of group and deals with moneylenders in their environment.

g. Advocacy and Case Handling

DESBUMI members also get various trainings from PPK, Migrant CARE and its partners to handle IMWs case. They are expected to actively involved in the process of resolving cases experienced by IMWs. Existing cases will be discussed with DESBUMI and analyzed for the resolution of the case. PPK will observe and acted as mentor in resolving the case. If DESBUMI group cannot handle the case, PPK will help to advocate and connect to the related networks.

h. Voice and Decision-Making Process

PPK also encouraged DESBUMI group members to participate in Musrenbang activities actively so they could voice their rights. For example, members of DESBUMI in Darek Village expressed their voice to the village to obtain a village budget for skills training and tools needed for production activities.

3 Conclusion

From this study, NGOs played an essential role in empowering returned women IMWs through DESBUMI in Central Lombok. The empowerment includes empowerment in groups and has a considerable influence on the empowerment of individuals (group members) and the

wider community, especially for returned IMWs' families, village officials, and related parties. The empowerment carried out is focused not only on economic empowerment but also gender awareness for returned IMWs and their families, capacity building for DESBUMI members, increasing the role of returned IMWs in village development, and advocating for IMW protection. It is also crucial for having a NGO or local partner that is assisting the women returned IMWs group in regular basis, continue and empower in many aspects.

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