STAY-BEHIND CHILDREN IN MYANMAR, THE PHILIPPINES AND INDONESIA

A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

Authors:

▪ Anderson Villa ▪ Ariadne Tiara Hapsari ▪ Avyanthi Azis
▪ Dalhar Shodiq ▪ Diyah Woro ▪ La Ring ▪ Moe Thuzar ▪ Sri Wijayanti
▪ Tyas Retno Wulan ▪ Yoga Prasetyo

Editor:

Yoga Prasetyo

HRWG

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Authors: Anderson Villa
Ariadne Tiara Hapsari
Avyanthi Azis
Dalhar Shodiq
Diyah Woro
La Ring
Moe Thuzar
Sri Wijayanti
Tyas Retno Wulan
Yoga Prasetyo

Editor: Yoga Prasetyo

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Human Rights Working Group (HRWG) Indonesia
Yarnati Building, Room 207D, Proklamasi Street, No. 44
Menteng, Central Jakarta, Indonesia 10320
Phone: 021-3902579, 021-29922459, Fax: 021-2902579
e-mail: hrwg.indonesia@gmail.com
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/HRWG.Indonesia
Twitter: @HRWG_Indonesia

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CHAPTER 3

INDONESIA

Children of Indonesian Migrant Workers:

Whose Responsibilities?

Tyas Retno Wulan, Sri Wijayanti, Diyah Woro Dwi Lestari, Dalhar Shodiq, Ariadne Tiara Hapsari, Yoga Prasetyo

ntroduction

Labor out-migration from Indonesia has generally been attributed to he scarcity of employment opportunities at home and increasing lemands for foreign labor in countries of destination. Limited employment ıpportunities and lay-offs during economic crises have prompted many ıdonesian workers to seek employment abroad. The initial flow of ıdonesian migrant workers, particularly to the Middle East, began ımmediately following the oil boom in the 1970s. Later, the Asian inancial Crisis in 1997/1998 marked a turning point, in which ıternational migration became particularly salient as households utilized : as a livelihood strategy, as well as a means for migrant workers to ıprove income and secure education for their children (Wulan *et al.* 010).

Data from the National Agency for Protection of Indonesian Overseas

Workers (BP2MI)[14] revealed that in 2019, there were an estimated 6.5 million Indonesian workers across 142 countries globally. On average, there are 250,000 Indonesian migrant workers deployed annually. Between 2015 and 2018, the number of deployment was relatively stable, although there was a marked decrease if we compare it to the 2014 figure, which stood at 429,872. In 2015, there were 275,737 deployed migrant workers; the number slightly fell to 234,451 in 2016; whereas the years 2017 and 2018 recorded as many as 262,899 and 283,640 migrant workers leaving, respectively.

Disaggregated by gender, the data further reveal that there are significantly more female than male migrant workers. Women comprised 65% of the migrant worker population. With regard to the levels of education, most Indonesian migrant workers are elementary and secondary school graduates. Most of them are married (47.25%), the rest are either single (have never been married) (37%) or divorced (15.75%). The five countries of destination are Malaysia, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, and Singapore (BP2MI 2020).

Labor migration contributes to development, particularly through economic remittances sent to the country of origin. It also fosters the transfer of knowledge, and the creation of businesses and networks. Migration adds new skills and work experience, which could later be utilized when migrants return to their home countries (ILO 2006: p. 18-19; GCIM 2005: p .6-7). Research on migrants from Ghana (King & Vullnetari 2003) asserts that aside from economic gains, migrants also bring back human and social capital, which allows them to set up their own business ventures once they return to the country of origin.

According to Raharto (2003), Indonesian migrant workers benefit from migration in a number of ways. In addition to allowing them to gain

14 Prior to 2020, the Agency was called BNP2TKI (*Badan Nasional Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia* or National Board for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers).

experience, increase their skills and secure better wages, migration also provides an opportunity to go on *hajj* pilgrimage, visit other countries and even meet life partners. Fariani (2001), who based her study on interviews of 71 migrant workers originating from West Java, finds that upon return, female migrant workers have more control of and access to agricultural resources. They are also likely to have more income than men, which translates to changing power relations within the household. Setiadi and Dwiyanto (2002) contend that migrant-sending areas show different characteristics and levels of socio-economic and cultural development from regions which do not see much labor outmigration. Economically, migrant-sending areas enjoy better economic growth relative to other areas. Based on the studies above, it may be concluded that international migration has positive impacts on development in countries of origin, particularly due to the economic potentials from remittances.

According to Bank Indonesia, remittances sent home by Indonesian migrant workers reached USD 10.971 million or equivalent to IDR 153.6 billion in 2018 (at an exchange rate of IDR 14,000/US dollar). The number rose by 25.22% from the previous year. Studies done by the World Bank have particularly highlighted remittance potentials. For example, Maimbo (2005) posits that remittances have emerged as the primary source of revenue flowing to developing countries. Like the World Bank, other financial institutions also emphasize how funds remitted by migrant workers benefit not only the families left behind at home but also the development of local communities and national economies in general. Wilson and Terry (2005), writing for the InterAmerican Development Bank, state that the current scale and magnitude of remittances render them an important force in the global financial systems—remittances boost savings and can jumpstart small businesses as they transform into loans and other forms of capital crucial for local community development. The significant contribution that migrant workers make to the development has earned them the label "foreign exchange heroes".

Instead of flattering, this has caused migrant workers to feel uncomfortable, as in truth, outside of their economic contributions, the government does not seem to care much about their protection and well-being.

In addition to economic remittances, migrants also generate social remittances, which according to Wulan (2010, 2019) come in various forms, among others: language proficiency (English, Arabic and Cantonese); the everyday ability to operate modern equipment; improved knowledge about nutrition, health, sanitation, and hygiene; internalized professional values (punctuality, discipline, better work ethics); change in mindset, especially concerning children's education, independence, marriage, gender relations within the family; and the formation of social networks through their involvement in organizations. Some Indonesian migrant workers returning from abroad utilize social remittances as a development tool to help empower people around them (Wulan 2019).

Aside from its potential to bring about positive impacts, international migration could also result in unintended or undesirable social changes. Some studies, among others Setiadi (1999), show that migration could also lead to a shift in perspective, especially regarding social roles within the society, which could lead to consequential social and cultural transformations. Wahyuni's multi-sited study (2000) in a village in Central Java and Bandung illustrates significant shift in families' economic strategies as women emerge as heads of households. Concomitant with this trend is the splitting up of families' core into two (or at times, more) units, which present a problem for both children and the elderly, as they are left behind in the villages.Another study carried out in Cilacap by Kolopaking (2000) shows that labor out-migration (to Malaysia) does not automatically improve the quality of human resources. Returning migrant workers do not display improvement in terms of skills. They do not display increased knowledge of religion, and their capacity to represent themselves in official forums remains limited. Kolopaking further

observes that migration adversely encourages negative attitudes to work upon return to Cilacap. Returned migrant workers spend their money on getting drunk and gambling. A number of studies have documented how migration alters the traditional family structure as the number of divorce is increasing significantly (Tamtiari 1999, 2000; Sukamdi 2001; Kustini 2002). These studies converge on the observation that the phenomenon of family disruption among migrant families is characteristic of the social cost of the international migration process. Other studies have examined the negative impacts of migration on children's education in Indonesia and Asia (see Bryant 2005; Huang and Yeoh 2005). Huang & Yeoh (2005) observe that the education of children of Chinese immigrants who migrated to Singapore requires great sacrifice from the mothers.

From previous research outlined above, we can conclude that international migration has real impacts on the lives of migrants, their families and surrounding communities. Building on previous work (Wulan *et al.* 2010), three are fundamental problems facing Indonesian migrant workers, their immediate families and communities: (i) neglect of the basic rights of children who are left on the origin country, or stay-behind children; (ii) rupture in the family structure, usually in the form of divorce, and (iii) weak capacity in managing remittances received from abroad. This chapter will focus on the first.

Problem Formulation

In 2016, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (*Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia* –KPAI) urged the government to stop the overseas deployment of female workers who still have to care for their babies and young children at home. KPAI estimates that annually, about 11.2 million children are deprived of their mothers' care and affection. The Commission's appeal to the government is based on its research, which finds that babies as young as a week-old are being left behind by female migrant workers—in extreme cases, they do not see their

mothers for a period of up to ten years.

A number of social ills are attributed to the absence of the migrant parent—these range from mounting psychological pressures on the stay-behind families as their integrity is put into doubt, teen pregnancies, rising consumerism, youth involvement in gang violence, to drug abuse (KPAI 2016). KPAI's appeal was met with mixed responses. On the one hand, those who supported the appeal argued that this was a necessary measure considering that parenting responsibility primarily lies with the mother. On the other hand, detractors saw that this call to prohibit migrant mothers from going overseas failed to consider the contemporary reality for so many women, who found it increasingly difficult to secure jobs locally to feed their children.

While KPAI's proposed ban was flawed in its positioning of putting parenting responsibility squarely on the mother, it did point to serious problems facing stay-behind children of migrant workers, which continue to elude the government's and general public attention. Although Indonesia has ratified the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and All Members of Their Families through the passing of Law No. 6 Year 2012, the plight of stay-behind children indicates that there has not been sufficient consideration given to them. This research aims to contribute to increasing awareness and better understanding of their predicament. It seeks to identify key issues in their experiences, and the extent to which policies in Indonesia have accommodated their protection.

Research Methods

This research employs a constructivist approach, which gives emphasis to the utmost importance of understanding the reality of the social world. Constructivism emerged through a long process after generations of positivism's predominant rein in the social sciences. The paradigm posits an antithesis to both positivist and post-positivist approaches.

A qualitative method is used in this study to spell out details of a

community's culture through the point of view of the research subjects. Here, the researcher's craft and skills are crucial in uncovering cultural details in an in-depth manner, so as to produce a thick description of the problems faced by the children of indonesian migrant workers

Research Subjects

This research focuses on examining existing policies on the protection of migrant workers' children. Therefore, the primary subjects of this study are stakeholders in Indonesia's migration governance, including: (i) government officials representing the Ministry of Manpower, National Agency for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (*BP2MI*), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesian Child Protection Commission *(KPAI)*; (ii) local government officials in Banyumas Regency, officers working for the Productive Migrant Village or *Desa Migran Produktif (Desmigratif)*, and Village Social Institutions or *Lembaga Sosial Desa* (LSD) of Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara; (iii) CSO representatives from Tanoker in Ledokombo, Jember, NGO *Santai* and ADIMW; (iv) Indonesian Consulate in Sabah, and principal of the Kinabalu City Indonesia School or *Sekolah Indonesia Kota Kinabalu* (SIKK); (v) stay-behind children of migrant workers in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara and Banyumas, Central Java, Malang and Tulungagung East Java.

Data Collection

This study uses in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders, including governmental agencies and CSOs. It complements the interviews with thorough participant observation to obtain deeper information from the stay-behind children of migrant workers. Another data collection technique used was FGD (focus group discussion) or directed discussion in a limited group to obtain comprehensive information from the stakeholders.

Data Analysis

The data in this study are processed using the interactive analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman (1984). Analysis is conducted through the following processes: once data are collected, they are reduced into main points, where only findings relevant to the research problem are selected and then presented in a narrative. Data reduction and presentation are two components of analysis done simultaneously with the collection of data. The final step is the drawing of conclusion, which takes place after data collection, presentation, description, and the logical interpretation.

Research Sites

This multi-sited research took place in several locations: Banyumas, Central Java; Malang and Tulungagung, East Java; Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara; Jakarta; and Sabah, Malaysia.

Issues Facing Children of Indonesian Migrant Workers

Issues Relating to School/Education

This study identifies several problems based on interviews, FGDs and observation of the children.

With regard to education, interviews conducted with children of migrant workers reveal varied responses. First, there are children who do not feel that their parents' migration has impacted negatively on their studies—in the sense that they feel that they can still learn well, and even continue to excel. This is what Ifa (16) experiences, a ninth grader who has managed to retain her standing in her class top 10 ranking, despite her mother's absence. Ifa's mother currently works as a waiter in a restaurant in Malaysia—she routinely sends money to buy books and school supplies. She also keeps regular communication with her daughter via telephone, BBM and video calls. Similar to Ifa, Safira (9) also reported no problem with regard to her performance at school. Staying behind with her mother, Safira maintains regular communication with her father,

who works in Malaysia. The steady arrangement has helped her with her study, and her grades have not been negatively affected by the father's absence. Similarly, Erlin (11) has also consistently come top of her class, despite her mother working in Saudi Arabia for an extended period.

A second group of children of Indonesian migrant workers reported difficulty concentrating, which has an adverse impact on their learning. According to a number of respondents, this is due to missing the (migrant) mother, and the fact of not having her around to remind them to study. For instance, DB, a 17-year old daughter of a migrant worker stated that her mother's departure abroad has affected her ability to concentrate on her studies as she keeps thinking about her mother. Meanwhile, Hani (17) a high school student in Kebanggan, Banyumas, feels that she is no longer motivated as her mother, who is now working abroad, is not there to remind her to study.

The third group experiences the most adverse impact from their parents' migration as they drop out of school. Although only affecting 10 percent of the study's respondents, this needs urgent attention. DA (18), a child of a migrant worker residing in the Sokaraja District, reported that he felt too lazy to study. He found continuing on with school difficult as he had to do everything by himself, away from her mother. He eventually opted to drop out of school altogether.

Mr. Hr, a respondent from PPA office (Protection of Women and Children) Kutaliman Village Banyumas, observed that there are indeed a number of children of Indonesian migrant workers who failed their classes and stopped going to school. AH, a Kutaliman village apparatus, offered the view that parental absence has diverse impacts on stay-behind children's school performance—for some it could be positive, while for others, negative. Some children feel neglected and drop out of school, but there are also instances in which stay-behind children manage to continue their education up to tertiary level and earn Bachelor's degrees. Lack of attention, particularly from the migrant mother, at times results in a decline in the child's learning ability. The problem becomes

compounded as these children often do not have alternate figures in the family, who might be able to help them with difficult subjects and oversee their study processes. There are cases in which stay-behind children have both parents working abroad, and they have to live with illiterate grandparents who are in no position to assist them in doing homework.

The educational problems faced by stay-behind children in Banyumas are similar to what stay-behind children in other countries are experiencing. Botezat's (2014) study of stay-behind children in Romania identifies mixed results—on the one hand, they get better grades at school, partially because they have more time to study; but on the other hand, they also suffer from more depression and are prone to more health problems, especially those living in rural areas. Cortes' (2013) study in the Philippines found that stay-behind children of female migrant workers were more at risk of encountering problems at school than those who were left behind by their migrant fathers.

Economic Issues

Children of Indonesian migrant workers also face economic issues. Many people are under the impression that a child of Indonesian migrant worker(s) enjoys greater well-being because they have ready access to cash (generated through remittances). People also, rather wrongly, perceive that they could easily join their parents abroad.

Based on interviews with respondents, the researcher did find that the majority of stay-behind children did not experience significant economic problems; they would routinely receive remittances managed by their caregivers (father, brother, grandfather, or grandmother). In general, most of the migrant household respondents reported no problems with finances. This potential for financial stability afforded by remittances is what has led many studies to probe in more detail as to how this particular international flow contributes to family's finances and which areas become prioritized—consumption, children's educational needs or other tactical costs.

However, not all stay-behind children enjoy the fruit of their parents' hard labor. There are cases in which they are unable to pay for tuition/ school fees, and cannot buy books because there is no money remitted by their parents. In some cases, the flow of remittances is constrained due to various reasons, such as the withholding of wages or salary deduction, which may last up to nine months. Da (17) from the village of Keniten, who is left behind with her school payments (tuition, building & development fees), has not received any money from her mother, who is currently still in a pre-departure shelter. This is to be her mother's second deployment abroad—she had previously gone to Singapore in her previous overseas placement.

Psychological & Social Issues

A third problem that this study identifies touches upon the social aspect, relating to the children of migrant workers' relationships with others and the development of their concept of *the self*. In general, child respondents still in elementary school reported no significant problems with their peers, in the sense that they are able to continue socializing at school and get along well with their classmates.

For those in middle and high school, emerging problems are related to the typical challenges that teenagers face during the turbulent (pre-) adolescent period. For many, connection to peers is important, and problems could appear when they have no one to share their thoughts and feelings with, or someone who could be a role model. At times, children can simply fall in with the wrong crowd or hang out with people who influence them negatively.

For some children of migrant workers, their parents' status as migrant workers comes as a problem; some feel at a loss to explain what their parents do abroad when friends ask about their work. Stigma over low-wage migrant workers is a real issue, and some stay-behind children fear that their friends at school would bully them because of their parents' jobs. Some become more withdrawn, displaying low self-esteem and a

lack of confidence in themselves, their ideas and their parents' occupation. Observing stay-behind children in his area, Ha, a village head from Pamijen Sokaraja, identifies several problems, including teen pregnancies and school drop-outs, which he attributes to a lack of parental care and loose supervision. Adding to Ha's observation, RW, another village-level official in Pamijen, commented that there is widespread perception that stay-behind children have a lot of money (they are considered as "rich kids"), and that due to their easy access to cash sent by their parents, they are more likely to idly play games, instead of striving hard to do well in school.

At times, stay-behind children decide to hide their parents' occupation, as work overseas has often come to be regarded as synonymous with being a "housemaid". The Indonesian public in general still holds negative views of migrant workers, equating work overseas with taking up 3D (dirty, dangerous, difficult) jobs—which they see as undignified. This is despite studies showcasing that upon return, many Indonesian migrant workers have emerged to become successful leaders in their immediate community (becoming village heads or part of the village-level government, as well as members of the *BPD* or village consultative body), while others turn into teachers, advocates, and entrepreneurs, who empower not only themselves but also their families and people in their surrounding areas (see for example, Wulan 2019).

Stay-behind children who are of mixed or interracial/inter-ethnic marriage or union have come to face unique challenges when socializing with their peers. Bullying is common toward children with physical features that are distinguishable from those of their parents. They are often stigmatized and labelled as '*anak haram*' or 'illegitimate children'. As a result, these stay-behind children are usually either ostracized by their peer groups or have withdrawn themselves from their social circles.

Access to Legal Documents

Another notable issue that requires immediate response concerns access to legal documents as illustrated by the following case. Rini, a

mother of four, migrated to work as a domestic worker in Saudi Arabia after her husband's passing. She then married a Saudi man and returned to Indonesia, where she gave birth to Alatas and Rasyid[15]. At age 20, Alatas was planning a trip to Thailand, for which he had to apply for a passport. However, he was deliberately put through a strenuous process by some irresponsible immigration officers, who then demanded a great sum of money in exchange for the passport. They contended that Alatas was a foreigner and threatened him with deportation if he refused to pay the money. In fact, there are similar cases in which stay-behind children with distinct physical features are 'repatriated' to countries in which they have never set foot. Alatas shared that his acquaintance, being racially mixed, was 'repatriated' to Turkey and put in an orphanage for failing to pay certain amounts of money[16]. Out-of-wedlock children are unable to have their fathers' names in their birth certificates, which further reinforces the stereotypes against them. There are also instances in which migrant workers' children are disowned by the families or denied recognition into family certificates as they display physical features distinguishable from those of either parent. More often than not, neighbors will usually step in to offer help by admitting these children into their family certificates so that they can fulfil the formalities necessary for obtaining other legal documents. Without these legal documents, such as birth certificates, stay-behind children face a major obstacle to formal schooling and access to other public services. In various instances, however, this kind gesture carries its own challenges in relation to inheritance. Members of the family who regard the stay-behind child as part of their family often raise objections for fear of losing some shares of their inheritance to the said child. The interviews with local activists in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, show that a lack of legal documents has varied repercussions in terms of access to education.

15 All names have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals.

16 Based on a personal interview on December 14, 2019 in Malang, East Java.

Stay-behind children are unable to access financial aid from the government as the program requires birth certificates, among other legal documents.

Caregivers of Children of Indonesian Migrant Workers

Interviews with the stay-behind children of migrant workers reveal that grandmothers tend to be the primary caregivers who take over the migrant parent(s)' role while they work overseas. Depending on the family's situation, grandfathers, fathers, brothers, uncles, aunts as well as other extended family members also turn up as figures who look after children. Based on interviews with caregivers, it is apparent that they have needs to learn about child-rearing techniques at each stage of their growth, both for nutritional problems, regulation of cell phone use (allocation of "screen time"), learning patterns, and others. In some cases, children of female migrant workers are left in the care of their fathers, but because these men have to work, they put the grandparents in charge. While caring, some grandparents have very low levels of formal education; some are illiterate, and therefore could not provide any assistance in learning. Wulan *et al.* (2018) assert that the upbringing of stay-behind children of female migrant workers would depend a lot on the father's character and his resilience to ensure that the family remains intact. It is of note that stay-behind children interviewed for this study expressed their hope that village-level government would give more attention to their needs and provide them with some forms of community care.

Role of the State in Protecting Children of Indonesian Migrant Workers: Gaps in Implementation

As has been mentioned earlier, Indonesia has ratified the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families through Law No. 6 Year 2012. In addition, Indonesia has also adopted Law No. 18 Year 2017, which regulates

matters concerning the protection of migrant workers and their families. Both of these laws should form the basis for state's protection of children of Indonesian migrant workers. To explore the role of the state in the protection of IMW, interviews and FGDs were conducted with the Ministry of Manpower *(Kemenaker)*, the National Agency for the Protection of Migrant Workers (BP2MI,) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) as a state agency that directly deals with child protection issues. Key results and findings are discussed below:

Ministry of Manpower

The Ministry of Manpower *(Kemenaker)* has since 2016 rolled out the Productive Migrant Village or *Desa Migran Produktif (Desmigratif)* program that aims to empower (returned) migrant workers, improve government services for them, and provide them with comprehensive protection beginning at the village level. There are four main pillars under the Desmigratif, which are tailored toward: (1) providing information on safe migration at the village level; (2) encouraging productive business efforts initiated by migrant workers and their families; (3) building community parenting activities for stay-behind children, whose parents are working abroad; and (4) strengthening productive businesses in the long-term through cooperatives.

Desmigratif is expected to be able to answer the problems faced by migrant workers and their families. In 2018, Desmigratif was applauded by many parties, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) because Desmigratif, with its 4 integrative programs, was considered to be able to minimize the problems of migrant workers and their families. Desmigratif incorporates child protection through its third pillar on community parenting, which provides stay-behind families with direction in educating, caring for and giving children proper guidance.

The study observes the implementation of community parenting in two Desmigratif located in the Banyumas Regency, namely the Cihonje

village in the Gumelar District and the Losari village in the Rawalo district, and one Desmigratif in the district of Kediri in West Nusa Tenggara. In these first two villages, community parenting activities are carried out at the Desmigratif's center, which is dubbed as "Desmigratif's House of Learning" (*Rumah Belajar Desmigratif*). These learning centers include a play-area for children, which also doubles in function as a learning space and a reading park (library). Aside from activities for children, the centers also hold other activities for migrant worker families, including counseling sessions, language training, entrepreneurship training, and financial management planning.

Village heads, with support and assistance from various stakeholders, selected the location for the Desmigratif's learning center and built the necessary infrastructure. Once the learning center was prepared, the village heads appointed an officer responsible for its day-to-day management. Activities were carried out in collaboration with intended partners, which include ministries/institutions, local governments, CSOs, social organizations, academics, volunteers, etc.

The Desmigratif Community Parenting activities in the Losari village, Rawalo district, include the following: (1) community parenting activities with stay-behind children, held weekly on Thursday afternoon, which include: a. educational reading; b. basic English and math courses; c. play-and-learn sessions; (2) POSBINDU (*Pos Pelayanan Terpadu* or Integrated Health Service), which provides routine health services for mothers at the Desmigratif 's learning center. Held every month on the 21st, the activities are administered in collaboration with village midwives, who serve as resource persons/mentors. Posbindu activities include: (i) simple medical check-up (blood pressure check), and body weighing; (ii) health counseling sessions by the village's midwife; and (iii) social gathering among members as a binder of togetherness.

The Desmigratif Community Parenting activities in Cihonje village, Gumelar district, are as follows: a. basic English classes for stay-behind

children in elementary and junior high school, held in the learning center; b. child care counseling, which is available online via group chat on WhatsApp. Villagers can also direct complaints to designated officers via the chat application; c. advocacy efforts for stay-behind children who are facing problems, for example, those who cannot afford tuition, or children who, for whatever reason, refuse to go to school. To help those who cannot pay school fees, Desmigratif officers would conduct fund-raising or find donors to help with the costs.

The Desmigratif community parenting initiatives in Kediri district of West Nusa Tenggara are much more 'advanced' as they have managed to organize the stay-behind children into a group that is actively involved in policy- and decision-making processes that affect their lives at the level of village government. It is worth noting that compared to other Desmiratif, this success is an exception rather than a norm as the community had set up their advocacy initiatives and other community parenting-related activities even before Desmigratif was introduced to the community.

From the description of the Desmigratif's community parenting activities above, it can be gleaned that there are budding efforts to protect children of migrant workers. While at present there is no standardized community parenting curriculum to follow, and there is no monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, the innovativeness and creativity of the Desmigratif officers have helped advance the community parenting agenda.

National Agency for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (BP2MI)

Up to this point, BP2MI has not initiated any specific program targeting children of migrant workers. In 2013, however, BP2MI extended financial assistance to *Rumah Peduli Anak Tenaga Kerja Indonesia* (RPATKI) or Shelter for Children of Migrant Workers, which was established by National Movement for Social Care (*Gerakan Nasional Kepedulian Sosial*/GNKS) in

collaboration with Puri Cikeas Foundation. RPATKI provides a shelter to returned pregnant migrant workers and renders necessary assistance for their labor. RPATKI also looks after the babies until their families are ready to take them. A Memorandum of Understanding No. B1688/PL/IX/2013 was signed by BP2MI and RPATKI, but this partnership ceased following the appointment of a new head of the former institution (Salimah 2016; Susilawati and Cholid 2014).

BP2MI focuses its efforts on economic empowerment of returned migrant workers. An example of the agency's program geared toward this objective is the KKBM (*Komunitas Keluarga Buruh Migran*, or Migrant Workers Family Community). KKBM is a community of, by, and for the locals—as a social entity, it could cover the vicinity of a village, a cluster of villages, or an entire district. The community includes returned, active and prospective migrant workers. KKBM has a designated community organizer (CO), who organizes members either at the community-level or in smaller groups. KKBM's objective is to further collective efforts and solve problems occurring at the local level, which relate to placement and protection of migrant workers. KKBM's core activities include: economic empowerment activities of its members, provision of information on safe migration and advocacy.

KKBM set up some indicators as a measure of success, including: (i) establishment of economic business units; (ii) increase in unit and business volume; (iii) establishment of cooperatives, or *kelompok usaha bersama* (self-help collective business groups; (iv) utilization of the Credit for Business Program (*Kredit Usaha Rakyat*—KUR).

While KKBM's organizing activities are mostly directed at economic empowerment, there are innovative practices done by its village-level community organizers. For instance, the KKBM in the village of North Jenggik, in the Montong Gading district in East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara also directs efforts at protecting children of migrant workers. Interviews with its village head and community elders in October 2019 signaled openness to collaborate with stakeholders, on the issues of not

only empowerment but also protection. The ADBMI (*Advokasi Buruh Migran Indonesia*—Advocacy for Indonesian Migrant Workers) in East Lombok first initiated protection efforts through the establishment of LSD (*Lembaga Sosial Desa*, or the Village Social Institution) (Ansori, Lalu Husni *et al.* 2014). In North Jenggik, many stay-behind children face challenges at school; they also often get entangled in social problems, such as teen delinquency and child marriage. These problems are commonly attributed to their parents' absence (many of them migrated to Malaysia for work). With support from BNI (*Bank Nasional Indonesia*, or the Indonesian National Bank, a state-owned bank), LSD found the Rumah Edukasi TKI, (literal translation: Education House for Indonesian Migrant Workers). KKBM also assists in the Rumah Edukasi TKI's activities in North Jenggik. The village's empowerment and protection efforts earned recognition nation-wide when it won the prestigious Hassan Wirajuda Award from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2017.

To conclude this section, thus far, the BP2MI has not initiated any specific programs catering to the needs of stay-behind children. There are best practices done, as illustrated in the North Jenggik, but the LSD, instead of KKBM appears to play a more dominant role in local efforts to protect stay-behind children.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture: Efforts to Protect Children of Indonesian Migrant Workers Living in Sabah, Malaysia[17]

Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia, especially in the State of Sabah, are experiencing serious issues in relation to the education of their children. Around 23,000 children in Sabah have been given access to education either through the Community Learning Center (CLC) or in collaboration with the Humana Guidance Center, a Malaysian Non-governmental Organization (NGO). The Sabah government calls them

17 This particular subchapter observes the lived experience of children who reside in Malaysia, a country of destination, with their parents.

'Sabah Inland Foreigners'. The children are born into migrant families, most of whom have already lived 2 to 3 generations living and working there. In many instances, children are deprived of birth certificates and other legal documents as their parents do not have marriage certificates. Some who are still small will be reared at daycare centers, and then they will be transferred to the Humana Guidance Center or CLC (Ratri 2018). Generations of Indonesian descent have resided in the state of Sabah, working on palm plantations and lacking documents. This has major repercussions for their children, who cannot access formal education in Malaysia as a result of the lack of legal documents. As a response, the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Indonesian Consulate in Kota Kinabalu, has implemented affirmative education programs for children of Indonesian migrant workers in Sabah. They do this by co-founding the SIKK (*Sekolah Indonesia Kota Kinabalu*—the Indonesian School in Kota Kinabalu), together with the Ministry of Education and Culture. Since 2006, the Indonesian government has continued to bring in teachers to the SIKK, and by 2019, the ninth year of the program, 100 teachers had been sent to the eastern Malaysia state.

There are currently 290 Indonesian teachers across 294 PKBM (*Pusat Kegiatan Belajar-Mengajar*, which literally means Center for Learning and Teaching Activities, or better known as Community Learning Centers (CLC)) that we have mentioned before, in Sabah—155 of them teach children of elementary school age groups (roughly 6-12), while 139 tutor children within junior high school age groups (13-15). The CLCs are formal institutions established through community initiatives. They are community-run, with the clear, primary objective to fulfil children's educational needs (Kompas 2018).

Aside from co-founding SIKK, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its Consulate in Tawau also eases the processing of identity documents for children of Indonesian migrant workers. The Indonesian mission provides population and civil registry services usually administered by

the Disdukcapil (*Dinas Kependudukan dan Pencatatan Sipil*, or Population and Civil Registration Office), such as issuance of birth certificates. This policy is urgently needed by the children, whose lack of identity documents prevents them from accessing basic rights, such as access to education, health services, etc.

In 2018, the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education through its Directorate of Student Affairs, launched an affirmative scholarship program known as ADik (*Afirmasi Pendidikan Tinggi*, or Higher Education Affirmative Program). To target marginalized children of Indonesian descent abroad, scouting of candidates is also conducted through the SIKK and SIKL (*Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur*, the Indonesian School in Kuala Lumpur). In 2018, as many as 123 children of Indonesian migrant workers in Sabah were given affirmative scholarships to study in state universities throughout Indonesia. Five of them are currently studying in various degree programs at the Universitas Jendral Soedirman in Purwokerto, Central Java. Interviews done with these students revealed that they feel very fortunate and are proud to study at the higher education level in Indonesia. They all stressed that the support they received from their parents and teachers at CLC greatly factored into their being able to pursue their current studies.

Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI)

In an FGD conducted on August 13, 2019, the KPAI explained that the Commission's work and advocacy are based on incoming public complaints. Thus far, issues surrounding children of migrant workers have not come up as a priority agenda for the Commission. Nevertheless, one of KPAI's commissioners present in the FGD affirmed that forms of intervention are needed in advancing the well-being and protection of children of migrant workers—particularly parenting and directive interventions. Ensuring that caregivers have necessary parenting skills is crucial if we want to break the cycles of dependency and achieve betterment in the plight of children of migrant workers. Good parenting

requires training, and caregivers need to understand key elements substantial for effective parenting practices. We need to initiate sincere dialog with children of migrant workers. In more concrete terms, for example, we can begin by improving Desmigratif's community parenting practices through collaborations with Himpunan Psikologi Indonesia (HIMPSI).

Capacity-building training is also needed to improve the community's knowledge on reproductive health issues. KPAI also expressed its commitment to future collaborative efforts toward the protection of children of Indonesian migrant workers. The table below summarizes existing policies/programs initiated by various state agencies, which bear relevance to the protection of children of migrant workers.

Table 1. Policies relevant to protection of stay-behind children

No.	State agency	Policies relating to protection of stay-behind children	Existing program(s)	Information
1.	Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI)	Unavailable	Unavailable	KPAI advocates for issues based on public complaints
2.	Ministry of Manpower	Desmigratif (Productive Migrant Village)	Community Parenting pillar	Unavailable

3.	National Agency for the Protection of Migrant Workers (BP2MI)	Unavailable	Unavailable	In 2013, BP2MI partnered with RPATKI, but this partnership ceased in 2014
4.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Starting in 2018, population and civil registry services have been provided by the Indonesian Consulate in Sabah	Unavailable	Unavailable
5.	Ministry of Education and Culture	Deployment of teachers to provide education for children of Indonesian migrant workers in Sabah Advocacy for the education of children of Indonesian migrant workers in Saba, (through SIKK)	Unavailable	Unavailable
6.	Ministry for Research, Technology and Higher Education	Affirmative scholarship for children of migrant workers (ADik)	Unavailable	Unavailable

Sources: Primary data

Good Practices on Protection of Children of Migrant Workers (by the government and CSOs)

One of the most effective mechanisms to protect children of migrant workers is through strengthening the roles of community actors. Due to the bottom-up and contextualized nature of their work, communities have strong potential in building effective parenting systems for children of migrant workers. Building the community's participatory role will increase the members' sensibility and awareness of issues happening around them, as well as their capacity to solve problems. It also optimizes local potentials and helps rally social and material support for specific causes.

Community's role in child protection is mandated in Article 25 of Law No. 35 Year 2014, which revised the previous Law No. 23 Year 2002 on Child Protection. The Article explicitly states that the public has the obligation and responsibility to contribute to child protection through community initiatives. Article 72 further affirms this role. Referring to Article 1 of the Law No. 35 Year 2014, Community's role can be taken up by individuals, child protection agencies, NGOs, educational institutions, religious/faith-based organizations, business enterprises, and the media. The law thus provides a clear legal basis for community parenting for stay-behind children of Indonesian migrant workers.

Some good practices from various localities in Indonesia show that increasing community's involvement could help alleviate problems faced by stay-behind children. In West Java, Netty Prasetiyani Heryawan, Chair of the West Java PKK Driving Team (*Tim Penggerak Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*, or the Family Welfare Movement) put forth a proposal for community parenting as a way to protect stay-behind children in the province. Children who grow up without their parents, especially mothers, are prone to abuse and violence; therefore, the government needs to attend to their needs as a preventive measure. She stated, "We expect that women and youth organizations can take up

parenting roles as means to protect stay-behind children, who are prone to violence and other criminal acts". The PKK intends to develop programs in cooperation with the BP3AKB (*Badan Pemberdayaan Perempuan, Perlindungan Anak dan Keluarga Berencana*, or the Women Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Agency) and involve cadres from PKK, Posyandu, and local youth organizations in the community parenting efforts. Pilot projects would be prioritized in 6 regencies with the highest labor out-migration in West Java, namely Sukabumi, Cianjur, Majalengka, Cirebon, Indramayu, and Karawang (Narsidah *et al.* 2016)

Farha Ciciek and her husband, Suporahardjo, initiated the Tanoker community activities in Ledokomdo. Among Tanoker's programs are educating and empowering stay-behind children, as well as their immediate social circles, such as their caregivers.[18] Tanoker is organizing learning/support groups for stay-behind fathers, who are often ill-prepared to take up primary parenting roles once their wives migrate. In addition, separate support groups have been developed to assist stay-behind grandparents, who often shoulder child-rearing responsibilities, and the stay-behind children themselves. Ciciek's sincerity and commitment to protecting these children have earned her national and international recognition. Tanoker has an extensive network with institutions in Indonesia and abroad. Their primary mission is to optimize children's potential through traditional games, such as the *egrang* (stilts), as well as other learning activities.

A number of NGOs in Lombok also show concerns for stay-behind children, who are prone to other issues such as child-trafficking for sexual slavery, child labor and child marriage. They conduct advocacy on behalf of these children and run programs for the benefits of the latter. Among these NGOs are the previously-mentioned ADBMI and Yayasan Tunas

18 Farha Ciciek's profile can be viewed in the following link: https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/majalah-38246594. Tanoker's profile can be viewed here: https://tanoker.org/selayang-pandang-tanoker-ledokombo.

Alam Indonesia (SANTAI), both operating in Lombok. It is of note that the two organizations rely on external funding, thus the sustainability of their programs is less certain.

Conclusion

The protection of children of Indonesian migrant workers has not become a priority issue for state agencies. While the Ministry of Manpower has launched the Desmigratif, which includes community parenting among its four pillars, there has not been a standard curriculum to guide and monitor its implementation. The community parenting model applied in Desmigratif is left to the discretion of its respective officers. There are affirmative policies for children of migrant workers living abroad, particularly those residing in Sabah.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Consulate, provides document services catering to the needs of children of undocumented Indonesian workers in the state of Sabah. The Ministry of Education and Culture has since 2006 sent teachers to provide education for these children. Furthermore, since 2018, the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education has also provided affirmative scholarship opportunities for them. There is a need to continue advocating good practices, such as the community parenting model advanced by Tanoker Ledokombo, which has consistently provided protection measures for children of migrant workers through play-and-learn activities in Jember.

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