

Bridging Voices, 11th Development Dialogue

Panel: Labour Markets and Migration

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Marketization of Care and Gendered Cross-Border Migration from Indonesia to Malaysia: The Case of Indonesian Female Migrant Domestic Workers in/to Malaysia

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1. Introduction

For the last two decades, the rights of domestic workers have drawn attention from academia, policy makers, NGO workers and human rights activists. The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2011) estimates that there are currently 53 to 100 million domestic workers worldwide¹ (around 83% of whom are women and girls), and many of them, especially the female live-in migrant domestic workers (MDWs), are working under precarious conditions without any labour rights. Since domestic work is undervalued and poorly regulated, domestic workers remain overworked, underpaid and unprotected. Media reports have increasingly highlighted the plight of MDWs in the different parts of world who suffer from maltreatment, such as control of mobility through withholding identity papers, physical abuse, sexual harassment, overtime work and wage denial. Yet, public authorities have been reluctant to intervene in the defense of domestic workers, primarily because domestic work is regarded as a "private" issue within the family. Government intervention mainly takes the form of banning the migration of women in low-skilled sectors

¹ ILO (2011) says that the estimated number of domestic workers based on the national survey and/or census of 117 countries is around 53 million, but the global total number including the unregistered could be as high as 100 million.

altogether or domestic workers specifically, rather than finding measures to protect the rights of these migrants².

Developed within feminist theory, "domestic labour" is often used interchangeably with many other concepts such as "domestic work", "care work", "personal services in families" (Anderson, 2001a & 2001b). As an analytical concept, domestic labour seeks to show the significance of the un-paid work performed by women in the home. The concept is "sometimes" referred to as "reproductive labour", following the distinction made by Marxist theorists between work considered as "productive" (or creating economic value) and work aimed at re-creating the worker's capacity to work. While there is some disagreement as to how precisely to conceptualize domestic labour and how to assess its substantive significance, a consensus exists regarding its role in as an important but hidden subsidy to the economy, and subsequently its role as a basis for gender inequality because it is generally attached to women's ascribed status.

The fact that domestic work/labour is generally considered as un-productive pays a significant role in denying the contribution of those who performed such work, without or against payment. As long standing issues in the debate on women's rights, domestic labour and its links with the international migration of women as domestic workers have become major policy concern, bringing together a wide range of issues related to demographic transition³ in receiving countries and employment opportunities and foreign exchange earnings for sending countries (Oishi, 2007).

In spite of the gains made in a number of international legislative frameworks, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Domestic Workers Convention of ILO (2011), which have made gender inequalities in the domestic sphere more visible, the implementation of these legal instruments remains problematic due to socio-cultural norms on the public-private divide (hereafter PPD). As a social construct and historical phenomenon, this divide can be fluid rather than fixed and can reveal and construct certain aspects of reality while simultaneously masking others. Thus, this divide can create conflicting perceptions about rights and accountability (Howell, 2007).

Under neoliberal globalization, the PPD has shown new faces especially in the domain of care and domestic work. The marketization of care and domestic work expresses deep transformation of regional, national and local care systems, many aspects of which remains invisible. From the perspective of female domestic workers as right holders, new analyses are needed to highlight the connections between different layers of power which (1) deny the recognition of rights (2) influence the nature of direct abuse and (3) create the conditions of vulnerability which are distinct from other types of occupations in the service sector (Truong, 2011).

This research focuses on the cross-border migration of Indonesian women to Malaysia as domestic workers. It makes a distinction between "domestic labour" (sub-concept within the broader concept of "reproduction" as the re-creation of human societies, including biological, social, systemic, cultural and ideational aspects), and "domestic work" as a normative concept to refer to the specific activities undertaken for reproduction within a household, which include a wide range of physical activities as well as 'emotional ones' such as management of tension in human relations and caring. Its main premise is the acknowledgement of how changes in reproductive systems correspond with production systems, affecting also the socio-cultural and

² For example, in Bangladesh (1998), Indonesia (1980 and 2009) and Sri Lanka (2007).

³ For example, aging population, double-income families, reorganisation of caring arrangements for the young, elderly and sick.

legal arrangement for domestic labour. These changes in turn affect the norms used in the definition of "domestic work" (as family labour or paid services).

Based on these theoretical background, in the Development Dialogue, I want to present the main research findings of my fieldwork in Indonesian (Jakarta and the district of Karawang) and Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur) conducted from February 2012 to January 2013 and give some reflections on gendered local/national/international labour market and care & MDWs. With the empirical data gathered in Indonesia and Malaysia, in the Development Dialogue, I want to mainly illustrate the following:

- (1) how the socially constructed discourses around “public-private”, “formal-informal” and “skilled-unskilled” affect the forms of vulnerability experienced by Indonesian women who have actually migrated as domestic workers in Malaysia and those who are aspiring to become MDWs;
- (2) the gaps in government policy & law (Indonesia & Malaysia, bi-lateral agreements) and international norms (such as ILO) regarding the definition and framework of care and domestic labour, work and worker;
- (3) gendered aspects of transnational labour recruitment and gendered local & international labour markets in Indonesia and marketization of care and transnational migration networks in Malaysia

2. Women’s Cross-Border Migration as Domestic Workers: Research Findings in Indonesia

Indonesia is a huge archipelago composed of 33 provinces and 399 districts. Migrant sending areas in West Java include Indramyu, Cianjur, Cirebon, Sukabumi and Karawang as main districts. The choice of Karawang was determined by accessibility and availability of local support. It is a rural area on the outskirts of Jakarta Metropolitan area called Jabotabek (abbreviation for Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang and Bekasi). As the Map 1 below shows, Karawang is located about 56 km east of Jakarta, right next to Bekasi district.

Map 1: West Java



I was based in the sub-district of Rawamerta, where two local grassroots NGOs active in the campaign for the rights of MDWs - Kaliaget and SBMK (*Solidaritas Buruh Migran Karawang*) - are located. With support from these NGOs, (1) baseline survey with 100 aspiring migrants (2) semi-structured & unstructured interviews with 53 returnees from Malaysia (3) focus group discussion with aspiring migrants and returnees (4) informal conversations/chatting with the migrants' family members and (5) participatory observation in the village, were conducted. Based on the firsthand data obtained from these research, in-depth interviews with Manpower Department, Karawang (*Disnaker Karawang*), recruitment sub-agency (called *sponsor*), business advisor for the industrial estates in Karawang and development consultant, were conducted.

After these field research in Karawang, I conducted in-depth interviews in Jakarta with the central government officials (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration, and National Board for the Placement and Protection of Indonesia Overseas Workers), National Commission on Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan), Legal Aid Organization (LBH-Jakarta and LBH-APIK), NGOs active in the campaign for the rights of MDWs - Migrant Care, Solidaritas Perempuan, HRWG and PBM, Indonesia domestic workers network (Jala PRT), trade unions – SBMI, ASPEK and Unimig, Indonesian manpower service association (APJATI), Embassy of Japan in Indonesia, business consultant/facilitator, ILO and academia.

The main aims of this field research were: (1) to gain new insight on how international migration policy and its legal and political premises may contribute to the re/reproduction of the conditions of vulnerability experienced by Indonesian women migrants; (2) to obtain new information on how the key stakeholders in the migration industry operate under these policies and; (3) to document the returnees' specific experiences of vulnerability in Malaysia through the in-depth interviews.

2.1. Urbanization of Jakarta Metropolitan Area and Industrialization of Its Peripheral Area: Effects on the Karawang Local Population

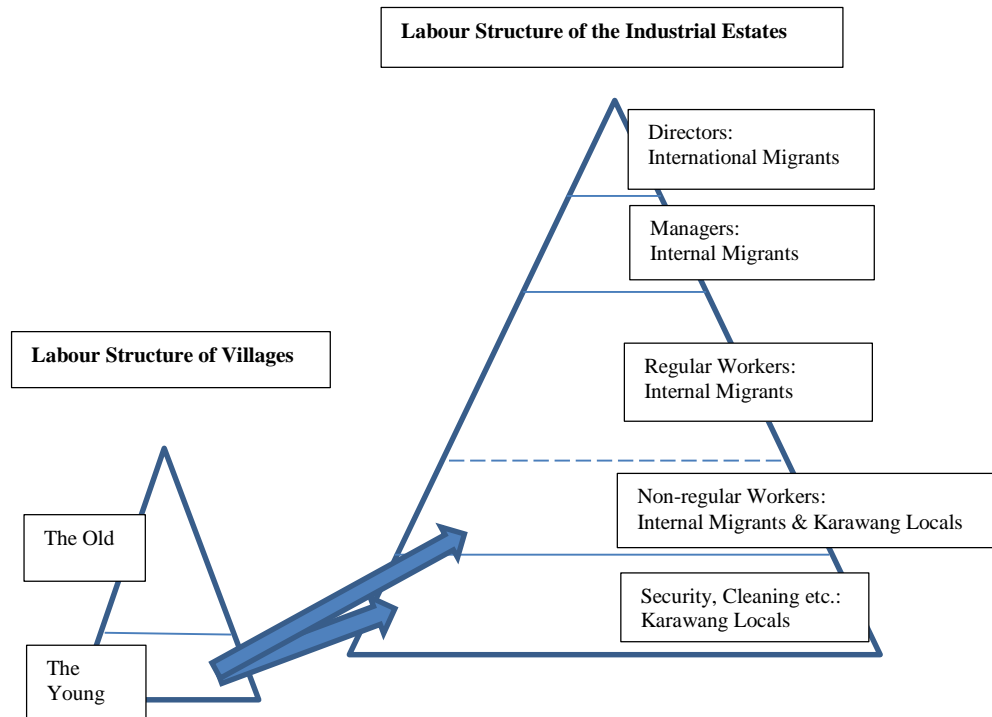
One of the main research findings is that urbanization policies of Jakarta and its metropolitan area Jabotabek and industrialization of its peripheral areas change the livelihood of the local people in ways that increase the vulnerability of the local workers, especially women, in Karawang. While Jakarta has been shifted from industrial to financial and service center in the process of urbanization, the industrial and manufacturing sector has been moved to its peripheral areas, including Karawang. Since Karawang is along the Jakarta-Bandung corridor, which is connecting the capital, Jakarta and the second most populous city in West Java, Bandung, it also functions as an important distribution district for the development of Jabotabek. Therefore, since the end of Suharto administration, the central government has officially designated Karawang as a strategic location for the industrial estates and national development. Under these geopolitical situations, Karawang district has experienced a rapid economic and social transformation through industrialization which have affected the livelihood and working conditions of the local population in remarkable ways.

Karawang is historically recognized as the center of agriculture in Indonesia and producing not only rice but also vegetables (corn, soya bean, peanut, cassava, sweet potatoes and green pea etc.) and fruits (mango, guava, rose apple, jack fruits, papaya and banana etc.). The agricultural reform through Green Revolution in the 70s made the agriculture in Karawang larger scale and less labour intensive, and it has significantly contributed to the national food supply. However, the shift from agriculture to industry negatively affected the employment conditions of the local workers, especially the landless peasant and women who have been pushed out of agriculture. While the total population in agriculture is decreasing, the total population in commerce and industry is increasing. For example, in 2009, about 29% of the total population was employed in agriculture and fishery while about 26% was employed in commerce and 19% was employed in industry (Karawang Local government, 2011). Even though agricultural sector still absorbs a lot of labour mainly in an informal way, it is shrinking and many local workers are struggling to obtain stable job as farmer. According to the local people and NGOs in Karawang, the most remarkable economic and social changes in Karawang contributed to an increase in the vulnerability of the local people are introduction of Green Revolution in 70s and establishment of the industrial estates in 80s (for example, personal interview with Krisnawaty, 2012 & 2013).

The establishment of large-scale industrial estates since 80s has also contributed to an increase in the vulnerability of the local people in Karawang. Following the designation by the central government in 1989, two large industrial estates were established - Karawang International Industrial City (KIIC) and Surya Cipta City of Industry. KIIC was jointly developed by Itochu Corporation, a Japanese major trading company, and Indonesia's Sinar Mas group (Itochu, 2012). It is located in the sub-district of Teluk Jambe and covers 1,139 hectares, composed of Phase 1, 2, 3 and other facilities, such as golf course, residence and gas station (ibid). It has attracted international manufacturing companies, especially automobile and motorcycle companies such as Toyota, Isuzu, Yamaha, and is occupied by 92 companies now (mostly Japanese companies) (ibid). Surya Cipta City of Industry is located in the district of Ciampel and covers 1,400 hectares, composed of Phase 1, 2, 3 and other facilities, such as green open space and residence (Surya Cipta City of Industry, 2012). It actually started its operation in 1995. It has also attracted international manufacturing companies, such as Bridgestone Tire and Levi Strauss, and is occupied by 25 companies now (ibid). Especially after Asian Crisis in 1998, more and more large-scale industrial estates are established in Karawang and agricultural lands are replaced by these industrial estates.

The important point is although vast area of agricultural land was replaced by the industrial estates and a lot of landless peasant and women lost their jobs as farmer, these local residents hardly obtain jobs in the industrial estates. Even though the industrial sector in Karawang is labour intensive, the industrial estates do not absorb local labour in Karawang in a significant way. Some empirical studies in Karawang also pointed out that most jobs in the industrial estates are taken not by the Karawang local people but by the international and internal migrants (Ibid: p.183 & Naito, 2007). Naito (2007) illustrated the labour structure of the industrial estates as follows (p.96):

Figure 1: Labour Structure of the Industrial Estates in Karawang



Source: Naito (2007) modified by the author

The top of the structure (director) is composed of international migrants based in Jakarta, and the manager level is composed of internal migrants, who hold a bachelor's degree, also based in Jakarta. The actual factory workers are regular worker (fixed-term contract) and non-regular worker (daily employment and part-time), who completed at least high school. The bottom of the structure is security and cleaning who completed high school or junior high school. The Karawang local people (only the young men and women) are situated at the bottom of the labour structure of the Industrial Estates.

Most of the regular workers are recruited through recruitment agencies, and the job requirements for applicants are highly demanding, including not only exams and interviews but also age, educational status, eyesight, height and weight (Manpower Department, Karawang, 2012). It is also required the application fee, which is usually more than 1,000,000 Rupiah. It is very high for the Karawang local people. In spite of the highly demanding job requirements, the companies in the industrial estates usually do not employ the regular worker for a long period as

the labour law (No.13/2003) does not encourage long-term employment in terms of labour fluidity (Arai, 2011: p.186). In addition, the industrial estates tend not to employ the Karawang local people as regular worker due to their educational level and capacity for work (ibid: p.186). One business advisor for the industrial estates in Karawang said “the industrial estates are reluctant to employ the local population in Karawang because Sundanese people (including Karawang people), especially men, are very lazy. The industrial estates are willing to employ Javanese people because they are much more hardworking than Sundanese people” (personal interview with business advisor for the industrial estates in Karawang, January, 2013). Accordingly, there are only limited job opportunities in non-regular worker and security & cleaning for the Karawang local people, which are unstable and low-paid.

The establishment of the industrial estates has contributed to influx of internal and international migrant workers in Karawang, bringing about population growth. Placed in a weak position for competition (due to prejudices) local people must look for employment abroad. Moreover, as Doyon (2009) points out, many communities in Karawang are losing its *gotong royong*, which means reciprocity or mutual aid in Indonesian language. These communities do not function to embrace especially the vulnerable group, such as landless peasant and poor and low-educated women, at the grassroots level.

2.2. Division of Formal and Informal Sector and Its Effect on Domestic Workers

One of the important research findings relevant to market is that a division between formal and informal sector in the legal and economic system creates vulnerabilities of domestic workers in Indonesia. The economic communities in Indonesia, for example Bank of Indonesia, categories domestic helpers and plantation, construction, fisheries workers as informal sector (Bank of Indonesia, 2009: p.IV) It is mainly because law No.13, which is the main labour law in Indonesia, does not incorporate domestic workers into the general regulatory system for employment relations (ILO, 2006: p.10). In fact, there is no law to protect domestic workers at the national level. What can apply for the regulation of domestic workers are: (1) relevant national laws, such as the criminal code, anti-domestic violence law⁴, the child protection law, national education law, human rights law etc.; (2) sub-national law – Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Sumatra - relating to domestic work; and (3) international standards, such as fundamental ILO conventions, the universal declaration of human rights and CEDAW (ibid, p.9-23). Therefore, approximately 2.6 million domestic workers are working in informal ways without legal protection and safeguards in Indonesia. Due to the pressures from CSOs and international organizations, domestic workers protection bill was first placed on the national legislative agenda in 2010 and 2011, but the failure to pass this law has been raised twice at the UN in 2012 because of the internal political conflicts (Jakarta Post, 2013a).

Not only legally and economically but also culturally, domestic work is not recognized as formal work in Indonesia. In Indonesian language, domestic worker is rarely referred to as worker (*pekerja*) but as simply helper (*pembantu*) (ILO, 2006: P.9). Therefore, historically, domestic workers have been imposed multitasks, such as cleaning, sweeping, washing, laundering, cooking, shopping, caring children, gardening and washing cars, etc. in the employer’s household without regulation. For example, the local people in Karawang use three different terms for domestic

⁴ In 2004, a Law Regarding the Elimination of Violence in the Household (Law 23/2004) was passed by the Indonesian parliament. Domestic workers were specifically included in the law as potential victims of violence. However, the Law has yet to be fully implemented, especially with regards violence against domestic workers (Amnesty International, 2011)

worker – *ibu rumah tangga*, *pembantu rumah tangga* (or *pekerjaan rumah tangga*), *pembantu* (personal interviews and conversation/chatting with the local people in Karawang, 2012). *Ibu rumah tangga* is a term for housewife meaning married women who are providing domestic work in their household without monetary compensation. *Pembantu rumah tangga* (or *pekerjaan rumah tangga*) is a term for domestic helper (worker) meaning women (including single, married and divorced) who are providing domestic chores in their employer's household with monetary compensation. *Pembantu* is a general term for helper. Among these terms, only *Pembantu rumah tangga* (or *pekerjaan rumah tangga*) can generate income, but it is also hardly recognized as formal work in their culture.

There is actually a contradiction in the government's policy on domestic worker that although the government of Indonesia negotiates with the receiving countries to formalize its domestic workers abroad⁵, its domestic works within Indonesia still remain in the informal sector. Jala PRT emphasized it is impossible to develop the formal sector in the big cities without informal sector because the formal sector is sustained by the informal sector (personal interview with Jala PRT, January, 2013). In other words, domestic workers from rural areas are sustaining the higher income generating activities of the richer families not only in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia but also in big cities in Indonesia.

2.3. Structured Recruitment System in the International Migration Industry from Indonesia to Abroad (Malaysia)

Another important research finding in relation to market is that recruitment agency is creating a new system in recruiting the local women to facilitate international migration business, and the local women, especially poor and low-educated, increase their dependency on the agencies. Moreover, the government's policy cannot eliminate the brokerage in the recruitment system in Indonesia. This section only discusses the recruitment system in the international migration industry in the sending side Indonesia, and the next chapter will discuss the placement system in the receiving side Malaysia.

According to the returnees from Malaysia and Saudi Arabia in Karawang, almost all of them used recruitment agency (sub-agency in the village called *sponsor*) to migrate abroad (personal interviews with returnees in Karawang, 2012). Due to not only the bureaucratic process of the international migration through legal channel but also the economic and educational situation of the local people, the local women need to depend on the sub-agency for their international migration. Under the current regulations on the international migration in Indonesia, recruitment agencies have to obtain a license from Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration to recruit prospective migrants, and these legal recruitment agencies are called PPTKIS or PJTKI. Most of the legal agencies have their offices in Jakarta or the other big cities, and have their sub-agencies in the rural areas to recruit the local women. The sub-agency is looking for potential migrants in the village and visits them and their family for recruitment. Some sub-agencies come to the village in Karawang, where I conducted fieldwork, from the other city or district to recruit the Karawang local women. These sub-agencies often have brokers to obtain information about the potential migrants in the villages. If the broker can connect the potential migrants with its sub-agency successfully, it can receive a commission from its sub-agency. It means that the recruitment agencies, sub-agencies, and brokers are competing in the international migration industry and

⁵ For example, President Yudhoyono attended 100th session of the International Labour Conference (ILO) in Geneva in 2011 and expressed the government's intention to support the proposed convention on decent work for domestic workers.

making information system about migrants. Even though the National Board for the Placement and Protection of Indonesia Overseas Workers has created Online System, computerization of international migration management, it cannot eliminate the brokerage in these recruitment system.

Moreover, according to the returnees especially from Saudi Arabia in Karawang, most of them received some allowance (about 1,000,000 Rupiah) from the sub-agency to prepare for international migration after signing a contract (personal interviews with returnees in Karawang, 2012). Actually, the deduction rule, which means deducting the international migration fee (recruiting, training, document issuing and transportation) from migrants' salaries in their destination country, used to be a common practice in international migration of the local women in Indonesia, but the allowance rule has been introduced as new practice in recent years. The deduction rule could facilitate international migration because the local women did not need to pay for the fee for international migration prior to departure. However, the allowance rule (in many cases, deduction plus allowance rule) can further facilitate international migration because she does not need to pay for the fee for international migration plus can receive money to prepare for her departure. This allowance comes from the fee from the migrant's employer and the salary of the migrant workers in the destination country. However, the local women believe they "get" the allowance from their sub-agency before departure, and do not know the allowance partly comes from their own salary in the destination country. This deduction and allowance rule further facilitate high-risk international migration of the local women and make a market system to which the local women can easily access because it enables any women (even poor and low-educated) migrate abroad.

I also found that even destination country of aspiring migrants very much depend on the recruitment agency. The main destination country of the aspiring migrants in Karawang used to be Saudi Arabia⁶. However, due to the moratorium on Saudi Arabia, current main destination countries of aspiring migrants are United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman. Once the government of Indonesia imposed a moratorium on sending its domestic workers to Saudi Arabia, recruitment agencies find alternative destination countries in the Middle East and make connections to send migrant workers there⁷. Moreover, while the main destination country in the whole Karawang used to be Saudi Arabia, the major destination country in some sub-districts and cities in Karawang is Malaysia. It means the recruitment agencies in those sub-districts and cities in Karawang have strong connections with Malaysia and lead the local women to Malaysia. That is to say, the local women are subject to choose their destination countries with which the recruitment agencies have strong connections.

In order to promote the destination countries with which the recruitment agencies have strong connections, recruitment agencies often manipulate the information regarding international migration. In my interviews with the aspiring migrants and returnees in Karawang, most of the respondents answered that the priorities in their international migration are "high salary" and "good employer" and the main reason for aspiring to work in Arab Saudi was the high salary. However, actually, the salary in Saudi Arabia was not really high compared to the other destination countries/areas, such as Hong Kong and Taiwan. The below table 1 shows the monthly salary of Indonesian MDWs in the main destination countries and areas as of 2012.

⁶ Historically, while the main destination country of West and Central Java is Saudi Arabia, the main destination country of East Java is Malaysia.

⁷ Recruitment agencies have to choose the region where to send the migrant workers, such as Middle East and Asia & Pacific (personal interview with sub-agency in Karawang, June, 2012).

Table 1: Monthly Salary of Indonesian MDWs in the Main Destination Countries/Areas (2012)

1. Hong Kong	HKD3,975	RM1,590
2. Taiwan	NTD 15,840	RM 1,584
3. Singapore	SGD 450	RM 1,125
4. Saudi Arabia	SAR 800	RM 734
5. Brunei Darussalam	BND 300	RM 720
6. Malaysia	RM700	RM700

Source: The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Kuala Lumpur.

It implies that since the local people do not have a way of obtaining proper information about international migration, they need to depend on the information from recruitment agencies and gossip among the local people. So, the recruitment agencies often give disinformation which can benefit their international migration business. As the local women prioritize high salary and good employer in their international migration, they do not really care where to go to work abroad. The local women usually choose their destination countries according to the information from the recruitment agency about the amount of salary in the destination country.

2.4. Men's Double Exclusion from Both Local and International Labour Market in Karawang

From my fieldwork in Karawang, I found that only women migrate abroad because men have very limited opportunity to obtain a job in both local and international labour market. As mentioned earlier (see 1(1)), it is extremely hard for men, especially above 30s, to obtain a regular or non-regular job in the industrial estate because of the strict criteria and job requirements, such as exam, interview, age, educational status, eyesight, height and weight, and high application fee (more than 1,000,000 Rupiah). The main jobs for men in the village in Karawang, where I conducted fieldwork, are seasonal work as farmer, motorcycle taxi called *ojek*, construction work, and street vendor, which are unstable. Furthermore, while women have a lot of job opportunities as MDWs, men, especially poor, low-educated and old, have very limited job opportunity in international labour market. For example, the main jobs for Indonesian men in Malaysia are construction and plantation work mainly in Kuala Lumpur and Sabah & Sarawak, which are not easy for Indonesian men, especially middle age, to take. Also, while deduction and allowance rule are applied to women to work abroad, men have to pay high fees by cash for international migration prior to departure. Therefore, even though many men want to migrate abroad, these conditions make them extremely difficult to make it.

I conducted focus group discussions with the local people (men, women returnees, aspiring migrants and NGO workers) about gendered local and international labour market in Karawang. The below focus group discussion shows the local people's common understanding about the current situation of the gendered local and international labour market in Karawang:

Picture 1: Focus group discussion at Kaliaget



- (1) How do women usually decide to migrate abroad?
 - There are a lot of *sponsor* in Indonesia. They come to visit us to recruit potential women migrants. We don't go find the *sponsor*, but *sponsor* come to our village to find migrants. They sometimes come from the other district or province. They negotiate not only with woman but also with her family members. Woman cannot work abroad without permission from her husband or parents.
- (2) Why more women than men are migrating abroad from Karawang?
 - It is because recruitment cost for women is low. Women also don't need to show a school certificate to work abroad as domestic worker. Recruitment cost for men is way more expensive. It is sometimes 4,000,000 Rupiah, sometimes 5,000,000 Rupiah. It is too expensive for the villagers. Also, only men have to pay in cash.
- (3) If the recruitment fee for men is the same as the one for women, do you think more men will migrate abroad?
 - Yes, definitely. I'm sure of it! You should see the economic condition in the villages. A lot of men must want to work abroad.
- (4) While women are migrating abroad, who is taking care of her babies? Is it no problem for the family?
 - While woman works abroad, her husband and mother /mother in law usually take care of her babies. They care for the babies together because man has to work outside. We sometimes have problems. For example, man uses remittance from his wife to get married to another woman. If his wife comes home from work abroad, he has a new baby with his another wife.
- (5) Why women are migrating abroad again and again even though there are a lot of problems in women's international migration?

- We have heard a lot of gossip about the problems in women’s international migration. Of course, we are scared! However, we have just a limited amount of job in villages... There are a lot of neighbors who had horrible experiences abroad, but there are also some neighbors who got a lot of money there. So, we want to follow the latter.

3. Malaysia’s Labour and Immigration Policy and Transformation of the Organization of Care Provision: Implications for Migrant Domestic Workers

In Malaysia, I conducted fieldwork in Kuala Lumpur (and partly in Penang) from August to October, 2012. In Kuala Lumpur, I was based in Tenaganita, one of the leading NGOs in global migration, addressing issues of exploitation, discrimination, unequal treatment and violence against women, refugees, documented and undocumented migrant workers, trafficked persons, domestic workers, sex workers and people living with HIV/AIDS. I also went to Penang, which is also one of the major migrant receiving areas in Malaysia, to join the CSOs’ campaign for the rights of migrant workers and interview with recruitment and placement agency. I conducted fieldwork in Peninsula Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur and Penang) because more Indonesian women go to work as MDWs in Peninsula Malaysia while more Indonesian men go to work as plantation and construction worker in East Malaysia (Sabah & Sarawak).

Map 2: Malaysia (Peninsula & East Malaysia)



With support from Tenaganita, I conducted in-depth interviews with: (1) government officials (Department of Labour, Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) member of the parliament of Malaysia, Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, Kuala Lumpur, Embassy of Japan in Malaysia); (2) CSOs (NGOs (Malaysian & Indonesian), Trade Union (Malaysian & Indonesian), Indonesian informal groups, media); (3) business community (recruitment and

placement agencies, association of MDWs agencies (PAPA & PIKAP), elderly care center, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) Kuala Lumpur); (4) Indonesian live-in MDWs who escaped or rescued from their employers and stayed in the shelter of Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia and NGO, and Malaysian employer hiring Indonesian live-in MDW; (5) lawyer; (6) international organization (ILO); and (7) academia⁸. I also joined meetings, conferences, workshops and gatherings held by CSOs for focus group discussion, informal conversations/chatting and participatory observations.

The main aim of this fieldwork is to search for the answers to the following questions:

- (1) What major changes need to be made in the bilateral agreement that ensure the concrete measures for safe migration and decent work for MDWs, and in the arrangements for its implementation?
- (2) What are the main features of organization of care in Malaysia today as compared with the decade of 1990s under neo-liberalism, and how do the changes affect pulling Indonesian female migrants as domestic worker in Malaysia?
- (3) In what ways the changing public-private divide (PPD) and women's gender identity facilitate international migration of Indonesian women as domestic workers especially since the 1997-8 Asian Financial Crisis?
- (4) How can the activities and trans-border cooperation of NGOs contribute to enhance protection of Indonesian MDWs in Malaysia and recognition of domestic workers as caregivers?

3.1. Reforming the Labour Market to Transform Malaysia into a High-Income Nation: Reducing the Dependence on Unskilled Foreign Labour?

One of the important research findings relevant to market is the government of Malaysia is reforming the labour market to transform Malaysia into high-income nation and trying to reduce the dependence on “unskilled foreign labour”, but in practice the government cannot make it. Rather, as a result of the reduction in the number of MDWs, Malaysia is falling into “care crisis”, serious shortage of care and domestic labour.

After the government of Malaysia made three key national policy frameworks for its development: (1) New Economic Policy (NEP) (1971-1990); (2) National Development Policy (NDP) (1991-2000); and (3) National Vision Policy (NVP) (2001-2010), the government launched Vision 2020, which outlines Malaysia's vision to achieve the status as a developed country by 2020. Under the Vision 2020 initiatives, the government seeks to achieve knowledge economy and information technology society with high-tech, high-value-added industrial development. In this regard, for example, *Tenth Malaysia Plan 2011-2015*, a comprehensive blueprint to allocate the national budget from the year 2011 to 2015 to all the economic sectors in Malaysia, stipulates “reforming the labour market to transform Malaysia into a high-income nation”. It says:

“the influx of low-skilled foreign labour has more than doubled since 2000 to 1.9 million⁹. The abundance of cheap low-skilled labour has delayed investments in mechanization and innovation, particularly in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, and thus lowered productivity growth and hampered Malaysia's aspiration to move the economy up the value

⁸ I interviewed with Health, Labour & Welfare Attche in Embassy of Japan in Malaysia and senior advisor in JETRO Kuala Lumpur because foreign embassies and business communities sometimes have information about international migration which the government of Malaysia does not disclose to the public, such as amnesty programmes.

⁹ According to the Tenth Malaysia Plan 2011-2015, the number of foreign workers in Malaysia in 1999 is about 410,000 and in 2009 is about 1,918,000. So, the number in 2009 is nearly five times higher than the one in 1999.

chain. Sectors with the highest reliance on unskilled foreign workers have lower productivity. So, the dependence on unskilled foreign labour will be gradually reduced”... (Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia, 2010: p.231)

However, according to my fieldwork in Malaysia (especially interviews with foreign government officials, business communities and NGOs), due to the long-term dependence on migrant labour in the history of Malaysia, it is too hard for Malaysia to reduce its dependence on “unskilled” foreign labour. Moreover, because of the reduction in the number of MDWs (mainly for: (1) the deadlock of MoU 2011 between Indonesian and Malaysia with business communities in Malaysia; (2) moratorium on sending domestic workers imposed by the Kingdom of Cambodia; (3) Indonesian women’s reluctance to go and work in Malaysia due to the low wage and a lot of abuse cases)¹⁰, Malaysia is now facing serious shortage in care and domestic labour market.

In this connection, the government of Malaysia is also diversifying the migrants’ nationalities and trying to hire Indonesian migrant workers last, which is the largest migrant nationality in Malaysia. As Table 2 below shows, in 2008, more than half of the total number of migrant worker is Indonesia.

Table 2: Number of Labour Migrants in Malaysia by Country of Origin

Country of Origin	Number of Workers (2006)	Number of Workers (2008)
Indonesia	1,215,000	1,120,828
Nepal	200,200	207,053
India	139,700	138,083
Vietnam	85,800	103,338
Bangladesh	58,800	315,154
Myanmar	32,000	134,110
Philippines	22,000	27,105
Thailand	7,200	20,704
Others	88,900	43,579
Total	1,849,600	2,109,954

Source: IOM, 2010: p.42

Accordingly, the government has proposed a “hiring Indonesians last” policy and accepted more migrant workers from Bangladesh and Myanmar. However, since the government has historically

¹⁰ Indonesia and Cambodia are the main source countries of domestic labour for Malaysia.

strongly depended on migrant labour from Indonesia for its national development, Malaysia cannot easily reduce its dependence on the migrant labour from Indonesia and implement the hiring Indonesians last policy, especially in the domestic work sector.

It should be noted that the government of Malaysia implemented 6p programme (as mentioned earlier, the last amnesty program in Malaysia including an element of legalization) not only for unskilled foreign labour management but also for job security for Malaysians, especially Malays. The government said the rationale of 6p programme for industry is to address the labour shortage in certain sectors by changing the status of illegal foreign workers and distribute them to the registered employers in the sectors. According to Health, Labour & Welfare Attche of Embassy of Japan in Malaysia, the government of Malaysia may want to make use of the labour pool of “illegal” migrants within Malaysia instead of importing new foreign labour from abroad (personal interview with Health, Labour & Welfare Attche of Embassy of Japan in Malaysia, September, 2012). However, due to lack of transparency and poor implementation in 6p programme, according to Tenaganita, “out of the 1.3 million undocumented workers registered into the biometric system, 1 million or more remained as undocumented workers with no work permits or permits rejected by the Immigration department, as of February 2012¹¹ (Tenaganita, 2012). In short, reforming the labour market to transform Malaysia into high-income country has negatively affected the care & domestic labour market and a lot of migrant workers, but Malaysia still cannot reduce its dependence on the “unskilled” foreign labour.

3.2. Privatization of Health Care and Its Effects on MDWs

Another significant research finding in relation to market is privatization of health care has changed the organization of care institution and service in Malaysia and subsequently affected the conditions of Malaysian families/households and situations of live-in MDWs.

Privatization of health care has been promoted by the government of Malaysia since Mahartir administration, especially since *Seventh Indonesian Plan 1996-2000*. It is stipulated that private healthcare is one of the key economic areas to move from middle income to high income country in *Tenth Malaysia Plan 2011-2015*. Privatization (liberalization) of the health care involves some or all of the followings, and it changes the organization of care in the public & private institutions and services in Malaysia:

- “permission for foreign corporations to set up and operate private hospitals in Malaysia
- permission for foreign Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) and Health Management Organizations (HMOs) to set up networks in Malaysia
- permission for foreign doctors to be employed in the Malaysian health sector - both in the foreign owned private hospitals and MCOs as well as in other institutions
- permission for foreign paramedics to work in Malaysia
- permission for foreign insurance companies to offer personal health insurance packages” (Jeyakumar, 2009).

In this connection, medical tourism, targeted by the government of Malaysia to increase the revenue and develop the industry, has also influenced the organization of care in the public & private institutions and services in Malaysia. Leng & Barraclough (2007) pointed out that the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 provided the impetus for the expansion of medical tourism in Malaysia (p.28). As a number of patients at the private hospitals shifted back to the public hospitals after the crisis, the private hospitals turned to global markets to promote their services (ibid).

¹¹ These registered migrants for 6p programme already paid the registration fee. Moreover, a large number of the registered migrants for 6p programme were cheated by the enforcement agencies during the implementation.

According to my interviews especially with Fernandez, Dr. Michael Jeyakumar Devaraj (medical doctor, member of the Malaysian parliament), and Caram Asia (Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility), the followings are the possible effects of the privatization of health care and promotion of medical tourism on the conditions of Malaysian families/households and situations of their live-in MDWs:

- Medical cost (for all people - Malaysian citizens and migrants) goes up
- Many employers are reluctant to cover the high medical cost for their domestic workers
- Due to the above 1st and 2nd reasons, MDWs have difficulties to gain access to health care services
- Many employers hire live-in MDWs to take care of their children and elderly people because there are poor public services by the government for the elderly care, and the cost for the private institutions to take care of the elderly is high
- The number of private institutions to take care of the elderly, such as elderly care center and elderly home, increases, and these private institutions hire female migrant workers as care givers

From my fieldwork in Malaysia, I found that it is not easy for many middle-class families in Malaysia to cope with the rise in the care service cost (medical and child & elderly care) and hire live-in MDWs with their financial capacity. As a bench mark to show the financial capacity of the average people in Malaysia, for example, minimum wage, introduced by the government of Malaysia in 2011, for workers including migrant workers in peninsular Malaysia is 900 Ringgit (approximately 273 US\$) and for the ones in Sabah & Sarawak is 800 Ringgit (approximately 243 US\$) per month¹². Following this minimum wage, workers in the peninsular Malaysia can receive 10,800 Ringgit and the ones in Sabah & Sarawak can receive 9,600 per year. This minimum wage is not applicable to domestic workers, private drivers and gardeners because they are categorized into “informal sector”, but, under the MoU 2011 between Indonesia and Malaysia, the government of Indonesia claims 700 Ringgit per month for Indonesian MDWs as minimum wage. Following the cost structure in MoU 2011, Malaysian employers have to pay 2,711 Ringgit to receive Indonesian MDWs and 700 Ringgit per month (8,400 Ringgit per year) for their salary; they have to pay in total 11,111 Ringgit per year to hire Indonesian MDWs. While the minimum wage for workers in peninsular Malaysia is 10,800 Ringgit and the ones in Sabah & Sarawak is 9,600 per year, the cost to hire Indonesian MDWs through a formal channel is 11,111 Ringgit per year. On the other hand, for example, minimum wage in Jakarta for 2013 is 2.2 million Rupiah (approximately 194 US\$)¹³ (Jakarta Post, 2012g). It shows that the minimum wage in Malaysia is not so different from the one in Jakarta, and implies that it is not really affordable for the average Malaysians to hire Indonesian live-in MDWs with their financial capacity. As many Malaysian employers do not have sufficient financial capacity and spatial capacity in their household to hire live-in MDWs, they cannot provide them with decent living and working conditions. According to my interviews with CSOs, there are many cases that live-in MDWs have to sleep in the corridor in their employers’ household (personal interview with CSOs, October, 2012).

3.3. Multiple Channels in MDWs Placement in the Transnational Migration Industry and the Rigid Agreement between Agency and Employer to Hire Live-in MDWs

Another important research finding in relation to market is that the multiple channels in MDWs placement in the transnational migration industry and the rigid agreement between agency

¹² This is at the exchange rate as of September 9th, 2013.

¹³ This is at the exchange rate as of September 9th, 2013.

and employer to hire live-in MDWs contribute to an increase in vulnerabilities of live-in MDWs. Here, it is significant to differentiate the role of the agency between the Indonesia and Malaysia. In transnational migration industry, while the agency in sending country is more involved in recruitment, the one in the receiving country is more engaged in placement. Therefore, this paper basically recognizes agency in Indonesia as “recruitment agency” and the one in Malaysia as “placement agency”.

From my fieldwork in Malaysia, I found that it is optional for employers to go through the licensed placement agency to hire live-in MDWs in Malaysia while it is obligatory for aspiring migrants to go through the licensed recruitment agency to migrate abroad in Indonesia. In Malaysia, there are basically two channels for employers to hire live-in MDWs - through agency and direct hiring¹⁴. Under the direct hiring policy, employers can directly hire live-in MDWs by themselves. According to Immigration Department of Malaysia, since 2011, the government of Malaysia has principally ceased using outsourcing agencies to outsource migrant labour in all the sectors except MDWs (personal inquiry with Immigration Department of Malaysia, November, 2012). Therefore, under the current policy, direct hiring is the only way to hire migrant workers in all the sectors but MDWs in Malaysia. Only in hiring MDWs, employers can choose either using agency or direct hiring. In the case of hiring Indonesian MDWs under direct hiring policy, any “qualified” individual is allowed to bring Indonesian MDWs in Malaysia with JP (journey performed) visa (ibid). While the government of Indonesian (and the Philippines) requires use of licensed agency for international migration, the government of Malaysia promotes the direct hiring policy (ibid).

I also found that the direct hiring policy also creates a space for brokerage and allows any middleman (licensed & non-licensed agency, sub-agency, broker and individual) to get involved in the recruitment and placement process. The agencies in Malaysia have transnational networks inside and outside Malaysia facilitating cross-border labour migration in the transnational migration industry. According to one Indonesian informal group in Malaysia, there are many Indonesian *preman* (gangster) in Kuala Lumpur and other big cities in Malaysia engaging in the recruitment and placement of Indonesian MDWs both from Indonesia and from within Malaysia (personal interview, September, 2012). There are many cases that Indonesian migrant workers are cheated not only by Malaysian agencies but also by these Indonesian middlemen within Malaysian (ibid). The government of Malaysia promotes the direct hiring policy probably because the government wants to secure the multiple channels to import domestic labour from abroad to cope with the care crisis in Malaysia. However, if the government does not provide protections for MDWs in the multiple channels, MDWs are subject to high risks in the transnational migration industry.

The agencies in Malaysia strongly criticizes the direct hiring policy that if employers hire live-in MDWs through direct hiring, there is nobody who can monitor the employer and domestic workers. In this regard, the business communities in Malaysia ask the government to change the policy and abolish JP visa to bring Indonesian MDWs in Malaysia. As mentioned earlier, they also ask the government to modify the cost structure in MoU 2011 between Indonesia and Malaysia. On the other hand, the NGOs in Malaysia, including Tenaganita, are supporting direct hiring policy and criticizing use of agencies in terms of the high placement fee and unreliability of agency. They emphasized that if migrants come to work in Malaysia through agency, migrants have to pay extra

¹⁴ There is another channel that migrants come to Malaysia on general workers visa and work as domestic worker. Migrant workers do not know the dynamics of visas in Malaysia, and the government and media do not report the dynamics, too.

or unnecessary cost for the agency. In fact, even though agencies in Malaysia are not recruiting migrant workers (agencies in Indonesia are recruiting migrant workers) but just processing the necessary documents to hire MDWs, they request high fees for migrant workers. These NGOs also emphasized that agencies in Malaysia are not reliable because there are many cases MDWs are cheated by fraudulent agencies. Moreover, due to the business relationship between agency and employer, agency cannot monitor the employer properly.

In fact, the business relationship between agency and employer, especially the rigid agreement between them, contributes to an increase in vulnerabilities of live-in MDWs. For example, agency puts a rule on “guarantee for replacement of workers for the first three months” with the employer. It means if the live-in MDW runaways or cannot work for the employer properly, agency has to replace the worker free of charge for three month after signing the contract. However, employers have to pay all the fees for 2 years in advance to the agency when they sign the contract. Therefore, if the live-in MDW runs away after her fourth month (after the warranty period), employers have to suffer big economic losses. That’s why many employers try to confine live-in MDWs in their household and limit their freedom and mobility (holding domestic worker’s passport by the employer and not giving a mobile-phone to domestic worker, etc) in order not to let them get away. According to one employer hiring Indonesian live-in MDW in Kuala Lumpur, it is a still common practice for employers to keep their domestic workers’ passport even though it is prohibited by the MoU 2011 between Indonesia and Malaysia (personal interview with Malaysian employer hiring Indonesian live-in MDW, October, 2012). Furthermore, according to some NGOs, there are some cases that agencies ask live-in MDWs to run away after their 4th month to cheat the employers of their money (personal interview with NGOs, October, 2012).

3.4. Change in Malaysian Women’s Gender Identity & Role in the Family and Its Effects on MDWs

One of the significant research findings relevant to family/household is that reforming the labour market to transform Malaysia into a high income nation has affected the changes in Malaysian women’s gender identity & role in the family, and it causes forming multi-ethnic family with live-in MDWs in the household.

As mentioned earlier, the government of Malaysia is currently reforming the labour market to transform Malaysia into a high income nation, and focusing on the following three key areas: (1) making the labour market more flexible; (2) upgrading the skills and capabilities of Malaysia’s existing workforce; and (3) enhancing Malaysia’s ability to attract and retain top talent (Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia, 2010: p.229). As for (1) & (2), the government is encouraging greater participation of housewives into the workforce. For example, it is stated in *Tenth Malaysia Plan 2011-2015* that:

“the trend towards double-income households has increased demand for more flexible working arrangements. In light of this, the Government will introduce Part-Time Work Regulations under the Employment Act 1955. This initiative is aimed at encouraging greater participation of the untapped talent workforce such as housewives, retirees and disabled persons. Arrangements for working from home, teleworking, and part-time or flexi-time will be encouraged. In addition, to fully leverage the availability of women as a source of untapped labour, measures will be undertaken to increase the female labour force participation rate from 46% in 2010 to 55% in 2015” (ibid: p.231-232).

It means that in order to achieve a knowledge and innovation-based high-income economy, the government is further promoting double-income households with special emphasis on mobilizing

housewife of the untapped labour and upskilling the current female labour. In fact, as below Table 3 shows, the female labour force participation rate in Malaysia is relatively low, which is the lowest among the ASEAN member states.

Table 3: Female Labour Participation Rate in ASEAN (% of Female Population Age 15+)¹⁵

Country/Year	2008	2009	2010	2011
Brunei Darussalam	56	56	56	56
Cambodia	79	79	79	79
Lao PDR	77	77	77	77
Indonesian	51	51	51	51
Malaysia	44	44	44	44
Myanmar	75	75	75	75
Philippines	49	49	50	50
Singapore	56	55	57	57
Thailand	65	63	64	64
Vietnam	73	73	73	73

Source: World Bank (2013)

Importantly, this market labour reform has influenced the changes in Malaysian women's gender identity & role in the family and created need for the domestic labour in the household. Since Malaysian women housewives are mobilized into a labour market for knowledge and innovation-based high-income economy, they need somebody who can perform the substituting role for them in the household. Therefore, a large number of Malaysian families are importing cheap labour from abroad to outsource their domestic work (basic housekeeping and child and elderly care). In other words, this reform is leading Malaysian women into "productive" sector and female MDWs into "reproductive" sector. In this process, Malaysian women are identified as "high-skilled" workers in the public sphere while MDWs are identified as "low-skilled" workers in the private sphere.

In order to cope with not only the changes in women's gender identity & role in the family caused by the labour market reform but also the serious shortage of live-in MDWs, Malaysian families have recently used care services from both public and private sectors, such as child & elderly care center, care home and nursing center. There is a good number of private institutions for child & elderly care in some particular areas in Kuala Lumpur, such as Petaling Jaya, but it is not really affordable for many Malaysian families to use the private institutions. According to Labour Department Peninsular Malaysia, the government is discussing to further establish care sectors for child and elderly, but it is still under consideration (personal interview with Labour Department Peninsular Malaysia, October, 2012). Therefore, many Malaysian families need to continue to rely on live-in MDWs.

4. Concluding Remarks: Reflections on the Implications of the Fieldwork

(1) Governance Dilemma: Double Standard of the States on MDWs:

¹⁵ Labor force participation rate is the proportion of the population ages 15 and older that is economically active: all people who supply labor for the production of goods and services during a specified period (World Bank, 2013).

Both states (Indonesian and Malaysia) have a double standard on migrant workers and are facing a “governance dilemma” especially towards migrant domestic workers (MDWs). This dilemma of governance seems to have shaped the forms of vulnerability experienced by Indonesian women migrating to, and working in, Malaysia as MDWs.

In the context of Indonesia, there are two points to be further reflected upon. Firstly, the government of Indonesia has demanded the rights for its MDWs while abroad without guaranteeing rights for its domestic workers domestically. In fact, although the government of Indonesia negotiates with the government of Malaysia to formalize the situation of domestic workers while working abroad, this government still legally places the category of Domestic Work in the informal sector. Secondly, while the government of Indonesia still highly depends on the remittances from its international MDWs, the government has announced its political will to stop sending its domestic workers abroad under the Domestic Worker Roadmap 2017. The Roadmap cannot be practical unless the government promotes the local development and creates more domestic employment opportunities in the rural areas.

In the context of Malaysia, it has to be reflected that in order to achieve a knowledge and innovation-based high-income economy, the government of Malaysia has announced its political will to reduce the dependence on unskilled foreign labour without implementing sufficient domestic measures to replace them. It does not seem to be practical due to Malaysia’s long-term dependence on migrant labour, especially Indonesian women MDWs, for its national development.

(2) Double Pressure on the Care Gap: Who Profits and Benefits from Marketization of Care and the Labour Market Reform in Malaysia?

In order to achieve a knowledge and innovation-based high-income economy, the government of Malaysia has facilitated marketization of care and the labour market reform. In line with this, the government has promoted privatization of health care and has encouraged greater participation of Malaysia women, especially housewives, into the workforce.

In this regard, the point that needs to be reflected on is who profits and benefits from marketization of care and the labour market reform in Malaysia? It appears that marketization of care and the labour market reform in Malaysia bring care crisis for the average Malaysian families and increases vulnerability of live-in MDWs. Although the government has promoted privatization of health care and mobilized the labour of Malaysian housewives, it has not sufficiently established care sectors, such as child & elderly care center, for replacement of the care and domestic work in the household yet. Moreover, (1) deadlock of MoU 2011 between Indonesia and Malaysia with business communities in Malaysia (2) moratorium on sending domestic workers imposed by the Kingdom of Cambodia (3) Indonesian women’s reluctance to go and work in Malaysia due to the low wage and a lot of abuse cases, increase inaccessibility of Malaysian families to hiring live-in MDWs. As Malaysian families are falling into care crisis, serious shortage of care institution & service and live-in MDWs through the formal channel, they rely more on the informal channels to hire live-in MDWs as a less costly alternative. Therefore, there are many cases that Indonesian live-in MDWs are confined in their employer’s household and imposed to work as care giver (not only the basic housekeeping but also child and elderly care).

(3) Global Migration Networking System Enabling Any Women to Migrate Abroad as Domestic Worker

There exists a structured recruitment system in the international migration business, especially the shift from deduction rule to allowance rule, further facilitates Indonesian women’s

cross-border migration as domestic worker. In this context, the point to be reflected is the global migration networking system enables any women, even poor, illiterate and old, to migrate abroad as domestic worker again and again. In most cases, these women have poor bargaining power and are subject to not only high risks in the global migration industry but also physical, mental and sexual harassment & abuse by their employers in the destination country. It will be pointed out that, even so, husband in the village in the area I have studied has to rely on his wife's cross-border migration because men are excluded from both local and international labour market.

(4) Care as Socially and Culturally Embedded Norm: Difficulty in the Transfer of Care Work:

Since domestic work includes a lot of human interactions, especially in child and elderly care, proximities, such as in language, religion and race, are important factors. Because of the proximities between Indonesia and Malaysia, it is difficult for the government of Malaysia to diversify the migrants' nationalities in the domestic work sector, which highly relies on Indonesian women live-in MDWs. In this regard, the point to be reflected is care as socially and culturally embedded norm and the difficulty in disembedding and transferring of care and care work. Care and care work cannot be an economically oriented norm because it includes a lot of human interactions and reciprocity.

(5) Enhancement of Social Protection for MDWs and Revitalization of Community at the Grassroots Level: The Case of "Kaliaget Organic Farm and School" in Karawang

My research findings imply the legal and formal channels of women's cross-border migration do not guarantee the security and safety of women migrants, especially MDWs. It requires to reflect how CSOs and their cooperation with the other social actors (government, ASEAN, business community and family) can enhance social protections for MDWs between/among the sending and receiving countries. It should be discussed that multi-layered protection mechanism at the grassroots, local, national, international, regional level are necessary for MDWs.

My research findings also imply that the situations of MDWs cannot be improved without promoting the local development and creating more employment opportunities in the rural areas in the sending country. In this regard, one of the key points to be reflected is revitalization of community at grassroots level. As the next step, I will reflect on the activities of grassroots NGO "*Kaliaget Organic Farm and School*" in Karawang and how it contributes to revitalization of community in terms of sharing resources, caring others, job creation, women empowerment and production of local knowledge.

(Title plus Main Texts: 9933 words)

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