

Empowered Voices from the Village:

Changing Norms and Addressing
Violence against Women Migrant
Workers and Trafficking from the
Village



An initiative of the United Nations funded by the European Union







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Foreword

UN WOMEN

The journey of women migrant workers begins in the village. Most of them come from the village, and it is an entry and exit point wherein information on overseas employment opportunities and requirements can be obtained, either officially from the government, the communities, or recruiters. The decision to work abroad is often made while in the village. Likewise, the village is also forever home to many migrant workers after fulfilling their plans and contracts as migrant workers.

For many, working abroad is a means of earning a better life and safer living conditions. It may also be a way to flee from domestic violence and defy traditional gender roles. Villages play a pivotal role in ensuring safe and regular migration for women migrants. It includes providing information on safe migration and preventing and addressing gender-based violence and human trafficking. Women migrants are at higher risk of gender-based violence and human rights violations at every stage of migration than their male counterparts. Unsafe and irregular migration increase the risk of gender-based violence and trafficking.

In addition, villages benefit greatly from labour migration. Many migrant workers can send home part of their earnings to their families, which also benefits the communities. According to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), about half of global remittances from migrant workers go to rural areas. As a result, the village economy is thriving and growing. In addition to financial remittances, women migrant workers also contribute to sending social remittances, through which knowledge and skill received from working abroad has benefited the community. Therefore, we must all ensure their rights to safe and fair labor migration.

In response to this, UN Women, in partnership with Kalyanamitra initiated “Strengthening the Capacity of Village and Migrant Communities to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Women Migrant Workers and Trafficking” project in 2020-2022. The project aims to increase the capacity of the village community to better prevent and respond to gender-based violence and trafficking of women migrant workers. This project is supported by Safe and Fair (SAF): Realizing women migrant workers' rights and opportunities in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a UN Women and International Labour Organization (ILO) joint programme generously supported by the European Union.

The story of change from the villages is captured in this book to inspire everyone, including small village communities, that they can play their part in ending gender-based violence and trafficking. Moreover, it is an excellent example that efforts to protect and promote safe and fair migration of women migrant workers can be driven from the village.

Hopefully, these stories of change can serve as good practices that can be replicated elsewhere. UN Women will continue to support such initiatives with aims to comprehensively support Indonesian women migrant workers and to continue safeguarding their human rights in all stages of migration.

Jamshed M. Kazi

UN Women Representative and Liaison to ASEAN

Foreword

Kalyanamitra

Indonesian women migrant workers remain vulnerable to various forms of violence and human trafficking at all stages of migration, from pre-departure, departure, and placement to return to their villages. Indonesian women migrant workers mostly come from villages and need protection and access to information about safe migration. Therefore, the role of village government is crucial in preventing various forms of violence against women migrant workers and human trafficking, as well as ensuring the fulfillment of the workers' rights in accordance with the mandate of the Law No. 18 of 2007 on the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, Village Law No. 6 of 2014, Law no. 21 of 2007 on Human Trafficking, Presidential Regulation Number 59 of 2017 on Village SDGs.

To provide protection and safe migration to villages, Kalyanamitra, since 2019, has collaborated with UN Women through the Safe and Fair program to strengthen the capacity of villages and communities to respond to violence against women migrant workers and prevent human traffickings. This program was carried out in six villages in three provinces, namely Sumber Lor Village and Babakan Gebang Village in Babakan District, Cirebon Regency, West Java; Sidorejo Village and Pugung Raharjo Village in Sekampung Udik District, East Lampung Regency, Lampung; and Sukorejo Wetan Village and Tanen Village in Rejotangan District, Tulungagung Regency, East Java. Various activities have been held to optimize the program program, such as information dissemination through various media, capacity building of human resources (training, discussions, workshops, etc.), advocacy, and campaigns.

In implementing this program, Kalyanamitra received the support and commitment of the village government in those areas to ensure that women migrant workers—whether prospective workers, currently working, or returned ones—receive protection and have their rights fulfilled. One form of support and commitment is the issuance of Village Head Decrees in six villages on establishing the Task Force on the Prevention of Violence against Women Migrant Workers and Human Trafficking. This village task force has various roles and functions to prevent and respond to cases of violence and trafficking faced by women migrant workers in the village. In addition to the village government, the communities have given favorable response, because it opened access to information on the importance of safe migration starting from the village.

This book has collated the stories describing positive changes in each village to capture the contribution and lessons learned from the village safe migration project. We hope to disseminate this book to the village communities or a wider network. Hopefully, these positive stories can provide inspiration and insights for the public, especially migrant worker networks and communities at large, regarding the prevention of violence against women migrant workers and human trafficking.

Listyowati

Director of Kalyanamitra

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**Not the real name*



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Introduction

Changing Norms and Addressing Violence against Women Migrant Workers and Trafficking from the Village

This book is a collection of stories of change from villages that captured efforts in preventing and addressing gender-based violence and the trafficking of women migrant workers. This book consists of 15 stories of change written from the perspective of individuals involved in the initiative to develop the Task Force for Handling and Prevention of Gender-Based Violence and Trafficking in Persons against Women Migrant Workers in Villages. This initiative was implemented in six villages from three districts, namely Sumber Lor Village and Babakan Gebang Village in Babakan District, Cirebon Regency, West Java; Sidorejo Village and Pugung Raharjo Village in Sekampung Udik District, East Lampung Regency, Lampung Province; and Sukorejo Wetan Village and Tanen Village in Rejotangan District, Tulungagung Regency, East Java.

UN Women partnered with Kalyanamitra to develop this village-based initiative to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and trafficking of women migrant workers. This initiative is part of “Safe and Fair: Realizing Women Migrant Workers’ Rights and Opportunities in the ASEAN Region,” part of the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls, a multi-year global initiative between the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN). The programme aims to strengthen labour migration governance and address risks inherent in migration systems that can result in violence and trafficking, strengthen rights-based and gender-responsive approaches to violence against women and labour migration governance, and support access to essential services.

Many Indonesian women migrant workers come from villages. Therefore, protection must start from the village. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, ratified through Law no. 6 of 2012, recognizes the protection of the rights of migrant workers and members of their families.

Additionally, Law No. 18 of 2017 on the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers mandates village government to protect migrant workers, whose implementation must be monitored from upstream to downstream.

The contribution and action by village communities to end gender-based violence that is captured in this book would not have happened without the support from relevant stakeholders. Assisting women migrant workers and their families and improving the capacity of village apparatus and migrant communities are just a few examples of community intervention implemented through this project. These activities positively impact the community, not only for women migrant workers but also for their families. Throughout 2020-2022 Kalyanamitra and the community and village government organized several activities, including consultations, information dissemination, education and training, village capacity building, service delivery, and campaigns.

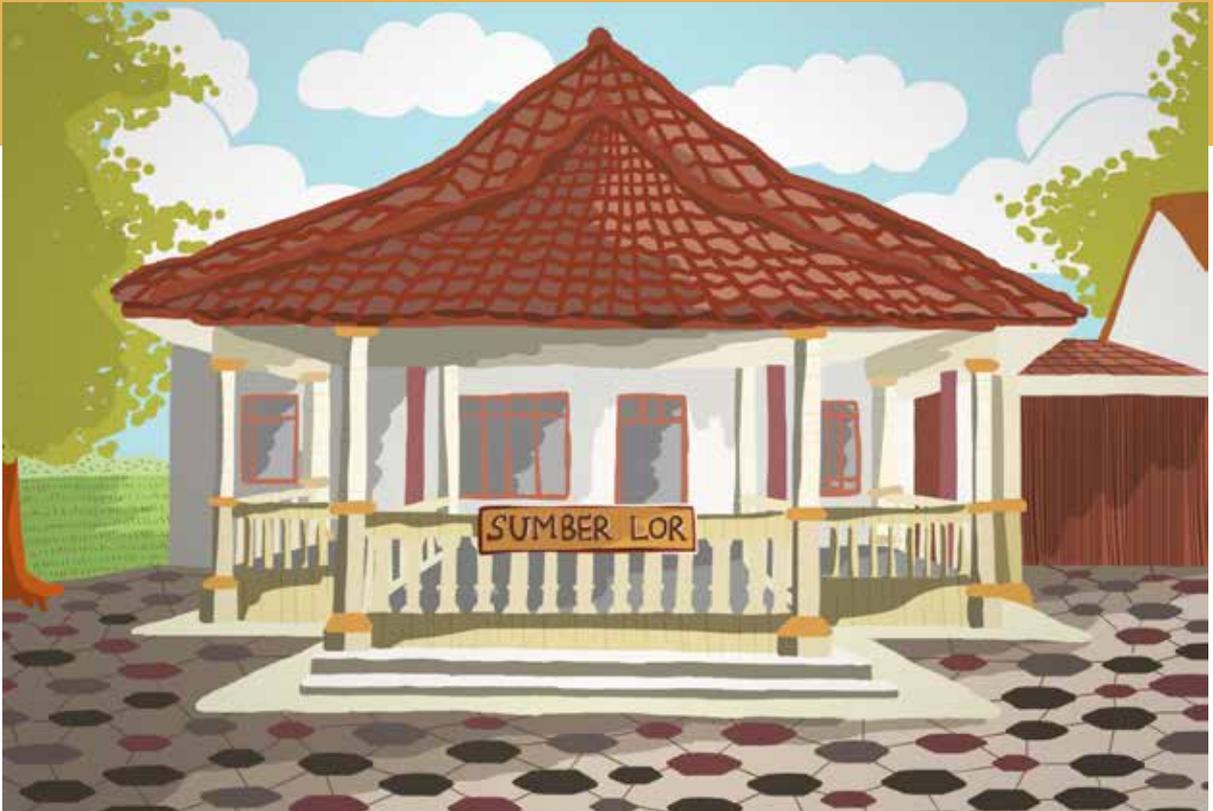
Out of the 15 stories featured in this book, eight are from inspiring women: victims of violence, victims' families, and survivors of violence turned migrant workers' rights activists and village heads. Meanwhile, seven are the story of male partners, including village apparatus and former migrant workers. These stories record the process of increasing awareness and knowledge of the risk of gender-based violence and human trafficking to women migrant workers.

The story of change in this book can serve as a best practice to prevent and address gender-based violence and trafficking of women migrant workers from villages, which are vital for protecting women migrant workers. At the same time, community-based interventions for violence prevention not only have an impact on individuals but also on structural changes at the village level.





SUMBER LOR



Sumber Lor Village, Cirebon

Sumber Lor Village is located in Babakan, Cirebon, West Java Province. It is known as “Farmer Village” as many villagers work in agriculture sector. Occupying an area of 122,567 hectares, the village has a population of 1,900 families or a total of 4,980 people, 2,128 of whom are men and 2,852 are women. Data shows there are 55 women migrant workers and 15 men migrant workers.



Karyanti

Karyanti (Yanti), works as a teacher for early childhood education institutions (PAUD) and madrasa in Sumber Lor Village. The 29-year-old woman is also a member of the Task Force for the prevention and handling of violence against women migrant workers and human trafficking in her village.

Yanti is also involved in the Village Capacity Building Program to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Women Migrant Workers and Human Trafficking in Sumber Lor. The activities she participates in include training; education on gender, violence against women, and human trafficking; the rights of Indonesian migrant workers; and prevention of violence against the migrant workers.

According to her, women migrant workers are vulnerable to being victims of violence, both at home and at work, because of the unequal relationship between husband and wife, as well as between workers and their employers. In addition, women migrant workers are vulnerable to violence from labor recruitment companies, agencies, and unscrupulous officers, at the shelter, during departure, and at the destination country.

Yanti said progress has been made since Law No. 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers was ratified. Previously, neither Yanti nor many other women migrant workers understood the process of reporting a case, case flow, or case handling. If women migrant workers experience sexual violence, they don't report it because they do not know the information about where they can turn for help. They just kept quiet, discussing it only with their neighbors.

Now, according to Yanti, information about support for women and girls who experience violence is available. The village government is also ready to assist women migrant workers or the community who reported their cases.

Yanti observed how the Village Capacity Building Program carried out in the village was going well, as seen from the increased awareness of the village community regarding case filing to the village government and the formed Task Force. The program has also managed to improve the understanding of village government and prospective migrant workers on migrant work procedures, rights, and other issues.

As a Task Force member, in accordance with the roles and duties of the team as stipulated in the Sumber Lor Village Decree, Yanti seeks information about opportunities to work abroad at the Labour Office and disseminates it to the public and worker candidates for their safety. Sumber Lor Village did not have a program to prevent and handle human trafficking and violence against women migrant workers. After the Village Capacity Building Program was in place, the village government carried out more frequent education campaign related to the protection of women and children.

The Task Force works closely with the Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK) team, village mid-wives, Cirebon Labour Office, community health center (puskesmas), local police and military, and the Cirebon Migrant Workers Union. Yanti explained that the role of the Task Force included coordinating, lobbying, consulting, disseminating information, and educating the public in regards to Indonesian migrant workers and human trafficking. Sumber Lor Village Government and the Task Force have responded to emerging cases. The village task force has disseminated information on safe and regular migration. Yanti saw an increase in the capacity of the village government regarding information about Indonesian migrant workers.

Seeing the benefits of the Village Capacity Building Program for herself and for others, Yanti expressed her desire to remain a member of the Task Force, with a commitment to continue to be involved in preventing and handling violence against women migrant workers and human trafficking.

Yanti hopes the ongoing program will always receive full support from the village government, the village community, and the national government. "The existing prevention and handling work must be integrated between the central government and regional or village governments to protect Indonesian women migrant workers," she said.



Musripin

Being both deputy village head and village secretary of Sumber Lor Village, Musripin often encounters cases of women migrant workers during village meetings. It pushes him to take preventive measures upon seeing how vulnerable the workers are to violence, and having their rights violated, such as being paid less than stated in the contract and excessive working hours. “Another challenge is stigma towards the existence of women migrant workers,” said Musripin.

He later became a member of the Task Force of the Village Capacity Building Program to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Women Migrant Workers and Human Trafficking in Sumber Lor. The role of the village government is to provide legal protection to women migrant workers and prevent the occurrence of human trafficking. The village government usually leads the coordination in monitoring the condition of Indonesian migrant workers.

According to Musripin, the benefit of the Village Capacity Building Program is that more people receive information about Indonesian migrant workers to sustain the efforts to protect migrant workers and prevent violence against women migrant workers and human trafficking in Sumber Lor.

He observed how women migrant workers are now more independent and well-informed. The government's response in responding and following up on cases experienced by migrant workers has gotten better.

Personally, Musripin said he benefited from the gender education he received from the program. He increasingly understands the importance of sharing household roles and workloads with his wife. He is also active in providing education about gender equality to village communities, either directly or through social media.

For Musripin, women and men have equal rights, and rural communities should respect women migrant workers more because they contribute to the family economy, as well as in the community.

Challenges remain with the strong influence of middlemen that villagers still put more trust on them than on the village government when it comes to the migration process. While Law no. 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, stipulates that national and regional governments, including villages, must participate in efforts to protect and empower Indonesian migrant workers.

However, according to Musripin, village women now have a more open space to exercise their voice, and their needs are incorporated into village development plans through community empowerment programs. Village women are increasingly involved in village decision making, and occupy strategic positions, such as in village government apparatus and the Village Representative Body.

"The village is currently budgeting to facilitate safe migration for prospective migrant workers. If there is a case of violence against women migrant workers, the village will handle it. Village policies and village development plans also include the interests of village women," said Musripin.



KEC BABAKAN
KAB. CIRIBON

SELAMAT DATANG
DI DESA BABAKAN GEBANG



Babakan Gebang Village, Cirebon

Babakan Gebang Village is situated in Babakan, Cirebon, West Java. As a part of regional expansion, this village has an area of 159,135 hectares, with a population of 8,956 people, consisting of 4,712 men and 4,587 women. Currently, Babakan Gebang Village is led by a woman named Yeni Setiati.



kalyanamitra
Pusat Komunikasi dan Informasi Perempuan

SOSIALISASI PENCEGAHAN KEKERASAN TERHADAP PEREMPUAN PMI DESA BABAKAN GE



Gina

As a former migrant worker, who worked in Taiwan for three years and in Hong Kong for two years, Gina is well-aware of how vulnerable Indonesian women migrant workers are to exploitation, violence, and human trafficking.

While working in Hong Kong, the 38-year-old woman who was born in Cirebon was heavily exhausted because she was barely given time to rest. Reporting about poor working conditions was impossible as there was no internet access, with her mobile phone could only be used for texting and making calls to Indonesia. The absence of a regulation on migrant workers complicated the situation. She did not know where and to whom she would report, and she had no money to bring the case to a lawyer.

“Violence against women migrant workers is a very inhumane act influenced by patriarchal culture. Women are considered to have minimal knowledge, skills, and information. Patriarchal culture considers men to be strong and powerful, while women are weak and powerless,” said Gina, who now helps her parents sell cakes in Babakan Gebang Village.

Reflecting on her experience, Gina got herself involved in the Village Capacity Building Program to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Women Migrant Workers and Human Trafficking in Babakan Gebang, a two-year program that was kicked off in June 2020. She is also a member of the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Task Force, and is appointed by the village government to be the village coordinator of Productive Migrants Village (Desmigratif), a program of the Ministry of Labour.

The activities she participated in included trainings on gender, human trafficking, migrant workers' rights, and outreach around villages about safe and regular migration. She attended discussions on case handling and the formation of a Task Force, as well as plans for creating Village Regulations.

Gina explained that the role of the village Task Force is to prevent and handle violence against village women and women migrant workers, as well as to prevent and handle human trafficking cases, in collaboration with the village government. The Task Force received reports from migrant workers and other villagers, and in coordination with the puskesmas, labor service, police, military, and other parties, they help refer cases to the authorities and assist victims.

For Gina, the Village Capacity Building Program is very helpful because there had been few information about migrant work. Information about migration only came from recruiters or middlemen, and was often inaccurate. She was not aware of the rights of migrant workers and other related issues. Gina saw how many migrant workers had their rights violated by recruiters and employers, such as inappropriate pay and working hours, no days off or leave, and unsafe work situations that were not free from sexual violence and harassment.

“In the past, village programs regarding human trafficking were only limited to brief information from PKK cadres or integrated health post (posyandu) in the village. After the Village Capacity Building Program was launched, migrant workers are more aware of violence against women migrant workers, human trafficking, and so on,” she said.

According to Gina, the village government has given much better response for cases of violence against women migrant workers or human trafficking. The government has committed to assisting migrant workers and has budgeted annual funds for the purposes of handling cases.

With her involvement in the program, Gina also feels the change in gender relations in her own household as she is more daring to express his opinion. By becoming a member of the Task Force, Gina has now been able to inform and find solutions if problems arise from women migrant workers, neighbors, or the village community.

She hoped the village government would be more responsive and continue to support the work of the Task Force, and immediately draw up village regulations regarding Indonesian migrant workers. She also urged the central government to increase the protection of migrant workers, who have contributed to the welfare of the people.

Penandatanganan SK Pembentukan Satgas Desa



Yeni Setiati

Yeni Setiati has been the village head of Babakan Gebang, Cirebon, for nine years. As a leader, the 52-year-old woman must listen to the aspirations of her residents, including the challenges for women migrant workers, a job she has held before.

She may never experience any abuse while working overseas, but she is well-aware of the vulnerability of women migrant workers to violence, starting from the time of departure and accommodation, as well as during the placement at destination countries. Yeni saw how the working hours of migrant women could reach 20 hours per day. After returning to the village, other problems await them, such as other forms of violence, discrimination, and other cases.

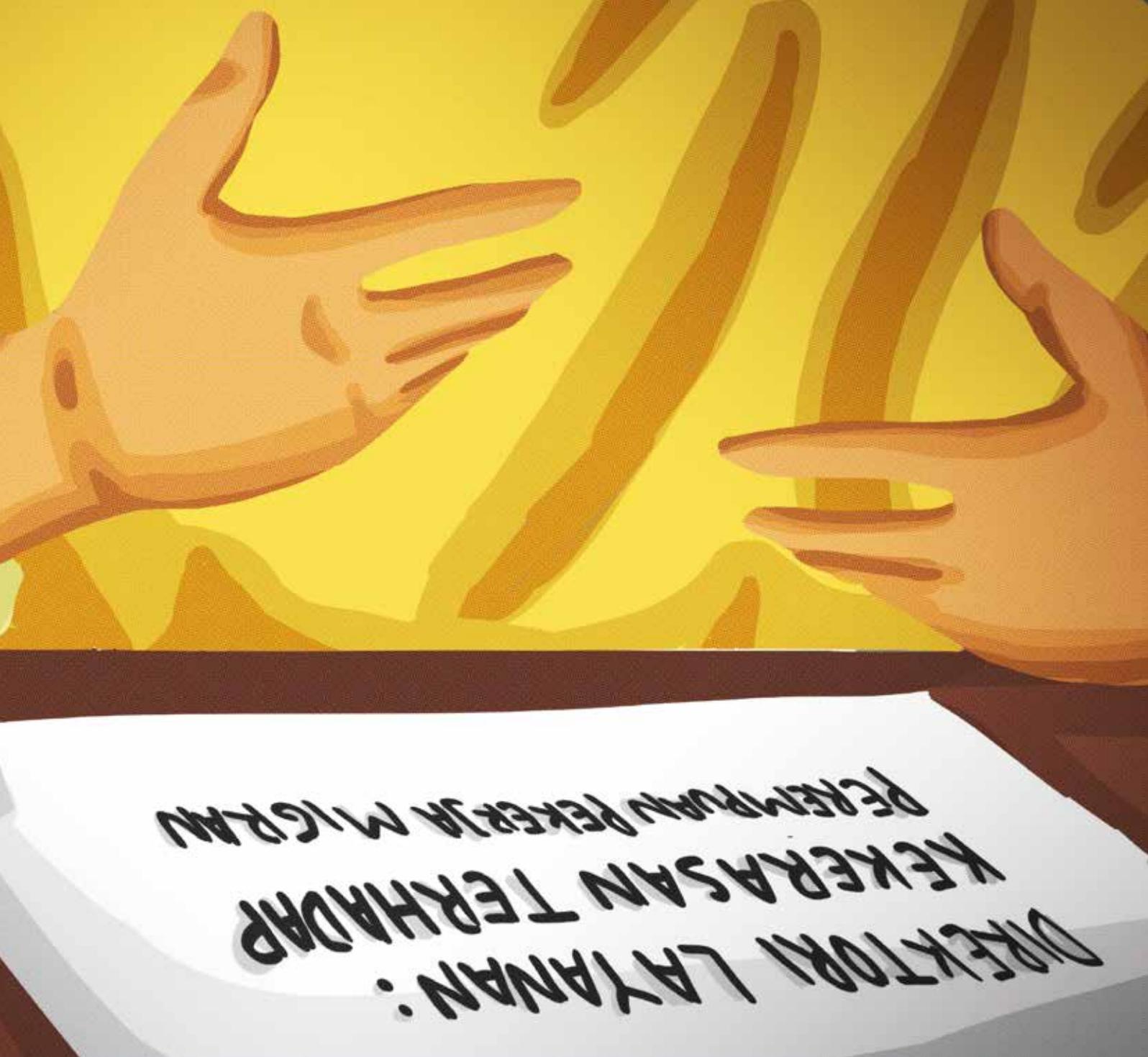
“Women migrant workers in Babakan Gebang is still vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and human trafficking,” she said.

Yeni participated in activities such as trainings on gender issues, human trafficking, migrant workers’ rights, and violence against women. She said it was essential for the village administration, which works closely with the Task Force to handle and prevent cases, as well as disseminate information.

As the supervisor of the village Task Force, she is involved in handling cases of Indonesian migrant workers. The Task Force receives and disseminates information about safe and regular migration; assists the village government, as well as collaborates with the hospital, the military, the Labour Office, and the police.

Yeni applies the materials received in gender training in her own home by improving gender relations, sharing housework with her husband, and helping each other. As village head, Yeni is committed to continuing the Village Capacity Building Program, among others, by providing a special budget for the Task Force.

Thanks to her dedication in helping migrant domestic workers who are victims of human trafficking, Yeni received the Hassan Wirajuda Award from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Her efforts in providing protection for women and migrant workers have made Babakan Gebang an independent migration village assisted by the Ministry of Labour and Transmigration, and a pilot project for Women Friendly and Child Care Villages by the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection. Yeni’s hope is for the program to be carried on by her successors and to serve as good practice in the future.



Surti*

Surti is a housewife from Babakan Gebang Village, Cirebon, who worked as a casual labourer before becoming a migrant worker in Saudi Arabia. There, the 40-year-old woman switched from one employer to another following a series of abuse and her status as a non-regular worker.

In the first employer, she was exploited and worked long hours without pause that she ran away to the agency. She kept changing employers until she finally asked for protection at the Indonesian Embassy in Riyadh.

**Not her real name*

Surti asked to be flown back to Indonesia, but the Embassy said she had to pay for it herself. Surti's family could not afford the cost, so she was "stranded" in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia without a clear status.

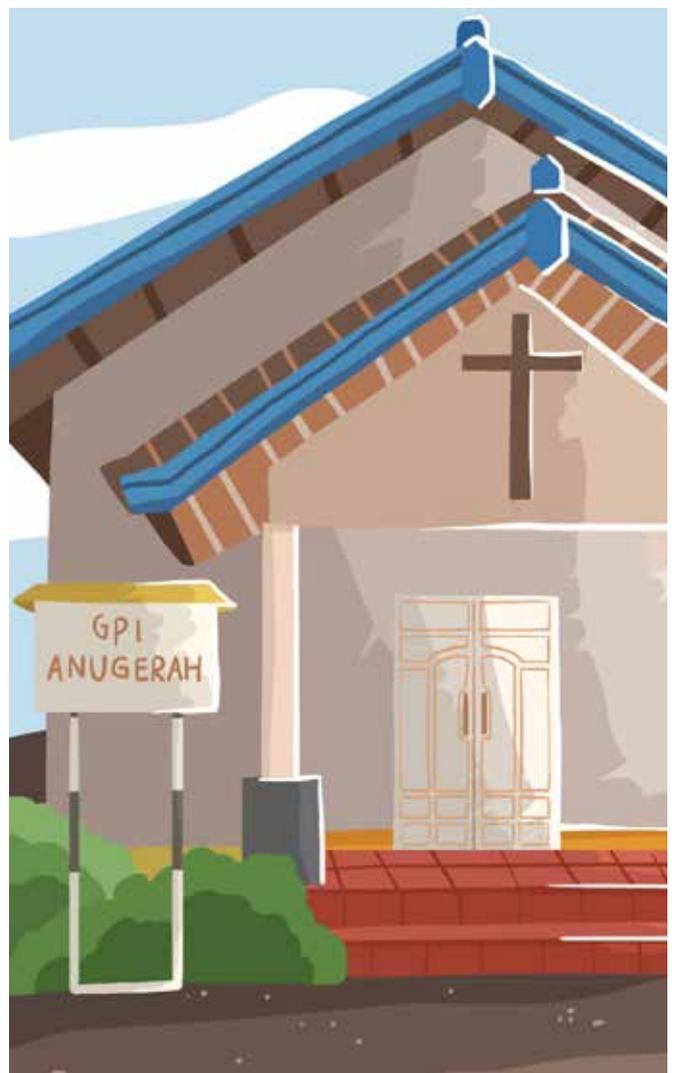
Surti's husband, Parto*, said he and his family were baffled by her wife's case. "I was worried and losing sleep every day thinking about my wife and children. The whole family was also confused about my wife's case," he said.

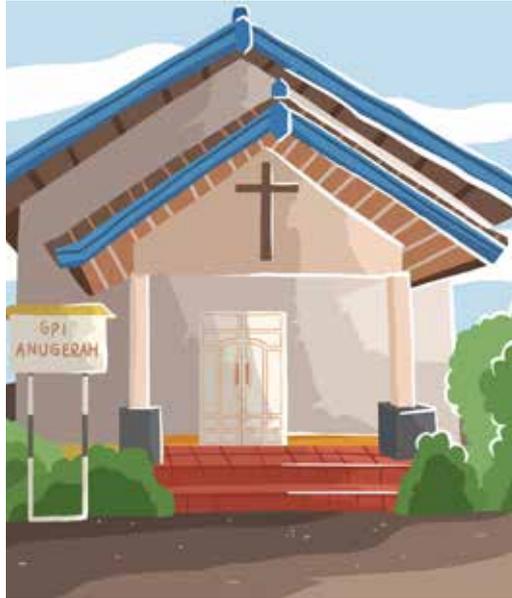
The light at the end of the tunnel began to appear with the establishment of the Task Force for the protection of Indonesian migrant workers in Babakan Gebang. Parto reported Surti's case to a member of the Task Force in the village, Toto Sutanto, who then file the report to the village head for a follow-up. Toto asked for Surti's documents so that the case could be handled immediately and Surti could be sent home.

According to Parto, the handling of his wife's case was smooth, immediate, and free of charge. The Task Force worked swiftly so that Surti could be repatriated from Saudi Arabia as soon as possible.

**Not his real name*







Sidorejo Village, East Lampung

Sidorejo Village is located in Udik Village, East Lampung, Lampung Province. With an area of 1,429.97 hectare, this village has a population of 12,158 people, with 5,847 men and 6,311 women. The number of underprivileged families reaches 437 families. Most of the residents of Sidorejo village make a living as farmers.

Mewujudkan Pelindungan Perempuan Pekerja Migran Mulai dari Desa



Suparman

Even before receiving gender equality training, Suparman had sensed there were injustices against women, especially women migrant workers. As the Secretary of Sidorejo Village, Sekampung Udik Subdistrict, East Lampung, Suparman sees how women migrant workers are vulnerable to being victims of violence both in their countries of origin and destination because they are isolated, far from friends and family, do not understand local language, and were unaware of the laws applied in the country or how to obtain service information. Women migrant workers

become victims before leaving, in the destination country, and when they return. In addition, they do not understand their rights as migrant workers or safe and fair migration.

“In the past, the village government was of the opinion that the Village Capacity Building Program related to handling violence against women migrant workers and preventing human trafficking was not important,” said Suparman, 41, who also works as a farmer and paving block entrepreneur.

Now, both the village government and residents have benefited greatly from the program. The situation opened the eyes of the village government, leading them to address the issues faced by women in general and migrant workers in particular.

Suparman hopes there will be no more injustice faced by women migrant workers, and that women migrant workers can work safely and comfortably, and return home to be reunited with their families. Village officials through this program are expected to be aware of and have deep understanding of gender equality, such as an equal division of labor at home to prevent domestic violence and workplace abuse. In Sidorejo, data collection on women migrant workers, both active and returning, is being carried out so that the village government knows the number of people who have become migrant workers and can design programs for returning migrants.

To support safe migration, the village government has issued a special decree for the Task Force to respond to this issue. If villagers need information or report their case, they can directly meet the Task Force. The presence of the Task Force is very helpful for the village government amid the attempts to keep people from violence or human trafficking.

To optimize the efforts to create safe migration, Suparman hopes that a village regulation for the protection of women migrant workers will be issued soon. “Such regulation is not to prohibit or prevent villagers from becoming migrant workers, but to provide protection to them,” he said.





Tutik Listiani

It took time and training until Tutik Listiani (Tutik) realized that she had the same rights as men. Born in Sidorejo Village, Sekampung Udik Subdistrict, East Lampung, Tutik faced a series of abuse when she worked as a migrant worker. She experienced document forgery, having his rights violated, heavy workloads, and excessive working hours.

After being involved in the Village Capacity Building Program to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Women Migrant Workers and Human Trafficking, Tutik found her horizons expanded and she was no longer baffled by this issue.

“Violence against women migrant workers often occurs because they are considered weak, do not have courage, and are not equal in many ways. Women migrant workers also lack sufficient knowledge about this line of work,” said Tutik.

She is now a housewife and a corn farmer, while serving as a member of the Task Force for the prevention and handling of violence against women migrant workers and human trafficking.

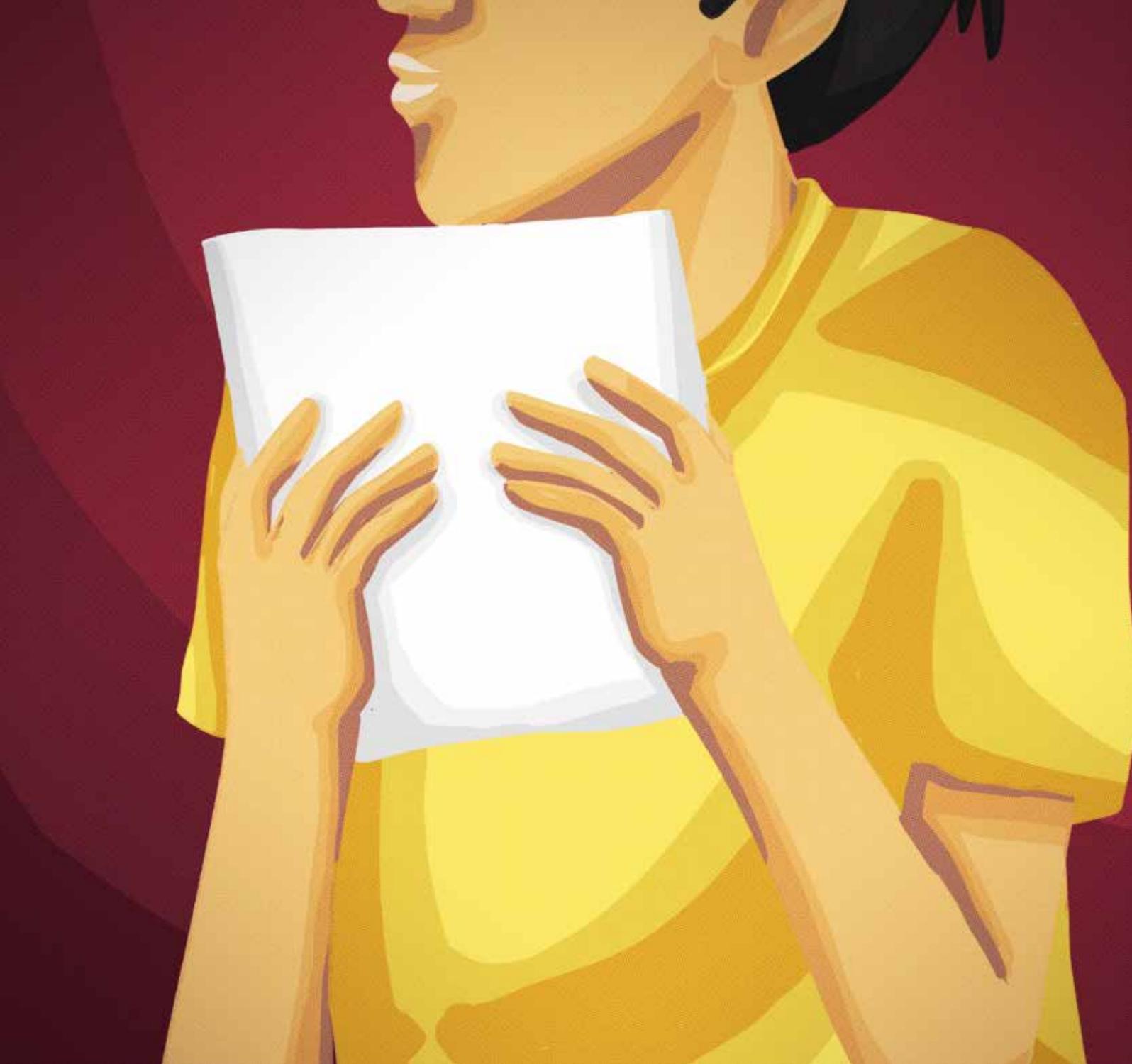
Tutik participated in outreach activities, training, information dissemination, campaigns, and others in the context of implementing the Village Capacity Building Program. Tutik began the campaign against human trafficking by sharing information with her family and Quranic study groups, as such group is common and has regular activities. In the study meeting, Tutik conveyed information about legal migration procedures, the rights of migrant workers, the importance of building equal relations between women and men to prevent violence against women, information about the legal Indonesian Migrant Worker Placement Company (P3MI), as well as the existence of a Task Force for the Protection of Migrant Workers in the Village.

As a result of this outreach, residents who received the information are moved to report to the Task Force or inform the families of migrant worker candidates to report to the village administration before leaving to other countries.

Unfortunately, there remain those who trust middlemen and recruiters more because they feel the administration will complicate their departure. Tutik said the village government has started to actively handle cases of women migrant workers. Potential migrant workers have also become more aware of their rights.

“Hopefully, the government will be more open and responsive when migrant workers report their cases and address their needs. . Likewise, the Task Force will be more active, and the village government can better protect the migrant workers,” she asserted.





Rumiati*

After giving birth to her child three years ago, Rumiati felt the need to improve the family's economy by working abroad. Unfortunately, she was deceived by middlemen and fell into the trap of human trafficking. She was flown to Turkey without proper procedures and was tossed around from place to place, from being a domestic worker and waiting table at a restaurant to working in a hotel. Everything happened in only one month.

**Not her real name*

Rumiati also received inadequate wages, hardly rested and slept, and didn't have regular mealtimes. Eventually, Rumiati, who previously worked at a village shop, asked her family to send money to pay for his return to Indonesia.

Rumiati and her family then reported to the Task Force for the prevention and handling of violence against women migrant workers and human trafficking in Sidorejo Village. From the members of the Task Force, she received information about the procedures of becoming a regular migrant worker, received mediation assistance, and was assisted in seeking justice at various agencies such as Lampung Labour Office, the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency (BP2MI), and Lampung Police.

"I feel grateful for the assistance in solving the case, starting from seeking information and mediation, to police's assistance. I enjoy gaining knowledge and was encouraged to fight for my rights. I was assisted until my problem was resolved," she said.



BALAI DESA PUGUNGRAHARJO



Selamat





Pugung Raharjo Village, East Lampung

Pugung Raharjo Village is located in Udik Village, East Lampung, Lampung. This village is classified as a developing agrarian village. With an area of 600 hectares, this village is inhabited by 6,675 people, with 3,225 men and 3,450 women. The number of underprivileged families reaches 238. The majority of residents work as farmers, with corn as the main commodity.



Suyitno

Suyitno is the head of a hamlet in Pugung Raharjo Village, Sekampung Udik District, East Lampung. The 42-year-old man also plays a role as a member of the Task Force for the prevention and handling of violence against women migrant workers and human trafficking. He knows firsthand how women migrant workers faced various challenges ranging from administrative issues and departure, to work problems, training, and when returning home. Women migrant workers often fall for the promises of sponsors and brokers, he said.

“Currently, I am helping to respond to migrant worker cases. Mediations have been carried out and have been forwarded to legal channels,” he said.

Suyitno is actively campaigning for the rights of migrant workers, assisting residents regarding safe migration, collecting data on migrant workers, and examining contracts. He is disseminating the information on the prevention of against women migrant workers and human trafficking in religious study groups and other forums.

As a member of the Task Force, Suyitno is coordinating with the village government, the police’s security and public order officers (Bhabinkamtibmas), sub-district government, and other institutions. The Task Force is using social media, such as WhatsApp and Twitter groups, to coordinate with their partners.

“For me personally, the Village Capacity Building Program makes me aware of the importance of role sharing in the household and eliminate the (gender) gaps,” said Suyitno.

He hoped prospective migrant workers in the village have prepared well in regards of legal and procedural administration. Suyitno wished that the government would support the efforts to protect migrant workers and keep them from experiencing violence and human trafficking, and that village governments will be more responsive to migrant workers’ problems.





Sumarlan

Sumarlan is a corn and oil palm farmer in Pugung Raharjo Village in East Lampung, and an elected village head. He pays special attention to Indonesian migrant workers, because he has seen how the workers in the village, especially women, are vulnerable to abuse, scam, and trafficking.

However, there had never been any public discussion on the issue of migrant workers at Pugung Raharjo, let alone gender issues. Sumarlan admitted that the village government could have done better in highlighting the plights of migrant workers and women, given the rampant cases of violence against them.

Things change when the Village Capacity Building Program was launched in the village. Many activities to address the problems have been carried out, such as training, outreach, and campaigns with village communities. This encourages the government and villagers to be more concerned with safe migration procedure starting from the village.

Sumarlan said he really supports and appreciates the efforts of the Task Force for the Prevention and Handling of Violence against Women Migrant Workers and human trafficking. To strengthen the capacity of the Task Force, Sumarlan has issued a related decree and allocated a budgets for public awareness campaign, as well as providing incentives to Task Force members.

“The Task Force is expected to be the friend for women migrant workers and returning migrants,” he said.

In the village, women are already involved in village development planning and are included in the village government structure. Sumarlan hopes that in the future, there will be no more resident that became victims of violence and human trafficking and that women can work safely. To ensure safe migration from the village, he plans to issue a village regulation that can support women migrant workers.





PEMERINTAH KABUPATEN TULUNGAGUNG
KECAMATAN REJOTANGAN

KANTOR KEPALA DESA SUKOREJO WETAN

Jl. SUPRIADI NO. 10 - TELP. (0355) 387372
SUKOREJO WETAN - KODE POS: 66293



Sukorejo Wetan Village, Tulung Agung

Sukorejo Wetan Village is located in Rejotangan, Tulung Agung, East Java. Occupying an area of 400.20 hectares, the village has an altitude of 149.7 meters above sea level. The land is very dry and barren due to the absence of an adequate irrigation system. Villagers manage their farms by relying solely on the rainy season. The total population of Sukorejo Wetan is 4,765 people, with 2,424 men and 2,341 women. Sukorejo Wetan Village has a fairly large agricultural land, which is 113 hectare with a variety of agricultural commodities.



Agus Basuni

Agus Basuni (Agus), 52, serves as Village Secretary, in addition to working as a farmer and rancher. He had been a migrant worker in Malaysia for seven years and in Taiwan for three years. While working in Malaysia in 1989, he set out on an unofficial and dangerous route.

Agus observes how violence against women migrant workers often occurs due to the lack of quality human resources and fraudulent middlemen. These middlemen often promise large salaries so that prospective migrant workers are tempted to work abroad without considering the risks.

He said that the conditions for migrant workers must be improved so that the destination countries see Indonesian migrant workers in different light.

Currently, Agus is involved in the Village Capacity Building Program, including by disseminating information in Quranic study groups. According to him, the program is useful because it provides information about migrant workers and how the Task Force is handling their cases.

Agus feels the Task Force in the village plays crucial role, as they receive reports about cases so that the village government can handle them together. However, he observed how limited the Task Force's authority and scope of work are. "The village government needs to give encouragement (for the Task Force). They are still newly formed, so their knowledge and experience is still limited," he said.

He added that the village government has been trying to follow up on the Village Capacity Building Program with some adjustments to local condition. The village has also carried out an empowerment program for returning women migrant workers, such as handicraft workshop to make beaded accessories.

Agus said the central government must be able to protect women migrant workers for they are the foreign remittance heroines. In addition, there needs to be a village bylaw that regulates the protection of women migrant workers.

According to him, the perspective of the village community has shifted significantly regarding gender relations. The Task Force helps accommodate the resolution of the problems of women migrant workers in the village.

"Women in the village are now involved in the decision making process. They are given the opportunity to voice their concerns through hamlet and village meetings. Women are also among village government apparatus. Villages will allocate village funds to support safe migration starting from the village. However, women's issues have not been included in the village development planning document," he said.



Sudar Ali Ma'ruf

Sudar Ali Ma'ruf is a farmer and goat breeder in Sukorejo Wetan Village, and he is also active in community organizations. He serves as the head of the Task Force for the Prevention and Handling of Violence against Women Migrant Workers and Human Trafficking, an issue he is familiar with as he had worked as migrant worker in Malaysia for two years, in Brunei Darussalam for four years, and in Timor Leste for six months.

He may have experienced fraud by labour agencies, but Sudar said that the challenges he faced as a male migrant worker are different from women migrant workers, who face disproportionate impacts of and are vulnerable to violence, starting from the household, during departure, and in the destination country.

The 47-year-old man was then involved in the Village Capacity Building Program to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Women Migrant Workers and Human Trafficking. He participated in the training on team capacity building and the education on violence against Indonesian migrant workers.

In his village, the Task Force collects data on migrant families and helps migrant workers and former workers to have the proper information and support from relevant parties. If there is a case of women migrant workers, the Task Force will provide assistance to ease their burden.

Held for the first time, the Capacity Building Program in the village, according to Sudar, has been running quite well. The public is now more aware about the reality of migrant workers, human trafficking, and the official or legal procedure to become migrant workers.

Sudar feels that he is currently more insightful about women's issues and he implemented a change in the relationship in his family after joining the program, by increasing the mutual respect and sharing duties and roles in the household.

In addition, he is increasingly daring to speak in forums, and is actively campaigning about related issues in regular meetings of community organizations. He is determined to remain active in the Task Force in educating, providing information to the public, and carrying out social activities in the community.

“My hope is that the village government is serious in supporting the Task Force by allocating budgets, issuing decrees, and so on. To the central government, I hope that no more Indonesian workers are falling victims to violence and human trafficking, or facing death sentence,” he said.



DESA TANEN



Tanen Village, Tulung Agung

Tanen Village is located in Rejotangan, Tulung Agung, East Java. With an area of 10.35 square kilometer, this village has a population of 4,923 people, consisting of 2,521 men and 2,411 women. Tanen village has a vast agricultural area of 151 hectare with a variety of commodities. Unfortunately, the lack of infrastructure and facilities in Tanen makes agricultural businesses non-optimal. It has led a number of villagers to become migrant workers to improve their financial conditions.



Tutik Narwiyah

When Tutik Narwiyah (Tutik) became a migrant worker, she experienced a series of fraud, abuse, and exploitation, mainly because of the irregular channel to work abroad. She also faced harassment and discrimination as a woman who was considered to be of lower status and had to be content with meager wages. The working hours were very long, and when she tried to report his condition to the authority, they did not provide a solution, but instead responding by saying, "Yes, do you want to go to prison or what?".

Returning to Tanen Village, she was later involved in the Village Capacity Building Program to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Women Migrant Workers and Human Trafficking, and became a member of the program's Task Force.

She was given trainings on gender issues and safe and legal migration. As a member of the Task Force, Tutik's role is to prevent the cases of violence against women and human trafficking in the village, as well as to increase the capacity of village women.

As a former migrant worker, Tutik said that women are vulnerable to violence in society and at work, due to the absence of gender equality, a situation where women are no longer discriminated against either at home, in society, or at the workplace. Women, she said, are still considered by society as weak, so they are easy to become victims of physical and psychological violence.

Now, according to Tutik, Indonesian women migrant workers are more protected because many related parties are increasingly concerned about their safety. Likewise, policies to protect the migrant workers, such as the national law and others have been available.

With her involvement in the program, Tutik feels that there is a change in gender relations in her own family, in terms of labor division or roles that are not distinguishing gender. Another change is an increased understanding of gender issues and other forms of violence against women, including safe and fair migration for women.

Another benefit that Tutik feels by participating in the Village Capacity Building Program is that she is now more aware of the roles of the Task Force and the rights of migrant workers, as well as having deeper understanding and sensitivity to the problems in the village. The village administration now has its own program to prevent human trafficking by resolving existing cases and holding public dialog to settle migrant workers' problems.

Tutik's efforts related to the prevention of human trafficking and the handling of violence against women in the village is to provide information directly to the community or through social media. Tutik hopes there will be more campaign against human trafficking and violence against women migrant workers.

"The village government, the Task Force, and the central government must work together to protect migrant workers, starting from the village to the destination country and their safe return. These must be coordinated with each other," she said.



Lukman Khakim

When he was a migrant worker in South Korea in 2005-2014, Lukman Khakim (Lukman) said he did not understand his rights at all. While working in the country, he did not get paid overtime, receive work protection, or provided with personal protective equipment to work in snow.

Back then, he only communicated with the recruitment agency, without the slightest government assistance or intervention. Instead of providing clear information, the agency was more likely to mislead prospective Indonesian migrant workers, said Lukman, who now works as a farmer and rancher.

It was only after he joined the Village Capacity Building Program in Tanen that Lukman received proper information about migrant workers and other related matters. In addition, the gender training he received as a member of the The Migrant Workers Task Force opened her eyes to gender inequality in society and the violence faced by women migrant workers.

According to Lukman, women migrant workers lack public support and protection from the village government and other related parties. Violations of the rights of women migrant workers have sustained, such as poor work agreements or work contracts and long working hours.

“The role of the Task Force in preventing human trafficking and violence against women is to disseminate information about migrant workers, the law on migrant workers protection, the rights of migrant workers, and so on,” said Lukman, 39, who said that he had implemented the division of labor, responsibilities, and roles in the household regardless of gender.

According to Lukman, not much had been done by the village regarding the prevention of human trafficking. Now, prospective migrant workers in the village must meet the Task Force to obtain clear information about migrant work.

The Task Force’s response to cases experienced by migrant workers has so far been favorable, said Lukman, by finding solutions, managing cases, and processing them with related agencies. Victims also receive psychological assistance.

Now, there is a shift in the perspective of village community about migrant workers. Lukman said a WhatsApp group has been set up in the village to coordinate with relevant parties to work together in preventing the violence. These parties include Village Consultative Body (BPD), Community Empowerment Institution (LPM), village administration, NGOs, and religious institutions. The strategy is developed through village meetings.

“My hope for the village government is to issue a village regulation to protect migrant workers. The central government should minimize the cost of migration, and if possible provide banking credit for prospective migrant workers once their contracts are agreed,” he said.



Inaroh

Inaroh is a recipient of the service of Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection Task Force. The 48-year-old woman from Tulungagung lost contact with her husband, Hadik, who worked in China for a year. The Task Force in the village then provided assistance in handling her husband's case.

Initially, Inaroh received an invitation regarding safe and fair migration, before she asked the Task Force to help with her husband's case. Hadik left for China to become a migrant worker without proper procedure in 2021. The migration is through a middleman who still had family tie with him. Because he did not go through an official mechanism, Hadik did not dare to leave the house or the factory he worked for, as he was afraid of being arrested by the police.

However, one day, Hadik left the factory through the back door. While walking aimlessly, he was caught by the police and put in a prison for three months. Then Hadik was deported to Indonesia in 2022.

According to Inaroh, the services of the Task Force and the village government were exemplary and swift, that they managed to get her husband to return home. Currently, her husband is having mental health problems, but he has received psychiatric treatment.

"I hope that no more migrant worker will suffer the same fate as my husband. Hopefully, the village can help open up job opportunities so there is no need to look for work far away, which is risky," she said.





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