BERANDA migran

Koordinasi Purna Pekerja Migran Indonesia -KOPPMI-

EMPOWERING

FORMER MIGRANT WOMEN WORKERS



TUS MULYANI

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



My name is Yani. I am a former migrant worker. I worked abroad for 15 years in three countries—Taiwan, South Korea, and Hong Kong—as a factory worker and domestic helper. I began learning about organizing while working in Hong Kong.

I returned to Indonesia in 2019, just before the COVID-19 pandemic, and experienced the challenges of reintegrating into Indonesian society. Currently, I organize former migrant workers in my area and serve as the coordinator of KOPPMI in Cilacap Regency.

ABOUT KOPPMI

KOPPMI stands for **Koordinasi Purna Pekerja Migran Indonesia** (Coordination of Former Indonesian Migrant Workers). KOPPMI itself is a mass organization founded in 2023 to organize, empower, and mobilize former migrant workers, their families, and supporters.

We established KOPPMI because we realized that even after returning to Indonesia, former migrant workers continue to face discrimination in economic, social, legal, and public service spheres. They struggle to access decent jobs and wages, are excluded from government aid and subsidies for the poor, are targeted for extortion through fees and taxes, and are often stereotyped as “successful people.”

Women face even harsher discrimination, especially if they are widowed or unmarried. As a result, their complaints are usually not taken seriously, and their aspirations are frequently overlooked by both the government and the broader community. This situation can only be challenged if former migrant workers are organized and fight back systematically.





KOPPMI has various programs, including case assistance and access to social services, a hotline, rights and political education, reading houses for migrant children, networking and collaboration with allies in support of migrant workers, skills training, public awareness campaigns, and more. Our services also extend to surrounding communities in need.

ABOUT FORMER MIGRANT WORKER FARMERS:

I want to share the situation and challenges faced by former migrant workers who have become farmers, particularly in Karangjengkol Village, Kesugihan District, Cilacap Regency. This village is located on fertile hills filled with rice fields. However, the hills are controlled by a company that exploits the stone for a coal-fired power plant (PLTU). This mining has been ongoing for decades and is expanding causing locals to lose their farmland. The shrinking agricultural land has driven up land prices.



The village has a population of 11,346 and is categorized as an area of extreme poverty. The government defines this based on the very high rate of malnutrition among young children.

Of the productive labor force, approximately 45% work abroad as migrant workers, while the rest are farmers or traders with very low incomes. Transportation access to urban areas is poor, leaving locals with no choice but to rely on the local economy.



Those who migrate abroad are mostly young people who were previously farmers. They are forced to work overseas due to the lack of local job opportunities, to support their children's education, and to build a home.

Most men work in factories in Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan as laborers. Women mostly work as domestic helpers in Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Their working periods range from 4 years to several decades.



However, upon returning home, they continue to face complex problems. There are still no viable jobs or income sources. Due to their age and limited education, they are also unable to secure formal employment in urban areas. Thus, farming becomes the only option left for these former migrant workers.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

Due to the ongoing mining and PLTU projects, land prices have skyrocketed and become unaffordable for locals. Most villagers no longer own enough land to farm. They can only cultivate leftover spaces around their homes and a few remaining plots of rice fields.





Those without any land use pots or polybags to grow vegetables, especially organic ones. This is done to reduce daily expenses and still provide nutrition for their families. However, even with this effort, their income remains insufficient. Most must work as seasonal laborers for other farmers who still own larger plots of land.

ORGANIZING FORMER MIGRANT FARMER WORKERS:

KOPPMI began organizing former migrant worker farmers in Karangjengkol by bringing them together to share their post-return experiences. Most of those we organize are women who grow organic crops in their yards. They gather to learn how to cultivate crops and market them collectively. We built the KOPPMI group as a space to share and support each other in surviving life in Indonesia.

At first, none of us knew how to grow crops without using expensive and scarce chemical fertilizers. Eventually, we began producing organic fertilizers from available materials like animal manure, rice husks, organic household waste, and rice-washing water. We process these materials into alternative fertilizers so we no longer have to rely on chemicals. We mix the ingredients to enrich the soil without using toxic substances.

We learned how to make this fertilizer from the internet and books we requested from the local agricultural office. We carry out all processes—fertilizer production, land preparation, and planting—collectively.
From these efforts, we successfully produced organic fertilizer made from manure and rice husks, which we use and sell locally. We also grow organic vegetables that fetch higher prices in the market. These women have grown more confident in their ability to overcome economic challenges through organization and cooperative farming.

HOPES FOR THE FUTURE:

We hope that these efforts will enable former migrant women workers to gain agricultural knowledge and use it as a source of income to support themselves in Indonesia. We also hope that they will no longer feel forced to leave the country and abandon their families.

We currently need support in the form of:

- Renting sufficient farmland for collective farming
- Obtaining agricultural tools to work more efficiently
- Procuring seeds, as market prices are very high
- Receiving training in modern agriculture
- Learning marketing strategies both offline and online
- Receiving political education about land grabbing and the lives of Indonesian farmers
- Building wider local, national, and international networks to raise awareness about our issues and demands
- Building solidarity with farmers and other sectors resisting land grabs in our region

KOPPMI is also actively fighting for the rights of migrant and former migrant workers through various local actions and justice campaigns.