

*Analysis on Social Remittances as the Impact of International Migration
Case Study: The Return Migrant Women in East Java Indonesia*

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0040

The Asian Conference on the Social Sciences 2013

Official Conference Proceedings 2013



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1. Introduction

During the past decade, there has been considerable interest in the forces for the international migration in South East Asia. Of these, Indonesia is one of greatest sending countries of labors, mostly dominated by female migrant labors. In 2010, there were 2,503.3 thousand Indonesians who migrated to countries, such as Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and so forth. The inward remittance flows in 2010 is 7,139 US\$ millions (The World Bank, 2011). The hosting countries draw workers from East Java, West Java, Central Java, Nusa Tenggara, and Sumatra (Kaur, 2006).

Apart from a good fact that Indonesia has been able to send their female citizens as labors overseas, comprising more than 70% out of the total Indonesian migrant labor (Anggraeni, 2006), there have been so many mistreatments experienced by those female labors. Women might have problems even prior to their departure, the problem still continues during their contribution overseas, and even more once they return. The later problem is somewhat needs to be taken care of wisely as it deals with those women's future survival and opportunity, especially in terms on how they spend and use their money to improve their life quality.

The remittances influence the local incomes in economic matters. Migrants remit their money because it is considered the main purpose of their departure. They want to improve the life for themselves and their entire family. Return migrants have competency and capacity to perceive how the international migration may link to the development. Based on general subjectivities, their perceptions are tested with other stakeholder's opinion. This results in certain ways to rethink how the migration relates to the development of Indonesia.

In addition to sending money, migrants and return migrants remit the new pattern of value, behavior, and practices from their experiences overseas. Unfortunately, the study about how the remittance can be assessed culturally and socially has not been discussed much. Most debates about migration and development emphasize the economic at the expense of the social.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this study is by having Levitt indicator on assessing social remittances, the research aims to analyze how those indicators are implemented by the return migrant women in Indonesia particularly in East Java. Eventually, the research attempts to recommend how the remittances may contribute to development.

3. Methodology

The research belongs to the qualitative method by having a descriptive way of gathering information and presenting the existing condition. The primary data was collected through semi structured and in-depth interviews with 27 return migrant women and by observing their households. A snowball sample was used by asking each respondent to recommend other people, who might also be willing to participate in the research. Some interviews were also conducted with the family, neighbors, institutions, and related government. There were **31 respondents** of this type. The institutions were Citra Kartini Cooperative, which manages and regulates migrant's

remittance and are also concerned with return migrant issues, and Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia (Indonesian Migrant Worker Union) of Malang Branch. The government respondents are the office staff from Department of Manpower and Transmigration of Malang and Tulungagung. Secondary data was taken from published studies of books, journals, and other literary instruments. Many fruitful inputs were gained through the seminars and discussions among other scholars. During the fieldwork, some discussions were also conducted with scholars from Brawijaya University, Malang.

4. Discussion

The status of women in Indonesia varies widely across the country, reflecting the diversity of ethnic group traditions and social expectations about the behaviors of men and women across the archipelago. Women's rate of primary and secondary school enrollment is approximately equal to boys, but gender inequality still manifests itself in political participation and employment. According to the ILO, women in the workforce earned 68 percent of that of male workers (Pasaribu, 2004).

Worker migration from Indonesia is dominated by female domestic workers. Hugo states that turning to the gender dimension in Indonesia migrant labor flows, while women dominate some undocumented flows, women outnumber men among documented migrant flows (Hugo, 2002). Kaur (2006) notes a report in *Migration News* that of the 1.5 million Indonesian migrant, who went abroad officially between 1994 and 1999, about two thirds were women. This also was documented by the Indonesian government and the World Bank. In 2002, 76 percent of 480,393 overseas workers from Indonesia were women, and 94 percent of these women were employed as domestic workers in Middle Eastern, East Asian, and Southeast Asian countries (Buchori, 2003).

In the above studies, the women cited financial necessity and a desire to support their parents and children as their primary reasons for seeking work in Malaysia. Some women stated that they were interested in seeing a different country and having new experiences. Most were between the ages of seventeen and thirty-five, and had completed elementary or middle school (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

The international community has long recognized that workers away from home can be vulnerable to abuse (Martin, 2006). Controversies arise from female migration, especially those moving to Saudi Arabia and Malaysia due to a high risk of being exploited as an employee through over work, extended hours, poor conditions, sexual harassment and assault from male members of their households (Wijaya, 1992). The Indonesian government has taken actions for a moratorium of migration process, particularly in the informal sector. Due to the many problems experienced by Indonesian women workers overseas. Although some women might have problems prior to their departure, in many cases the problems still continues during their contribution overseas, and even more once they return. The later issue needs to be assessed thoughtfully.

Female migrants and their remittances are considered important factors in economic development due to their contribution to foreign exchange, unemployment solution, and poverty reduction. These concepts all deal with economic consequences. Besides

sending money, migrants sometimes introduce new behavior as a result of their overseas experience. When they return to their sending community, these women become change agent, with sets of new values, practices and capital. Whether they were economically successful or unsuccessful, as migrants, they take in part in social structure and development on their return. They are also familiar with international interactions which can be utilized to engage in development actions on their own.

Development can be defined as the enlargement of people's 'capabilities' as what they are able to do and be in life. People are their own providers of aid: they are the beneficiaries, as well as the architects of economic and social progress (Sen, 1999). The return migrants become key players in their communities, associations, local authorities, civil society, the private sector, and the academic sectors. The international community has increasingly supported the creation of cooperation between return migrants, which have the potential to better link the migration and development of origin and hosting countries.

Using the human development approach, adequate opportunities must be in place to support the activities of return migrants. Among these actors, policymakers should dedicate special attention to the role played by migrants themselves. The human development approach recognizes the ways in which return migrants' contributions to development occur, not only financial remittances, but social remittances such as networks and relations, skills and knowledge, ideas and values (Levitt, 1998) embed developmental potential.

Levitt (2004) explains that not all migrants are transnational migrants nor do all those who participate in transnational activities do so all the time. But when return migrants are considered as bunches of small groups which are regularly involved in their sending country, and others participate periodically, their combined efforts add up. Taken together and over time, these activities constitute a social force with tremendous transformative significance that can modify the economy, values, and everyday lives of entire regions. Social remittances play a key role in bringing about such changes. Not all social remittances are positive, however. What some consider a force for greater democratization and accountability, others hold responsible for rising materialism and individualism.

There are few scholars, who assess remittances, wearing the lens of a social approach. Social Remittances are the ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from the hosting country to the sending community. Indicators on evaluating social remittance are: normative structure, system of practice, and social capital (Levitt, 2001).

The return migrants have the potential to connect many aspects of their lives in host countries, these include context-related knowledge, emotional ties, legitimacy vis-à-vis local populations and insight into the diverse local realities in which they participated (de Haas 2006) The successful return migrant has the capacity to leverage their social remittance contributions in development actions on their own, their community, or serve the related policy makers through constructive policy ideas.

However, the potential of return migrant should not be overestimated. In Indonesian's case, the majority of migration is south-south migration. The social and cultural

backgrounds among the countries are relatively the same.

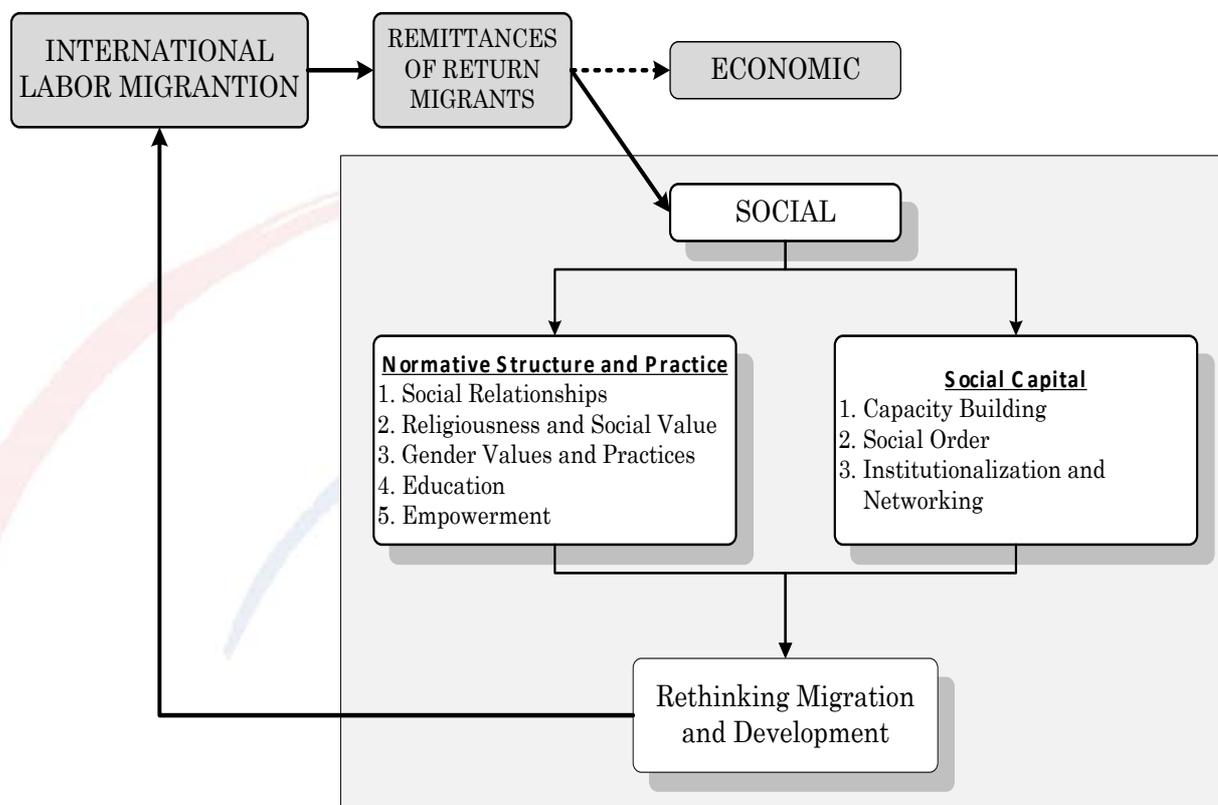
Normative structures include ideas, values, and beliefs. They include norms for behavior, notions about family responsibility, principles of neighborliness and community participation, and aspirations for social mobility. They encompass ideas about gender, race, and class identity. They also include values about how organizations should work, incorporating ideas about good government and good churches, and about how politicians and clergy should behave (Levitt, 2001; p.59).

Systems of practice are the actions shaped by normative structures. These include how individuals delegate household tasks, the kinds of religious rituals they engage in, and how much they participate in political and civic groups. They also include organizational practices such as recruiting and socializing new members, goal setting and strategizing, establishing leadership roles, and forming interagency ties (ibid, p.61).

Social capital is defined as the expectations for an action within a collectivity that affects the economic goals and goal-seeking behavior of its members, even if these expectations are not oriented toward the economic sphere (ibid, p.241). Based on World Bank Working Paper no.18 (2004), social capital is most frequently defined in terms of the groups, networks, norms, and trust that people have available to them for productive purposes. The survey tool in this paper has been designed to capture this multi-dimensionality.

Migrants develop and maintain social ties across different locations. The potential embedded in these social relations to yield other resources is part of social capital. This is what allows the creation of networks that facilitate the flow of information, skills, financial resources, values, ideas, and so on (Faist and Fauser, 2011)

In general the framework of the research can be analyzed by using the diagram below:



Levitt acknowledged that normative structure refers to ideas, values, and beliefs. They include norms for behavior, notions about family responsibility, principles of neighborliness and community participation, and aspirations for social mobility. These structures shape the system of practice. These include how individuals delegate household tasks, the kinds of religious rituals they engage in, and how much they participate in political and civic groups.

Some valuable findings of the social remittances to confirm with Levitt's were identified in several aspects, namely:

a. The Social Relationships

The return migrant has changed the structure of social relations among the nuclear family, the extended family, and the community. In some households there was a shift division of labor, economic allocation and the allocation of power among husband, wife, and children. It was seen that the traditional child rearing inseparable from the tasks of the wife, were overcome by replacing their role by the husband, parent or siblings. Some return migrants become role models for girls who want to improve their lives. The shifting of return migrant roles has

increased their capacity as decision makers in the family.

In term of relation with spouse, most women had fewer powers and depends entirely on their husband for economical support and household decision but after migration, women are likely to be empowered and independent. Some women prefer to maintain typical gender relations by returning home and depending on their husbands. Return mother were demanded to readjust this situation on implementing their production and reproduction functions. The social relations with parents, families who stay behind are clearly the weaker partners in the interdependent relationship that arises between migrant and non migrant. The shift in the power dynamics of the family and decision makers is being renegotiated.

b. Education

The reviewed literature showed that migration tends to increase dropout rate and discourage student from going on to secondary school. In Indonesian case, due to the violence and trauma experienced by overseas migrant, women expected their children to achieve education and settling job in the home country. As women worked as low skilled labor, they expected children to improve their knowledge better than their parents.

Interestingly, the finding in education showed different phenomenon compared to Levitt's description to what happen to Latin American's migrants. Levitt findings showed that migration tended to increase dropout rate and discouraged students from going to secondary school. In contrast, due to the violence and trauma experienced by overseas Indonesian migrant women, they expected their children to achieve education and settle in jobs in their home country. As women worked as low skilled labor, they expected their children to study more in order to get better jobs with or without migrating overseas.

c. Gender Values

The migration has made women more independent on their economic power and decision capacity. Those who remained behind were of different minds about their response to these new dynamics. Some men and women clearly felt that men should continue to tell women what to do.

Gender specific values in the host countries studied such as *men as breadwinner, women as the queen in the household, heaven is on the bottom of mother's foot*, or *wife is the husband's companion* regarded as normative values of how women are

demanded to behave in traditional Muslim values. These thoughts clashed with the euphoria of international migration. Normatively, the returning women studied were required to assume gender typical values, but in fact unemployment, poverty, and survival strategies of the households made these women take a greater part in the public domain.

d. *Economic and Empowerment*

The return migrant has changed the image of women as domestic workers into high-value jobs that can improve the condition of her family. Higher living standards are only possible because so many villagers continue to migrate. Those who remain behind have become dependent upon. Women with some vision and planning skills were successfully maintaining their economic conditions and self determining on decision making. The successful return migrant has increased their family's prosperity by greater assets, knowledge, and knowhow gained from working abroad. The cultural insight and working ethic has improved. The return migrant possessed more control over financial resources, technology, production inputs and decision making in the household. There were also unsuccessful migrants for whom the life upon return was very similar to the one before they left.

e. *Social Capital*

Social capital is explained by Levitt as those expectations for action within a collectivity that affect the economic goals and goal-seeking behavior of its member, even if these expectations are not oriented toward the economic sphere. In the research, this can be recognized on the feasibility of return. Returnees fall into two broad groups, namely those who have difficulties to put long term income generating strategy into place and those who own more knowledge, resources and successful at returning. The social hierarchy can also be compared regard to the nature of society which was basically divided into a two-class society consisting of a small landed or business-owning elite and a large class of landless farm laborers. After migration, many additional type of works and classes are increasing, especially the entrepreneurial activities.

The emerging institutions at the village show the change of social order, such as cooperative institutions, NGOs, and so forth. These institutions and networking work hand in hand to overcome the migrant's problems. Many returnee women who were actively involved in particular strategic movements during their overseas, continued to work towards their goals once they returned home, such as Indonesian Migrant Worker Union and Citra Kartini Cooperative.

The return women, who were actively involved in particular movement during their overseas migration and critically possessing strategic visions, continued this goal once

the return home. They initiated to collect other return migrants and generated economic supported group among them. It also developed to be the social networking support. This pattern has positively contributed to development. A cooperation institutions in Malang Regency, owned by return migrants has more less 2000 member and stimulate economic activities in the regions, such as remittance management, schooling, retailing, technology educations, and even social counseling. These institutions and networking are regarded as capitals which have positively contributed to development.

Social remittances have explained some rational choices which conducted return migrant women behaviors. When return migrant women considered as potential group, which is regularly involved their society, and others participate periodically, their combined efforts will give particular impact to development. Taken together and over time, these activities constitute a social force with tremendous transformative significance that can modify the economy, values, and everyday lives of entire regions. Social remittances play a key role in changing the society. This may challenge the related stakeholders to grasp this idea into development.

5. Novelty

Remittance is mostly associated with economic contribution. Most debates about migration and development privilege the economic. It is not surprising that economic remittance has given big impact on increasing household income, influencing the exchange rate, and creating capital stock in most sending countries. Unfortunately, the study how the remittance can be assessed culturally and socially has not been discussed a lot. Most debates on migration and development privilege the economic at the expense of the social.

6. Conclusion

The main conclusion of this study showed that the return migrants are the important actors because they contribute to the remittances that they bring from working overseas. In addition to sending money, migrants and return migrants remit the new pattern of value, behavior, and practices from their experiences overseas. Return migrants have competency and capacity to perceive how the international labor migration may link to the development.

The respondents of the research were explored to rethink the relations between international migration and development. Return migrants perceived their low bargaining position in the job market. There seems no recognition from the receiving countries to their existence. Some recommendations are offered to overcome this condition. **First**, the requirement of self determination and skill among migrant

workers are important because to work successfully, skills and a sense of work quality are necessary. **Second**, the expectation on domestic employment is increasing, therefore it needs any stakeholders involvement such as the job opportunities provided by government, skills and knowledge quality provided by educational institutions, and so on. **Third**, the policy and credibility on sending Indonesian women migrant workers need to be improved.

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