

*Strategy for Increasing the Placement of Indonesian Migrant Workers in the  
Formal Sector*

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**Abstract**

The Government of Indonesia keeps trying to improve the protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers. One of the efforts undertaken is to reduce the sending of migrant workers in the informal sector who more vulnerable and lack of protection, and to increase the placement of migrant workers in the formal sector which more fully protected. For the research methods, in-depth interviews of government and non-governmental agencies directly related to the policy of migrant workers in the formal sector are conducted in each sample area. From the research results, it can be concluded that to increase the placement of Indonesian Migrant Workers in the formal sector, the Indonesian government must make some efforts in order to improve the system and mechanism of Indonesian Migrant Workers placement in the formal sector as well as the education and skills of prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers; so that, they can compete in the global job market.

Keywords: Placement, Migrant Workers, Formal Sector

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## Introduction

Indonesia is currently the largest labor-sending country in the world. Unfortunately, most of the workforce from Indonesia works in the informal sector. It is undoubtedly that the workforce working in the informal sector will always cause problems such as torture, ill-treatment and many others. Moreover, in terms of providing protection, it will be more difficult for Indonesian workers to be protected if they working in overseas illegally. (Simanjuntak, Payman J, 2004). Their occupations are vary, among others: as Helper, Baby Sitter, Nursing Nurse, Gardener, Driver and so on. In addition, sometimes they are employed by individuals; so that, these informal Indonesian Migrant Workers are vulnerable to face many cases because it is impossible for either the government or Indonesian Migrant Workers Company (PPTKIS) to monitor them. Whilst, the cases that occur in the Indonesian Migrants Workers who work in the formal sector is less than in the informal sector. It can be happen because the monitoring procedures are easily monitored by the government and PPTKIS because they are not employed by individuals, but by the company.

Facing this situation, then the Government of Indonesia plans and estimates that at one time, there will be a hyperbolic placement trend in which more formal sector placements rather than the informal sector. Therefore, The Ministry of Manpower together with National Board for the Placement and Protection of Overseas Workers (*BNP2TKI/Badan Nasional Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia*) and also other stakeholders continue to make improvements on all fronts; because actually sending Indonesian Migrant Workers to work overseas is posing a dilemma for the Indonesian Government and for the prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers as well. On the one hand, it is beneficial not only to reduce the burden of unemployment, but also to create remittances which brings into Indonesia. On the other hand, it can create adverse effects to the Indonesian Migrant Workers themselves, such as torture, acts of violence and sexual harassment.

Based on the conditions of Indonesian Migrant Workers placement as described above, it can be formulated some issues raised in this study such as follows:

1. What are the efforts made by the Indonesian Government and other parties in order to increase the program of Indonesian Migrant Workers placement in the formal sector from the perspective of Supply (education level, skills, and competence of Indonesian Migrants Workers) and Demand (market intelligence, promotion, labor market information system) side, and also from the placement side itself?
2. What kind of strategy that should be developed to improve the formal migrant placement program?

Based on the above problems, this paper try to formulate research objectives as follows:

1. To evaluate and analyze the efforts made by the Indonesian Government and other parties in order to increase the program of Indonesian Migrants Workers placement in the formal sector from the perspective of Supply and Demand side, and also from the placement side itself.

2. To formulate some strategies in improving the formal migrant workers placement program.

## Methodology

The method used in this research is to take some Indonesian Migrant Workers sending areas, namely, Central Java and East Java Provinces to be used as research samples. In each sample area, in-depth interviews of government and non-governmental agencies directly related to policy making and placement operations for migrant workers are conducted to find out the problems and explore strategies that can be applied to improve the placement of labor migrants in the formal sector. All in all, whole data collected then would be analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis method.

## Results and Analysis

### The Development of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Placement in Formal Sector

Formal Indonesian Migrant Workers placement in this study was conducted on two periods under different conditions, such as the period before and after the moratorium between the Indonesian government and the government of Saudi Arabia and also other Middle East countries. Prior moratorium, the number of formal workers in Indonesia in 2006 - 2010 was much smaller (less than 30%) compared with non-formal workers, where informal Indonesian Migrant Workers in this period were dominated by occupations as Domestic Helper/Domestic Worker in Middle East countries. This is due to the low level of education and skills of the labor migrants; so that, they can only fill vacancies in the non-formal sector. The comparison of formal and informal Indonesian Migrant Workers placement before the moratorium can be seen in the following table:

Table 1: The Number of Formal and Informal Indonesian Migrant Workers Placement Prior Moratorium (BNP2TKI, 2018)

No.	Year	Formal Indonesian Migrant Workers	%	Informal Indonesian Migrant Workers	%
1.	2006	177,495	26	502,505	74
2.	2007	196,191	28	500,555	72
3.	2008	182,439	29	462,292	71
4.	2009	103,918	17	528,254	83
5.	2010	124,683	27	451,121	73

The discourse on the moratorium on migrant workers to Saudi Arabia has long been becomes the concern of the Indonesian government. With the occurrence of abuse case of Indonesian Migrant Worker named Sumiyati in Medina informed by the mass media at the end of 2010, then the Indonesian government did the Indonesian Migrant Workers soft moratorium or semi moratorium to Saudi Arabia since January 2011. Transient moratorium policy for migrant workers to Saudi Arabia finally set since August 1, 2011, after the mass media heavily reported about the imposition of death

sentence against Indonesian Migrant Worker named Ruyati in Mecca. The case of the beheading of Ruyati was newly known by the Indonesian Government the day after the procession was carried out; therefore, the Indonesian government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a protest to the Kingdom Government of Saudi Arabia and issued a policy of moratorium above which then responded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by issuing. Furthermore, they make a decision to stop the issuance of visas for informal workers from Indonesia and the Philippines since July 2, 2011. (<https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2017/09/16/06573551/bnp2tki-rumuskan-format-baru-pengiriman-tki-to-timur-tengah.>: Indra Akuntono)

The moratorium (suspension of shipments) of migrant workers is carried out in two stages. First moratorium is limited to Saudi Arabia in 2012-2015, then the moratorium extends to 19 countries in the Middle East in 2015-2017. With the existence of the moratorium, there was a significant decrease in non-formal shipment of migrant workers. Since 2011 the placement of formal sector workers tends to increase. The percentage comparison between the placement of formal and informal sector workers is closer to the balance or 50:50. The government continues to reduce the placement of informal Indonesian Migrant Workers by encouraging more placement of Formal Indonesian Migrant Workers to increase protection by placing Indonesian Migrant Workers with better skill and competence. The development of informal and formal migrant worker shipments since 2011 can be seen in the table below:

Table 2: The Number of Formal and Informal Indonesian Migrant Workers Placement Post Moratorium (BNP2TKI, 2018)

No.	Year	Formal Indonesian Migrant Workers	%	Informal Indonesian Migrant Workers	%
1.	2011	266,191	45	320,611	55
2.	2012	258,411	52	236,198	48
3.	2013	285,297	56	226,871	44
4.	2014	247,610	58	182,262	42
5.	2015	152,394	55	123,342	45
6.	2016	125,176	53	109,275	47
7.	2017	118,830	45	142,990	55

In the delivery of formal labor migrants belonging to the category of semi-skilled and skilled workers, the main issue is no longer related to their protection because almost in all the recipient countries of formal labor migrants, the protection of formal labor migrants is regulated by the employment law of the recipient country. There are several main issues in the placement of formal Indonesian Migrant Workers which must be considered by the Indonesian government, namely:

1. The inadequacy of labor market information system in foreign countries makes the supply and demand of Indonesian Migrant Workers become unequal;
2. The low level of prospective migrant workers education and skills;
3. Various limitation that occur in education and training institutions;
4. Indonesian Migrant Workers placement procedure is still considered less effective and efficient.

## **The Jobs Market of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Formal Sector**

Indonesian workers, especially in the formal sector, are well-liked overseas. During this time, the types of vacancies and job opportunities for formal workers are available in various placement countries such as construction, petroleum, mining, transportation, services, hospitality and tourism, nurses, supermarket servants, plantation workers, agriculture and fisheries. Based on data from BNP2TKI there are 5 priority sectors of formal Indonesian Migrant Workers employment opportunities as follows:

1. Health: Kuwait, Qatar, Taiwan, UAE, Japan;
2. Hospitality: Singapore, Macau, UAE, Bahrain;
3. Oil and Gas: Qatar, Australia, Kuwait, Malaysia;
4. Construction: Macau, Malaysia;
5. Manufacturing: Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, Qatar, Canada.

In addition, there are some countries that become potential targets for expansion of the formal labor market for migrant workers. For example, several countries in Eastern Europe, such as Czechoslovakia and Russia, have asked many Indonesians to work there primarily as health-care massages at spas and therapists. These employment opportunities of labor migrants in Eastern Europe, especially for these two areas are fairly new, following the large number of workers in Eastern Europe absorbed by Western Europe and the United States; so that, these countries begin to look for labor into the Asian region. Beside in Eastern Europe, the absorption of formal labor migrants for the Middle East region is also considerable, to be placed in the construction, mechanical, and oil engineering sectors (Elia Rosalina, 2018).

The data placement of Indonesian Migrant Workers based on Job Title can be seen in the following figure:

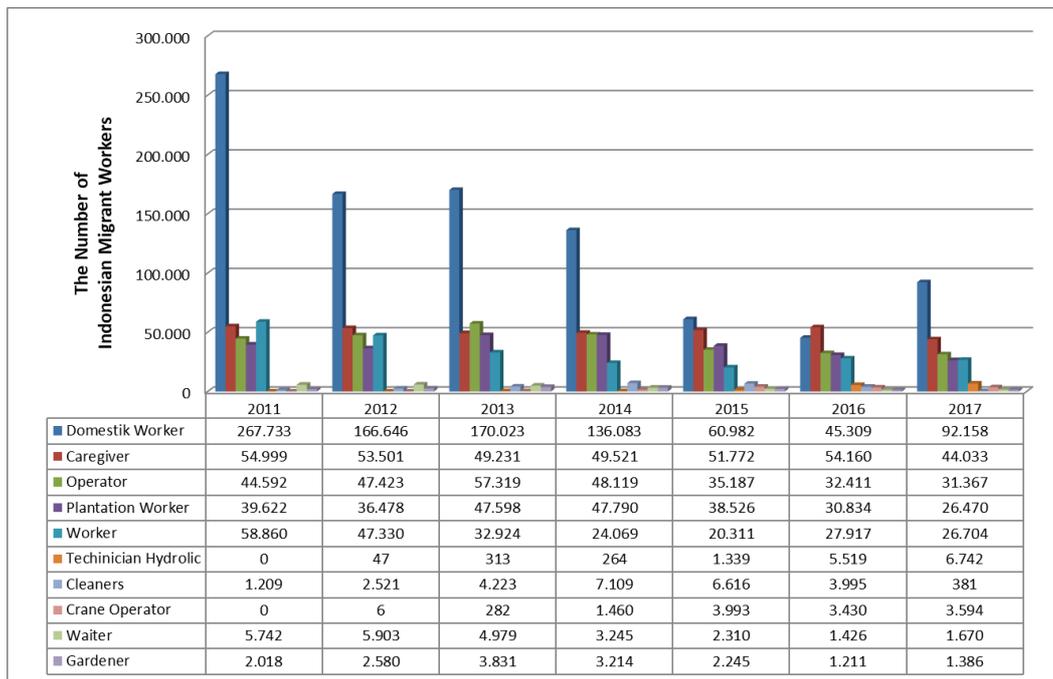


Figure 1: The Placement of Indonesian Migrant Workers Based on Job Title (BNP2TKI, 2018)

From the data displayed above, the three-most number of formal Indonesian Migrant Workers occupy on the position of Care giver, Operator and Plantation Worker. From the data of supply and demand of formal Indonesian Migrant Workers in 2017, it can be concluded that the demand of Oil and Gas Mining and Hospitality sectors is still much higher than supply, so there is still open employment in both sectors.

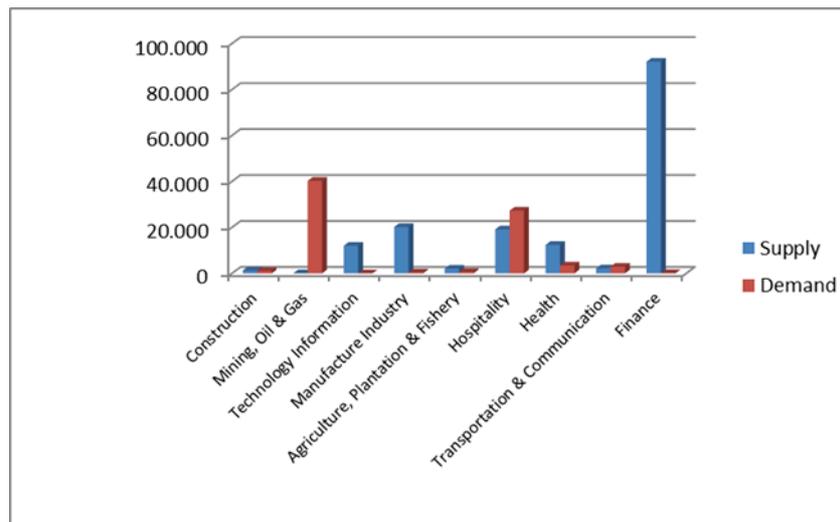


Figure 2: The Number of Supply and Demand of Formal Indonesian Migrant Workers in 2017 (BNP2TKI, 2018)

This circumstance needs to be continuously pursued and encouraged in order to produce Indonesian Migrant Workers who have work skills, competence and professionalism; therefore, it can fulfill the vacant jobs available abroad. Job opportunities in the formal sector available in the international labor market are still wide open for the labor migrants. However, to fill that job opportunities in the formal sector, the quality of Indonesian Migrant Workers should be improved optimally through job training. Both government and private institutions have to work closely together in order to develop the expansion of the labor market for Indonesian labor migrants, and continue to make sure that the placement of formal Indonesian Migrant Workers in line with the strategic plan for the elimination of Indonesian Migrant Workers who work as domestic workers.

### **The Condition of Labor Market Information System of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Formal Sector**

To protect and empower the prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers, government build the labor market information system that consists of the data of migrant workers, labor agencies, employers and destination country policies. In Indonesia, APJATI (stands for *Asosiasi Perusahaan Jasa Tenaga Kerja Indonesia/Indonesian Manpower Services Association*) has started to create an electronic data center of all migrant workers along with employment agencies and employers in the destination country. In addition, government agencies should act as leaders in this regard to ensure that the information given is independent and accurate.

Then, BNP2TKI (stands for *Badan Nasional Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia/National Board for the Placement and Protection of Overseas Workers*) pioneered to build the Overseas Employment Information Service (Jobs Info) which is a service for the community/job seekers who want to work abroad. The services provided include overseas employment information, online registration through <http://jobsinfo.bnp2tki.go.id>, consultations and more. This information system in the future is expected to be developed into an integrated information system containing information supply and demand of foreign job market. The foreign job market application which has been built and operated by the BNP2TKI can be seen at the picture below:

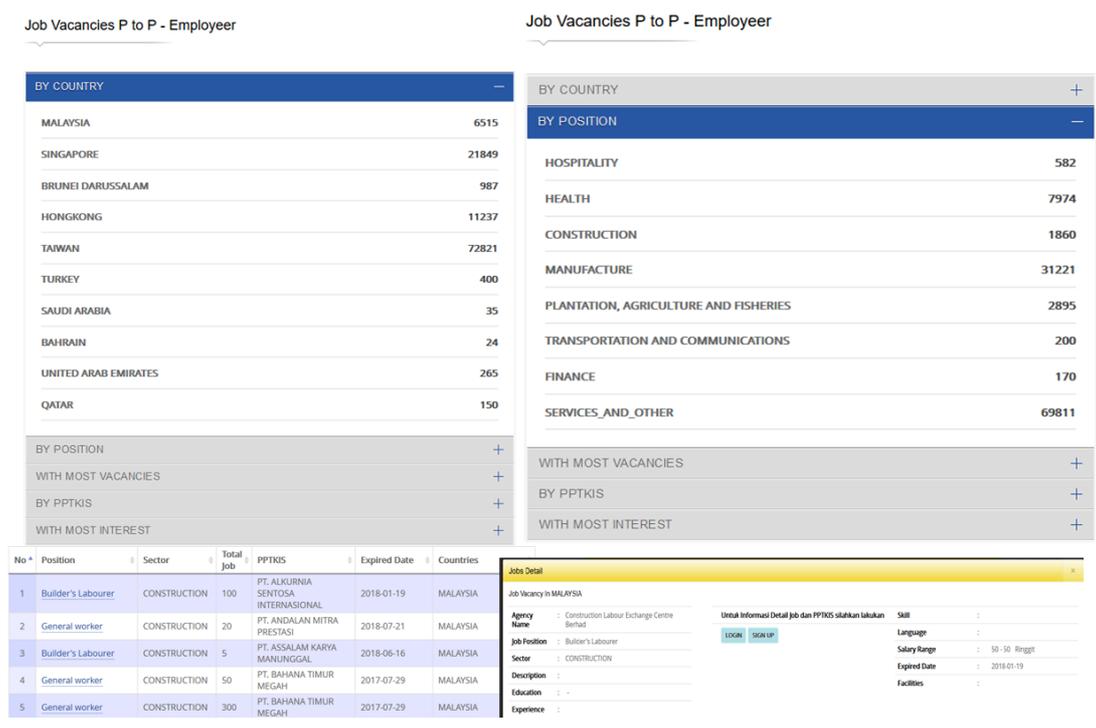


Figure 3: The Current Jobs Info Application (BNP2TKI, 2018)

Whilst, there are still many weaknesses of the application system in jobsinfo.bnp2tki which is now running, such as:

1. The supply information has not yet entered into the application, so that new job info can only display from the demand side especially job vacancy in the formal sector;
2. The system of job information has not been integrated either in between related institutions themselves or between the central and regional governments.

### Formal Indonesian Migrant Workers Education and Skills Level

The availability of overseas employment opportunities in abroad should be accompanied with the readiness and availability of prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers with skills and competencies in accordance with the needs of the labor market. From the point of view of Indonesian Migrant Workers education level, based on data obtained from BNP2TKI, it is illustrated how their education level are low and still dominated by elementary and junior high school, as shown in the following picture:

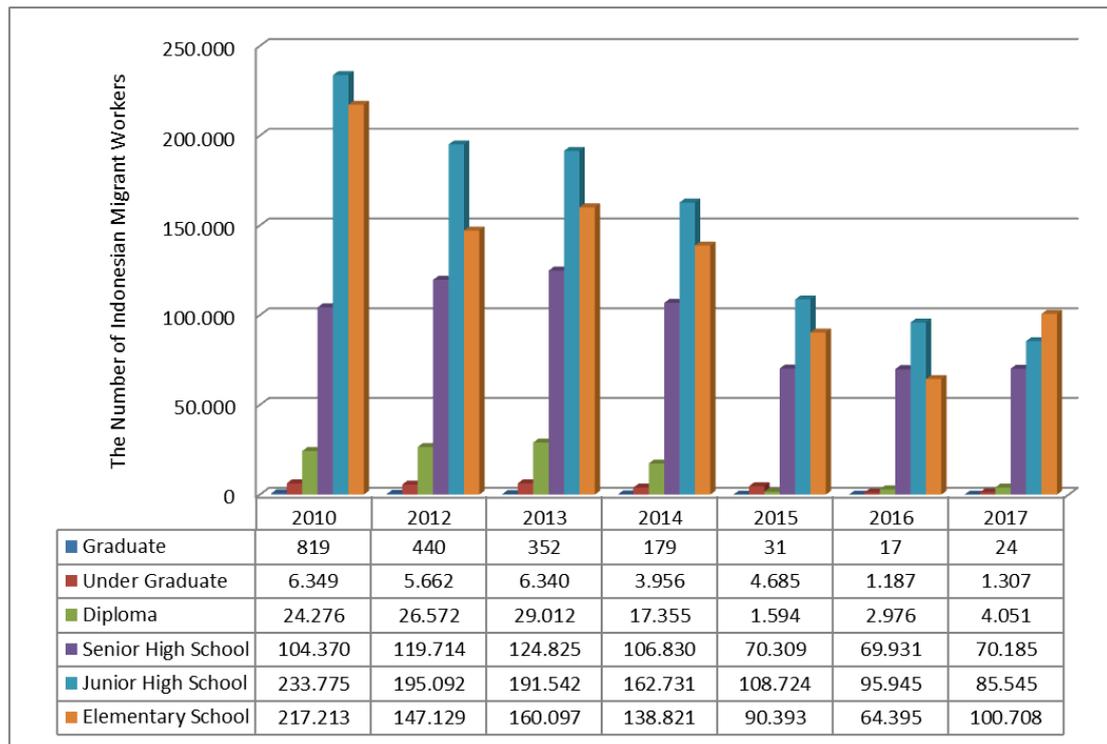


Figure 4: The Placement of Indonesian Migrant Workers Based on Education Level (BNP2TKI, 2018)

By looking at the above data, it is clear that the majority of migrant workers graduate from elementary, junior high and high school. Therefore, the Indonesian government, in cooperation with the private sector concerned, should make any efforts to provide education and training facilities for migrant workers to meet the level of education, skills and competencies that are accepted by the destination countries.

### **The Availability of Education and Training Institutions for Formal Migrant Workers**

Increasing the education and skills of labor migrants through formal education institutions and training institutions should be the concern of all stakeholders. Both government and private sector who will dispatch the migrant workers in abroad, have to ensure the skills possessed by prospective migrant workers. Education and job training for prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers, Education and Job Training for Prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers are defined as a job training process to give, gain, improve and develop work competence, productivity, discipline, attitude and work ethic, at certain skill and skill level according to the level and qualification of the job title. Education and training for prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers are intended to:

1. Equip, allocate and develop the competence of prospective migrant workers;
2. Give some knowledge and understanding of the situation, condition, customs, culture, religion, and risk of working abroad;
3. Provide the ability to communicate in the language of the destination country;
4. Give some knowledge and understanding about rights and obligations of prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers.

After they get the proper education and training, then the Prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers are required to have job competency certificates in accordance with the requirements of the position. Certificates of competence are obtained through a competency test issued by professional certification bodies licensed namely the National Agency for Certification of Professions (BNSP). In the process of formal Indonesian Migrant Workers placement, PPTKIS (literally Indonesian Migrant Workers Company) parties generally do not provide adequate skills before the migrant workers depart because PPTKIS only rely on their skills gained at school. This condition certainly creates misunderstanding when the user ask them to complete their task given. There are some education and training institutions that play the roles in improving the competence of prospective migrant workers, as follows:

a. BNSP

There is a requirement that requires for every Indonesian Migrant Workers who will work abroad must follow a competence test. Therefore, it is a must for all who work in abroad to have a competence certificate. This certificate can make Indonesian workers able to compete in the international community. Competence certification aims to ensure that people who will work overseas are already competent in their field. If they are competent enough, then will able to do work and get proper remuneration. Thus, this competence certification would become such a protection for Indonesian Migrant Workers since they can do work properly and get paid adequately.

To tackle this function, then government formed National Board for Profession Certification (*BNSP/Badan Nasional Sertifikasi Profesi*). The duty of this agency is to perform the certification of work competence for all professions. BNSP is an independent body which responsible directly to the President. In order to fulfill the job competence certification task, BNSP may grant licenses to professional certification bodies - named LSP (*Lembaga Sertifikasi Profesi/Professional Certification Bodies*) - that meet the requirements stipulated to implement the certification of work competency.

There are approximately 200 certification bodies that exist in Indonesia. The sector of Profession certification bodies is divided into five main sectors: agriculture, manufacturing, mining, transportation and services. Almost all economic sectors already have certification institutions. However, each sector applies the competence certification process in different way. For example, in the banking services sector, all the bankers are required to have a certificate of competence in the field of list management, then there is LSP in that field.

The implementation of competence certification previously has been focused and limited to domestic workers only, better known as informal Indonesian Migrant Workers. It is because these informal workers work for individuals that make the government feels that this segment is must be protected first, whereas formal workers who usually work in industry and companies are already considered to have clear procedures and guarantees. With the existence of global competition, especially in the field of labor, the Minister of Manpower mandates that now it is time for this certification to be developed not only for informal overseas workers, but also for the formal ones.

## b. PPTKIS and BLKLN

PPTKIS (*Pelaksana Penempatan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia Swasta/Indonesian Migrant Workers Company*) is legal entities that have obtained written permission from the Government to organize overseas workers placement services. Since all prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers should get job training before placement process; therefore, there is another institute used to train prospective migrant workers before departing abroad called BLKLN (*Balai Latihan Kerja Luar Negeri/The Overseas Work Training Center*). BLKLN can be organized by government, private, and corporate training institutions.

In each Province in Indonesia, there are PPTKIS and BLKLN that play a direct role in the process of formal and informal Indonesian Migrant Workers placement. This study conducted an observation in East Java and Central Java Provinces. Based on data collected from LP3TKI Surabaya, until 2016 there are 71 PPTKIS in which branch offices spread in various districts/cities of East Java Province; while in Central Java Province, there are 25 PPTKIS whose branch offices are spread in various regencies/municipalities.

There are also PPTKIS as well as BLKLN included in private education institutions and participate in the formal placement program of migrant workers. However, many of the existing BLKLN train more informal Indonesian Migrant Workers while for formal Indonesian Migrant Workers relies more on competency test certificates owned by prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers previously, without be given further education and training by BLKLN. This circumstance could be occurs because it is assumed that those who working in the formal sector are considered to have possessed the skills so that it does not need to be trained again.

## c. Institute of Formal Education

Besides those two previous institutions, there is another institution that has an important role also called SMK (*Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan/Vocational High School*). It becomes important because some PPTKIS in Central Java Province has recruited Indonesian Migrant Workers Candidates from SMK graduates/alumni. In conducting the training, PPTKIS then sometimes cooperates with Vocational High School through some ways like:

1. Collect and organize alumni or prospective alumni to convey information about employment abroad;
2. Provide counseling, assisting and delivering those who are interested in enrolling to complete the required documentation requirements.

Moreover, in East Java Province, there is a SMK Mini (Mini Vocational High School) mini which means private education institutions that play a role in the placement of formal migrant workers inspite of teaching the usual lecturer. SMK mini is one of the East Java Governor program which is attempted to overcome the huge number of unemployment especially those who are graduates from Islamic Boarding School (*Ponpes/Pondok Pesantren*) in East Java Province. Facing the fact that this *Ponpes* has already have facilities as an education institution, then the East Java Provincial

Government only provides assistances to various SMK Mini which consist of 70% for training facilities, and 30% for facilitating entrepreneurship training in remote areas.

### **Placement Mechanisms of Formal Migrant Workers**

The three major obstacles faced by the government in processing the placement of Formal Indonesian Migrant Workers are as follows:

1. Lack of coordination among related institutions so that there is no integration between both central and local government policy. As an adverse impacts, the data related to the Formal Indonesian Migrant Workers becomes unintegrated also. This situation creates lack of integration between its supply and demand sides.
2. Some PPTKIS does not undertake the stages of training or competence certification tests for the formal Indonesian Migrant Workers, because they assume that these formal Indonesian Migrant Workers candidates are already have the competence obtained from their formal and informal education. In addition, government-owned BLKLN is also generally intended only to provide training for prospective informal Indonesian Migrant Workers or to provide training in language skills only. Competency tests for formal Indonesian Migrant Workers are generally only done for the Government to Government (G to G) placement system.
3. The number of government agencies that perform the function of "Market Intelligence" are very limited. There is only BNP2TKI that has been intensively performing as market intelligence in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Trade and Ministry of Health. However, market intelligence activities are not broad enough socialized to the provincial and district levels. The PPTKIS as a non-governmental institution gets information on formal sector employment opportunities directly from their business partners in every recipient country or from labor attaches. Unfortunately, both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Manpower have not been able to maximize the role of the Employment Attaches in carrying out the "Market Intelligence" function.

To face those obstacles, the Government made some efforts to improve the profile of Indonesian Migrant Workers by upgrading the education, skills and competence of Indonesian Migrant Workers as well as the implementation of an accelerated market intelligence. Besides that, for processing the migrant workers documents, there are many steps that must be passed and involve many different agencies. To simplify this process, then One-Stop Integrated Service (*LTSA/Layanan Terpadu Satu Atap*) has been implemented, for example in Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB) Province. The LTSA involves all elements both private and government, such as to what happen in NTB Province, all related affairs from some institutions such as Disnakertrans NTB (Nusa Tenggara Barat), BP3TKI, Immigration Mataram, Health Facility, Bank Program Participant (BRI), Insurance Consortium, Tax Service BFLN and Airline (Merpati) can be taken care of at the same place.

The aims of establishing LTSA as a center for information are to provide services easily, quickly, cheaply and appropriately to Indonesian Migrant Workers who will work abroad in order to reduce the number of migrant workers problem. Furthermore, this place is also built to provide the easiness in managing the departure

administration of overseas workers. Results achieved after the establishment of LTSA are:

- An 7.7% increase of Indonesian Migrant Workers placement from as many as 49,884 people in 2008 becomes as many as 53.731 in 2009;
- The return of Indonesian Migrant Workers through deportation in 2009 decreased by 24.5% or accounted as many as 4,222 people, compared to 2008 as many as 5,592 people;
- The total remittance in 2009 rose by 21% compared to 2008;
- The number of PPTKIS offices both Central and Branches in NTB Province raised from as many as 224 units in 2008 to as many as 352 units in 2009.

Last but not least, this LTSA system in NTB Province can be a good lesson learned to be developed in other provinces. Therefore, in order to improve the formal placement program for Indonesian Migrant Workers, it is necessary to build an integrated system through coordination mechanisms between related institutions, both government institutions and non-government institutions. Their respective functions then shown in the figure below:

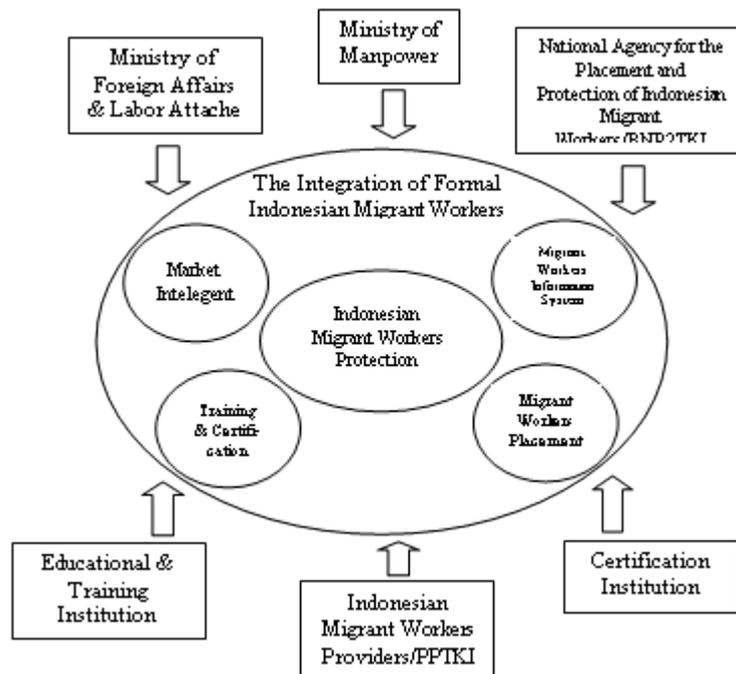


Figure 5: The Integration of Formal Indonesian Migrant Workers Placement Development Program (BNP2TKI, 2018)

## Conclusion

Many countries in the world need formal migrant workers especially originally from Indonesia; however, it is still difficult for people to know what the work field demanded and the competencies required. There are still many weaknesses towards implementing better formal Indonesian Migrant Workers placement program. All in all, it is necessary to improve and develop the current system, especially related to the following issues:

1. The condition where there is no clear jurisdiction division among all involved state institutions in term of Indonesian Migrant Workers placement program at the national, provincial and district levels, resulted in very minim coordination and cooperation or duplication of work among government agencies in performing their functions regarding to formal Indonesian Migrant Workers placement programs.
2. The low level of education and skills of prospective formal Indonesian Migrant Workers makes it difficult for them to meet all competences required by the user. Therefore, the government needs to make some efforts to increase their competence in order they can compete in the global job market.
3. There is no accurate and integrated labor market information system of Indonesian Migrant Workers which can match between supply and demand.

### **Suggestion**

The availability of overseas employment opportunities in the formal sector should be accompanied with the readiness and availability of skilled and qualified Prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers in accordance with the needs of the labor market. Some strategies that can be taken by the Indonesian government to improve the formal migrant placement programs are as follows:

1. Increase the placement of formal sector workers by using policy that creates by design (means well prepared and planned earlier) not by accident (when there is a new demand from overseas then seeking its workforce);
2. Improve the implementation of market intelligence and do road shows to potential countries;
3. Doing up skilling, up grading, and adjustment training (link, train, and match);
4. Encourage the enhancement of BLKLN, LPK, LKS, BNSP and LSP roles to be more proactive in preparing prospective formal Indonesian Migrant Workers in accordance with the required competency standard
5. Organize multilateral and bilateral diplomacy
6. Cooperate the job training with the center of excellence in the country (universities, polytechnics, vocational high schools, vocational training centers and so on)
7. Develop a labor market information system of Indonesian Migrant Workers in particular to the formal sector that its utilization are integrated and socialized utilization
8. Conduct cross sectorial cooperation in order to develop the Indonesian Migrant Workers placement program.

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## **Resources**

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