HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN INDONESIA: RETHINKING THE NEW ORDER’S IMPACT ON EXPLOITATIVE MIGRATION OF INDONESIAN WOMEN

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Kenji Kimura
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This thesis entitled
HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN INDONESIA: RETHINKING THE NEW ORDER’S IMPACT ON EXPLOITATIVE MIGRATION OF INDONESIAN WOMEN

by
KENJI KIMURA

has been approved for
the Center for International Studies by

Elizabeth F. Collins
Associate Professor of Classics and World Religions

Drew McDaniel
Interim Dean, Center for International Studies
Abstract

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HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN INDONESIA: RETHINKING THE NEW ORDER’S IMPACT ON EXPLOITATIVE MIGRATION OF INDONESIAN WOMEN (59 pp.)

Director of Thesis: Elizabeth Collins

This thesis describes exploitative migration of Indonesian women, which is nowadays regarded as one of the main forms of human trafficking. In the 1980s the number of female migrant workers from Indonesia increased sharply. This led to an increase in the trafficking of Indonesian women by recruiters and agencies, legal and illegal. This thesis analyzes policies of Suharto’s New Order – the ideology of Women’s Duties (Dharma Wanita), agricultural reform, promotion of international labor migration, and industrial restructuring—as well as the effects of a structural adjustment program, to see why and how these factors domestically and internationally contributed to an increase in vulnerable women migrants. The thesis concludes with recommendations to combat human trafficking and to ensure more secure migration.

Approved:

Elizabeth F. Collins
Associate Professor of Classics and World Religions
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................................. 3

Acknowledgments ................................................................................................................................. 4

List of Tables ....................................................................................................................................... 6

Chapter 1: The Issue of Human Trafficking in Indonesia ................................................................. 7
    What is Human Trafficking? ............................................................................................................... 7
    Exploitative Migration of Indonesian Women ............................................................................... 9
    Methodology .................................................................................................................................. 11
    Literature Review ......................................................................................................................... 12

Chapter 2: The Trafficking Industry and Vulnerable Women .......................................................... 22
    The Story of Ibu W ......................................................................................................................... 23
    Mechanism of Trafficking Industry .............................................................................................. 28
    Vulnerabilities of Migrant Workers ............................................................................................. 31

Chapter 3: Policies Contributing to Exploitative Migration of Indonesian Women: Rethinking Suharto’s New Order .................................................................................................. 37
    Status and Role of Women ............................................................................................................ 38
    Agricultural Reform ....................................................................................................................... 40
    International Labor Migration ........................................................................................................ 42
    Industrial Restructuring and the Effects of a Structural Adjustment Program ...................... 47

Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations ............................................................................. 50

References .......................................................................................................................................... 54

Interviews ........................................................................................................................................... 58
List of Tables

Table 1: Number of Indonesian Migrant Workers Formal and Informal Segregated by Gender 2003 ........................................................................................................................................... 10
Table 2: Framework of Human Trafficking ................................................................................................. 19
Table 3: The Number of Indonesian Migrant Workers 1979-1993 ............................................................ 43
Chapter 1: The Issue of Human Trafficking in Indonesia

In the 1980s the number of female migrant workers from Indonesia increased sharply. This led to an increase in the trafficking of Indonesian women by recruiters and agencies, legal and illegal. In this thesis I will describe “exploitative migration,”¹ which is nowadays recognized as one of the main forms of human trafficking. I also analyze policies of Suharto’s New Order – the ideology of Women’s Duties (Dharma Wanita), agricultural reform, promotion of international labor migration, and industrial restructuring – as well as the effects of a structural adjustment program – to understand why and how these factors domestically and internationally produced many vulnerable female migrants and conclude with recommendations to combat human trafficking and to ensure more secure migration.

What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking is recognized as modern-day slavery in the age of globalization. Sex and humans have been embedded into the market under the modern capitalism system. The more commodification of humans and sex has accelerated, the more human trafficking has been promoted.

¹ This term is cited from International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR). IMADR is an international human rights organization working to protect and promote the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples, as well as other vulnerable groups in societies around the world. Refer to: IMADR http://www.imadr.org/index.html
The phenomenon of human trafficking is not new but very old. Human trafficking is a universal phenomenon, not only in Indonesia but also in other countries and regions. Although this phenomenon is not new, the term “human trafficking” itself is new term. There are many definitions of human trafficking, but one broad useful definition is the “movement of persons (especially woman and children), with or without their consent, within a country or internationally, for all forms of exploitative labor, not only prostitution and servile marriage” (Hardani et al., 2004, p. 5).

According to The Australian, an Australian newspaper, people-trafficking in Asia is on the rise and “Indonesia has a severe and worsening problem with underground trade” (McKenna, 2006). In Indonesia, people started to recognize human trafficking as a serious problem around the year 2000. A number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), international organizations, and the Indonesian government have been working together to eradicate human trafficking. For example, trafficking laws have been amended, and Ministry of Women Empowerment (MOWE) has recently started a special program to eliminate human trafficking in Indonesia (Saraswati, 2004).

The factors causing human trafficking include poverty, lower levels of education, gender discrimination, and corruption etc. It should be emphasized that poverty is not the sole factor for human trafficking. All of the factors are interrelated. In addition, there are many forms of human trafficking, not only exploitative migration but also child trafficking, and servile marriages, etc., but any form of human trafficking is accompanied by serious human rights violations.
Exploitative Migration of Indonesian Women

In Southeast Asian countries, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia are the main sending countries of migrant workers. Those countries are sending migrants as a national policy to the Middle East and East Asian countries, such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, mainly because of a labor surplus. The first wave of global migration was due to the oil-boom in the 1970s and the second one in the 1980s was owing to the rise of Asian Newly Industrializing Economics (NIES) (Matsui, 1999, p. 45-56). These Middle East and East and Southeast Asian countries have absorbed a large portion of cheap labor from the poorer countries, such as Indonesia. Migration from Indonesia to Malaysia became one of the biggest streams in the world. According to Liow (2003): “the long-term, undocumented migration flow of Indonesians into Malaysia is arguably the second largest flow of illegal immigrants after the movements across the U.S.-Mexico border” (p. 44). Serious political and economic damage by the Asian Financial Crisis of 1998 also increased the number of Indonesian migrant workers abroad.

The “feminization of migration” has become a global issue since the 1980s. The number of female migrant workers, both domestic and international, has increased dramatically over the last decades in Indonesia. As Table 1 shows, the number of female migrant workers is much higher than the numbers of males (about three times). The majority of female migrant workers are domestic workers (maids, household workers, and housekeepers) and sex workers.
Table 1: Number of Indonesian Migrant Workers Formal and Informal Segregated by Gender 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Asia Pacific</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>57,034</td>
<td>32,405</td>
<td>89,439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6,098</td>
<td>6,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunei Darussalam</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>758</td>
<td>1,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,508</td>
<td>3,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>1,307</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>1,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>6,390</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td>7,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>65,225</td>
<td>44,497</td>
<td>109,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Middle East &amp; Africa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>14,304</td>
<td>154,734</td>
<td>169,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1,377</td>
<td>1,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>12,159</td>
<td>12,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>14,513</td>
<td>169,257</td>
<td>183,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. America</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Europe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>79,897</td>
<td>213,797</td>
<td>293,694</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Labor, 2004

Indonesian male and female migration does not represent a “brain drain” because most of the migrant workers are engaged in the risky low-skilled sector. Some of the migrants make their own decision to work in a bigger city or abroad, but many were structurally or systematically pushed out into a city or foreign country. As Sasssen (1998) emphasized, “migrations do not just happen; they are produced” in this global system (p. 16). Poor people are very vulnerable and easily trafficked in the process of
migrant workers committed suicide in their destination countries due to rape, sexual harassment, and physical torture (p. 44).

**Methodology**

This paper is based on published research on human trafficking and interviews with victims of human trafficking and workers and activists combating human trafficking. The principal information was collected from articles, journals, books, reports, and newspapers, and web-sites. I primarily consulted materials in English and Japanese, but I also used materials in Indonesian which have not yet been translated because they contain up-to-date information, such as statistics.

Throughout my internship and research at National Coalition against Violence to Women (Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan: Komnas Perempuan) in Jakarta from July 1, 2005 to August 5, 2005, I conducted formal and informal interviews (see Interviews²). This taught me a great deal about the concrete details of human trafficking in Indonesia. Komnas Perempuan has a huge network reaching out to politicians, government officials, police, journalists, NGO workers, international organizations, and the victims of human trafficking. Through Komnas Perempuan, I was able to talk with all these people. I also attended meetings of Komnas Perempuan and workshops of other organizations concerned about human trafficking in Indonesia. My

² To protect the identity of my sources, I did not use the names of the victims, instead I used Ibu, which means Miss or Mrs., and their initial.
research at Komnas Perempuan was participant observation of activities intended to combat human trafficking.

In addition, I conducted research in field locations in Jakarta, such as Block M, Kota, Jalan Jaksa, and Tanjung Priok, which are known as sites of the sex trade. In Block M and Kota, there are a large number of prostitutes, including Indonesian, Chinese, and European women. In Block M, I went to one brothel and pretended to be a customer. I conducted an informal interview with a prostitute there on July 3, 2005. In Kota, there are two big places known for the sex trade, Seribu Satu and Stadium. Seribu Satu is a big building including restaurants, karaoke bars, and brothels. Stadium is a discotheque, which also contains a brothel. I carried out informal interviews with the Indonesian and Russian prostitutes there.

Tanjung Priok is the port area of Jakarta, and many victims of human trafficking are shipped there. On the day I went to Tanjung Priok, I witnessed the arrival of many Indonesian migrant workers, both men and women, who had been deported from Malaysia as undocumented migrant laborers. I interviewed one of the deported Indonesian migrant workers. This field research gave greater depth to my understanding of the trafficking of persons.

**Literature Review**

The literature about human trafficking in Indonesia before 2000 is very limited. The first report concerning trafficking of women is the *Country Report on the Trafficking of Women: Case of Indonesia*, by Hafidz and Sabaruddin in 1993. They described how
two national policies, the exploration of the foreign labor market and the boosting of tourism, which were designed to cope with the economic recession and unemployment caused by the oil price slump in 1983, affected women negatively and led them into trafficking. The authors do not explain the term trafficking. Their analysis considers only two factors in causing trafficking and is therefore not really convincing, but this work is worth reading as the first report about human trafficking in Indonesia.

In *Losing Control?: Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization* (1996) Sassen discusses international migration in the context of globalization. She emphasizes that immigration flows proceed within specific systems: “large-scale international migrations are highly conditioned and structured, embedded in complex economic, social, and ethnic networks. States may insist on treating immigration as the aggregate outcome of individual actions, but they cannot escape the consequences of those larger dynamics” (p. 75). Sassen also argues that “economic globalization decentralizes national economies; in contrast, immigration is renationalizing politics” (p. 59). “There is a combination of drives to create border-free economic spaces yet intensify border control to keep immigrants and refugees out” (p. 86). In her next work, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (1998), Sassen rejects the simplified push-pull theory of migration: the push of poverty in sending counties and the pull of wealth in receiving countries. She again emphasizes that networks are essential to facilitate trafficking, economic push and pulls are not sufficient.

In *Women’s Burden: Counter-geographies of Globalization and the Feminization of Survival* (2000), Sassen concentrated on the growing presence of women in a variety of cross-border circuits. “Feminization of survival”, which is her own expression, means
that not only families and communities but also governments (and companies) are dependent on female migrants’ earnings and remittances from the global circuits. In fact, many developing countries, including Indonesia, have made use of female labor for their development strategy. Sassen recognized that “among the most important of these global circuits are the illegal trafficking in women” (p. 523).

In 1998, the International Labor Organization (ILO) published a study entitled *The Sex Sector: The Economic and Social Bases of Prostitution in Southeast Asia*, edited by L.L. Lim. This is the first book about prostitution in relation to human trafficking in Indonesia. In their article *Prostitution in Indonesia* Jones, Sulistyaningsih, and Hull describe the sex industry in Indonesia in detail, covering the issues of basic human rights, morality, employment and working conditions, gender discrimination, health threats and criminality. They use the term trafficking, but treat prostitution and trafficking as almost the same. Nowadays, prostitution is regarded as just one aspect of the phenomena of human trafficking.

In November 2000, the “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime” was signed in Palemo Italy. It was the beginning of Indonesia recognizing human trafficking as a human rights issue (A. Hamim, personal interview, August 1, 2005). This Protocol provided the comprehensive definition of human trafficking. The UN Protocol states:

(a) Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of
a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered trafficking in persons even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;

(d) Child shall mean any person under eighteen years of age. (p. 2)

This definition is recognized as the first international comprehensive definition of human trafficking. In fact, many organizations are actively lobbying their government to put this definition into the anti-trafficking law. One of the significant points in this definition is (b). Many people believe if the person voluntarily works (of their own will), it is not trafficking. However, according to this definition (b), this is not true. If the person is manipulated in the process by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, and fraud, etc, for the purpose of exploitation, it is trafficking. Although this definition is valuable, it has some ambiguity and admits of several interpretations, such as the range of “exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation.”
In 2001 the * Trafficking in Persons Report * was published by the U.S. Department of State. With a huge budget, the US Department of State conducted research on human trafficking in many countries. The U.S. Department of State (2001) classified countries into different categories:

1) Tier one countries criminalize and have successfully prosecuted trafficking, and have provided a wide range of protective services to victims, and their governments sponsor or coordinate prevention campaigns aimed at stemming the flow of trafficking.

2) Tier two countries are strong in the prosecution of traffickers, but provide little or no assistance to victims. Some work to assist victims and punish traffickers, but have not yet taken any significant steps to prevent trafficking:

3) Tier three countries are beginning to take concrete steps to combat trafficking, but some of tier three countries refuse to acknowledge the trafficking problem within their territory. (p. 7)

The U.S. Department of State stated that the U.S. would take economic sanctions against tier three countries if they do not make efforts to combat human trafficking. Indonesia was classified as a tier three country in this report. Indonesia was embarrassed by the report, and this caused the Indonesian government to adopt new programs to end human trafficking, such as media coverage to increase public awareness. The government began collecting law enforcement data and providing shelters for victims of human trafficking. Additionally, the term human trafficking became more common after the publication of this report.
Anti-trafficking measures by the U.S. and UN are part of their anti-terrorism measures. The UN Protocol supplements the UN convention against transnational organized crime. The main business of transnational criminal syndicates is drug and human trafficking. These syndicates can also be used by terrorist networks. In order to eradicate the transnational syndicates and terrorism, they implement measures against human trafficking.

*Trafficking in Persons Report* is very controversial. First of all, the U.S. does not evaluate itself. In addition, some Indonesian Muslims criticize this report because many of the tier three countries are Islamic countries, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Turkey. They argue that the report is a plot of the U.S. to blacken the reputation of Islam (personal interviews in Jakarta, July, 2005).

After the *Trafficking in Persons Report* 2001 was published by the U.S. Department of State, many organizations have started to work on human trafficking and a number of reports about human trafficking were published. *Indonesia: Migration and Trafficking in Women* by Dzuhayatin and Silawati in 2002 is a noteworthy article about human trafficking in Indonesia. The article is included in *A Comparative Study of Women Trafficked in the Migration Process: Patterns, Profiles and Health Consequences of Sexual Exploitation in Five Countries (Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Venezuela and the United State)*, published by the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), which is a well-known NGO promoting women’s human rights around the world. Even though this is a short article, it explains the issue of human trafficking in Indonesia. The authors show how women are trafficked as domestic helpers, mail-order brides, and for the entertainment industry. Their comparison of women trafficking in
Indonesia with trafficking in the Philippines, Thailand, Venezuela, and the United States shows that the trends of women trafficking in the migration process have similarities in all cases.

The International Catholic Migration Commission and the American Center for International Labor Solidarity with support from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) produced a report on *Trafficking of Women and Children in Indonesia* in May 2003 (edited by Rosenberg). This is the first comprehensive report on human trafficking in Indonesia ever published. This study reflects a growing recognition that previously accepted forms of human trafficking, such as exploitative labor, child labor, recruitment into the sex industry, and servile marriages are violations of human rights. The authors reviewed the most commonly recognized sectors into which women and children are trafficked in Indonesia, the causes of trafficking in Indonesia, and the trafficking routes, both domestic and international. Davis, Surtees, and Hamim described the major factors contributing to human trafficking as poverty, low levels of education, women's role in the family, relative status and power, children's role in the family, historic precedents of bonded labor, traditions of early marriage, gender-biased laws, and corruption. This report is very helpful because it includes various resources, such as a review of Indonesian legislation related to trafficking, a list of organizations working on trafficking in Indonesia, and a bi-lingual glossary of trafficking related terms.

In *Assisting Victims of Human Trafficking in the Indonesian Legal Process* (2004) Hardani, et al. developed the following framework (see Table 2 below) for a clear understanding of the definition of human trafficking.
Table 2: Framework of Human Trafficking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>Ways/Means</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment or Transportation or Transferring or Harboring or Receiving</td>
<td></td>
<td>Threat or Coercion or Abduction or Fraud or Deceit or Deception or The Abuse of Power</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prostitution or Pornography or Violence/Sexual exploitation or Forced labor/with unfair wages or Slavery/Similar practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|   | 1 | + | 1 | + | 1 |

Source: Hardani et al., 2004, p. 6

If one condition from each of the three categories – process, way/means, and purpose – is met, the result is trafficking (p. 15). As in the case of UN Protocol, for Hardani et al. the consent of the victim is irrelevant if one of the means above is used, and consent is irrelevant with or without the above means for children (under eighteen years of age).

Several studies of New Order policies provide important background information to explain the increase in human trafficking in Indonesia in the 1980s. One is *Cultural Change in Rural Indonesia: Impact of Village Development* (1993) by Soemardjan and Breazeale. The authors describe the characteristics of many villages in Indonesia, changes due to development programs, such as electricity, media, and literacy, and how the Green Revolution (Bimas-Inmas program) was implemented. They also describe the technologies Indonesia used for agricultural reform and how they changed traditional Indonesian agriculture. They evaluate the Bimas-Inmas program in a positive way and reject the critique that “only a limited number of people participated in the Bimas and
that mainly the well-to-do farmers could afford the inputs (seed, fertilizer, pesticides) and really benefited” (p. 103). However, the authors do not include information on how the agricultural reform negatively impacted women in the villages.

The Indonesian government promoted international migration in the five-year plans of national development (Repelita) because of the large population and labor surplus in Java. Cremer (1988), Hugo (1993), and Spaan (1994) conducted research on international labor migration from Indonesia. In *Deployment of Indonesian Migrants in the Middle East: Present Situation and Prospects*, Cremer described the reason why a large number of Indonesian migrant workers go to the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia to become housemaids and drivers there. He also described the Middle East labor market and the Indonesian migrant workers’ problems and difficulties in the market. Hugo focused on migration to Malaysia in *Indonesian Labour Migration to Malaysia: Trends and Policy Implications*. He examined the migration process in terms of structural changes in industry in Malaysia and described that developed “immigration industry” between Malaysia and Indonesia with respect to the network of social contacts. Spaan also focused on the migration networks in *Taikings and Calos: The Role of Middlemen and Brokers in Javanese International Migration*. This study is interesting because Spaan describes the historical development of informal networks of immigration from Indonesia to the receiving countries (Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Singapore). He emphasized the role of middlemen and brokers in Indonesian informal migration.

Heyzer and Wee (1992) examined why many countries, such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, produced so many female domestic workers who was sent to the richer countries in *Domestic Workers in Transient Overseas*
Employment: Who Benefits, Who Profits. They reflected on how changes in industrial structure influenced the role and status of women. They emphasized that the earnings of domestic workers mainly benefit for agents, governments, employers, and the families and communities of the migrants rather than the workers themselves. In Reflections on the New Order Miracles (2002) Wie also focused the change in industrial structure in Indonesia under the Suharto’s New Order. He argued that “one of the remarkable achievements of the New Order government was its success in combining rapid growth with a sustained reduction in the incidence of absolute poverty, while keeping relative inequality, that is, the pattern of income distribution, at moderate levels” (p. 171). However, the New Order made a large number of women vulnerable migrant workers and brought about feminization of migrant workers.

On the status and role of women in Indonesia, Wolf’s study Factory Daughters: Gender, Household Dynamics, and Rural Industrialization in Java (1992) and his article, Javanese Women and the Family examined Javanese women’s status and position in the kinship system and family in terms of income, decision making, marriage, and sexuality. His study highlighted the distinctive character of Javanese women, criticizing previous research about daily practices of men and women and the relationship between them in Java, and developed a more complex understanding of women’s position in Java.
In this chapter, I first tell the story of a trafficking victim named Ibu W. I interviewed her at the office of Women’s Movement for Migrants’ Rights (Gerakan Perempuan untuk Perlindungan Buruh Migran: Solidaritas Perempuan), which is an Indonesian NGO, in Jakarta on July 26th in 2005\(^3\). I will show how she was trafficked and victimized in the process of migration.

In the following section, I will describe the mechanism of the trafficking industry. The trafficking industry is organized by international/transnational syndicates. They have created illegal channels of migration. The syndicates are connected with agencies and recruiters, and they systematically traffic vulnerable people, especially women. They are involved in every stage of the migration process – recruitment, pre-departure, transit, destination, and return.

In the final section, I will depict the vulnerabilities of the migrant workers. Since most potential migrant workers are very vulnerable (poor and less-educated), they are exposed to various forms of exploitation in the process of migration. Furthermore, they, especially domestic workers, become more vulnerable in the destination countries because they are isolated and severely monitored by the employers.

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\(^3\) After the interview, I confirmed the details of Ibu W’s story with Solidaritas Perempuan, which has documented. However, what Ibu W told me and the data of Solidaritas Perempuan are sometimes different. For example, Ibu W said she went to Malaysia twice, but Solidaritas Perempuan said she went to Malaysia three times. Therefore, I mostly trusted the testimony of Ibu W.
The Story of Ibu W

Ibu W went to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia twice, 1999-2001 and 2002-2004. Although Ibu W was married and had two children, she decided to go to Malaysia by herself in order to earn money to fix her house in the village. The first time Ibu W went to Malaysia, she was put into a training center for four months where she was given information about immigration, English language classes, and vocational training. The agency deducted the training fee Rp. 3,680,000 (US$376) from her salary. Before the second trip, she stayed in the shelter for only one month because she did not need vocational training. She just waited for her documents to be processed and visa to be issued. Ibu W’s documents had to be falsified because she was too old to work as a domestic worker in Malaysia. The agency made her five years younger than her actual age. But Ibu W did not understand why the agency had changed her age.

The agency which arranged for the training and the visa did not provide Ibu W with any information about the Indonesian embassy in Kuala Lumpur. This information was provided by the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower before her second trip. The Indonesian Embassy is supposed to help migrant workers who face problems, but it is hard for migrant workers to get to the Embassy because they must get permission from their employer to leave the house.

As a domestic worker Ibu W said that she worked everyday until 1:00 or 2:00 a.m. and started again at 4:30 a.m., and did not have a day-off. Sometimes she did not get even three hours sleep because she was caring for the baby at night. In the morning, she had to clean the house and cook. Once a week, she had to wash the car. On the

4 US $ 1 = 9,800 Rupiah on August 2nd 2005.
weekends and holidays, she accompanied her employer in order to take care of the children. She was paid Rp. 11,000,000 (US$ 1,122.) for two years. She had been told that she would be paid Rp. 920,000 (94 US$) a month (Rp. 22,080,000 = 2253 US$ for two years), but her employers deducted the cost of her medical treatment from her salary. When her contract expired, she returned to Indonesia.

Nine months after she came back to Indonesia, Ibu W got a phone call from her employer who asked her to return to Malaysia because his daughter was sick. He said that the baby missed Ibu W and was crying and calling her name repeatedly. Ibu W did not want to go back to Malaysia because she wanted to stay with her children in Indonesia. When she was in Malaysia, she had difficulty communicating with her family because she was not allowed to phone them. She said that she was not even allowed to send a letter to her family. But Ibu W finally decided to return to Malaysia because her employer sent her Rp. 5,000,000 (US$ 510) to cover the costs.

During Ibu W’s second time in Malaysia in 2003, her employers, Yusumadi and Rosmini, were divorced. Rosmini, the wife/mother, was given custody of their children, one son and one daughter. Ibu W moved to a new house with Rosmini, who promised to pay her Rp. 3,220,000 (329 US$) to take care of the children during the rest of her contract. This amount was less than the original contract, which said that she would be paid Rp. 920,000 (94 US$) a month. Ibu W called Yusumadi, who had signed her contract. He told her that she should work at the house of his sister, Nurita, who lived next to his own house. Ibu W moved to Nurita’s house, where she worked from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and then Yusumadi’s driver took her to his restaurant where she worked as a cook until late at night, sometimes until 5:00 in the morning (migrant workers cannot
work as waiters because the police may ask for their documents). Then she had to wake up at 8:00 a.m. again.

During the fasting month, Ibu W says that she was raped by Nuita’s husband, Arifin. Arifin told her “if you tell my wife, it doesn’t matter to me. I will be imprisoned.” Ibu W was very afraid, but she told Yusumadi about the rape. She said she wanted to go back to Indonesia. She cried for several days. Yusumadi called his mother who came and took Ibu W to her house. Yusumadi’s mother told Ibu W that she would be paid by Nuita, but Nuita did not give her any salary. Instead Nuita attacked Ibu W, slapping her face, hitting her head against the wall, pulling her hair, and kicking her body. Ibu W fainted, and her eye was bleeding, so Nuita’s younger brother took her to the hospital. The doctor said that Ibu W had not suffered serious harm (though Ibu W says that her eyesight is still not clear). After this incident, Ibu W worked at another of Yusumadi’s restaurants from 7:00 am to 12:00 a.m. for one year.

Twenty days before her visa expired, Ibu W discussed her contract with Yusumadi. If the employer wants to extend a migrant’s visa, he/she must pay for a new contract. Yusumadi did not pay for a new contract and gave Ibu W the money he owed her. Ibu W learned that his restaurant was bankrupt. Since Ibu W did not have money to go home, she borrowed Rp. 1,495,000 (153 US$) from her nephew, who was living in Kuala Lumpur. This was not enough money, so Ibu W began to work at her nephew’s restaurant.

Ibu W began to suffer from headaches. Her nephew took her to the hospital where the doctor told her that she had cancer. Unless she had an operation, she would die in three or four months. Ibu W’s nephew found Tenaganita, an NGO that gives financial
support to migrant workers. Tenaganita provides legal aid and cooperates with the Indonesian embassy. The staff took Ibu W to the Indonesian embassy in Kuala Lumpur where there is a shelter. She was told that she could stay there for three months. Ibu W told the staff at the Indonesian Embassy that her employer had not paid her and about the overwork, physical abuse, and rape. The Embassy staff contacted Yusumadi and asked him to meet with them and staff from Tenaganita. Yusmadi promised to pay Rp. 6,900,000 (704 US$) in monthly installments of Rp. 1,035,000 (106 US$) to Ibu W. However, after the first month, Yusumadi did make further payments. Ibu W waited for nine months for her salary, but she did not receive any more money.

Tenaganita gave Ibu W an airplane ticket to return to Indonesia, so she could have the operation she needed. They told her that Solidaritas Perempuan, an NGO in Jakarta, could help her. Ibu W has a family in her village and a daughter and grandchildren in Jakarta, but they were too poor to help pay for her operation. Solidaritas Perempuan arranged for her operation, and she stayed in their shelter for nine months. Her family visited her in the shelter except for her husband who was playing with other women when she was working in Malaysia.

Ibu W went to Malaysia twice as a domestic worker. The living and labor conditions of the first time and the second time were different. The second time is clearly a case of human trafficking. For example, in the framework of Hardani et al. (see Table 2, p. 15), more than one condition from each of the three categories are met (process – recruitment, transportation, transferring, harboring, and receiving + ways/means – threat, coercion, fraud, deceit, and the abuse of power + purpose – violence/sexual exploitation,
forced labor/with unfair wages, and slavery/similar practices). The first time even though Ibu W worked everyday from 4:30 a.m. to 1:00 or 2:00 a.m. without a day-off, she obtained the wages that were stated on her contract. She was obviously overworked, but it is difficult to conclude that overwork is the same as forced labor or slavery/similar practices. This issue became a controversy at Komnas Perempuan when I had an internship there. Whether or not this was trafficking is related to how much Ibu W understood the contract. Since she is from a village, poor and uneducated, she might not have understood the contract or might not have been able to read it (I did not verify this with her).
Human trafficking is recognized as a systematic transnational crime, organized by underground international/transnational syndicates. Trafficking in migrants has become a profitable business for these syndicates. They connect with many actors and are practically involved in every stage of the migration process - recruitment, pre-departure, transit, destination, and return (Asian Watch and the Women’s Rights Project, 1993). The syndicates’ well-established networks are not only with criminal groups, such

5 This map was given to me by Rachmat Sentika, who is in the Ministry of Health when I interviewed him on July 8th in 2006. He works on child trafficking in Indonesia.
as the mafia and yakuza, but also with legitimate corporate sectors, such as companies, municipalities, and governments. With a highly-organized global circuit, trafficking syndicates draw vulnerable people, especially women and children, into the black market and constitute the ‘trafficking industry’. Significantly enough, the trafficking industry is male-dominated.

As the map shows, there are many channels for cross-border migration, and trafficking syndicates are involved in both channels directly and indirectly. People need to register with the Ministry of Manpower for legal migration, but in most cases, this procedure is undertaken by agents, who have a license from the Ministry of Manpower, such as the PJTKI (Perusahaan Jasa Tenaga Kerja Indonesia) (Jones, 2000, p. 44). However, many Indonesians choose illegal migration, relying on the broker and middlemen to avoid the troublesome and expensive procedures of legal migration. Legal migration is more expensive, time consuming, bureaucratic, and inflexible. Prospective migrants also prefer illegal migration because they can choose the destination country. The distinction between legal and illegal agents can be meaningless because there are many trustworthy illegal agents and untrustworthy legal agents\(^6\). Therefore, whether legal or illegal, it is not important for most Indonesian migrant workers.

Legal and illegal agents hire recruiters to find and convince women to be migrant workers. By Indonesian law, a legal agency needs to have regional, provincial, and local branches, and these branches have to employ recruiters. However, because

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\(^6\) In fact, illegal agents outnumber legal ones. Illegal companies operate without a license from the Ministry of Manpower owing to the difficulty of obtaining and high cost of the license. For example, in order to become legal agent, a company needs to have training center (Teti, personal interview, August 3, 2005).
most agents do not have branches in rural villages, they employ recruiters informally (Teti, personal interview, August 3, 2005). These informal recruiters can be the potential migrant’s parents, sibling, relatives, friends, neighbors, and village leaders. Even now, poverty may force a family, especially in villages, to agree to a recruiter taking a child (daughter) to the city for employment as a domestic servant. Many illegal agents and recruiters search for recruits during economically hard times in the villages, such as the period before the harvest season, during the drought season, and after a natural disaster, because it is easier to recruit and traffic then, especially women and children (Dzuhayatin & Silawati, 2002, p. 19). According to Hamid Patilima of the Indonesian Child Welfare Foundation, in poor areas, such as Indramayu (West Java), parents view their children as an “asset” in such times (personal interview, July 8, 2005).

After recruitment, the potential migrants are transferred to the training center run by agents (mostly in Jakarta and the other big cities). All legal agents have to provide a training center for vocational and language training and information about immigration and the destination country. The quality of the training, the training fee, the cost of living at the training center, and the length of time that candidate migrant workers have to stay there, all depend on the training center. While the candidate migrant worker is staying in the training center, the agent has to collect the proper documentation, such as a visa, passport, information sheet, and employment contract for them. As in Ibu W’s case, the documents (name, address, birth date, and nationality) are often falsified by both legal and illegal agents. Furthermore, in most cases, the fee for the training center is deducted from wages the candidate migrant worker is supposed to earn in the destination country, because most of them do not have enough money. Generally speaking, the fee is very
expensive for the candidate migrant workers. In Ibu W’s case, she paid Rp. 3,680,000 (= US$376) as her fee. Since her wages for one year in Kuala Lumpur were Rp. 11,040,000 (=US$1126), her fees were one-third of her wages.

After these pre-departure processes, the migrants are sent to the destination country. Upon arrival, the agent in the destination country, who is connected with the agent in Indonesia, needs to pick up the migrant worker and send them to the employer. The majority of Indonesian migrant workers are engaged in low-skilled or semi-skilled labor, such as taxi driving, plantation work, factory work, sex work, and, domestic work. Up until the contract expires (which usually lasts two years), migrant workers cannot change employers. Furthermore, when they are returning, and even after they return, traffickers try to draw them into the trafficking industry again and again.

**Vulnerabilities of Migrant Workers**

Many Indonesian migrant workers suffer from several kinds of exploitation, abuse, and harassment in every phase of their migration. They are often situated in illegal labor practices, such as debt bondage and forced labor. In fact, most migrant workers are potentially vulnerable because they are poor, have low-levels of education, and suffer discrimination. They do not know how to handle the problems they encounter in the destination country. Many women try to escape from the destination country prior to the end of the labor contract period because of the difficulties and servile conditions of the work.
Because immigration policies in many countries have intensified border controls since September 11, 2001, a large number of migrant workers must pass through dangerous and insecure situations. My informants told me that they are treated badly by the immigration officers when they pass through the immigration check at the airport. While the criminalization of migrants has been enhanced, the criminalization of the syndicates and related-actors involved in trafficking has been selective. Trafficked migrants are “commonly dealt with under the immigration and alien laws of the receiving country, arrested and often imprisoned for long periods without charge or trial and eventually deported” (Lim, 1998, p. 18-19). For instance, 223,146 Indonesian migrant workers were tried and put in jail in Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Singapore between 1995 to 2001 (Coalition of NGOs, 2000, p. 9, cited by Misra & Rosenberg, 2003, p. 51). Often female migrant workers are sexually harassed by the police and officials when they are imprisoned and deported. These women are not able to resist the sexual harassment because they feel vulnerable when they are arrested and imprisoned. Moreover, it is difficult for the female migrant workers to report such violations by the police and prison officials in the receiving country (information from the staff at Komnas Perempuan, July, 2005). In contrast, the syndicates and other related actors have remained relatively untouched by governments because they can contribute to the national economy and politicians and have corrupt ties to government officials.

There are many problems caused by the falsified documents. For instance, when migrant workers die in the destination country, their family may not be informed because the documents are falsified. Furthermore, if the migrant worker dies in the destination county, the dead person is sent back to their supposed family in Indonesia. The family
may see the dead person, and say “this is not my daughter (or mom)!” (Maria, personal interview, July 28, 2005). Additionally, it is difficult to sue the agencies and employers who provided the falsified documents because the migrants who traveled on these documents are illegal.

Although a large number of Indonesians are working abroad formally and informally, people in the receiving countries do not welcome them. Since most of the Indonesian migrant workers are cheap labor, their image is not good in the destination countries. They are considered lazy, lacking in morals, stupid, and disease ridden. Moreover, they are forced to work too hard by employers because they are part of an interchangeable transient workforce. Receiving countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore, recognize the migrant workers as “needed but undesirable aliens, who have to be controlled stringently, with only their labor to be extracted and the rest of them as persons to be restricted” (Heyzer, 1992, p. 63). Therefore, many employers feel justified in treating the migrant workers poorly. For instance, some employers serve only one meal to the migrant worker even though the job is very hard (P. Chandra, personal interview, July 22, 2005). They are regarded as “disposable domestics” (Heyzer, 1992, p. 32).

Migrant domestic workers are extremely vulnerable to abuse. Since domestic workers live with their employer, there is a little private time and space. Their freedom is highly restricted in the employer’s house. As they are strongly dependent upon their employer, and as in Ibu W’s case, they are compelled to work from very early morning to midnight without a day-off. It is hard to refuse the employer’s requests and directions in that sort of situation. Moreover, because domestic workers are isolated from the outside
world and easily confined, they are subject to physical and sexual harassment, abuse, assault, and rape. Many domestic workers are prohibited to communicate with their family and friends by the employer. They cannot even make a phone call to ask for a help (information from staff at Komnas Perempuan, July, 2005).

It is very difficult for migrant workers to escape from an employer because the employer often takes the migrant worker’s passport, visa, and the other necessary documents for the immigration. In some cases, the agent impounds a migrant worker’s documents at the airport or port after their arrival. If they become undocumented migrants, police will arrest them. Even though these undocumented migrant workers are victims of trafficking, police punish them instead of protecting them. This situation exists in receiving countries, where police and government officials are not properly trained and do not know what human trafficking is (T. Priyo – Transnational Crime Coordination Center, personal interview, July 26, 2005). There are no proper laws and regulations to protect victims of trafficking in many countries.

Many migrant domestic workers are forced to have extra jobs (besides the domestic jobs) by the employer even though this is an illegal practice. In many cases, the migrant domestic workers are sent to sex sectors for the extra jobs. They are often infected with sexually transmitted diseases and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) in the sex sector (information from staff at Komnas Perempuan, July, 2005).

The migrant workers are “voiceless”. Even if they suffer from physical and sexual exploitation, they do not know how to accuse and sue their employers and agencies and how to negotiate with officials. Officials do not want to hear about the migrant workers’ experiences in the destination country because there is no concrete
evidence to support their story. Oral report is not sufficient. Komnas Perempuan regularly invites the “voiceless” ex-migrant workers into the office to document their report. One of the roles of Komnas Perempuan is mediation between the government and victims. When I had an internship there, I saw some ex female migrant workers crying and talking about their terrible experiences in the destination countries. Most ex-migrant workers, who suffered from physical and sexual exploitation, are traumatized and mentally depressed.

Although migrant workers have various vulnerabilities and suffer from physical and sexual exploitation, they tend to work abroad repeatedly. While their wages are low and often below their expectation, and their remittance to their family in Indonesia is not enough, it still helps to improve their household economy. On July 15th, I interviewed a woman named Ibu H at Tanjung Priok. She is originally from Lombok, and had been just deported from Malaysia. She went to Malaysia three times as a migrant worker and worked under servile conditions. She was imprisoned there three times because she was an undocumented migrant. However, she told me that she wanted to migrate to Malaysia again as there were almost no jobs for her in Lombok. She said that she could support her family with a salary in Malaysia. Ibu W also migrated to Malaysia twice even though her working conditions were horrible. Her first salary in Malaysia was Rp. 11,000,000 ($US 1,112) for two years offer the fee for the training center and the cost of medical treatment in Malaysia was deducted. This means her salary was about $1.50 per day. Nevertheless, she went to Malaysia again to help her family in Indonesia. Although migrant work is very risky and migrant workers are vulnerable in many ways, as
described above, migration cannot be stopped because migrants have to help their families.
Chapter 3: Policies Contributing to Exploitative Migration of Indonesian Women: Rethinking Suharto’s New Order

In this chapter, I will reflect on why and how the New Order’s policies – the status and role of women, agricultural reform, international labor migration, and industrial restructuring – produced a large number of female migrants particularly in the 1980s. Many vulnerable women were pushed by these policies to migrate internally and externally, and were trafficked in the process of migration.

In the first section, I will discuss the status and role of Indonesian women. In fact, women’s role and status in their family, community, and country, have been changing, but women still have continued to be seen as mothers and wives in the Indonesian tradition. They sometimes need to bear a heavy burden, not only working in the home (unpaid-work) but also outside the home (paid-work) to support their families. Their lower-status pushed women to migrate to big cities or to foreign countries for the financial support of their family.

In the second section, I will describe, the Bimas-Inmas program. Because Indonesian agriculture was mechanized by the Bimas-Inmas program, many Indonesians, particularly women, lost their jobs and were marginalized in the village.

In the third section, I will review the policy of international labor migration. Repelita recommended Indonesians work abroad chiefly because of the high population density and labor surplus in Java. A large number of Indonesians (more women than men
since 1984 – see Table 3) were pushed to migrate abroad, especially to Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Singapore, by this policy.

In the last section, I will explore the change of industrial structure. Suharto’s New Order adopted a structural adjustment policy in the 1980s. It brought about dramatic changes in industrial structure. Although it contributed to job creation for people from the middle or high classes, it produced increased unemployment among women. At the same time, the neighboring Asian countries, such as Singapore and Malaysia experienced rapid economic development and needed cheaper labor in the low-skilled sector, such as domestic work. Therefore, changes in industrial structure caused by the structural adjustment policy pushed low-skilled Indonesian women to work abroad.

**Status and Role of Women**

Although the status and role of women has changed through globalization, in Indonesian (especially Java) women are still considered to be primarily wives and mothers. Strong patriarchy remains in many rural areas in Indonesia. Women are considered to be the center of the domestic sphere although they also participate actively in market activities. However a patriarchal ideology introduced by the government in 1978 known as Panca Dharma Wanita (The Five Duties of Women) strongly defined the status and role of a woman as serving her husband, children, and nation. The duties of a woman are as wife, standing by her husband; as household manager; as mother,
responsible for reproduction and education of children; as supplementary wage earner; and as citizen of Indonesia (Aripurnami, 2000: 58).

In a low-income family, women are required to not just engage in the household work but also earn income outside the house. In order to nurture and support their family, women often sacrifice themselves and bear a disproportionate burden. Therefore, the daily labor hours of women are sometimes longer than those of men. Women usually manage and budget the family income, but this does not mean they can control decisions about household expenditure. “Rural Javanese women may be strong and self-sufficient, but these qualities do not necessarily indicate that they have power” (Wolf, 1992, p.66).

Since women’s domestic work is not income-generating (unpaid work), men tend to believe this is secondary-status work. Men also think women’s domestic work is easy because all people can handle it without any special training. Furthermore, “women are considered not only to have naturally nimble fingers, but also to be naturally more docile and willing to accept tough work discipline, and naturally more suited to tedious, repetitious, monotonous work” (Elson and Pearson, 1981, p. 144). “Due to the undervaluation of women’s work, their increasing participation in the workforce does not automatically guarantee their well-being” (Heyzer, 1992, p. 37). Women’s labor has been seen as a cheap, easily available, and an unskilled form of labor. These factors have played a vital role in maintaining Indonesian patriarchy.

In 1980s a structural adjustment program under the New Order created large-scale unemployment. Unemployment of both men and women added to the pressure on women to find a way to guarantee household survival. Because of their lower status, women have been the first to be retrenched and expected to migrate to larger cities and
abroad to meet their family’s survival needs. Although migration abroad entails various kinds of risks, many women decide to dedicate themselves so they can send remittance to their family, primarily for the benefit of their children in Indonesia. The remittances of these women have been a central survival strategy for many households in Indonesia. The remittances sent home by domestic workers also are a major source of foreign exchange for the government. This has been described by Sassen as the “feminization of survival.”

Agricultural Reform

Rice is a staple food for the vast majority of Indonesians as even McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken sell rice in Indonesia. Indonesia had been the largest rice importing country in the world for a long period (McDonald, 1980, p. 168). In order to maintain political, economic, and social stability, Suharto’s government started an agricultural program for self-sufficiency in rice production within the framework of Repelita. One of the most remarkable accomplishments in agriculture under the New Order was the introduction of the Green Revolution. It changed Indonesia from the biggest rice importer to a self-sufficient agricultural country. Even though Indonesia went through some poor harvests during the Green Revolution, self-sufficiency in food production was achieved for the first time in 1986 (Manning 1988: 1-3).

Of course, we should not view all female migrant workers as victims. To work abroad can also be an empowering experience. In the destination country, women gain independence, earn their own money and may have more control over how that money is spent and experience the adventure of living and working in a new world (Misra & Rosenberg, 2003, p. 42).
Accounting to the Bogor Agricultural Institute, agricultural reforms consisted of irrigation systems for unpredictable weather conditions, high-yielding varieties (HYVs) of rice, high-quality fertilizers, pesticides to combat destructive and disease-carrying insects, and rice seedlings planted in orderly rows. The Bimas (Bimbingan Massal) program, which means ‘guidance to the masses’ was launched in many areas in Indonesia (Soemardjan & Breazeale, 1993, p. 82-83). In this program, selected rice farmers could make use of the Bimas credit system for their fertilizers, insecticides, seeds, and living allowances (Kern, 1986, p.110). As Soemardjan & Breazeale (1993) explained, although farmers were required to pay one-sixth of their harvests as repayment for the inputs they received in credit in the early stage of Bimas, they had to repay the credits by cash in the 1970s. The Inmans program (Intensifikasi Masal), which means mass intensification, appeared at the later stage. Bimas and Inmas were pretty similar programs, but the distinction of the Inmas program was that farmers did not receive the same soft credit terms that the Bimas farmers received (p.85-86). These two programs dramatically increased productivity in agriculture.

However, the implementation of the Bimas-Inmas program destroyed traditional agricultural practices. One of the most drastic changes in agriculture was the method of rice harvesting. By tradition, farmers used the ani-ani (a small hand knife) to cut the stalks of rice, and the harvesters were mostly women (Collier, 1973, p. 36). Ani-ani was unsuited to the new rice plants modified by the Bimas-Inmas program because they did not grow as tall as the old ones at the harvest season. As a consequence, harvesters started to use clurit (short-handled sickle), which is regarded as a male instrument, to harvest the shorter-stalked paddy (Soemardjan & Breazeale, 1993, p. 90). Later on,
various kinds of mechanical equipment for harvesting were adopted. Another drastic change in agriculture was the way of rice threshing. In Javanese tradition, women chiefly pounded rice in a wooden trough, but after the introduction of mechanized tools, their jobs were replaced by mechanical mills (McDonald, 1980, p. 173-174). Because rice harvesting by *ani-ani* and hand-pounding to remove the rice husks were principally women’s work and the mechanical devices were associated with male roles, many women lost their jobs. The Bimas-Inmas program marginalized a large number of women in many rural areas, and they were forced to look for a job in the big cities or abroad.

**International Labor Migration**

In the 1980s, the number of migrant workers abroad (especially women) sharply increased because the government promoted overseas employment to overcome rising unemployment and to gain foreign exchange. The government claimed that this was also a way of allowing workers to obtain skills and experience. Table 3 shows the increase in migrant workers in the 1980s.

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8 Many farmers did not accept the Bimas-Inmas program. There is no complete division of labor between men and women in Indonesian agriculture. Although the Bimans-Inmas program did not change agriculture in all areas of the whole Indonesia, the impact was big in many areas.
Table 3: The Number of Indonesian Migrant Workers 1979-1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>The Number of Migrant Worker</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992/1993</td>
<td>79,000</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991/1992</td>
<td>14,977</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990/1991</td>
<td>86,264</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989/1990</td>
<td>84,074</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988/1989</td>
<td>61,419</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987/1988</td>
<td>61,092</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986/1987</td>
<td>68,360</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985/1986</td>
<td>54,297</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984/1985</td>
<td>46,014</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983/1984</td>
<td>29,291</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981/1982</td>
<td>17,904</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>3,675</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Miyamoto, 2001, p. 206

State encouragement of Indonesian migrant workers was explicitly written into Repelita IV (1984-1989) and V (1989-1994) (Jones, 2000: 18). A series of Repelita since 1969 (Repelita I-V) established a transmigration program (transmigrasi⁹) to encourage migration from Java to the other islands in Indonesia, but the government recognized overseas employment as a valuable tool to solve the surplus labor problem and took a more active role in sending migrant workers abroad in Repelita IV and V. The Center for Overseas Employment (AKAN), under the Ministry of Labor, has been operating since 1984 to encourage, “control and co-ordinate the recruitment and sending of Indonesian labor abroad and also to maintain data on those sent overseas” (Hugo, 1993, p. 39-40).

⁹ This program was started by the Dutch to “satisfy the demand for cheap labor in the plantations and mines outside Java and was justified by the ethical ideal of reducing poverty on Java. After the Independence, it was continued as a solution to population pressure and poverty on Java” (Dawson, 1992, p. 35).
The age of most Indonesian migrant workers is between 20 and 30 years, and their major occupations are construction worker, taxi driver, plantation worker, domestic worker, and sex worker. They go to several richer countries, but the main destination countries are Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

Saudi Arabia has become the major destination country for legal and illegal Indonesian migrant workers since the 1980s. The Indonesian government was interested in sending migrant workers to Saudi Arabia after the slump in oil prices in 1986 (Cremer, 1988, p.79). Since Indonesian migrant workers were latecomers to Saudi Arabia, it was hard for them to compete with migrants from the other countries, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the Philippines in the shrinking labor market. In addition, as most Indonesian migrant workers cannot speak Arabic or English, they cannot work in the semi-skilled or high-skilled sectors (p. 85). On the contrary, taxi drivers and domestic workers were still in demand. Therefore, the majority of male Indonesian migrant workers became taxi drivers, and the female Indonesian migrant workers became domestic workers in Saudi Arabia.

The dominant reason for many Indonesians going to Saudi Arabia is to perform the hajj (the Islamic pilgrimage). Most Muslims in Indonesia are eager to perform hajj, and obligation for all Muslims who are able that also leads to elevation of their social status. Poor Indonesian Muslims cannot afford to go to Mecca by themselves because of the high travel costs. Due to the long-term relationship between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia in terms of Islam, there are a large number of village-based male brokers in both countries. Despite the geographical constraints, the brokers in both countries have
established their own channels and led the Indonesian migrant workers to their pilgrimage (Spaan, 1994, p.105-108).

The movement of people between Indonesia and Malaysia (mostly from Indonesia to Malaysia) is fairly longstanding and ongoing. The historical, geographical (sharing Kalimantan\(^\text{10}\)), racial, and religious linkages have greatly facilitated the movement of people. In particular, since language is almost the same, it is comfortable for Indonesian migrant labors to work in Malaysia. According to Mantra (1999), “the flow of Indonesian migrant workers to the Malayan Peninsula experienced a sharp increase in the 1930s” (p.60). Furthermore, as discussed earlier, the labor shortage in Malaysia in the 1970s, caused by rapid economic development, and the problem of excess labor, especially in Java, facilitated the formal and informal movement of people from Indonesia to Malaysia. Malaysia has demanded more blue color workers, such as plantation, construction, and domestic workers, and many of these workers migrate informally to Malaysia. For informal migration, numerous brokers and many kinds of middlemen, variously known as “calo, taikong, tauke, or mandor,” have established extensive networks in both countries (Hugo, 1993, p. 57). They have power to manipulate the migration process through recruitment of workers, arranging transmigration, and obtaining job contracts (Spaan, 1994, p.103 & Hugo, 1993, p. 57). Even though there are a lot of wicked middlemen, many Indonesians have relied on middlemen because the solid network among the middlemen could be trusted and supplied a great deal of assistance.

\(^{10}\) The Malaysian ringgit is a strong currency in Indonesia. Some areas on the border with Malaysia in Kalimantan use ringgit for their currency (Lisa, personal interview, July, 2005)
Indonesian migration to Singapore is longstanding as well. Spaan (1994) explained that since the Dutch restrained the free outflow of pilgrims to Mecca from the Dutch East Indies in the mid 19th century, Indonesians made a channel going to Mecca by way of Singapore. The pilgrimage was organized by a pilgrim broker together with various Javanese merchants and craftsmen. The pilgrim brokers provided food, lodging, documents, and travel arrangements during the trip from the Dutch East Indies to Saudi Arabia. Since kyai (venerated scholar or teacher of Islam in Indonesia) and leaders of pesantren (school of Koranic studies for children and young Indonesians) are familiar with pilgrimage, they gave advice to the brokers (p.95). “The system of recruitment shows continuity with the past in that the migrants still rely heavily on brokers for information, transport, documents, and loans” (p. 98). Additionally, Singapore has been an attractive destination for Indonesian migrant workers because Singapore has sustained vigorous economic growth. Like Malaysia, Singapore has a problem of labor shortage in the low-skilled sector.

Indonesians historically have established a lot of informal routes and networks to migrate abroad, especially to Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Singapore. It has to be emphasized that people cannot go abroad without the well-established routes and networks. For instance, Thailand and the Philippines send many migrant workers to Japan for economic reasons. However, Indonesia sends only a few migrant workers there. As Table 1 shows (see p. 6), Indonesia sent only 100 migrant workers to Japan in 2003. One of the principal reasons is that Thailand and the Philippines have organized many informal channels and networks to Japan, but Indonesia has not. Therefore, the
push-full factor in regard to migration does not work in the absence of the well-established routes and networks.

**Industrial Restructuring and the Effects of a Structural Adjustment Program**

During the New Order especially in the 1980s, Indonesia experienced considerable economic and social structural change. With its oil dependent economy, Indonesia was strongly influenced by the worldwide economic recession in the early 1980s, followed by the fall of the price of oil. “In 1981/82, oil accounted for 82% of exports and 71% of government revenues” (Anwar et al., 1991, p. 101). Since Indonesia relied heavily on primary exports, such as oil, export performance was inferior to the other high-performing Asian economies, such as Singapore and Malaysia (Wie, 2001, p. 165). Due to debts incurred when the price of oil fell after 1982, Indonesia adopted a structural adjustment policy imposed by the IMF and the World Bank and made serious efforts to promote manufactured exports. The structural adjustment program led to a shift from agriculture to the manufacturing sector.

Because of the acceleration of deregulation after 1983, a large number of multinational corporations came into the Indonesian domestic market. The transfer of the offices and plants of the multinational corporations contributed to formalization in various sectors in Indonesia and a general shift to a service economy (Sassen, 1998, p. 130). Due to the formalization process, a large number of Indonesians lost their jobs. For instance, 983 beca (traditional trishaw) were removed from the streets in South
Jakarta in 1984, and beca were officially banned in 1985 because Suharto thought that beca represented underdevelopment (Murray, 1991, p. 91-92). Unemployed men became market traders and street vendors in warung (traditional market), jobs that were originally occupied by women. When these jobs were taken over by men, women had to find alternative opportunities in factory work, domestic work, sex work, and migrant work.

The early stage of industrialization increased job creation in the un-skilled sector, such as factory work, but when factories were closed and manufacture moved to countries with lower labor costs, there was massive unemployment. In addition structural adjustment programs required privatization in many sectors, leading to job loss, and there was a reduction of public services and a higher cost of living. All these factors added to the pressure on women to migrate for employment.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Singapore underwent rapid economic development, and economic conditions provided higher-skilled employment in capital-intensive industries. Due to rapid economic development, these countries had an excess labor demand. For example, Malaysia confronted a “labor famine” (Hugo, 1993). The labor shortage was particularly in the lower skilled and lower wage sector, what Matsui called (1999) “difficult, dirty, and dangerous’ job areas” (p. 46). As a result, they had to import cheaper labor from poorer countries, such as Indonesia.

11 There is a paradox of the labor famine co-existing with high unemployment rate. Young highly-educated Malaysians are willing to go through a period of unemployment and wait for suitable white collar jobs because they regard plantation, agriculture, and manufacturing jobs as low-wage, low-status, dirty, and unattractive jobs (Hugo, 1993, p. 53).
Owing to the rise in the cost of living in high-performing Asian economies, both husband and wife need to be paid workers (necessity of double income) to keep a middle class standard of living. Declining birth rates and a growing aged population also drew wives into the paid-work force. When wives in middle class families took jobs, they increased the demand for female domestic workers, such as live-in housemaids, babysitters, and caregivers, to deal with the “double burden” (Heyzer, 1994, p.37). Many employed cheap female domestic workers from Indonesia. According to Misra & Rosenberg (2003), the employers preferred to hire Indonesian female domestic workers because they are likely to “know less about their rights, report complaints and violations less often, and have less support from their Embassy” (p. 40). In short, the richer labor-shortage countries pulled the female domestic workers from the poorer countries, and the poorer labor-surplus countries pushed their laborers to the richer countries.
Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations

Since Indonesia was classified as a tier three countries in the *Trafficking in Persons Report* 2001, the government has made efforts to combat human trafficking. NGOs and prominent Indonesians pushed the government to work on the problem of human trafficking. As a result, the Indonesian National Plan of Action to fight human trafficking was enacted in 2002 and a national and regional task force was set up. Because of this progress, Indonesia was classified as a tier two countries in the *Trafficking in Persons Report* 2003. Even though the government’s policies in legislation, prosecution, prevention, and protection, are indispensable, they are not enough to eliminate human trafficking.

Policies enacted during the Suharto era that contributed to exploitative migration of women, such as agricultural reform and changes in industrial structure, cannot be undone. Therefore new policies to combat human trafficking should focus for the short term on regulating migration and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of migrants. In the long term the government must address economic disparity and gender inequality by changing the ideology of Women’s Duties that supports what Sassen called the “feminization of survival.”

Since human trafficking is a transnational organized crime, a more comprehensive approach is needed involving governments, international organizations, and NGOs. Indonesia should create negotiate bi-lateral agreements regarding human trafficking, not just with Malaysia but also with other receiving countries, such as Saudi
Arabia and Singapore, and multi-lateral agreements among Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states. Since many countries still do not have special laws against human trafficking, awareness about human trafficking must be increased. ASEAN countries should collaborate together and overhaul the overall process of secure migration. Indonesian law needs to be revised to include the UN definition of trafficking. Such reforms would mean that police cannot arrest the undocumented migrant workers, who are mostly victims of human trafficking.

For more secure migration, migrant workers have to be provided with adequate information, training, and education. Most Indonesian migrant workers do not have sufficient knowledge about migration and their rights, such as the minimum wage, and maximum work hours, and other aspects of the contract. The recruiter, agency (training center), and government (Ministry of Manpower) have to disseminate proper information about where to go for assistance, and the details of the migration process and their jobs. However, many prospective migrant workers are semi-literate and cannot read the contracts; the agency and the government should ensure that they understand their contract. Any oral agreement without the contract has to be avoided.

The agency and the Indonesian government must keep records of the migrant workers. Computerizing the information may be one practical way. This will be one step toward eliminating of falsified documents.

Indonesia ought to raise public awareness about human trafficking. Some NGOs and the other organizations have public awareness campaigns, such as providing pamphlets, posters, and comics at the grassroots and community level. Journal Perempuan, which is a media company in Indonesia, offers radio programs, bi-monthly
magazines, and video documentation about human trafficking. In particular, the radio program is very practical because a large number of Indonesians listen to radio. Almost all households have at least one radio. Furthermore, the radio program is effective because domestic workers can listen to it while they are working (B. Wijaksana - Journal Perempuan, July 15, 2005). The Indonesian Child Welfare Foundation provides the “mobile library”. They bring books regarding human trafficking by bus, and citizens can read the books around the bus. Community and religious leaders can play an important role in raising public awareness although they themselves sometimes become recruiters of the migrants, as mentioned previously.

In the destination countries, the Indonesian embassy has to help the Indonesian migrant workers. In fact, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has already established a policy that the Indonesian embassy in the destination country should provide minimum protection for the migrant workers and basic information regarding migration, including the location of the embassy. For instance, the Indonesian embassy in Kuala Lumpur has a shelter for the physically and mentally ill migrant workers. However, most Indonesian migrant workers do not know about this policy or the location of the embassy. The passport actually states “if you have any problem or difficulty, please contact the Indonesian embassy,” but the address is not given in the passport (P. Chandra, personal interview, July 22, 2005).

Often wages are not often paid regularly. The agency and employer usually deduct fees for recruitment, transportation, housing, meals, passports and visa, and medicine, etc., from wages. In many cases, they do not give the records of these deductions to the migrant workers, and migrant workers do not know what kind of
expenses they paid (Jones, 200, p. 7). Some agencies and employers use a banking system for the payment of wages, but many migrant workers do not know how to withdraw the money. Since many migrant workers tend to go abroad again and again, a system for payment of wages has to be developed.

Training and capacity building for trainers is also essential. Not only the migrant workers but also the trainers and regulators, such as agency personnel, government officials, politicians, and police in both sending and receiving countries have to be made aware of the problem of human trafficking and their responsibilities. If they do not have enough knowledge about human trafficking, they mistreat the victims. In fact, there is a lot of evidence that the government officials, police, and legal agencies are directly and indirectly involved in human trafficking, such as by falsifying documents and working with traffickers. It is almost impossible to make migration safe if officials engage in corruption. NGOs and the other organizations, such as Komnas Perempuan, need to monitor the government to stop corruption.
References


Interviews


