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## **The Increasing Constraints of Return Migrant Household Welfare in Central Java, Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

Migrants are again upgrading their human capital through mastering new knowledge and skills in operating technology for domestic work and agriculture, and recreation on holidays and shopping. However, the skills acquired abroad are not applied in Indonesia because daily work in destination countries and Indonesia is not the same, the price of such equipment is too expensive in Indonesia, and the equipment is not available in Indonesia. Although some migrants have succeeded in increasing their human capital, their welfare level is still low. In the field of social capital, inter-migrants return to maintaining good relations and always communicating for personal matters, utilizing communication networks for work interests, and a small number of them are members of return migrant organizations, but the agenda of activities is more family matters. The actors involved in reorganizing migrants are NGOs, corporate, government and religious organizations. The problem of return migrants in improving their household welfare is the low level of education, the use of more remittances for consumer and investment goods (land), institutional support and access to credit, and gender because the majority of migrants return are women.

Keywords: welfare; constraints; return migrants; social capital; human capital; household

### **Introduction**

Previous studies show that migrants return, especially international migrants such as "addicted" to always work abroad. This is caused by remittance that tends to be consumptive<sup>1</sup> and investment needs<sup>2</sup>. In addition, after becoming international migrants, they became a royal shopper and urban lifestyle such as shopping and recreation so that within a few months in Indonesia, they had run out of money. In these conditions, there is no other choice for them except to go abroad as migrant workers again. Such conditions occur almost repeatedly for the majority of return migrants<sup>3</sup>.

Ideally, migrants return to work abroad can be for productive businesses in their home countries using remittances that have been obtained abroad. However, previous research shows that the ability of migrants to return cannot be fully utilized in economic productive behavior in the area of origin<sup>4</sup>.

Return migrants are defined as migrants return to their home countries of their own choice and / or the expiration of their residence permit or employment contract in the destination country<sup>5</sup>. Migrants again have work experience that is able to increase human capital<sup>6</sup>, increase income and change the traditional mindset to be modern<sup>7</sup>. Return migrants carry a number of capital namely financial capital, social capital, human capital, leadership, and training. Human capital includes five components, namely cognitive, conative, psychomotor, affective, and material-physical resources<sup>8</sup>.

Various studies have found that the productive behavior of migrant economists returns in their home areas as workers themselves or work for others<sup>9</sup>. Return migrants also play an important role in encouraging development through new skills and savings obtained while working abroad<sup>10</sup>. However, not always skills and work experience from abroad can be utilized in the area of origin<sup>11</sup>.

Because the general characteristics of return migrants are generally low educated, family economic support, and economic behavior is consumptive, empowerment efforts are needed. Meanwhile, the results of a recent study show that return migrants (1) generally cannot apply the human capital they obtain when working abroad; (2) the relatively limited social capital owned; (3) less significant improvement in household welfare; (4) income in general to fulfill consumptive needs<sup>12</sup>.

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## Method

This study uses survey design and case studies. Spatially, Central Java was chosen as the location of this study based on the following considerations: (1) Central Java Province is the national area of origin of migrant origin; (2) migrants return in Central Java have a high dependence on working abroad; and (3) due to the large number of productive age population working abroad in this province, the amount of remittances (material) is also large. The determination of the sample size of this study uses the Krejcie and Morgan techniques. The data collection uses structured interview method (questionnaire), indepth interview, and focus group discussion. Data analysis used descriptive statistical analysis, single and cross frequency distribution tables and qualitative descriptive analysis.

## Results and Discussion

The quality of migrant human resources is generally low, both education, skills, networks, and access to various facilities. The average education for return migrants is elementary and junior high school, only about 20 percent have high school education and tertiary education. In fact, almost 35 percent of migrants returned were elementary school graduates and did not graduate from elementary school. Because of the low level of education, it results in limited thinking, insight, access to various facilities, and networks. With these low competencies, it is also difficult to accept new things<sup>13</sup> including adopting new values and changes in a more advanced direction. This situation is one of the main obstacles for migrants to improve their household welfare.

Migrants return, generally allocating remittances for consumer and investment matters. Due to economic remittances for consumptive matters, generally there is no savings or budget for productive businesses<sup>14</sup>. Precisely because more remittances for consumptive matters, it makes them have a high dependence on return to work abroad. They generally become a royal figure when they have just returned from abroad, but a few months later the cost of living has run out. The choices he made were: to go abroad again or to remain in the village in a state of shortage instead of being poor.

So far, return migrants tend to develop or not develop naturally almost without intervention from any party. From the government (related agencies, employment) there are practically no economic and social empowerment programs for them because the related agencies are more concentrated on the policy of sending international migrant workers, not the management of migrant back. From the banking sector there is no special program about credit facilities for their economic development. Various companies, both State and private, also have no attention, for example through their CSR. Many non-governmental institutions, such as NGOs, also concentrate more on the protection of international migrants than the empowerment of migrants again. Because of that, they are "still as they were", the economic conditions of the migrants return generally there are no significant changes. For this reason, institutional support is a factor in the development of return migrant household welfare.

Judging from the gender aspect, migrants return almost 80 percent are women. Women in the Indonesian family structure are family members, not family heads because culturally, socially and legally the head of the family is a husband (male). The implications of this position in the family, they generally have to submit or follow the husband's decision. Moreover, Indonesian people tend to, when migrating (going to find paid work) their income is sent to families in their hometown. Income (remittances) of a woman (wife) is usually sent to her husband. When the money is in the hands of the husband, it is the husband who has more authority to spend the money. Spending money is sometimes for something that is not a family need or even for spree by her husband. In fact, sometimes the wife's income to look for a wife again or for gambling and having an affair. For this reason, gender aspects become an obstacle to improving the welfare of migrant households again.

## Conclusion

Migrants are again upgrading their human capital through mastering new knowledge and skills in operating technology for domestic work and agriculture. However, not all migrants re-apply their experience and skills acquired abroad for employment in Indonesia. This is caused by (1) daily work in the destination country and Indonesia is not the same, (2) the price of such equipment is too expensive in Indonesia for them, and (3) the equipment is not available in Indonesia. Although some migrants have succeeded in increasing their human capital, their welfare level is still low.

To improve the welfare of migrant households again faced several obstacles, namely the quality of human resources is low, both education, networking, and access to various facilities. Migrants return to the general allocation of remittances for consumer and investment matters so that they have a high dependence on return to work abroad. In addition, some of them become a royal shopper and lifestyle changes become like shopping at modern shopping centers and picnics on holidays.

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