

GKJW (The East Java Christian Church)
Amid the Struggle of Refugees and Migrant Workers
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I. Preliminary

Indonesia is a vast country. It is the 14th largest country in the world, with an area of 1,910,931 km², consisting of 17,504 islands. It is a country of 2 seasons, which has a lot of fertile land. This is what attracts many immigrants who want to settle in Indonesia. On the other hand, it is very unfortunate that many Indonesians themselves are unable to manage their natural wealth due to lack of skills.

II. The Arrival of Refugees from Other Countries

According to statistical data until December 2018, at present, there are 14,337 refugees in Indonesia. 29% of them are children. 309 of these children do not have parents. Until December 2018, most of the refugees came from Afghanistan (55%), Somalia (11%), Myanmar (6%), Iraq, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and others (28%). The institution which trusted by Indonesian government to handle refugees is: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Indonesia (UNHCR Indonesia).

In 2017, Jokowi signed a Presidential Regulation on Handling Refugees from Overseas. The Presidential Regulation contains the main definitions and regulates the detection, shelter, and protection of asylum seekers and refugees. By the regulation, the Government of Indonesia and UNHCR will work more closely for asylum seekers.

III. The Attitude of the Indonesian People Towards Refugees

To be honest, Indonesia is not a country which is “welcome to refugees”. According to the results of a study conducted by Amnesty International on 27 countries, it is known that on average only 32% of Indonesia's population is willing to let refugees live in their environment. The rest refuse to live with refugees in the same environment.

There are 3 strong reasons why refugees in Indonesia experience rejection:

1. Religious Differences
Although the refugees from Afghanistan are Muslim, they are rejected because they are Shiite, while the majority of Muslims in Indonesia are Sunni.
2. Problems of communication and cultural differences
The limited communication in Bahasa Indonesia makes the refugees unable to mingle. This often causes conflict between citizens.
3. Seizing Citizen Employment Opportunities
There are concerns that refugees will seize employment opportunities for Indonesian citizens, so that they will live more decent lives than Indonesian citizens.

IV. The Attitudes of the Churches in Indonesia Towards Refugees

However, GKJW (The East Java Christian Church) together with PGI (Communion of Churches in Indonesia) and CCA (Christian Conference of Asia) urged countries in Asia, including Indonesia, to accept refugees, especially from Rohingya - Myanmar. The churches in Asia consider that the conflict that occurred in Rohingya became an Asian issue, which demands responsibility and solidarity in Asian countries.

The urge has been agreed upon and delivered on 27 May 2015 in Ancol - Jakarta is: The church must be able to realize selfless love for fellow human beings, without questioning their background, social status, ethnicity, religion and culture. This was manifested in the theme: "Living Together in The Household of God". Churches in Indonesia hope that the Jokowi government will be serious in handling Rohingya refugees and prioritize them as a form of national concern.

So far, the churches in Indonesia, through PGI, have provided assistance to Rohingya refugees both materially and non-materially.

V. The Arrival of Refugees from Timor Leste

The most increasing number of refugees throughout history of Indonesia is from Timor Leste. In the former time, Timor Leste was the 27th province in Indonesia. But after breaking away from Indonesia and officially independent, on 20 May 2002, many people chose to remain Indonesian citizens.

Since 30 August 1999, 21.5% of the population of Timor Leste, or 94,388 people, chose to be Indonesian citizens. To this day, most of the refugees choose to live in the East Nusa Tenggara Province. Indonesia accepted them as citizens.

Indonesian Presidential Regulation No. 25/2016 states that: the government is fully responsible for the granting of Compensation to the Former East Timor Citizens Who Domiciled Outside the Province of East Nusa Tenggara. The Presidential Regulation was signed by President Joko Widodo on 30 March 2016. This was done by giving compensation of Rp10 million per family.

VI. The Attitudes of GKJW (the East Java Christian Church) Towards Refugees, Especially: Timor Leste

Among the Timor Leste refugees, there is someone who is accepted by GKJW to become one of the parish pastor, since moving to East Java in July 2001. Now, he is carrying out his ministry as a parish pastor in Jajag-Banyuwangi, a congregation at the eastern part of the East Java Province.

With regard to attitude to refugees, GKJW always bases its theology on the contents of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, thus:

Do not mistreat foreigners who are living in your land (Leviticus 19:33). Treat them as you would a fellow Israelite, and love them as you love yourselves (Leviticus 19:34). When you harvest your fields, do not cut the grain at the edges of the fields, and do not go back to cut the heads of grain that were left; leave them for poor people and foreigners (Leviticus 23:22). Be joyful in the LORD's presence, together with ... the foreigners ... who live in your towns.

Do this at the one place of worship (Deuteronomy 16:11). Do not deprive foreigners and orphans of their right (Deuteronomy 24:17). God's curse on anyone who deprives foreigners, orphans, and widows of their rights. And all the people will answer, 'Amen!' (Deuteronomy 27:19).

VII. The Indonesian Migrant Workforce

On the contrary, besides the large number of refugees who came to Indonesia, the bigger problem that Indonesia and the Indonesian churches have long faced is the Indonesian migrant workers.

The large number of workers, in contrast to the lack of available jobs in the country, has caused a number of Indonesians to look for work abroad, to get money, and to improve their economies.

Since 1969, the government of Indonesia has administered the recruitment of migrant workers. It is estimated around 4.5 million Indonesians work abroad. Most of them (around 70%) are women, most are employed in domestic sector as maid or domestic helper and manufacture sector. Most of them aged in productive age margin, between 18 and 35 years old. However it is estimated some of them might be under aged through document falsification. Around 30% are men, mostly work in plantation, construction, transportation and service sector. Currently Malaysia employs the largest numbers of Indonesian migrant workers, followed by Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, and Singapore.

The total salary earned by the migrant workers is quite large. The amount is estimated to reach \$ (US) 5 billion (or around 5 trillion rupiah), close to the results of state revenues from oil and gas sales. This money is then taken home, and indeed that their income has helped drive the Indonesian economy.

Unfortunately, most Indonesian migrant workers have low skills and work in the domestic sector only. The approximately 400 thousand of Indonesian Female Migrant Workers in Malaysia, most of them work as domestic helpers. They are who often experience severe problems. They are vulnerable to exploitation, extortion, physical and sexual abuse, suffered by those who have survived long in human trafficking.

In general, migrant domestic workers do not know the regulation properly. Not only do they not understand the contents of the agreement they signed, even most of them do not question why their passports and work permits are kept by employers or agents. Whereas taking someone else's passport and work permit is not only a violation of law, but also an opportunity for agents to exploit migrant workers.

Research shows that when migrant domestic helpers are tortured, sexually abused, or not paid by employers, they cannot rely on protection from anyone, not even from employment agencies who get a share of their wages. Most employment agencies must be more impartial to the employer than to protect the migrant workers, because all employment agents want to maintain their popularity before the governments (Indonesia and Malaysia) and other prospective employers.

With regard to the many cases experienced by migrant domestic helpers, the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur is not silent. The Indonesian Embassy seeks to provide a place for

the migrant domestic helpers who are experiencing problems, while following their case resolution process. The Indonesian Embassy is the only embassy in Kuala Lumpur that has its own shelter.

The shelter is located behind the Indonesian Embassy building in Kuala Lumpur. Its capacity is expected to accommodate 200 troubled migrant workers. All residents, who continue to come and go, consist of migrant domestic helpers who have fled from their employers and agents because they have suffered torture, sexual harassment, or are not paid by their employers.

VIII. The Attitudes of GKJW (the East Java Christian Church) Towards the Migrant Workforce

GKJW has the view that: the case of migrant workers, refugees, and displaced people is a humanitarian problem and injustice.

In fact, indirectly, various cases of migrant workers, human trafficking, and people smuggling, are assisted and supported by the sending government of migrant workers, who consider it a labor export program, and are considered a solution to overcome poverty. As a result, the poor are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

This issue must be the concern of the churches. The church must be able to be a pioneer in strengthening commitment, cooperation, networking, humanitarian efforts, and seeking strategic and sustainable solutions so that migrant workers, refugees, and marginalized people get a better life.

In the light of the gospel, the characteristics and challenges relating to various cases of migrant workers, demand that our faith community and all ecclesiastical departments need to re-examine the mission of the church and the way we manage the church to move its ministry so that the mission becomes more visible. The real mission is all ecclesiastical efforts to increase the income of church members, so that they can live more prosperously in their own land, so they no longer wish to sell themselves to other countries.

Various activities of GKJW in the form of humanitarian efforts, as well as seeking strategic solutions, so that migrant workers get a better life, including:

1. Cooperation between GKJW and the government to hold skills training program for unemployed people.

The Indonesian government has an institution called BLK (a skills training institution for workers). However, the training held by BLK is not free, so there are still many people who are not able to become participants in this program.

GKJW has taken the initiative to collaborate with the government in the implementation of this program in the following ways: The government bears 50% of the costs of the training program provided by the BLK, and after graduation, the participants get a certificate. While GKJW covers all costs of practice, accommodation, and meal for all participants.

GKJW and BLK have collaborated several times. The last one was held on 22 April – 29 May 2019. It is the collaboration between GKJW and BLK in the Air Condition Service Training Program.

2. *Organizing Expo GKJW (trade exhibition for all products which produced by GKJW members).*

So far, GKJW has taken place GKJW Expo twice. The first was held in 2014, in Malang. And the second was held on 10-12 May 2019, in Mojowarno. It is interesting that in the second GKJW Expo there were 130 products of GKJW members on display.

The GKJW Expo is a trade exhibition for products which produced by GKJW members, both agricultural products and home industry products. The aim is: products from one congregation to be known by other congregations, also known by all residents of East Java Province. The GKJW Expo is a means for trade networks, so that each producer gets a wider market. In addition, capital owners are also expected to invest in these producers, so that the producers can improve the quality of their production.

GKJW also invited government agencies to attend the GKJW Expo. They are expected to provide guidance to producers regarding: trademark licensing, good packaging of products, and about preservatives as well as giving a time limit (expired time) for food products.

3. *Partnership between GKJW and other churches, especially: GKI Tanah Papua.*

GKJW has a special ecumenical partnership with GKI Tanah Papua. This partnership program between the two ecclesiastical denominations has been going on for a long time, especially with the Keerom Classis region. The form of partnership program, that has been done, is the transmigration program of several families of GKJW to be domiciled and become members of GKI Tanah Papua in Senggi and Arso Regencies.

Until now there have been 7 families of GKJW who transmigrate to Classis Keerom region. They left for Papua in 2015 and 2017. GKI Tanah Papua provided facilities for them, in the form of: a house for each family, 2 hectares of agricultural land for each family, an identity card for each person, and food for one year.

This transmigration program is a form of economic empowerment program. GKJW hopes that the families who go to Papua experience an increasingly prosperous life. While GKI Tanah Papua hopes that the families will be able to provide a good example to the Papuans of how to cultivate their land, also able to play an important role in social life: becoming a school teacher, becoming a carpenter, opening a vehicle workshop, and so on.

IX. Closing

Indeed, here is our effort and prayer: that the people who persevere in their life is surely blessed by God. Be persevere in caring to share love for others who suffer and need help, also persevere in trying to reach a more prosperous life. The abundant blessings of God will surely accompany them.