



Tackling for Human Trafficking: Village-based Movement of Migrant Workers in Lembata, Indonesia*

Lindra Darnela,¹ Ahmad Tholabi Kharlie²

Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta, Indonesia



[10.15408/jch.v11i1.30970](https://doi.org/10.15408/jch.v11i1.30970)

Abstract

Studies on the role of villages in combating human trafficking have not been much discussed. This paper examines the efforts of the grass roots to counter human trafficking in Lembata, Indonesia. Data based on observations, interviews with the government, and discussions with six migrant workers' communities in Lembata. The methods used are qualitative research methods with literary approaches and empirical approaches. The results of the research indicate that the people of the village in Lembata have succeeded in providing alternative livelihoods for the former Indonesian Labour Force through the strengthening of the productive economy. This community has also been able to train and support the candidate TKI to acknowledge its rights and duties. This study proves that the bottom-up system is an effective way to tackle human trafficking.

Keywords: Human Trafficking; village community; Lembata, migrant workers, Indonesia, integration

* Received: December 22, 2022, Revised: January 13, 2023, Accepted: January 26, 2023, Published: April 15, 2023.

¹ **Lindra Darnela** is a Doctor in Law, Associate Professor of International Law, Faculty of Shariah and Law Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. SCOPUS ID: 57224473794. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6733-8351>. Email: lindra.darnela@uin-suka.ac.id

² **Ahmad Tholabi Kharlie** is Professor in Law, Faculty of Shariah and Law, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta, Indonesia. SCOPUS ID: 57215568831 ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9793-0356>. Email: abimania@uinjkt.ac.id

*Corresponding author: lindra.darnela@uin-suka.ac.id

**Penanggulangan Perdagangan Manusia:
Gerakan Buruh Migran Berbasis Desa di Lembata, Indonesia**

Abstrak

Studi abstrak tentang peran desa dalam memerangi perdagangan manusia belum banyak dibahas. Dokumen ini memeriksa upaya akar rumput untuk melawan perdagangan manusia di Lembata, Indonesia. Data didasarkan pada pengamatan, wawancara dengan pemerintah, dan diskusi dengan enam komunitas pekerja migran di Lembata. Metode yang digunakan adalah metode penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan sastra dan pendekatan empiris. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa orang-orang desa Lembata telah berhasil menyediakan sumber daya hidup alternatif untuk bekas tenaga kerja Indonesia melalui penguatan ekonomi produktif. Komunitas ini juga telah mampu melatih dan mendukung kandidat TKI untuk mengakui hak-hak dan kewajibannya. Studi ini membuktikan bahwa sistem bottom-up adalah cara yang efektif untuk mengatasi perdagangan manusia.

Kata Kunci: Perdagangan Manusia; Masyarakat Desa; Lembata; TKI; Indonesia; Integrasi

**Борьба с торговлей людьми: сельское движение трудящихся-мигрантов
в Лембате, Индонезия**

Абстрактное

Исследования о роли деревень в борьбе с торговлей людьми мало обсуждались. В настоящем документе рассматриваются усилия травяных корешков по борьбе с торговлей людьми в Лембате, Индонезия. Данные основаны на наблюдениях, интервью с правительством и обсуждениях с шестью общинами трудящихся-мигрантов в Лембите. Используются методы качественного исследования с использованием литературных подходов и эмпирических подходов. Результаты исследований свидетельствуют о том, что населению села Лембата удалось обеспечить альтернативные средства к существованию бывшей индонезийской рабочей силы за счет укрепления производительной экономики. Это сообщество также смогло обучить и поддержать кандидата ТКИ в признании его прав и обязанностей. Это исследование доказывает, что система снизу вверх является эффективным способом борьбы с торговлей людьми.

Ключевые слова: Торговля людьми; деревенское сообщество; Лембата, трудящиеся-мигранты, Индонезия, интеграция

A. INTRODUCTION

Studies on trafficking show that the efforts of the Government of Indonesia to tackle human trafficking have not shown significant results ([Izzati, 2019](#); [Rahayu, 2017](#); [Prihatin, 2007](#)). Statistics show that from 2016 to mid-2019, the number of victims of human trafficking reached 4,906 cases with an increase in annual data, and migrant workers are the most diverse group of 3017 people ([Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019](#)). This statement is supported by the 2019 Annual Report on Human Trafficking issued by the United States Embassy and Consulate in Indonesia, which states that Indonesia is still at the second rank, meaning that the Government of Indonesia does not fully meet the minimum standards to tackle human trafficking but is making significant efforts to make it happen ([US Embassy, 2019](#)). Social facts show that there were 230 victims of Human Trafficking in East Nusa Tenggara in 2018. Meanwhile, the same year, East Nusa Tenggara also succeeded in thwarting the departure of 1379 non-procedural workers and 816 workers by October 2019 ([Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018](#)).

To solve the problems of human trafficking, Migrant CARE³ creates another approach in dealing with the situation in human trafficking through a program called *Desbumi* (*Desa Peduli Buruh Migran/ Village Care for Migrant Workers*). Lembata Regency is one of the target areas for this program since it is one of the largest bases for migrant workers ([Migrantcare.or.id, 2019](#)). The role of the village is needed in preventing the protection of migrant workers ([Hidayah, 2018](#)). The concept of protection of migrant workers by *Desbumi* is related to the prevention of human trafficking because they experience a migration process, and migrant workers often become the victims of human trafficking.

This paper describes the village community's effort to prevent and control human trafficking. This paper also investigates the efforts of former migrant worker to integrate with their village. This study aims to examine the village community's effort in Lembata, East Nusa Tenggara to protect migrant workers and prevent human trafficking. The discussion focused on its program, operation, and the resulting progress. This study also aimed to analyze and elaborate the influence of *Desbumi* in Lembata in overcoming the problem of human trafficking.

³Migrant CARE is a civil society organization that focuses on strengthening the migrant worker movement as part of a social movement to achieve global justice. This organization was founded in 2004 which main work is to organize and strengthen the critical awareness of migrant workers, policy advocacy, case handling, and legal assistance for migrant workers who have injustice.

This study was conducted following one argument that the success in resolving human trafficking problems must start from the upstream area (i.e. village). Many efforts of the government, both through Task Forces and regulation, have not been able to change Indonesia's position at a higher level in tackling human trafficking. On the other hand, the success of village-based movement proved that the approach taken by targeting the community of prospective migrant workers and former migrant workers is a new hope that the problem of human trafficking can be overcome.

Literature Review

Studies on the role of villages in tackling trafficking for migrant workers have not received much attention. The studies that have far developed a lot on migrant workers and trafficking, both from a political and legal perspective, focused more on legal substance aspects, both nationally ([Izzati, 2019](#); [Rahayu, 2017](#); [Prihatin, 2017](#)) and internationally ([Daway, 2020](#); [Asriani & Amalia, 2014](#)) as well as its legal structure ([Widyawati, 2018](#)). Several studies that focused on the cultural aspect were carried out by looking more at the problems of the causes of human trafficking to migrant workers ([Aini, 2010](#)). In particular, the issue of village-based movement has also begun to be discussed ([Hidayah, 2018](#)), but it focused only on village community role in gathering information related to data on migrant workers.

From the cultural perspective, Nurul Aini sees economic problems as the main reason women become migrant workers. According to her, Migrant workers prefer spending more money on consumer goods than education ([Aini, 2010](#)). On the other hand, some research shows that migrant workers face various problems in the destination countries, and they are vulnerable to violence ([Wahyono, 2007](#); [Daway, 2020](#); [Kusuma et al. 2015](#); [Rahayu, 2017](#)), and get exploitation ([Dayaw, 2020](#); [Wahyono, 2007](#)), especially for those who do not have special skills ([Kusuma et al, 2015](#)). Such exploitation includes unsafe working conditions, unclear working hours, and becoming victims of human trafficking in prostitution places for female migrant workers ([Wahyono, 2007](#)), as well as other problems in the destination countries related to legal protection and agency issues ([Prihatin, 2007](#); [Wahyono, 2007](#)).

From the perspective of legal structure, the existing research observed the different roles of the legislative and executive in protecting migrant workers. Rahayu's research believes that the Indonesian legislative already has good initiatives in amending the Law on migrant workers ([Rahayu, 2017](#)). This is

reinforced by the study conducted by Farida et al. that Indonesia has made maximum efforts in protecting the rights of migrant workers abroad, especially Malaysia, including the enactment of Law Number 18/2017 ([Farida et al., 2019](#)). Research of Kusuma et al. also found that although there is a law, the executive is often unable to solve the problems of migrant workers properly, so it needs integral work among sectors in the ministry ([Kusuma et al., 2015](#)).

Regarding the legal substance, the first step to take is to look at the laws and regulations in Indonesia. Tan et al. found that the former regulation, namely Law Number 39/2004, could not be implemented properly ([Tan et al., 2017](#)). However, Rahayu perceived that the protection of migrant workers has hope by the presence of the amendment to Law Number 18/2017 since it regulates anything, starting from home, the process of departure, the destination country to returning home (2017).

Given that the substance of national law is limited to its jurisdiction, several studies have found the importance of regional and international cooperation through bilateral and multilateral international agreements ([Daway, 2020](#); [Tan & Shahrullah, 2017](#); [Asriani & Amalia, 2014](#)). Indonesia must bilaterally have cooperation or MOUs with the destination countries ([Widyawati, 2018](#); [Farida et al., 2019](#)) like Malaysia has done.

On a regional scale, Tan and Syahriyani said that AICHR (ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights), shows its slow movement in resolving human rights issues. Thus, strong ASEAN participation and commitment are needed through countries because the principle of intervention cannot be enforced in these regional organizations ([Tan & Shahrullah, 2017](#)). In contrast, Asriani said that ASEAN was committed to making policies that are pro towards migrant women (2014). To support this, Daway argued that ASEAN needs to pressure recipient countries to have legal mechanisms that favour migrant workers (2020).

At the local level, Hidayah found that the village community, named Desbumi, plays an essential role in gathering information about migrant workers in certain villages (2018). Starting from this study, it is essential to investigate the existence of village community further. The existing literatures do not yet see how a gathering at the village level contributes to tackling human trafficking. This study complements the gaps in the existing literatures on migrant workers and human trafficking.

B. METHODS

This research used a qualitative method with a sociological perspective. Sociological perspective was used to obtain an overview of the efforts of village communities of migrant worker in tackling human trafficking in Lembata, an area with big population of migrant. Primary data collection was carried out for two weeks in September 2019. In order to collect the data, this study has analyzed interview data from the head of local government (village and district). The interviews were also conducted with trafficking survivors, migrant worker's family and Migrant CARE and the Health Foundation for All (YKS) activists. Both organizations are the facilitators of *Desbumi*. This study also traced data from Focus Group Discussions were conducted in six groups of former migrant worker community in Lembata. Furthermore, the secondary data were collected from several sources, such as annual reports on trafficking and media, as well as data on migrant workers obtained from the records of the village community. All data and sources of information were confirmed by the author's reading of the issue of trafficking and migrant workers.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Formation Village Community (*Desbumi*) in Lembata

Desbumi Lembata was inaugurated by Hanif Dhakiri, the Indonesian Minister of Labor in Tegawiti, Ileape Regency, on August 30, 2016. *Desbumi* was launched in six villages, including Tegawiti, Beutaran, Dulitukan in Ille Ape Sub-district, and Lamatokan, Lamawolo, and Bao Lali Duli in East Illiape Sub-district (capable.or.id, 2016). The vision during the establishment of *Desbumi* was to become a center for service, protection, and empowerment of rural communities. It is also hoped that it can integrate all information instruments through *Desbumi*, so they are accessible and useful for those who will, being, and have retired from being migrant workers abroad ([Anis Hidayah, interview, September 4, 2019](#)).

The determination of Lembata as the area where *Desbumi* was established is due to the consideration that human trafficking usually starts by targeting areas that fall into the front, disadvantaged, and outermost category. Lembata is an archipelago that is geographically and geologically difficult to reach. The government does not expose much of its natural beauty to become a tourist destination, thus impacting the area's income level. With the lack of state protection of the people living in this area, many choose to become migrant workers.

Lembata is one of the areas that fall into the underdeveloped category and this area is also an area with an income that is very dependent on nature. The majority of Lembata people also choose to become migrant workers as an alternative to earning income other than gardening. Besides, the orientation of the community to work abroad is to pay for children's education and to find alternatives other than gardening ([Philipus Bediona, interview, September 2, 2019](#)). This confirms what Bediona conveyed: migrating has become part of the life of the Lembata people.

Migrant CARE highlighted many things before determining Lembata as the place for implementing *Desbumi* apart from these geographical and geological reasons. The data showed that East Nusa Tenggara is a province that occupied the first position as the region with the highest number of cases of human trafficking. The high number of human trafficking cases in this province has made the name East Nusa Tenggara often misrepresented as *Nusa Trafiking Tinggi/NTT* (High Nusa Trafficking) and the Head of District is also known as the Head of Trafficking ([liputan6.com, 2019](#)). One of the causes of human trafficking in many East Nusa Tenggara migrant workers is cultural issues, namely the culture of migration that is not carried out officially, and the aloofness of "easterners" who do not want to be witnesses when trafficking cases found ([liputan6.com, 2019](#)).

This cultural problem is the main cause of the high rate of human trafficking in East Nusa Tenggara. As explained above, migrating has become the Lembata community's culture, and many prospective immigrant workers take a personal or independent route to work. This idea is as conveyed by Bediona that many Lembata people take non-contractual routes when they go to work ([Philipus Bediona, interview, September 2, 2019](#)). The Deputy Regent of Lembata confirmed the same thing that many people migrate culturally ([Thomas Ola \(vice-regent\), FGD, September 2019](#)). The Lembata Labor Office has difficulty in collecting the data due to the prevalence of cultural migration ([Philipus Bediona, interview, September 2, 2019](#)). Although annual budgets are provided through the State Budget for the empowerment of migrant workers, this program faced difficulties because there was no exact number of migrant workers.

Public fear in dealing with bureaucracy is also why many people are reluctant to administer their immigration documents. Whenever someone wants to take care of immigration documents, most of the Lembata people chose to take the brokers' services who handled the administrative stuff even though they have to pay more to issue the required documents ([Philipus Bediona, interview, September 2, 2019](#)). The broker route was taken because of the vacant

immigration service facilities in Lembata, people had to go to Nunukan to administer their documents. The Lembata people chose to fake the population documents and immigration documents ([Philipus Bediona, interview, September 2, 2019](#)). This falsification has further enriched brokers in the administrative route for processing the immigration documents.

Another thing that supports the proliferation of human trafficking in Lembata is the absence of the village government in the migration process. This triggered the number of syndicates around the village, so the human trafficking chain generally starts from the village. A survey conducted by Migrant CARE in 2013 showed that since the Lembata was built, migration management has been managed exclusively ([migratcare.net, 2019](#)). This is supported by what Anis Hidayah said "Since the village was built, migration has been excluded from migration governance and has never been involved in making migration policies. Although the village is where people want to go, they have an intention, but syndicates recruit them" ([Anis Hidayah, interview, September 4, 2019](#)).

The management of migration which is exclusive and does not include the local government or village government created Lembata a contributor to the high rate of human trafficking in East Nusa Tenggara. The status of East Nusa Tenggara as the number one area with the highest number of human trafficking is also evident from the problem of immigrant deportation. This was conveyed directly by one of the representatives of each village who took part in the FGDs with the Vice Regent and several media;

"The East Nusa Tenggara people have many problems, whether they want to leave or are deported. Many deportation victims have settled in Nunukan and some have returned to Malaysia. This is because the province where they were sent did nothing" ([Head of Lamatoka Village, FGD, September 1, 2019](#)).

Another problem faced in the governance of migration in Lembata was the problem of low political will from the government, even this governance issue had been left to the private sector. According to Sakkeng, there was once an agent named Nunukan Jaya which was in charge of monitoring and advocating for policies related to labor recruitment mechanisms. Still, then it did not work ([Corvandus Sakkeng, interview, September 1, 2019](#)). The village government did not intervene through policies and left it to this private company because no rules frame this activity. The Lembata Government considered this matter as a PJTKI affair. Even so, Sakkeng saw that "According to Law Number 39, there is a gap for the government to participate, but there is no follow up in the form of coordination with an agent" ([Corvandus Sakkeng, interview, September 1, 2019](#)). Bediona also confirmed this condition that the Lembata Government had

planned to establish a Migration Office in Lembata. Still, there was no intention from the Regent to prove it, so they faced an obstacle in the implementation of the Regional Regulation on Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers ([Phillipus Bediona, interview, September 2, 2019](#)).

2. The *Desbumi*'s Program in Lembata

The presence of *Desbumi* in Lembata was conducive for the community in understanding good migration. In this case, it was proven that *Desbumi* had already followed up on government programs before the government implemented its program ([Ismail, interview, September 3, 2019](#)). The establishment of *Desbumi* was also intended so that migrant workers, especially female migrant workers, have the capability and capacity to advance their regions, both from an economic perspective and protection of migrant workers. In this case, women are expected to be at the forefront of empowerment and advocacy. The same thing was expressed by Darrel Hawkins, the representative of the Australian Embassy in Indonesia who became the founder of the *Desbumi*. He considered that female migrant workers must be at the forefront of empowerment and advocacy ([mediaindonesia.com, 2019](#)). It is female migrant workers who become the foundation to maximize the existing programs in *Desbumi*.

The *Desbumi* began with the provision of a Village Regulation, then expanded into economic empowerment and case handling, and continued to pay attention to children whose parents had migrated. The head of *Desbumi* group in Lamawolo said that *Desbumi* is oriented towards the protection of migrant workers. The formation of *Desbumi* group is a consistent attachment to campaigning for safe migration, and there is no excessive intervention at the group level ([Desbumi Bao Lali Duli, FGD, September 3, 2019](#)).

To start the *Desbumi*, Migrant CARE selected six villages in Lembata since these villages had the largest number of migrant workers ([Corvandus Sakkeng, interview, September 1, 2019](#)). Since December 2013, when the idea started to build, Migrant CARE and YKS surveyed Ile Ape to review the orientation and future objectives of the *Desbumi*. This program was started in January 2014 ([Corvandus Sakkeng, interview, September 1, 2019](#)) with the name "Gerakan Peduli Desa Buruh Migran" or Migrant Workers Village Care Movement. Still, it was eventually changed to *Desa Peduli Buruh Migran* or Migrant Workers Care Village ([Desbumi Bao Lali Duli, FGD, September 3, 2019](#)). There were nine groups in one *Desbumi* consisting of 15 members for each, and there are 18 members now

([Desbumi Bao Lali Duli, FGD, September 3, 2019](#)). In 2015, Desbumi was introduced by holding a Jambore in Jember attended by the representatives consisting of 101 persons from Lembata ([Corvandus Sakkeng, interview, September 1, 2019](#)). In 2016, the replication began in three villages and the Desbumi was launched ([Corvandus Sakkeng, interview, September 1, 2019](#)).

When Desbumi was about to be established, there were several obstacles because there was an established pattern in the Lembata community as conveyed by Cor as the YKS Coordinator who became Migrant CARE's local partner in the Desbumi. He said that Desbumi's first obstacle was found in a system collision in previously established villages, that is, people carried out cultural migration facilitated by Malaysians themselves ([Corvandus Sakkeng, interview, September 1, 2019](#)). Finally, this movement that involved YKS chose advocacy grand design to change the community's mindset. This elegant design was divided into three segments: policy advocacy, advocacy for the governance of migrant workers in the government system, and advocacy for strengthening the productive economy ([Corvandus Sakkeng, interview, September 1, 2019](#)).

The segment of policy advocacy was chosen to build awareness of all parties, including the government and society, to obey to laws and regulations. The main idea in the regulations is to protect the migrant workers. In other words, if the government is consequently operating its government based on applicable regulations, it is the same as protecting its people who become migrant workers. For the community, obeying the rules is a preventive step to cover the potential for human trafficking that always targets them. At the level of rule, is an urge for the government to provide legislation as a legal basis for the protection of migrant workers and safe migration ([migrantcare.net, 2019](#)) because law is an instrument that is constantly changing and needs to be evaluated at any time to maintain its effectiveness and efficiency.

This segment also exists, considering the sociological facts where the Lembata people often override migration procedures. As expressed by Ismail, many cases in the migration sector had overstepped the guidelines and regulations in Village Regulations, for instance, there must be a permit from the family, but the passports are issued using an Indonesian Family Card, Deed, and Citizenship Card only, without a license from the family ([Ismail, interview, September 3, 2019](#)). In addition to bypassing document procedures, document falsification also occurred when processing them in Nunukan, such as citizenship cards, passports, and other documents that used identity stating the Nunukan people even though the prospective immigrant was a resident of Lembata ([Corvandus Sakkeng, interview, September 1, 2019](#)).

Meanwhile, advocacy for the governance of migrant workers in the government system seeks to prevent illegal immigration patterns. This advocacy segment correlates with policy advocacy. However, the lack of governance of migrant workers makes many Lembata people use the “rat route” when they want to go overseas ([Corvandus Sakkeng, interview, September 1, 2019](#)). This happened due to the lack of attention of the Labor Department of Lembata Regional Government on the cultural migration process.⁴ This “rat route” was selected because the prospective migrant workers had falsified the documents. Therefore, this route was chosen to maintain security even though it was prone to be exploited by syndicates to exploit the prospective migrant workers.

Furthermore, advocacy for strengthening the productive economy was performed to help the Lembata people, especially women, have an income, so there was another option besides carrying out illegal migration. This segment is correlated with the previous one. Another consequence that the Lembata migrant workers had accepted due to the use of fake documents and mobilization through the “rat route” was a limited place for income earning. The place of work obtained by immigrants with fake documents was very limited, only in the area of plantations, forestry, and in domestic area (domestic workers). The wages and facilities were also very minimal, but they had to accept it, because if they didn't, they would be reported ([Corvandus Sakkeng, interview, September 1, 2019](#)).

To overcome this, the productive economy was strengthened to empower the Lembata people. As the meaning of the word “empowerment” aims to provide power, transfer power or delegate authority to other parties ([Bappenas.go.id, 2019](#)). Empowerment in the economic sector has the vision to give power to the Lembata people, especially power in economic, so those who hold power over their economy do not depend on other parties. Besides, the word “empowerment” applied to strengthen the productive economy, which means efforts to provide capacity, aims to give the Lembata migrant workers the ability to choose other safer alternatives as a substitute for service providers through migrant workers.

Therefore, the simple vision of the establishment of *Desbumi* through these three segments is to change the village paradigm as a citizen's servant, to build an awareness of the Village Government so the government's actions are transformed from its concern with administrative matters to more substantive matters and to generate an understanding of village communities on their rights

⁴Based on the results of the interview with Markus, the Head of Labor and Transmigration Department of Lembata on September 1, 2019, the number of migrant workers from Lembata was small and the Labor and Transmigration Department was only waiting for the public reports. There was no special program for protecting Indonesian migrant workers.

and obligations at work. This active role will erode private collaborators who have played more roles in recruitment. Therefore, the village is bound by the roles listed in Article 42 of Law Number 18/2017 on Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers with the presence or absence of CARE and *Desbumi* Migrants ([Anis Hidayah, interview, September 4, 2019](#)).

Based on the results of the FGDs with the *Desbumi* community in six target villages from several *Desbumis* in Lembata, it confirmed that *Desbumi* had succeeded in creating smarter migrant workers, so they could avoid human trafficking. Some of the successful efforts in the *Desbumi* performed in Lembata are listed below.

a. Productive Economy Strengthening and Capacity Building

One of Migrant CARE's accomplishments through the *Desbumi* is the productive economies strengthening for former migrant workers, especially women. The first step was taken to provide training in group organizing. The organizing was divided into administration and marketing management ([Corvandus Sakkeng, interview, September 1, 2019](#)). In the administrative aspect, an understanding on the required documents in a marketing strategy was provided and marketing management was carried out by learning asset management. Several groups have been established at present, such as agricultural groups, tourism groups, migrant worker groups, and other groups that have a focus on several things ([Desbumi Bao Lali Duli, FGD, September 3, 2019](#)). In some ways, these groups work together to produce a Creative House that functions as a meeting place and becomes a place for joint businesses, such as a sorghum (buckwheat) business. This was done by the *Desbumi* group in Bou Lali Duli and the *titi* corn and weaving business in Tegawiti Village.

The sorghum business run by the Bao Lali Duli people began with planting sorghum in one of the people's lands. It was then processed and sold at 5,000 rupiahs for village communities, and 10,000 rupiahs for residents outside the village ([Desbumi Bao Lali Duli, FGD, September 3, 2019](#)). Despite the Sorghum business, these people also offered services, such as catering, processing wood into matches, and helping village and sub-district activities as event organizers.

The members of the *Desbumi* Tegawiti group worked together to run a *titi* corn business in which the process took a week, from soaking to packaging. Now, they have succeeded in having their own land that can be planted with corn. The results of the *titi* corn business were used for group capital, so they will eventually get more assets ([Desbumi Tegawiti, FGD, September 1, 2019](#)).

The members of *Desbumi* group in Lamawolo had a cooperative that provided groceries. Besides, they also used a weaving tool to make woven fabrics originally from East Nusa Tenggara, although few of them had the skills to weave. With this cooperative, the members found it helpful to meet their daily needs. They also provided savings and loans for the members ([Desbumi Bao Lali Duli, FGD, September 3, 2019](#)).

In addition to strengthening the productive economy, these groups also often have meetings and discussions about the design of follow-up activities, activity evaluation, and membership evaluation ([Desbumi Lamawoto, FGD, September 3, 2019](#)). This activity is carried out on a schedule. In Bou Lali Duli, for instance, the first and the second week activity is collecting wood (for match), and the third week is making (*jagung titi*)/corn chips, and the fourth week is evaluation. The sense of togetherness was seen and brought out a culture of giving money to the neighbors in need if remittances from Malaysia or Kalimantan were late. The loan was repaid after the Malaysian shipment arrived ([Desbumi Tegawiti, FGD, September 1, 2019](#)).

By having this activity, the community was systematically able to plan activities, and their public speaking skills also improved. On several occasions, the members of *Desbumi* community had often joined the training held by Migrant CARE, YKS, and other institutions, both government and non-government institutions. As part of the *Desbumi*, they also had the opportunity to participate in seminars on human trafficking. As a result, apart from becoming aware of trafficking, they were also more confident in speaking out in forums. This was felt by all members of the *Desbumi* community in Lembata ([Desbumi Bao Lali Duli, FGD, September 3, 2019](#)).

Despite the discussions, they also had the opportunity to make a network and meet with other migrant workers through the national migrant workers jamboree held in Jember. Migrant CARE initiated this activity by inviting several stakeholders to discuss the local government's commitment to protecting migrant workers. This discussion was part of the plenary session series so that the migrant workers at the jamboree had a communication space with the regional policymakers. Besides, the jamboree was also enlivened by exhibitions and bazaars held by the migrant workers ([timesindonesia.co.id, 2019](https://timesindonesia.co.id)). This aimed to market their household products as well as become a learning and demonstration platform between one region and another, so every migrant worker from each region was inspired and could improve their quality and capability.

Desbumi not only strengthens the economic sector, but also provides training in each group, so those who wish to migrate can get a good and decent job with a better salary since they already have good skills ([Ismail, interview, September 3, 2019](#)).

b. Policy Advocacy and Governance for Migrant Workers

In this section, the policy foundation starts with Law Number 18/2017 on Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers which generally mandates the task of providing services and protection of migrant workers. The preamble to the Law on Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers starts with a philosophical paradigm that working is a human right that must be upheld, respected, and guaranteed. The state must provide this guarantee by fulfilling requests, and opportunities and protecting every citizen without discrimination to get a proper job and income, both at home and abroad, following their expertise, skills, talents, interests, and abilities. Based on the paradigm, more concrete obligations emerge for the state to protect every migrant worker from human trafficking, slavery, and forced labor and to protect and assist the victims of violence.

Work, both inside and outside the country, is an effort to realize equal rights and opportunities for workers to get a proper work and income. Community businesses must have a guaranteed protection to meet their needs before, during, and after work, as stated in the Law Article 7 on Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers. Each stage of protection is described in a separate article, i.e. Article 8 (protection before work), Article 21 (protection during work), and Article 24 (protection after work).

The protection before work is provided with administrative protection and technical protection. Administrative protection includes the completeness and validity of placement documents and the determination of working terms and conditions. Sechnical protection includes socialization and dissemination of information, enhancing the quality of prospective Indonesian migrant workers through education and job training, social security, facilitating the fulfilment of the rights of future migrant workers, strengthening the role of functional employees as work delivery personnel, placement services in one-stop placement services and protection of Indonesian migrant workers as well as guidance and supervision ([Article 8 Law Number 18/2017 on Protection of migrant workers](#)).

Protection during work includes 1) Data collection and registration by the labor attaché or appointed foreign service officials; 2) Monitoring and evaluation of the employers, employment, and working conditions; 3) Facilitating the

fulfillment of the rights of Indonesian migrant workers; 4) Facilitating the settlement of labor cases; 5) Providing consular services, shelter, mediation, and advocacy; 6) Providing legal assistance in the form of advocate service facilities by the Central Government and/or representatives of the Republic of Indonesia as well as guardianship following local state laws; 7) Serving as the guidance for Indonesian migrant workers; and 8) Facilitating repatriation (Article 21 Law Number 18/2017 on Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers). Protection after work is provided by facilitating their return to go home, resolving the unfulfilled rights of Indonesian migrant workers, facilitating the management of Indonesian migrant workers who are sick and dead, social rehabilitation and social reintegration, and empowering Indonesian migrant workers and their families ([Article 24 Law Number 18/2017 on Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers](#)).

Desbumi had carried out the entire mandate of the law, and according to Anis Hidayah, the protection stated in the Law on Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers is a prototype of *Desbumi* ([Corvandus Sakkeng, interview, September 1, 2019](#)). Therefore, apart from conducting training for the *Desbumi* groups, other programs included public information sharing about human trafficking and encouraging people to make documents to obtain legal migration. The program carried out by *Desbumi* in Lembata aimed to reduce the potential for human trafficking. The benefits of this program are that the Government had escorted the people who wished to migrate for accomplishing the documents and the community understood their rights and obligations as migrant workers.

A very contrasting distinction is that, at first, the community did not know the procedure for going abroad or when returning home. People were also afraid of dealing with bureaucracy, so the document was secretly done, or even without documents accomplishing at all ([Desbumi Bao Lali Duli, FGD, September 3, 2019](#)). It indicates that migration management in Lembata has not been effective yet in providing protection, both formal and material protection, and this has further nurtured the enthusiasm of human trafficking syndicates in Lembata.

Another problem before the presence of *Desbumi* was that the migrant workers lacked skills, were not connected to one another, either with other villagers or with internal villagers. Besides, there had never been any assistance to the migrant workers or their families who had been left, so it caused certain problems ([Desbumi of Tegawiti, Dulitukan, and Beutaran, FGD, September 1, 2019](#)).

At this stage, *Desbumi* also helped the community to produce village regulations in each village and there was a communication section to facilitate the dissemination of information in each village office ([Desbumi Desa Tegawiti,](#)

[Dulitukan, and Beutaran, FGD, September 1, 2019](#)). This program was also agreed upon by the Head of Lamatokan who said that *Desbumi* helped the community in producing village regulations related to migrant workers, because at first, the village only issued mandatory village regulations and were included in the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget programs and YKS also collaborated with the Village Government to collect data on the number of workers migrants in Lembata ([Head of Lamatokan, interview, September 3, 2019](#)).

To facilitate the coordination, *Desbumi* also initiated the establishment of Migrant Services House in Lowaleba whose base is the city of departure ([Local Regulation of Lembata Number 20 of 2015 on Protection of migrant workers; Philipus Bediona, interview, September 2, 2019](#)). The purpose of establishing the Migrant Services House and Shelter House was to serve as a government service unit for the needs of Indonesian Migrant Workers, both related to completeness of immigration documents and labor problems handling ([Article 1 \(21\) Local Regulation of Lembata Number 20/2015 on Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers](#)). Besides, *Desbumi* was also included in the structure of the Village Government as a new institutional structure under General Field Coordination ([Anis Hidayah, interview, September 4, 2019](#)).

The next training mechanism is the participation of migrant worker groups in responding to migrant worker issues, not only on a national scale, but also on an international scale ([Philipus Bediona, interview, September 1, 2019](#)). The United States has a mechanism called the UN General Assembly and the UN Treaty Body consisting of human committee, human rights, migrant workers, and so on. Every year, a review is always performed on the countries that have ratified the convention, and it is done for three countries in every review. In 2017, the reviewed countries were Indonesia, Mexico, and Ecuador. At an international discussion in Geneva in September 2017 which aimed at reviewing the implementation of the International Convention on Protection of the Rights of Indonesian Migrant Workers, *Desbumi* submitted a report in the form of a shadow report compiled by Migrant CARE. Besides, the world has seen *Desbumi* as an instrument that must be developed ([Anis Hidayah, interview, September 4, 2019](#)). This method has proven effective as pressure on the government to complete tasks related to international agreements in protecting migrant workers. This was conveyed by Anis Hidayah, "This international reporting method is effective in pressuring the government to immediately finish their task related to conventions that have been ratified, especially the convention on protection of Indonesian migrant workers. Also, the Government of Indonesia

received 25 review points in 2017, which will be reviewed again in the next five years." ([Anis Hidayah, interview, September 4, 2019](#)).

After performing this step, *Desbumi* had succeeded in becoming a governance model for the protection of migrant workers and village economic empowerment which was replicated into other programs which were then regulated. Besides, the prosperous ground for brokers began to decline, and the village began to be selective in seeing its citizens who were about to migrate. Therefore, *Desbumi* had massively managed to unravel the problems and prevent human trafficking from its roots. Evidence on the success of this step is the Regional Regulations on Protection of Migrant Workers established by *Desbumi* in the report on the implementation of the Geneva Convention ([Corvandus Sakkeng, interview, September 1, 2019](#)).

Another migration governance that *Desbumi* tried to do to maximize coordination and give attention to migrant workers is the establishment of Sister City, a governance model formulated by building cooperation between two districts, i.e. Lembata and Nunukan. A Departure House was built in Lembata and a Halfway House was built in Nunukan. What is meant by Sister City here is governance within the immigration office in which attention is paid to the health and mental conditions of migrant workers either before leaving or after returning from their overseas places.

The health check is essential, considering various diseases carried by Indonesian migrant workers who work abroad, including HIV/AIDS. People with HIV/AIDS in Lembata District have sharply increased in the last three years. Based on data released by the Regional AIDS Commission (KPAD) of Lembata Regency, the number of HIV/AIDS cases in this region has increased sharply since 2016 (i.e. 49 cases), 53 cases in 2017, 66 cases in 2018 and January-August period. In 2019, 27 cases were found ([kupang.tribunnews.com, 2019](#)).

Therefore, one of the ideas offered in Sister City is to provide counseling and assistance to people who are about to migrate so that the social impact that will be received by returning migrant workers, especially those affected by HIV/AIDS, can be immediately tackled.

3. *Desbumi* Progress in Suppressing Human Trafficking Potential

Based on the idea of the establishment and portrait of *Desbumi*, there were distinctions in the conditions of the community and government, both visible (e.g. economic activities) and invisible (e.g. the systematization of bureaucratic

flows in permit processing). The striking distinction was the presence or absence of village regulations governing the protection of migrant workers. Before the presence of *Desbumi*, this regulation did not exist. Meanwhile, after *Desbumi* was established, the Village Regulation became the first and foremost concern in its program. It aimed at providing rules on minimum basic protection and services for migrant workers and their family members.

Regarding bureaucratic actions, before the presence of *Desbumi*, the Village Government only provided a certificate as a villager for the prospective migrant workers who wanted to migrate. The issuance of this certificate directly impacted the untidiness of data archives on migrant workers, both village archives and village monograph data. The condition had changed after the presence of *Desbumi*, where the village government began to be responsive, not only to migrant workers, but also to the families of migrant workers. It brought a positive result in the dynamics of data on migrant workers and their families, for instance, the families of migrant workers know how their families went abroad, where they were placed, and what cases were being faced.

Before the presence of *Desbumi*, the village government's perspective on the problems of migrant workers belonged to the private sphere, meaning that if the problems occurred, it was the related party or the migrant workers who had to solve them. As a result, there was no institutional involvement of the village in dealing with the problems of migrant workers and no clear problem solving that could be taken by the migrant workers or their families to alleviate the problems, both the problems in the workplace (abroad) or their area of origin. Meanwhile, after the *Desbumi* was established, the paradigm of the Village Government began to change and the problem of migrant workers was a public problem, so the Village Government had to be involved and directly handle it. This involvement resulted in a clear resolution path and guaranteed more protection for migrant workers or their families.

The *Desbumi* had successfully suppressed the potential for human trafficking by taking over the monopoly of information from brokers who had previously been used to exploit the prospective migrant workers. This was a necessity because many village officials were also the brokers or sponsors, so they had broader access and knowledge about the ins and outs of immigration. After the presence of *Desbumi*, the space for brokering practices in recruiting migrant workers had been limited. For example, by strengthening rules and mechanisms for sanctions for village officials who were also migrant workers brokers and disseminating official information from the village to the community in the form of public information sharing and safe migration procedures.

To provide security and maintain social encouragement among migrant workers, the *Desbumi* also formed and organized migrant worker communities and migrant worker families as well as economic groups to empower migrant workers' families. The goal was to promote solidarity between communities and to utilize these networks to be economically self-sufficient through small businesses. The community that had been formed was also included in the Village Development Planning Conference so that the aspirations of the migrant workers' families could be maximally accepted and result in responsive planning, budgeting, and policy implementation.

Such a situation was different before the presence of *Desbumi*. The problem of migrant workers had not been integrated into the Village Development Planning Conference, and the migrant worker communities and their families had not yet been established. Another fundamental thing is the absence of an economic empowerment program for migrant workers and their family members, so the human trafficking chain, which is practiced through migration, continues throughout generations.

D. CONCLUSIONS

The article proved that preventing human trafficking on a village-based movement is an important way in tackling human trafficking. In this case, it is very significant to collect data, understanding, and good knowledge of prospective migrant workers by involving the community at the village level. Besides, post-placement organizing, when they return to their village, is an effective way to strengthen their abilities and economic empowerment to survive as former migrant workers. On a global policy scale, the village-based movement has succeeded to draw global attention to the importance of a local-based approach to protecting migrant workers.

This finding is different from that of the previous study which focused more on the legal structure such as the police, and the legal substance side. This study recommends the Indonesian government involve the community and village government in policymaking and tackling human trafficking. It is necessary to have further comprehensive research related to other community contribution in tackling trafficking. It is also interesting to compare others village-based movement in several other areas such as in Kebumen and Banyuwangi.

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