

# The Political Rights of Indonesian Women Migrant Workers

## Editorial

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## Articles

Women Migrant Workers in Overseas Elections: Where Are Their Voices, Aspirations, and Representation?  
*Trisna Dwi Yuni Aresta & Titi Anggraini*

The Dynamics of Political Passivity: Political Engagement Preferences of Migrant Domestic Workers in Electoral Processes in Host Countries  
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Indonesian Overseas Elections as an Arena of Activism for Indonesian Women Migrant Workers  
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Political Representation of Indonesian Migrant Women Workers (PPMI) in Parliament: Opportunities and Challenges  
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10 Years of Jokowi's Policy on the Protection of Migrant Workers: Fulfilment of the Right to Protection for Indonesian Migrant Workers is Still Limited  
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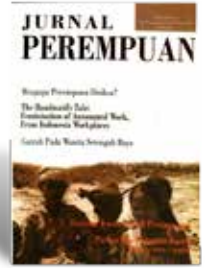
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# The Political Rights of Indonesian Women Migrant Workers

Women's participation in politics is one of the most important elements in achieving gender justice. According to Anne Phillips, women's political representation not only reflects symbolic justice, but also has a real impact on policies that are more inclusive and responsive to women's needs (Phillips 1995). In the context of women migrant workers, this political representation is even more urgent, as their working conditions are fraught with risk and are often ignored in policy making. In this context, it is important to understand how the gap between their significant economic role and the recognition of their political rights can create structural barriers.

Indonesian women migrant workers (PPMIs) play a strategic role in the national economy. Not only do they contribute to foreign exchange through remittances, but they also help shape political remittances in the countries where they work (Piper & Rother 2020). So why are their political rights still often ignored? This can be seen, for example, in the practice of the 2024 General Election. Many PPMIs lost their right to vote due to a lack of socialisation and a change in the method of voting from polling stations to postal voting. This fact is ironic. Their role in the economy is very important, but the denial of their political rights shows that their identity is not recognised as an important part of Indonesian democracy.

JP118 aims to show how the intertwined contexts of employment and concrete experiences of PPMIs need to be recognised and understood in order to address the root of the problem. For example, data from the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency (BP2MI) in 2023 shows that the majority of PPMIs worked in the informal sector, such as domestic workers (61.180 people (25.70 percent)) and caregivers (46.079 people (19.36 percent)). This dominance in the informal sector is one of the factors contributing to PPMIs' vulnerability to violence, dependence on employers, and social isolation. These conditions not only restrict their freedom of movement, but also deprive them of their political rights. For example, the lack of time affects the ability of PPMIs to organise. The prohibition by employers to take leave during elections also poses a challenge to political participation during the election period. A number of findings from JP118 articles show the challenges for PPMIs to be politically active.

Nevertheless, PPMI political awareness continues to grow through social media, family networks, migrant worker organisations and overseas political parties (Kusumastuti 2024). PPMIs face a number of challenges, but they also have the power to drive social change. For example, in monitoring the 2024 election, there were a number of initiatives and collective actions by PPMIs to ensure the conduct of inclusive and participatory election.

Within a social justice framework, Nancy Fraser emphasises the importance of recognising identity and redistributing resources to address structural inequalities (Fraser 1995). This perspective is highly relevant to understanding the challenges facing the PPMIs in the 2024 election. In Hong Kong, for example, 95.901 migrant domestic workers were unable to exercise their right to vote due to a lack of socialisation about the changes in electoral procedures. In Malaysia, the manipulation of the List of Permanent Overseas Voters (DPTLN) led to the disqualification of 370.000 migrant workers' votes, forcing a re-election (Migrant CARE 2024). These cases show that the overseas electoral system is far from inclusive, disadvantaging groups who should have equal rights.

Indonesia's 2024 election should have given a boost to PPMIs' political access. However, the reality is that ensuring their inclusion in the democratic process has not been a priority for the state. A comprehensive assessment is needed to address this challenge, with strategies that include both identity recognition and redistribution of resources to overcome existing barriers. In this way, political justice for PPMIs can be achieved through a more inclusive and integrated approach.

As part of its efforts to build a discourse on the political rights of PPMIs, *Jurnal Perempuan*, in collaboration with Migrant CARE, addresses this issue in its latest edition. This edition presents various important issues, such as:

- 1. Indonesian Overseas Elections as An Arena of Activism for Indonesian Women Migrant Workers:** This article discusses the participation of PPMIs in overseas elections, the administrative and technical challenges they face, and the proposed creation of special overseas electoral districts.
- 2. 10 Years of Jokowi's Policy on the Protection of Migrant Workers: Fulfilment of the Right**

**to Protection for Indonesian Migrant Workers is still Limited:** This article assesses the Jokowi administration's policy on the protection of migrant workers, focusing on the implementation of human rights-based policies.

**3. Women Migrant Workers in Overseas Elections: Where Are Their Voices, Aspirations, and Representation?** Using Nancy Fraser's political justice framework, this article analyses the unequal political representation of women migrant workers.

**4. Political Representation of Indonesian Migrant Women Workers (PPMI) in Parliament: Opportunities and Challenges:** This article explores the significance of PPMI representation in parliament, drawing on Anne Phillips' political theory of presence.

**5. The Dynamics of Political Passivity: Political Engagement Preferences of Migrant Domestic Workers in Electoral Processes in Host Countries:**

This article discusses how precarious working conditions affect the political passivity of migrant domestic workers.

**6. Affection and Political Awareness of Indonesian Migrant Women Workers:** This article uses Sara Ahmed's theory of affection and Nancy Fraser's theory of recognition to understand the discrimination and violence experienced by PPMIs.

Using a feminist approach, this edition aims to highlight a range of challenges to PPMI political participation, while encouraging more inclusive policy reforms. It is hoped that this edition will serve as a tool for reflection and learning in order to push for democratic policies and practices that are more sensitive and fully committed to the fulfilment of PPMI rights. Thus, the 118th issue of Jurnal Perempuan aims to present a critical and empathetic academic narrative towards the reality of women migrant workers (**Abby Gina**).

Abstracts

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**Trisna Dwi Yuni Aresta<sup>1</sup> & Titi Angraini<sup>2</sup>**  
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**Women Migrant Workers in Overseas Elections:  
Where Are Their Voices, Aspirations, and Representation?**

Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 29 No. 2, 2024, page. 75–86, 2 table, 25 bibliographies

The Overseas General Election deliberately neglects justice for Indonesian Female Migrant Workers (Perempuan Pekerja Migran Indonesia/PPMI). Structural layers of neglect occur from the formulation of regulations to their implementation. The economic contributions made by PPMI fail to be recognized by the state, as reflected in the fulfillment of their political rights during the general election. This article discusses the lost voices, aspirations, and political representation of PPMI due to poor Electoral District (Dapil) arrangements. The data in this article was gathered from 2024 monitoring activities conducted by Migrant CARE, an independent election monitoring organisation. The data was analyzed using Nancy Fraser's political justice framework, which encompasses redistribution, recognition, and representation. The article identifies two interrelated issues: (1) problems in the arrangement of Electoral Districts for overseas elections that disrupt the connection between PPMI as constituents and both candidates and elected representatives; (2) the current Electoral District policies weaken state advocacy on issues faced by PPMI. This paper proposes and advocates for establishing a Special Overseas Electoral District to accommodate the voices, aspirations, and leadership of PPMI in politics in a meaningful way, thereby achieving representative political justice.

Keywords: PPMI, Overseas Election, Jakarta II Electoral District

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**Ayu Kusumastuti**  
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**The Dynamics of Political Passivity: Political Engagement  
Preferences of Migrant Domestic Workers in Electoral  
Processes in Host Countries**

Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 29 No. 2, 2024, page. 87–95, 37 bibliographies

The enactment of Election Law Number 7 of 2017 outlines the requirements for voters, including Indonesian citizens (WNI) residing within the territory of the Republic of Indonesia or abroad. Focusing on migrant domestic workers, this paper seeks to analyze the political participation and engagement of migrant domestic workers in the political contestation of their homeland. The potential for political passivity among these workers is highly likely due to the restrictive nature of transnational caregiving work. This condition limits their freedom to engage in activities outside their work sphere, including participation in national elections. However, at the same time, they are able to identify personal barriers they face as a consequence of not participating in elections. Migrant domestic workers exhibit the characteristics of monitorial citizens, individuals who monitor and respond to election-related information amidst restrictive work patterns, while also developing alternative forms of political participation outside of electoral processes.

Keywords: women, migrants, domestic workers, home country, elections, participation

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**Indonesian Overseas Elections as an Arena of Activism for  
Indonesian Women Migrant Workers**

Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 29 No. 1, 2024, page. 97–108, 42 bibliographies

Although since the first Indonesian general election was held in 1955, it has guaranteed political rights, especially the right to vote, for Indonesian citizens who are abroad, but in the development of policies on elections in Indonesia there has been no adequate policy update. Women Indonesian migrant workers who are the face of the majority of Indonesian citizens abroad have not participated in the implementation of Indonesian elections abroad and also have not felt the direct benefits of organising Indonesian elections abroad. This research traces the emergence of overseas election monitoring activities and political education of Indonesian migrant workers. These initiatives have encouraged the political activism of Indonesian migrant workers to ensure that Indonesian elections abroad are more qualified, responsive to the migrant worker protection agenda and encourage the representation of migrant workers in legislative political representation contested in elections.

Keywords: politic activism, parliament, overseas election, Indonesian women migrant workers

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**Political Representation of Indonesian Migrant Women  
Workers (PPMI) in Parliament: Opportunities and  
Challenges**

Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 29 No. 2, 2024, page. 109–121, 1 table, 32 bibliographies

The absence of Indonesian woman migrant workers (Perempuan Pekerja Migran Indonesia/PPMI) in parliament reflects the unfulfilled political rights of citizens. With various problems of election violations such as double DPT, overseas election systems that are vulnerable to manipulation through postal and drop box methods indicate the vulnerability of the distribution of voting rights as a political right of a migrant worker, where the majority of migrant workers are women who work in the informal sector. The presence of migrant workers in parliament is important to accommodate political rights, both voting rights and the distribution of opinions. Their political representation in parliament will reflect the implementation of democratic values, and be a positive example for other women in politics, especially in the context of gender justice. This paper uses the gender justice framework of Squires, the political theory of presence from Anne Phillips, and the representation theory from Hanna Pitkin to discuss the urgency of representation of woman migrant workers in parliament as a reflection of the fulfillment of political rights. The research method used is a critical and in-depth analysis of relevant literature studies.

Keywords: political representation, women migrant workers, parliament

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**Savitri Wisnu Wardhani**

Migrant CARE and activist at Jaringan Buruh Migran (JBM)

**10 Years of Jokowi's Policy on the Protection of Migrant Workers: Fulfillment of the Right to Protection for Indonesian Migrant Workers is still Limited**

Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 29 No. 2, 2024, page. 123–136, 4 table, 26 bibliographies

The migration of Indonesian migrant workers has brought positive contributions to economic development in both the countries of origin and destination of Indonesian migrant workers. In an effort to provide protection for Indonesian migrant workers, the government has issued Law Number 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers and has carried out several protection initiatives. However, cases experienced by Indonesian migrant workers for 10 years actually show a lack of protection efforts for them. Women migrant workers in the informal sector are even more vulnerable to violence. This is due to the policy perspective that is more targeted at the area of economic gain than protection. Qualitative method exploration was carried out through the collection of literature study data and compilation of policy data for Indonesian migrant workers during the 10 years of President Joko Widodo's administration. The findings of this study indicate that there is a lack of commitment to protection efforts due to the lack of involvement of the experiences of Indonesian migrant workers in the process and implementation of policies. This study also proposes further steps that need to be taken to improve policies and implementation related to the protection of migrant workers.

Keywords: feminization of migration, policy implementation, development planning, Indonesian women migrant workers, protection of Indonesian migrant workers

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**Ikhaputri Widiyantini<sup>1</sup> & Abby Gina Boang Manalu<sup>2</sup>**

University of Indonesia<sup>1&2</sup> & Jurnal Perempuan<sup>1&2</sup>

**Affection and Political Awareness of Indonesian Migrant Women Workers**

Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 29 No. 2, 2024, page. 137–145, 18 bibliographies

The problems experienced by Indonesian female migrant workers both in their own country and in the destination country show how vulnerable they are to violence. Most of them are workers in the informal sector such as domestic and care workers, who are categorized as low-skilled workers. As a result of this categorization, they often experience discrimination and even violence. This is the impact of neglecting experiences, especially in fulfilling political rights, which hinders full access to policy guarantees that protect them. Data were collected using literature analysis and secondary research. This study uses a philosophical approach based on Sara Ahmed's theory of affection and Nancy Fraser's recognition of how the experiences of Indonesian female migrant workers need to include empathetic emotional values and recognition of the political rights of Indonesian female migrant workers. The findings of this article highlight the importance of fostering political awareness through the integration of affection and recognition in understanding and overcoming the political injustice of Indonesian female migrant workers.

Keywords: affection, political awareness, Indonesian Female Migrant Workers, recognition

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Jurnal Perempuan (JP) is a quarterly interdisciplinary publication in the English language that aims to circulate **original ideas in gender studies**. JP invites critical reflection on the theory and practice of feminism in the social, political, and economic context of Indonesian society. We are committed to exploring gender in its multiple forms and interrelationships.

The journal encourages practical, theoretically sound, and (when relevant) empirically rigorous manuscripts that address real-world implications of the gender gap in Indonesian contexts. Topics related to feminism can include (but are not limited to): sexuality, queer, trafficking, ecology, public policy, sustainability and environment, human and labor rights/ issues, governance, accountability and transparency, globalization, as well as ethics, and specific issues related to gender study, such as diversity, poverty, and education.

JP welcomes contributions from researchers, academia, activists, and practitioners involved in gender advocacy in any of the areas mentioned above. Manuscripts should be written so that they are comprehensible to an intelligent reader, avoiding jargon, formulas and extensive methodological treatises wherever possible. They should use examples and illustrations to highlight the ideas, concepts and practical implications of the ideas being presented. Feminist theory is important and necessary; but theory — with the empirical research and conceptual work that supports theory — needs to be balanced by integration into practices to stand the tests of time and usefulness. We want the journal to be read as much by stakeholders as by academics seeking sound research and scholarship in women's study.

JP appears annually and the contents of each issue include: editorials, peer-reviewed papers by leading writers; reviews, short stories, and poetry. A key feature of the journal is appreciation of the value of literature, fiction, and the visual narrative (works of art, such as paintings and drawings) in the study of women's issues

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