

# SIWI Community's Access to Information in Protecting Child Domestic Workers

Tri Joko Sri Haryono and Sri Endah Kinasih

*Department of Anthropology, Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia*

**Keywords:** Child Domestic Workers, Exclusion, Exploitation.

**Abstract:** This study explains the limited access of child domestic workers to information, which causes them to have difficulties in obtaining information and access regarding any efforts to develop organizations or join organizations that are able to advocate for their rights as women, children and citizens. The purpose of this study is to explain the SIWI community assistants who have concern for the conditions of children who are working in the worst job sectors. This research is descriptive research using the qualitative method. The research location is in Surabaya by conducting observation, in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as its data collection method. The informants for this research were the child domestic workers, the community leaders, the Department of Human Resource Development and Culture, the Child Protection Institution, the Department of Social Services, Labor, and Transmigration and the Department of Education. The results of this research show that those child domestic workers are prone to exploitation and social exclusion because they are treated like an employer's property. Through this SIWI community, they can gather together, share stories about their daily lives, knowledge and skills to gain information and access towards better jobs and no longer be domestic workers anymore. This study implies that the access to basic services and policy advocacy at various levels must be enhanced to ensure the realization of child labor protection.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Domestic workers can be grouped into two types. The first is adult domestic workers and the second is child domestic workers. Child domestic workers are then also classified into two categories, namely child domestic workers for local needs or domestic (Irawaty, 2011). The second is for foreign countries or overseas where the child domestic workers will be sent to Vietnam (Gribble & Tran, 2016), Mexico, and The Philippines (Espinosa, 2016) which means they can be categorised as migrant workers. There is also differentiation from the origins of CDW that is the one who still has family relations and the one who is not.

According to ILO (2013), there were 67 million domestic workers around the world, and 83% of them were women. While in Indonesia, According to the National Labour Force Survey there were 2,555,000 domestic workers in 2013 then increasing to 4,034,290 in 2015 and from this total 74% are women (ILO, 2017). The ILO data are the result of a study on the estimation of the total number of domestic workers based on the National Labour Force Survey,

which is available in the report with a title *Toward a Better Estimation of Total Population of Domestic Workers in Indonesia*. Based on an ILO survey that was conducted in Jakarta in 2016, there are 4.5 million local domestic workers who are working in the country. The number will increase and is in line with the level of economic growth in Indonesia. These increasing numbers show that domestic workers are an essential part of the social and economic order.

The increase in the number of domestic workers shows that the tendency of the local worker's presence is needed and becomes an employment field that is able to absorb a lot of workers, especially women (Venny, 2005, p. 4). This work has the prospect of becoming a regular job. Unfortunately, however, the increase in the number does not mean they have robust bargaining power. They are still far from prosperous and far from having decent working conditions (ILO-IPEC, 2004, pp. 109-110).

Socially, the domestic workers have lower positions towards their relations with their employers (Muryanti, 2005, p. 9). It can be seen in the condition of the people who are more familiar with calling

domestic workers helpers rather than calling them domestic workers. This situation indicates that the community still does not genuinely acknowledge the vital role of domestic workers and is always looking down on them (Utami, 2005, pp. 46-47).

When viewed from the significant increase in the number of domestic workers and most of them are experiencing unfavourable work situations, they are able to reverse the situation. Thus, consolidating the power of domestic workers through unions is one possible answer. The organisation experience has been best exemplified by the workers. Through the unions, the workers could build awareness regarding decent work and gather the power to fight for it. The establishment of the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), an affiliate of domestic workers' organisations in 54 countries, is evidence that domestic workers still need support in organising a movement.

The right to associate for domestic workers and child domestic workers can be found in Article 1, Paragraph 3 of Act no. 21 the year 2000 about trade unions. The assistance conducted by the National Network Advocacy for Domestic Workers with ILO Jakarta found that there are 13 domestic worker organisations spread in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi, Lampung, Makasar, Yogyakarta and Semarang, and five of them have become unions.

Limited access of domestic workers to the information makes it difficult for them to obtain the knowledge regarding how to develop organisations or join organisations that can fight for their rights as women, domestic workers and citizens. In Surabaya, there is no organisation for domestic workers, there is only a community called SIWI that is a platform for CDW activities.

SIWI Community is a community that consists of girl domestic workers. This community provides skills and crafts training in order to break the chain and help girls not to continue to work as domestic workers. It is because if the parents become a domestic worker then their children will follow the same path. Besides that, the SIWI Community has also informed their members regarding gender injustice that is faced by women and children.

## **2 TRAINING ABOUT GENDER INEQUALITY IN AN EFFORT TO PROTECT CHILD DOMESTIC WORKERS IN SIWI COMMUNITY**

Community participation which has developed to avoid the act of exclusion from any group is perceived as an indicator of social involvement in the community development program (Shortall, 2008, p. 452). Community development is characterised by avoiding the labelling attitude towards several groups or society who are socially different to the dominant culture, and it is essential to attract participation from all stakeholders. According to Cornwall (2008, p. 296), the concept of the involvement is to be beneficial by inviting all parties to take part in the activity.

SIWI is a community which consists of girls who work as domestic workers and some adult associates from Samitra Abhaya KPPD, Center for Human Rights Studies of Universitas, also from the arts and cultural community who have a concern for the conditions of children who work in the worst job sectors. The SIWI community was officially established on October 10, 2013, and served as a place for girls to learn, to organise and practice their life skills for their survival, although their formal education is insufficient. The embryo of SIWI formation began with gathering several Child Domestic Workers in the area of Gunung Anyar Tambak Surabaya.

These small groups often gather to make handicrafts. Furthermore, the idea to create a community for young women especially those who work as Child Domestic Workers began to appear. The members consist of part-time Child Domestic Workers who come from Gunung Anyar Tambak Surabaya. The SIWI community hopes that they can reach out to the other friends who work in the same field, especially ones who work full-time and live in their employers' houses. Such children are more vulnerable to exploitation and more socially excluded, and treated like an employer's property. Whatever they want to do, they must receive approval from their employer.

The difference between part-time and full-time child domestic workers lies in their working hours. The part-time ones work after school or before going to school. Their jobs include babysitting, house cleaning, washing clothes, dropping off and pick up their employer's children to school. Their parents usually work as housing security guards, domestic

workers, gardeners, factory workers, builders and laundry workers. In contrast, the full-time workers work and stay in their employer's house. There is a high probability that they will work 24 hours a day, without any day-off except when there is an Eid holiday. Most of them come from outside Surabaya from places such as Malang, Madura, Jombang, Nganjuk, Blitar and Kediri. The work that they do includes cleaning the house and babysitting. Some of them are working from morning until afternoon in their employer's home, then, in the evening, they are asked to take care of the store such as the food stalls. They receive this job information from their family or relatives, such as mother, sister, aunt, a brother-in-law who already becomes domestic workers in Surabaya.

The children who are part-time domestic workers should be able to go back home if they are sick. On the contrary, the full-time child domestic workers, if they have mild sickness, only receive medicine; they are only allowed to go home when they have a severe illness. They find it hard to obtain health services in their working place since most of them come from outside Surabaya and they also do not have identity cards.

There are similarities between child domestic workers and their parents who also work as domestic workers. The reason why children are willing to work is mostly to help their parents and improve their economic conditions, although some of the children also work to fulfil their lifestyle needs. There is an assumption that working in the city is a cool thing for people who come from the village or suburban area. Some of them prefer to work as Child Domestic Workers as this seems a better choice than being married at a young age. Parents assume that their child is an asset, so when the family economic conditions are difficult, they are not reluctant to send their daughters to marry at a young age. It is because if their child is married, then all their responsibilities as a parent are finished. However, if the children do not want to get married, then they are required to help the family economy by working, even though this requires them to work outside their region as a child domestic worker including facing all the risks.

The impact of the lack of interaction among child domestic workers means that many of them are unaware of the difficulties of their fellow child domestic workers and do not know that they have rights to join the union. Employers seem to disagree and prevent child domestic workers from meeting with the other child domestic workers, because they will gossip and vilify their employers, compare their working environments to other domestic workers and find new jobs. In the housing complex in Gunung

Anyar Tambak Surabaya, meetings between domestic workers are very rare. Generally, child domestic workers only go shopping with their friends to fulfil their needs as well as their employers' need, not to organise a movement to fight for their rights as child domestic workers. Those employers' restrictions are because they are afraid that the child domestic workers would ask unfulfilled demands and expose their weaknesses.

On the other hand, child domestic workers make a lot of friends and have a place to share their work problems. It is possible that, since the children are freer to say all kinds of issues to their peers, this interaction will reduce their burden. Moreover, it is possible to find the best way out of their problem. SIWI is an institution that has an intervention program and opens vast opportunities for child domestic workers to report and tell their problems.

SIWI Community has several approaches or strategies; those are: (1) outreach and organising child domestic workers; (2) increasing the knowledge and skills of domestic workers through training and providing education sessions; (3) promoting decent work for child domestic workers through social media, religious leaders and government; (4) conducting monitoring of the domestic workers' community by involving the head of the housing complex, and Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (Fostering Family Welfare) within the monitoring area; (5) building networks with unions and hotline services.

The SIWI Community is a model for monitoring or control in the case of child domestic workers in their environment, including dealing with their relationship with their employers. Besides that, the intention is to provide empowerment or educate the employers in how to provide a decent work environment including the treatment of child domestic workers. The establishment of the SIWI community is just one of several approaches and strategies to promote a proper work environment, and to eliminate or reduce child domestic workers as a profession.

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

SIWI Community is a model that has been built and developed by Samitra Abhaya KPPD. The intention is to monitor or control the existence of domestic workers in their environment including dealing with their relationship with their employers. It is also intended to provide empowerment and educate employers regarding a decent work environment

approach including the treatment of child domestic workers. The establishment of the SIWI community model has its own activity programs to conduct promotion and eliminate or reduce the number of child domestic workers. Therefore, it is expected that the rights and responsibility of domestic workers and the employers will be more transparent, measurable and monitored which will result in harmonious and better relationships between child domestic workers and the employers.

Undang-Undang No. 21 Tahun 2000 tentang Serikat Pekerja.

Venny, Adrianai., 2005. "Pekerja Domestik dari Masa ke Masa", Jurnal Perempuan 39

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was supported by the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education Indonesia

## REFERENCES

- Utami, Andri Yoga., 2005. "PRTA (Pekerja RumahTangga Anak), Fenomena Pekerja Anak yang Terselubung dan Termarjinalkan", Jurnal Perempuan 39.
- Cornwall, Andrea, 2008. "Unpacking 'Participation': Models, meanings and practices", Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal,43(3), pp. 269–283
- Espinosa, S. A., 2016. Diaspora philanthropy: The making of a new development aid?. *Routledge*, 5(3), 361-377.
- Gribble, C., & Tran, L. T., 2016. Connecting and reconnecting with Vietnam: Migration, Vietnamese overseas communities and social media. In: C. Gomes (ed). *The Asia-Pacific in The Age of Transnational Mobility: The Search for Community and Identity on and through Social Media*. UK and USA: Anthem Press.
- ILO, 2013. *Technical report: The estimation of total domestic workers in Indonesia*. Jakarta: ILO.
- ILO, 2017. *Toward a better estimation of the total population of domestic workers in Indonesia*. Jakarta: ILO.
- ILO-IPEC, 2004 *Bunga-bunga di Atas Padas: Fenomena Pekerja Rumah Tangga Anak di Indonesia*. Jakarta: kantor Perburuhan internasional
- Irawaty, D., 2011. *Redefining cultural practices and reconstructing a colonial legacy: Foundation for female household workers'empowerment in Indonesia*. Berlin: Dr Verlaag.
- Muryanti, 2005. Upaya Perlindungan PRT, Jurnal Perempuan No. 39: Pekerja Rumah Tangga. Jakarta: Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan.
- Shortall, Sally (2008). "Are rural development programmes socially inclusive? Socialinclusion, civic engagement, participation, and social capital: Exploring the difference, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 24, pp. 450–457.