

# **POLICY MODEL FOR THE PROTECTION OF INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS' REMITTANCES BASED ON PANCASILA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PROTECTION MECHANISMS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE VALUES BETWEEN INDONESIA AND THE PHILIPPINES**

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Received 15 Sep 2025 • Revised 22 Oct 2025 • Published 21 Nov 2025

## **Abstract**

Remittances from Indonesian migrant workers significantly contribute to national economic growth while serving as a crucial source of household welfare for their families. However, current remittance governance still faces regulatory and administrative challenges that hinder the full realization of economic benefits for migrant workers. This study aims to analyze Indonesia's remittance protection policies through the lens of administrative law and international law while formulating an ideal policy model grounded in Pancasila values. This research employs a normative legal methodology using statutory, conceptual, and comparative approaches, particularly contrasting Indonesia's policies with those of the Philippines. The findings reveal that although Indonesia has established a regulatory foundation through Law No. 18 of 2017 and national financial regulations, the implementation remains insufficient in addressing high transaction costs, limited access to formal financial services, and the widespread reliance on informal channels prone to fraud and loss of funds. Compared to the Philippines, Indonesia lags behind in ensuring interoperable cross-border payment systems, cost transparency, and financial literacy support for migrant workers and their families. Furthermore, weaknesses in regulatory oversight and interagency coordination contribute to unrecorded remittances and inadequate legal protection, especially for undocumented migrants. By adopting the social justice principles of Pancasila as a normative foundation, remittance policies should prioritize cost efficiency, accessible digital financial services, and strengthened supervisory mechanisms across institutions. Therefore, comprehensive government intervention is required to ensure that remittances operate not only as financial transfers but as instruments of equitable welfare and sustainable national development.

**Keywords:** Remittances; Indonesian Migrant Workers; Legal Protection; Pancasila; Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesian Migrant Workers constitute one of the groups that make a significant economic contribution to the country, particularly to Indonesia. Through the transfer of remittances, Indonesian Migrant Workers not only help improve the welfare of their families back home but also serve as an important source of foreign exchange for the national economy. Throughout the year 2024, the total remittances sent by Indonesian Migrant Workers amounted to IDR 253.3 trillion (Tempo English, 2025). This figure represents an increase compared to the previous year and underscores the position of the overseas employment sector as a significant pillar supporting Indonesia's economic growth.

However, the main issues currently faced in relation to remittances include the high cost of transfers, limited access to financial services, and the continued use of informal channels that are prone to fraud and loss. The cost of remitting money from abroad to Indonesia ranges between 4–9 percent, which is significantly higher compared to the Philippines, which has successfully reduced it to around 1 percent through policies promoting payment system interoperability and the strengthening of regulations on migrant financial services (The Philippine Star, 2023). This condition directly disadvantages Indonesian Migrant Workers, as a portion of their earnings is deducted due to administrative fees and exchange rate differences.

On the other hand, inaccurate data on migrant workers remains a major obstacle in policy formulation. The relevant ministry estimates that there are approximately 4.3 million non-procedural or undocumented Indonesian Migrant Workers. (VOI News, 2024). The remittances they send are often not recorded within the state's official system, resulting in weak legal protection and reduced effectiveness of government oversight. Although a regulatory framework already exists through Law Number 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, the Banking Law, as well as the authorities vested in the Financial Services Authority and Bank Indonesia (BI), its implementation has not yet been able to comprehensively address these issues. (Dewanto, 2021).

The urgency of discussing remittance protection becomes increasingly evident, as the majority of funds sent by Indonesian Migrant Workers are still used for consumptive needs and debt repayment rather than for productive activities or long-term investments. This fact reveals the vast untapped potential of remittances as an instrument for sustainable development. According to data from Bank Indonesia and the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency, the majority of Indonesian Migrant Worker remittances originate from the informal sector and domestic workers in Southeast Asia, who tend to have low incomes and limited access to formal banking services. (Bank Indonesia and BP2MI, 2024b).

In the context of administrative law, this situation illustrates that the functions of regulation, licensing, and supervision over remittance service providers still face significant challenges in implementation. From the perspective of international law, the state bears the responsibility to protect the economic rights of migrant workers. This obligation is stipulated in the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. (*ICRMW 1990*) (United Nations, 1990). This obligation requires every state to ensure that cross-border money transfers are conducted safely, efficiently, and at reasonable costs, while also ensuring that such financial flows contribute to development in the country of origin.

A comparison with the Philippines, one of the countries with the most efficient remittance systems in Southeast Asia, provides an interesting perspective. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) recorded total remittances in 2024 amounting to US\$34.49 billion. (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, 2025), equivalent to approximately 8 percent of the country's GDP. The Philippine government has also strengthened the framework for migrant worker protection and promoted financial literacy among remittance-receiving families through coordinated national policies.

The formulation of the problems in this research focuses on two main issues related to the protection of remittances of Indonesian Migrant Workers. First, how the legal and administrative policies of the state provide protection for Indonesian Migrant Worker remittances, in terms of regulation, implementation, and their effectiveness in ensuring the security and usefulness of remittances for migrant workers and their families. Second, what constitutes an ideal legal policy for Indonesian Migrant Workers to enable them to access and enjoy their rights fairly, in accordance with the principles of social justice grounded in the values of Pancasila, particularly in the context of economic equity and respect for the dignity of migrant workers as citizens.

The purpose of this research is to analyze and evaluate the existing legal and administrative policies of the state in providing protection for Indonesian Migrant Worker remittances, both within the framework of national law and in the context of inter-agency technical policies, such as those of Bank

Indonesia and the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency. In addition, this study aims to formulate an ideal legal policy framework for Indonesian Migrant Workers, enabling them to access and enjoy their rights fairly and sustainably, based on the principle of social justice embodied in Pancasila as the normative and ethical foundation for the implementation of policies concerning the protection of Indonesian migrant workers.

Thus, a study on remittance protection from the perspectives of administrative law and international law becomes essential. This interdisciplinary approach is expected to make a tangible contribution to strengthening regulations, enhancing the effectiveness of supervision, and safeguarding the rights of migrant workers so that the benefits of remittances can be optimally realized for both their families and the state.

## METHODS

This study adopts a normative legal research method, which emphasizes the examination of positive legal norms applicable within the Indonesian legal system. This approach was selected because the focus of the research lies in normative and conceptual aspects, making it appropriate to conduct an analysis through a review of legislation, legal principles, and doctrines (Wibowo & Matheus, 2023), relevant to the protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers' remittances. In this context, remittances are not merely considered a mechanism for transferring funds but rather an economic right that must be guaranteed by the State, both in terms of legal certainty and administrative efficiency.

To obtain a comprehensive analysis, the study employs several complementary approaches. The statutory approach serves as the primary foundation, reviewing regulations specifically governing the rights of Indonesian Migrant Worker and the remittance system in Indonesia, including Law No. 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, Law No. 3 of 2004 granting Bank Indonesia authority to regulate the national payment system, and Bank Indonesia Regulation No. 14/23/PBI/2012 on Fund Transfers. In addition, international legal instruments such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families ("ICRMW 1990") are analyzed to provide a global perspective on remittance protection. This approach enables the study to evaluate the State's obligations in providing legal protection while ensuring that remittance management is conducted transparently and efficiently.

A conceptual approach is also employed to understand various relevant legal concepts, including legal protection, remittances, financial inclusion, and the regulatory role of the State under administrative law. Consequently, the analysis is not limited to normative aspects but also examines the underlying values and legal principles that inform the formation of these regulations. Furthermore, a comparative approach is applied by reviewing migrant remittance protection practices in the Philippines, which has effectively reduced remittance costs through integrated national policies and robust regulatory implementation. This comparative analysis aims to extract best practices that could serve as references in formulating remittance protection policies in Indonesia.

The legal materials referenced in this study include the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law No. 18 of 2017 on the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, Bank Indonesia Regulation No. 14/23/PBI/2012 on Fund Transfers, and international legal instruments such as ICRMW 1990. The collection of legal materials was conducted through library research, encompassing the inventory of primary and secondary legal sources, categorization according to relevance, retrieval of additional data from official sources, and systematic organization to facilitate analysis (Muhaimin, 2020).

The analysis of legal materials is conducted using a qualitative descriptive method. Through this method, the study seeks to interpret the provisions of applicable legislation and relate them to legal principles and administrative law theories, both national and international. The analytical process includes identifying legal norms, interpreting the substantive meaning of relevant regulations, and conducting a juridical evaluation and synthesis to assess the alignment between administrative law theory and policy implementation practices. This approach allows the study to provide a systematic, objective, and argumentative overview of the effectiveness of legal protection for Indonesian Migrant Worker's economic rights through remittances.

The scope of this research is limited to a normative study of Indonesian Migrant Worker remittance protection based on national regulations and international legal instruments, analysis of the roles of state institutions such as Bank Indonesia, the Financial Services Authority, and the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency within the framework of administrative law, comparative study of remittance protection policies in the Philippines, and the relevance of the Pancasila principle of social justice in formulating an ideal legal policy for Indonesian Migrant Worker. Accordingly, this study is expected to

provide an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the legal position of Indonesian Migrant Worker remittances and serve as a reference for formulating more effective, fair, and migrant-centered policies in Indonesia.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Theoretical Framework

#### 1. Theory of Legal Protection

The theory of legal protection essentially explains the role of law in providing a sense of security, certainty, and justice for every individual in exercising their rights and obligations as citizens. According to Philipus M. Hadjon, legal protection consists of two main forms: preventive legal protection and repressive legal protection. Preventive legal protection functions to prevent violations of individual rights through mechanisms that allow the public to raise objections before a governmental decision becomes final. Conversely, repressive legal protection is provided after a violation of rights has occurred, through dispute resolution or judicial processes aimed at restoring justice to the aggrieved party. (Hadjon, 1987).

When aligned with the context of protecting Indonesian Migrant Workers, preventive legal protection can be manifested through government policies that ensure the security of remittance transfer systems, transparency of administrative fees, and the availability of accessible official transfer channels. Meanwhile, repressive legal protection is reflected in the measures taken to resolve disputes in cases of misconduct, fraud, or loss of remittance funds that cause harm to Indonesian Migrant Workers.

The right to income and the proceeds of one's work, including remittances, constitutes a part of the economic rights guaranteed by the Constitution. This is in line with the provision of Article 27 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which stipulates that "every citizen has the right to work and to a decent livelihood for humanity." Furthermore, the protection of migrant workers' rights is specifically affirmed in Law Number 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, which provides a legal basis for the state to ensure security and fairness in the process of transferring earnings through legitimate remittance channels. (Republik Indonesia, 2017). Thus, the protection of remittances not only demonstrates the role of law as an instrument for safeguarding citizens' rights but also reflects the state's responsibility to ensure the fulfillment of economic rights for its people, particularly for migrant workers.

#### 2. Theory of Administrative Law

From the perspective of Administrative Law, the government bears a significant responsibility in promoting public welfare through the execution of its public administrative functions. One of the key principles underlying this responsibility is the principle of *bestuurszorg*, which refers to the state's obligation to administer and safeguard the public interest (*zorg voor het algemeen belang*). (HR, 2020). This principle emphasizes that the role of the government is not limited to regulation but also includes the provision of public services and the exercise of supervisory functions over various social and economic activities within society.

In the context of remittance management, the regulatory function is reflected in the roles of the Financial Services Authority and Bank Indonesia in formulating policies and establishing standards related to cross-border payment systems. The service function is demonstrated through government initiatives to provide official remittance channels that are accessible, affordable, and efficient for Indonesian Migrant Workers. Meanwhile, the supervisory function is manifested in monitoring, evaluation, and control activities over remittance service providers to ensure compliance with legal provisions and the protection of consumer interests.

The concept of state responsibility in administrative law also affirms that any act or omission by the government that causes harm to citizens may give rise to legal liability. (Marbun, 2012). If the state fails to provide a secure remittance protection system, such failure may be categorized as a form of administrative negligence. Therefore, the implementation of the *bestuurszorg* principle is crucial to ensure that the economic rights of Indonesian Migrant Workers are optimally protected through administrative policies that serve the interests of the people.

#### 3. Principle of Good Financial Governance in Remittances

The application of the Principle of Good Financial Governance in the management of Indonesian Migrant Workers' remittances is of paramount importance as a manifestation of the state's responsibility to ensure that public financial administration operates transparently,

accountably, and in favor of the people's interests. This principle requires that all financial activities, including cross-border transfers conducted by Indonesian Migrant Workers, be carried out in an open and accountable manner both administratively and legally. Transparency in transfer costs serves as one of the main pillars of this principle. Through clear disclosure of information regarding administrative fees, foreign exchange rates, and processing times, Indonesian Migrant Workers can accurately determine the amount deducted and the net value received by their families in Indonesia. When such information is not presented transparently, migrant workers often suffer economic losses due to hidden fees or significant discrepancies between the official exchange rate and the actual rate applied by remittance service providers (Indrawati, 2012).

In addition to the aspect of transparency, the Principle of Good Financial Governance also emphasizes consumer protection in remittance services as an integral part of citizens' economic rights. This protection includes the obligation of financial institutions both banking and non-banking to ensure transaction security, safeguard personal data confidentiality, and provide compensation in cases of transfer errors. In practice, many Indonesian Migrant Workers still rely on informal or unregistered channels, as the costs of official transfer services are often perceived as too high and the procedures too complex. This situation creates significant legal and economic risks, as informal channels operate outside the supervision of the Financial Services Authority and Bank Indonesia. Consequently, in cases of fraud or loss of funds, victims face considerable difficulty in obtaining legal protection. Therefore, the presence of the state through clear regulations and stringent supervisory mechanisms is imperative to ensure the protection and accountability of remittance transactions (Ayuningtyas & Yuniza, 2022).

The implementation of the principle of Good Financial Governance in the context of remittances is closely related to the concept of *bestuurszorg* in Administrative Law, which refers to the government's responsibility to administer public interests. The government's role is not limited to that of a regulator establishing policies, but also extends to that of a public service provider responsible for ensuring that cross-border financial systems operate fairly and efficiently. In Indonesia, this responsibility is realized through coordination between Bank Indonesia, the Financial Services Authority, and the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency, which oversee remittance service providers and ensure the existence of effective complaint and dispute resolution mechanisms for Indonesian Migrant Workers who suffer losses. Failure of the state to provide a secure and transparent remittance system may be classified as a form of administrative negligence, which contradicts the principle of state responsibility in public law. (HR, 2020). Therefore, the protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers' remittances is not merely a moral responsibility, but also a legal obligation of the state derived from the Constitution, national legislation, and the principles of social justice embodied in Pancasila.

#### **4. Pancasila as the Normative Foundation for Remittance Protection**

As the foundational philosophy of the state, Pancasila holds the highest position as the source of all sources of law in Indonesia. Therefore, every legal policy formulated by the government must align with the values it embodies. In the context of remittance protection for Indonesian Migrant Workers, the values of Pancasila serve as a principal guideline particularly the values of "Just and Civilized Humanity" and "Social Justice for All Indonesian People." The value of humanity emphasizes that the state has an obligation to treat every citizen, including migrant workers employed abroad, with full respect for their dignity and human rights, without any form of discrimination. This means that remittance-related policies should not merely be viewed as economic measures but also as an integral expression of respect for human rights, encompassing the right to fair compensation and welfare.

Meanwhile, the value of social justice embodied in the fifth principle of Pancasila implies that the economic benefits derived from remittances should be distributed fairly across all levels of society, rather than being enjoyed by only a select few. In this regard, the state bears both a moral and constitutional responsibility to ensure that the remittance system operates in a fair, transparent, and migrant-worker-oriented manner benefiting both the Indonesian Migrant Workers and their families back home. Protection of remittances thus not only reflects the active presence of the state in safeguarding the welfare of its citizens but also serves as a tangible manifestation of social justice as mandated by Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

Thus, Pancasila serves not only as a philosophical foundation but also as a normative basis and a guiding principle of national legal policy in efforts to protect the economic rights of migrant workers. The implementation of the values of humanity and social justice within remittance policies

reflects the spirit of a law-governed state that prioritizes the public interest (*pro bono publico*) and aims to establish an equitable economic system in accordance with the ideals of the Indonesian nation. (Asshiddiqie, 2020).

### **National Legal Policy on Remittances**

In an effort to strengthen legal protection for Indonesian Migrant Workers and ensure that the management of remittances operates fairly, transparently, and in favor of the people's interests, the state must establish legal policies that align with philosophical, constitutional, and juridical foundations. The national legal policy on remittances should not be viewed merely as an economic policy, but rather as a manifestation of the state's responsibility to guarantee the economic rights of its citizens. Fundamentally, this policy rests upon four main pillars as follows:

#### **1. Pancasila as the Philosophical and Normative Foundation**

As the foundation of the state and the source of all sources of law, Pancasila occupies the highest position in the hierarchy of legal norms in Indonesia. The values contained in the second precept, "Just and Civilized Humanity," and the fifth precept, "Social Justice for All the People of Indonesia," serve as normative guidelines in every policy related to remittance protection. The value of humanity affirms that every citizen, including Indonesian Migrant Workers, has the right to dignified and fair treatment for the fruits of their labor. Meanwhile, the value of social justice mandates that the economic benefits of remittances be enjoyed equitably and not merely benefit certain groups. Thus, remittance policy is not solely an economic instrument, but also a form of actualizing Pancasila values in realizing distributive justice for all the people of Indonesia. (Notonagoro, 1983).

#### **2. The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia**

The constitutional foundation for remittance protection is reflected in Article 27 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution, which states that "every citizen is entitled to work and a decent living for humanity." This provision affirms the state's responsibility to ensure that the fruits of every citizen's labor, including income remitted from abroad, are received in full and securely. In addition, Article 28D paragraph (1) guarantees the right to fair legal protection and certainty, while Article 28I paragraph (4) underscores the state's obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights. Therefore, regulations concerning remittances must be framed within the protection of economic rights as part of the human rights guaranteed by the constitution. (Republik Indonesia, 1945).

#### **3. Law Number 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers**

Law Number 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers serves as the primary legal foundation that affirms the state's responsibility to provide comprehensive protection to Indonesian Migrant Workers, both before departure, during their employment abroad, and upon return to the homeland. This law emphasizes that the state must not neglect the economic rights of its citizens working overseas. This is reflected in Article 2 letter (d), which enshrines the principles of justice and equality, as well as Article 6 letter (f), which provides legal guarantees for Indonesian Migrant Workers to earn income and remit it to Indonesia through mechanisms that are secure and legally compliant. (Republik Indonesia, 2017).

These provisions serve as the foundation for the government to formulate policies that are not only normative but also implementable. The state is obligated to create an integrated and efficient remittance system, reduce high transfer costs, expand access to formal financial services, and enhance financial literacy for Indonesian Migrant Workers and their families. Thus, the government's role extends beyond mere regulation to also acting as a facilitator of welfare, ensuring that the benefits of remittances are tangibly felt by migrant workers and their families in Indonesia.

#### **4. Operational Regulations: Bank Indonesia Regulations, the Financial Services Authority, and the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency**

At the operational level, the protection of remittances is regulated through various regulations from financial institutions and Indonesian Migrant Workers protection agencies.

- a. Bank Indonesia, issued Bank Indonesia Regulation Number 23/7/PBI/2021 on Payment System Infrastructure Providers, which regulates interoperability and the security of cross-border payment systems. (Bank Indonesia, 2021b).
- b. Bank Indonesia Regulation Number 23/6/PBI/2021 on Payment Service Providers expands the digital financial services ecosystem, enabling Indonesian Migrant Workers to transfer funds quickly, affordably, and securely. (Bank Indonesia, 2021a).

- c. the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency, as the agency implementing labor migration policies, also collaborates with BI and the Financial Services Authority in establishing supervision mechanisms, financial education, and complaint channels for Indonesian Migrant Workers who suffer losses due to misuse of remittance services.

Therefore, national legal policy on Indonesian Migrant Workers remittances must be designed in an integrated manner, encompassing the foundational values of the state (Pancasila), the constitution (1945 Constitution), regulations on migrant worker protection (Law 18/2017), and financial services regulations. Only in this way can the state ensure that the economic rights of Indonesian Migrant Workers to the fruits of their labor are protected, transfer costs are minimized, and the remittance system functions as an instrument of social justice and sustainable national development.

## **International Instruments: ILO and ICMW**

### **1. ILO – International Labour Organization**

- ILO Convention No. 97 (Migration for Employment)

ILO Convention No. 97 of 1949 on Migration for Employment stands as a fundamental international instrument providing comprehensive protection for migrant workers, including rights to wages and remittances. This Convention emphasizes the principle of non-discrimination, stipulating that migrant workers must receive treatment equal to that of domestic workers in terms of wages, working hours, social security, employment conditions, trade union membership, and access to employment services. Member states are obligated to provide accurate information services, supervision of placement agencies, and protection throughout the recruitment, travel, and placement processes to shield migrant workers from fraud, exploitation, or illegal migration practices. In the context of remittances, Article 9 of the Convention affirms migrant workers' right to transfer their earnings and savings to their country of origin as they wish, provided it complies with national regulations on foreign exchange and financial matters. This provision demonstrates international recognition that remittances constitute an inherent economic right of migrant workers, meaning states must not restrict or obstruct money transfers except for legitimate regulatory purposes. The Convention's Annexes further reinforce this protection by regulating employment contracts, obligations for free employment services, prohibitions on unlawful fees, administrative assistance, access to healthcare, and facilities for transporting personal belongings and work tools all of which support the economic stability of migrant workers and their families. Overall, ILO Convention No. 97 positions remittances not merely as a financial transaction, but as part of international labor rights, a welfare protection mechanism for migrant families, and a key element in global migration governance. Therefore, the Convention serves as a normative reference for states in formulating remittance policies that are safe, legal, inclusive, and free from discrimination, while promoting formal financial systems that protect migrant workers from illegal money transfers or burdensome remittance costs. (ILO, 1949).

- ILO Convention No. 143 (Migrant Workers)

ILO Convention No. 143 of 1975 serves as a complementary international instrument that emphasizes the protection of migrant workers in two main aspects: preventing illegal migration and abuses in the migration process and promoting equal treatment for lawfully residing migrant workers. Although the Convention does not explicitly use the term "remittances," its provisions provide a crucial foundation for guaranteeing migrant workers' rights to their earnings and their ability to send wages to their families in their country of origin. Through the principle of equal treatment, the Convention ensures that lawfully present migrant workers must be treated on par with local workers in terms of employment rights, wages, social security, and other benefits attached to the employment relationship implicitly guarantee that migrant workers' income cannot be discriminatorily reduced or misused. Article 9 affirms that migrant workers, even those whose status cannot be regularized, remain entitled to wages, social rights, and other benefits arising from their previous employment, as well as access to legal mechanisms to defend those rights.

This provision is critical because it ensures that migrant workers can still receive and remit earnings they have lawfully earned, even in situations of vulnerability. Additionally, the Convention stipulates that deportation costs cannot be imposed on migrant workers, thereby protecting their income from unlawful deductions. Thus, while not directly using the term

“remittances,” ILO Convention No. 143 establishes a robust economic protection framework for migrant workers, ensuring that their earnings are secure and free from exploitation, and providing a foundation for fair, safe, and non-discriminatory remittance policies. This Convention complements ILO No. 97 by expanding economic guarantees for migrant workers, ensuring the continuity of income rights, and supporting the smooth flow of remittances which serve as a primary means of family welfare for migrant workers and a significant economic contribution to their countries of origin. (International Labour Organization, 2025).

## 2. (b) ICMW 1990 – UN Convention on Migrant Workers

- Article 32: Right to remit earnings

Article 32 of the ICMW affirms that migrant workers have **an absolute right** to take, hold, and transfer their earnings, savings, and other property lawfully acquired during their employment in the destination country. Through this provision, international law positions remittances as **an economic human right**, not merely an ordinary financial activity. This norm protects migrant workers from various restrictive practices, such as transfer limitations, wage withholding, unauthorized deductions, exchange rate manipulation, or discriminatory policies that burden migrant workers.

Article 32 also carries an **anti-exploitation** dimension, as many migrant workers are unable to bring home the fruits of their labor due to abusive contracts, illegal fees imposed by agents or employers, or administrative barriers. This article ensures that all earnings including allowances, severance pay, social benefits, and savings remain the exclusive right of the worker and their family. The norm also protects migrant families, since remittances are often the primary source of livelihood back home, covering education, healthcare, and daily needs.

Furthermore, Article 32 strikes a balance between workers rights and state authority by permitting national foreign exchange regulations, while insisting that such restrictions be reasonable, non-discriminatory, and consistent with international law. In other words, states cannot use financial policy pretexts to confiscate or obstruct migrant workers earnings. This principle reinforces the idea that migrant workers are entitled to fully and dignifiedly enjoy the fruits of their labor.

- Article 47: State obligation to facilitate safe and affordable remittances

If Article 32 grants the right, then Article 47 imposes the state obligation. This provision mandates both the country of origin and the destination country to ensure the availability of remittance systems that are easy, fast, secure, transparent, and affordable. This reflects a modern human rights approach that not only recognizes citizens rights but also ensures state responsibility in their implementation.

- Article 47 emphasizes several fundamental principles:

- Accessibility**

States must provide remittance facilities that are easily accessible to migrant workers, including those with low incomes or working in domestic and informal sectors.

- Secure & Transparent**

States are obligated to combat remittance fraud, money laundering through migrant channels, and illegal agents exploiting migrant workers' vulnerabilities.

- Reasonable Remittance Fees**

Transfer costs must be fair and not burdensome. This aligns with UN SDG Target 10.c to reduce global remittance costs to below 3%.

- International Cooperation**

States must collaborate to establish official remittance networks, harmonize financial systems, and promote modern remittance technologies (digital banking, fintech, mobile systems).

- Financial Inclusion & Migrant Education**

States must facilitate bank account access, financial literacy training, and protection of migrant workers' financial assets. Article 47 expands remittances from a mere individual right into a national and global development policy, as remittances are proven to be a critical source of foreign exchange and an instrument for empowering migrant families and communities (Komnas HAM, 2016).



## Current State of Indonesian Migrant Workers Remittances in Indonesia

### 1. National Remittance Value

Remittances from Indonesian Migrant Workers make a significant contribution to the national economy, serving not only as a source of income for migrant families but also as a pillar of the country's economic stability. Official data presented at a coordination meeting led by the Deputy Minister for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers show that in 2024, total remittances sent by Indonesian Migrant Workers reached approximately Rp 251 trillion, or about USD 15.7 billion. This figure underscores the strategic role of Indonesian Migrant Workers as a contributor to national foreign exchange, accounting for roughly 1% of Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Furthermore, a Bank Indonesia survey cited in the statement reveals that approximately 68% of Indonesian Migrant Workers earnings are remitted to Indonesia to support household economies. The use of remittances also reflects a productive consumption pattern, with 48% allocated to daily needs, 21% to investment, 7% to savings, 5% to business activities, and the remainder for other purposes. This pattern demonstrates that remittances not only sustain the basic needs of Indonesian Migrant Workers families but also contribute to enhancing economic capacity through investment and productive business development.

With the steadily rising remittance figures, the government emphasizes the importance of strengthening remittance governance, including improving access to official financial services, digitizing money transfer systems, and reducing transaction costs. This strategy is expected not only to sustain remittances but also to optimize their impact as a national economic force capable of driving individual and family welfare as well as more inclusive national economic growth. (KP2MI, 2025).

### 2. Formal vs. Informal Channels

#### a. Informal

In the context of remittance transfers, Indonesian migrant workers face a dualism in fund transfer mechanisms: formal and informal channels. Informal channels remain a significant choice among Indonesian Migrant Workers, especially those in domestic sectors and from rural areas. Despite the rise of fintech, mobile banking, and e-wallets opening access to formal financial services, adoption remains uneven. This highlights that limited financial literacy, poor understanding of digital financial services, and the perception that formal procedures are more complicated are key drivers pushing migrant workers toward informal channels. Additionally, socio-cultural factors such as trust in community networks, faster access, and ease of cash withdrawal for families in villages further solidify the dominance of informal channels.

It is not uncommon for Indonesian migrant workers to entrust money to fellow workers, use community agents, or rely on unofficial remittance services, even though these channels carry high risks in terms of legal protection and fund security. Other structural challenges such as limited geographic access, regulatory barriers in destination countries, document retention by employers, and difficulties in opening independent bank accounts further reinforce financial exclusion and dependence on informal channels. Therefore, the remittance issue for Indonesian migrant workers is not merely about technology or financial service availability, but also deep-rooted structural, cultural, and social barriers. To reduce reliance on informal channels, a holistic approach is needed through simplifying access to formal remittance services, enhancing financial literacy starting from pre-departure, providing bank accounts to migrant workers before placement, and designing more inclusive financial products tailored to the needs of migrants and their families. (Women's World Banking, 2025).

#### b. Formal

Remittances from Indonesian migrant workers are a vital source of foreign exchange and an instrument for improving the welfare of migrant families and the national economy. Strengthening formal channels is the primary focus to ensure remittances are delivered safely, efficiently, and with optimal impact. Bank Indonesia and national financial institutions continue to develop digital-based remittance systems through collaborations between banks such as BRI and CIMB Niaga with fintech companies and overseas digital platform partners. This service integration enables Indonesian Migrant Workers to transfer funds online anytime, anywhere with secure and transparent processes, thereby reducing reliance on informal channels. World Bank data cited shows that in 2005, only 36% of Indonesian Migrant Workers remittances flowed through formal channels. However, with the advancement of digital

innovation and official remittance services, the share of formal remittances continues to rise, driven by increased technology access and regulatory policies that reinforce the use of official channels.

This digital innovation strengthens the prospects for remittance growth amid global economic recovery post-pandemic, which has reopened Indonesian Migrant Workers placement opportunities. Remittance providers now offer fast and efficient services, even cross-border, at lower costs than traditional mechanisms. Thus, financial system digitization not only boosts Indonesian Migrant Workers financial inclusion but also promotes formal channel usage through enhanced access, security, and transaction convenience. The government's efforts to strengthen formal systems run in parallel with strategies to improve workforce quality, enhance migration governance, and integrate Indonesian Migrant Workers protection services ensuring remittances flow through safer official channels that are more productive for family welfare and national economic stability. (Kompas.id, 2025).

### **3. Remittance Cost Issues (4–9%)**

In this regard, it is highlighted how Indonesian migrant workers both formal and informal, including many women from rural areas still heavily rely on informal channels when sending money home to their families. In the context of remittance transfers, informal channels are often chosen due to speed, ease of access, and established community networks among migrant workers. Although digital financial technology is gaining ground with e-wallets, mobile banking, and cross-border fintech seeing significant growth in Indonesia adoption by migrant workers remains suboptimal due to several barriers, such as limited financial literacy, restricted access to opening bank accounts or using digital financial services, and the perception that formal channels are more complicated or unsuited to migrant workers' conditions. This shows that transactions through informal channels often involve hidden fees or higher margins, and while no specific figures are provided for the Indonesian migrant worker subsector, the global context indicates that such costs can range from 4% to 9% or more of the remittance amount far exceeding the international target of below 3% for transfer fees. This also underscores that transitioning from cash to digital and from informal to formal channels requires critical improvements in access to digital devices, financial agent networks, bank-fintech partnerships, and financial education. With better digital infrastructure, migrant workers can utilize more transparent and lower-cost formal channels, which in the long term will reduce fund leakage caused by high fees or risks associated with informal routes. (Women's World Banking, 2025).

### **Challenges in Remittance Protection**

The protection of remittances for Indonesian Migrant Workers is a critical part of the state's responsibility to safeguard the economic rights of its citizens, as enshrined in Law No. 18 of 2017 on the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers. However, field-level implementation continues to face numerous obstacles that undermine the effectiveness of legal and administrative safeguards. Broadly speaking, three main challenges stand out in remittance protection. These include:

#### **1. Low Financial Literacy Among Indonesian Migrant Workers**

One of the primary obstacles in remittance management is the low level of financial literacy among Indonesian Migrant Workers. Most migrant workers lack sufficient understanding of how to use formal financial services, manage earnings productively, or leverage secure digital financial tools. This limited knowledge leads many Indonesian Migrant Workers to prefer informal channels for sending money home, which carry high risks of fraud and loss of funds. The Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency data reveals that most Indonesian Migrant Workers still use remittances primarily for consumption needs, while long-term savings and investment rates remain low. (BP2MI, 2020). Therefore, enhancing financial literacy is the key factor in strengthening legal protection for remittances, as it directly relates to individuals' ability to make safe and rational economic decisions.

#### **2. High Number of Non-Procedural Indonesian Migrant Workers and Unrecorded Remittances**

The second equally critical issue is the large number of non-procedural Indonesian Migrant Workers migrant workers who depart without following official government procedures. According to the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency data, it is estimated that over 4 million non-procedural Indonesian Migrant Workers are working abroad without being recorded in the national system. (KP2MI, 2025). This situation results in unrecorded remittances sent through informal channels, meaning the state loses the ability to monitor and secure these funds. Additionally,

remittances sent through informal channels are not protected by official financial regulations and lack legal recourse in cases of fraud or loss of funds. As a result, Indonesian Migrant Workers economic rights become vulnerable, and the state struggles to harness the foreign exchange potential for national development.

### **3. Lack of State Oversight on Remittance Services**

Equally critical in the challenges of remittance protection is the lack of effective state oversight over remittance service providers. Although regulations have been issued by Bank Indonesia, the Financial Services Authority, and the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency, inter-agency coordination in monitoring cross-border remittance activities remains weak. (Bank Indonesia and BP2MI, 2024a). Several issues that frequently arise include:

- a. Lack of an integrated data system between financial institutions and labor agencies.
- b. Weak oversight mechanisms for non-bank remittance service providers.
- c. High cross-border transfer costs due to limited payment system infrastructure.

## **Comparison Between Indonesia's Alignment with ILO & ICMW Standards and the Remittance Governance Practices of the Philippines**

### **1. The Philippines as a Benchmark Country for Remittance Governance**

The Philippines is recognized as one of the countries with the highest remittance performance in the world and is frequently regarded as a reference model in the governance of migrant worker remittances. According to a report from Antara, in 2020, personal remittances sent by Filipino migrant workers amounted to USD 33.19 billion, only slightly decreasing from USD 33.47 billion in 2019, despite the global economic downturn caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (Antara, 2018). This remittance value is highly significant as it contributed 9.2 percent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and approximately 8.5 percent to the Gross National Income (GNI) of the Philippines, positioning remittances as one of the pillars of national economic stability.

The resilience of remittance flows during the pandemic demonstrates the robustness of the Philippines' financial system and migration governance, particularly supported by its substantial migrant workforce, estimated at around 12 million individuals working across various countries. This condition further emphasizes that the sustained remittance inflow amid the crisis not only reflects the country's economic reliance on migrant workers but also signifies the effectiveness of government policies in facilitating continuous access to formal remittance channels during a global emergency. Overall, the experience of the Philippines illustrates how institutional preparedness, regulatory support, and strong accessibility to formal remittance systems can maintain the stability of migrant financial flows, even in times of severe global economic uncertainty (Dewanto, 2021).

The remittances sent by Indonesian migrant workers amount to approximately IDR 128 trillion per year, or the equivalent of around USD 8.8 billion, according to Bank Indonesia data; however, this figure represents only about one-third of the remittance volume generated by Filipino migrant workers. This comparison indicates that the Philippines not only maintains a significantly larger remittance flow but also possesses a more advanced and mature system for managing migrant remittances. The high value of remittances in the Philippines reflects not only the large number of Filipino migrant workers but also the country's success in establishing efficient, formal, and globally diversified remittance channels.

While Indonesia continues to face challenges in expanding access to formal remittance systems and reducing dependency on informal transfer channels, the Philippine experience demonstrates that with a strong financial infrastructure, supportive regulatory framework, and a well-established culture of using official remittance mechanisms, migrant remittances can become a stable source of foreign exchange and deliver socio-economic benefits to migrant-sending communities, even amid global pressures such as the pandemic. Therefore, the Philippines' position as a benchmark country in migration and remittance governance is highly relevant for Indonesia as it seeks to evaluate and strengthen its national remittance framework, with a focus on enhancing access to formal channels, promoting digitalization of remittance services, and reducing transaction costs to ensure that migrant earnings are optimally received by families back home.

### **2. Harmonization of Indonesia's Policies with ILO and ICMW Standards on Migrant Worker Protection**

Indonesia's efforts to align migrant worker protection policies with international ILO and ICMW standards are reflected in institutional cooperation and the adoption of core principles within

national regulations. The official ILO brochure notes that Indonesia has ratified 20 ILO conventions, including 9 out of 10 fundamental conventions, and has established longstanding partnerships to ensure compliance with international labor standards.

Although Indonesia has not yet ratified ILO Conventions No. 97 and No. 143 on labor migration, the Government continues to strengthen the protection of migrant workers through tripartite social dialogue, labor inspection, migrant service integration, and social protection policies. The brochure further indicates that the ILO collaborates with the Indonesian Government in strengthening labor regulation, addressing informality, empowering MSMEs, and safeguarding vulnerable groups including migrant workers and women workers.

In addition, ILO-supported migrant worker information centers have been integrated into Government service systems incorporating gender-responsive approaches, demonstrating attention to equality of access and protection for Indonesian Migrant Workers. These initiatives show that although Indonesia has not yet formally bound itself to all global ILO instruments on migration, the country has taken significant steps to internalize international norms into its migrant worker protection system, including support for legal assistance, social security schemes, and access to formal remittance channels.

Accordingly, Indonesia is moving along a path of harmonization and progressive implementation, bringing its national legal system increasingly closer to ILO international standards and the principles of migrant worker protection under the ICMW (International Labour Organization, 2023).

### **3. Harmonization of Philippines's Policies with ILO and ICMW Standards on Migrant Worker Protection**

The Philippines is one of the countries that demonstrates a high level of compliance and harmonization with international standards on the protection of migrant workers as stipulated under ILO instruments and the United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families ("ICMW"). The country has not only ratified both instruments but has also translated them into a robust national legal framework, particularly in relation to the protection of migrant workers' remittances. As set forth in House Bill No. 4939, or the Overseas Filipino Workers Remittance Protection Act, the Philippines reinforces its commitment to safeguarding the rights of migrant workers through policies on remittance cost regulation, exchange rate transparency, and protection against exploitative financial practices.

The Bill contains concrete provisions, including the establishment of maximum remittance fee limits set by Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas ("BSP"), mandatory disclosure of exchange rates by remittance service providers, stringent supervision of money transfer institutions, and criminal sanctions for violations. Additionally, the Philippines institutionalizes mandatory financial literacy programs for migrant workers and their families as part of the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar ("PDOS") and Post-Arrival Training Seminars to ensure that remittances are utilized in a productive and sustainable manner.

This protection framework demonstrates that the Philippines not only fulfills the fundamental principles of the ILO and ICMW but also advances progressive protection mechanisms that strengthen the position of migrant workers as essential national economic actors and ensure that remittances are transferred through formal channels at reasonable, secure, and transparent costs. Through this approach, the Philippines is regarded as a model of best practice in migrant remittance protection within the Asian region (Republic of the Philippines, House of Representatives, 2025).

### **Ideal Policy Model for Remittance Protection Based on Pancasila**

Social Justice for All People of Indonesia—the Fifth Principle of Pancasila—is not merely a declaratory principle but a living constitutional command that binds the state to actively prevent and remedy economic inequality, particularly for vulnerable groups such as Indonesian Migrant Workers. In the context of remittances, this principle requires the state to ensure that the hard-earned income of migrant workers is not diminished by excessive fees, fraud, or lack of financial knowledge, but instead returns in full and in a manner that is productive for their families and communities.

A policy model for remittance protection grounded in the philosophical foundation of Pancasila must be capable of establishing a balance between regulatory interests, national economic dynamics, and the social dimensions of society. The State shall not merely position itself as a normative regulator, but must also be present as a provider of public services that guarantee the welfare of Indonesian

Migrant Workers and their families. Within this framework, remittances can no longer be viewed merely as commercial financial flows but as a manifestation of the right to income earned through the labor and sacrifices of Indonesian Migrant Workers abroad. With such recognition, the State bears a constitutional obligation to ensure comprehensive legal protection for all processes related to remittance transfers — from ensuring the security and transparency of transfer mechanisms to legal certainty for the services provided. This mandate is consistent with the substance of Law No. 18 of 2017, which affirms that the fulfillment of economic protection for Indonesian Migrant Workers is a State obligation throughout all phases of migration, whether pre-departure, during employment abroad, or upon return to Indonesia.

The Fifth Principle of Pancasila cannot be understood merely as a moral slogan but must be regarded as a constitutional mandate requiring the state to undertake concrete measures to rectify economic disparities and to provide adequate protection for groups situated in vulnerable positions, including Indonesian Migrant Workers. In the context of remittances, this mandate obliges the state to ensure that the lawful earnings of Indonesian Migrant Workers are not diminished by disproportionate transfer fees, exposure to fraud, or limitations in financial literacy. The state is duty-bound to establish a system that guarantees every rupiah remitted by Indonesian Migrant Workers returns to Indonesia safely, transparently, and in a manner that can be sustainably utilized to enhance the welfare of their families and home communities. From this perspective, remittance-protection policies can no longer be viewed merely as technocratic matters; rather, they constitute a concrete manifestation of the implementation of social-justice values within public policy. In this regard, the state is required to ensure that the economic benefits derived from employment abroad are distributed fairly to those citizens who make significant contributions yet frequently receive insufficient protection.

In addition to legal protection, optimizing the benefits of remittances requires concrete efforts to reduce transaction costs and strengthen financial inclusion. According to World Bank data (2023), the remittance fees imposed on Indonesian Migrant Workers remain within the range of 4 to 9 percent — a figure that clearly does not meet the global target of 3 percent (World Bank, 2023). Such high costs burden Indonesian Migrant Workers and diminish the potential of remittances as a driver of economic development. Therefore, the Government must enhance cross-border payment system interoperability, expand access to digital financial services, and provide incentives for remittance institutions that are able to reduce transaction costs.

The persistently high remittance costs, which still range between 4–9 percent, constitute the most glaring form of distributive inequality, whereby a significant portion of the earnings of Indonesian Migrant Workers is absorbed by financial institutions and intermediary agents rather than being fully transferred to the intended recipient families. This situation clearly contravenes the Fifth Principle of Pancasila, which mandates a just and proportionate distribution of the fruits of development to the entire Indonesian people, including those working abroad to support both their household economies and the national economy.

To rectify this inequality, concrete policy measures must be formulated in the form of binding regulatory interventions, including, *inter alia*, the establishment of a maximum remittance fee cap within the range of 1–2 percent through a Joint Regulation issued by the Financial Services Authority and Bank Indonesia. The imposition of such a cap is not merely an administrative figure; it represents a tangible manifestation of improved welfare: every one-percentage-point reduction in fees translates into additional real income for millions of low-income Indonesian Migrant Workers families who rely on remittance flows to meet their basic needs.

In addition to fee capping, the State must also introduce incentive mechanisms—through fiscal facilities or prioritised licensing arrangements—for remittance service providers capable of maintaining transaction costs below the stipulated threshold. Conversely, risk-based supervision by the Financial Services Authority serves as a critical instrument to ensure compliance and prevent exploitative practices, particularly with respect to business entities that have a recorded history of imposing high fees, receiving significant consumer complaints, or operating through informal channels prone to fraud. This risk-focused supervisory approach constitutes a concrete expression of the State's partiality toward groups that are structurally the most vulnerable to abuses in the fund-transfer process.

This approach aligns with the principle of social justice in Pancasila. Excessively high remittance costs not only erode the income that should benefit Indonesian Migrant Workers households, but also reduce the contribution of remittances to national economic development. In response, the State must broaden the integration of cross-border payment systems, improve access to formal digital financial services, and design incentive policies for remittance providers prioritizing efficiency and affordability. Such measures represent the embodiment of social justice values contained in Pancasila and reflect

the implementation of the *bestuurszorg* principle in administrative law — which obligates the Government to provide public services that are effective, fair, and oriented toward public interest.

Beyond regulatory and economic dimensions, the sustainable use of remittances is largely determined by the level of financial literacy among Indonesian Migrant Workers and their families. Data from Bank Indonesia and Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency (2024) indicates that a majority of remittances remain allocated for consumptive needs and have not been directed toward productive endeavors such as business development or family investments (Bank Indonesia and BP2MI, 2024a). This condition underscores the need for systematic and continuous efforts to enhance Indonesian Migrant Workers's understanding of prudent and empowerment-oriented remittance management. The State must provide financial education support from the pre-departure phase, throughout employment abroad, and through the reintegration period upon returning to Indonesia. Institutional collaboration involving Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency, the Ministry of Manpower, the Financial Services Authority, and Bank Indonesia is essential to ensure that productive remittance literacy can be properly internalized and yield tangible economic impact.

Productive financial literacy is, in essence, an empowerment instrument that enables Indonesian Migrant Workers and their families to transform themselves from mere recipients and users of funds into autonomous and capable economic actors. Through proper understanding of financial management, small-scale investments, long-term savings, and household business opportunities, remittances cease to function solely as consumptive cash flows and instead become capital that drives the socio-economic advancement of PMI households. This transformation is consistent with the mandate of the Fifth Principle of Pancasila, which not only positions prosperity as an objective, but explicitly emphasizes that such prosperity must be distributed equitably and provide space for every citizen to improve their standard of living. Productive literacy is not merely a financial education program; it constitutes a constitutional instrument to realize “equitable prosperity,” whereby economic growth is not reflected merely in statistical figures but is genuinely experienced by the families of Indonesian Migrant Workers who have long played a significant role in the national economy.

Ultimately, an ideal policy model for remittance protection represents a transformative effort — shifting remittances from merely a money transfer activity into an instrument for fulfilling economic rights and promoting equitable welfare. The State must go beyond regulating technical procedures and ensure that every rupiah earned through the hard work of Indonesian Migrant Workers returns safely and affordably to Indonesia while creating added socio-economic value for their families. In doing so, this policy becomes tangible proof of the implementation of Pancasila values within the national legal and economic system and reaffirms the State's commitment to achieving social justice for all Indonesian people — including those who toil abroad in pursuit of a better future for their families.

## CONCLUSION

Remittances constitute an essential economic right of Indonesian migrant workers that must be protected by the State as part of the fulfillment of their constitutional and human rights as citizens. The Indonesian legal framework — ranging from the 1945 Constitution to Law No. 18 of 2017 and national financial regulatory instruments — has established a legal basis for the protection of remittance transfer processes. Nevertheless, practical implementation continues to face significant challenges, including high remittance costs, a preference for informal channels, and low financial literacy among migrant workers and their families.

In global comparison, the Philippines serves as a successful model in remittance governance through integrated policies, regulated remittance fees, and extensive utilization of financial technology. While Indonesia has demonstrated progress, efforts to harmonize domestic policies with international standards such as those established by the ILO and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers require further strengthening. This includes enhancing the governance of formal remittance systems and expanding secure and efficient digital access. Policy reforms and institutional capacity-building are therefore crucial to ensure that remittances optimally function as instruments of family welfare for migrant workers and contributors to national economic stability.

Based on these findings, the Government should reinforce the implementation of remittance regulations, expand access to formal financial services, and strengthen cross-border digital remittance systems to reduce transaction costs toward the global benchmark of below 3%. In addition, improving financial literacy for migrant workers — from pre-departure to post-placement reintegration — must be intensified as a long-term strategy. Synergy among the Government, financial industry, and migrant education institutions is also essential to establish a remittance system that is safe, inclusive,

transparent, and sustainable, thereby ensuring the comprehensive protection of the economic rights of Indonesian Migrant Workers.

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