



Podcast Series: A Glimpse in to Two Year Journey of Migration FPAR Partners

Episode 6

“The dream to end overcharging and exploitation” Interview with Erwiana Sulistyaningsih,
IMWU, Hong Kong

Erwiana:

“Nama saya Erwiana Sulistyaningsih dari Ngawi, Jawa Timur. Saya adalah mantan PRT migran di Hong Kong tahun 2014 yang pernah mengalami ketidakadilan, dianiaya dan dieksploitasi oleh majikan saya. Saya bergabung dengan IMWU organisasi buruh migran di HK, mereka yang menyarankan saya ikut program FPAR.”

“My name is Erwiana Sulistyaningsih. I’m from Ngawi, East Java, [Indonesia]. I used to work as a migrant worker in Hong Kong in 2014 and I faced injustices. I was physically abused and exploited by my employer. I then joined IMWU, a migrant worker organisation in Hong Kong, and it was them who suggested that I join the FPAR programme.”

Andita:

“Untuk orang Indonesia memang cerita kamu itu cukup besar masuk berita, insiden yang terjadi di HK. Menurut saya pribadi sangat inspiratif melihat kamu ketika pulih justru kembali ke Indonesia Kerja bareng.”

“For many Indonesians, your story in Hong Kong was indeed huge and made the news. I personally think that it was really inspiring to see you recover from the incident and return to Indonesia to dedicate your time to the migrant worker movement. Before we go to FPAR, can you tell me what you do at IMWU and Kabar Bumi (previous organisation) as an activist?”

Erwiana:

“Yang mendorong saya untuk ikut berorganisasi karena saya menerima banyak support yang mendukung keadilan bagi saya yaitu teman-teman buruh migran dan komunitas lainnya. Dari situ saya tergerak untuk bergabung ke organisasi dan karena saya waktu masih di Indonesia, saya bergabung ke Kabar Bumi, yang terdiri dari mantan buruh migraine dan keluarganya. Kami berkomunitas mengorganisir dan mengedukasi mantan migran dan keluarganya supaya kita bisa mendapatkan hak-hak kita ketika kita mengalami pelanggaran. Saya kemudian dapat beasiswa kuliah di Yogyakarta, setelah lulus saya melakukan pengabdian masyarakat di HK, saya magang di Mission for Migrant Workers. Saya ikut komunitas, salah satunya IMWU, setiap minggunya saya bertemu dengan buruh migran ketika mereka ada kasus dan pengaduan, mereka datang ke kami dan kami membantu mereka.”



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“What motivated me to join [IMWU] the organisation, was because I received so much support from those who defended justice for me and most of them came from the migrant communities. I was moved to join an organisation, but since I was still based in Indonesia back then, I joined Kabar Bumi, which was a network of ex-migrants and their families. We mobilised and built the capacity of migrant workers and their families so that they would be aware of their rights when facing violations. I then received a scholarship to study in a university in Yogyakarta and after I graduated, I did community service in Hong Kong and interned at the Mission for Migrant Workers. I joined their community, in which there was IMWU. Every week I would meet with migrant workers if they wanted to file a case; they would come to us and we would support them.”

Andita:

“Berikutnya aku ingin tahu perjalanan kamu sebagai partisipan FPAR dari APWLD. FPAR adalah kepanjangan dari *Feminist Participatory Action Research*. Bisa ceritakan perjalanan kamu selama ini bagaimana?”

“I’d like to learn more about your journey as an FPAR participant at APWLD. FPAR stands for Feminist Participatory Action Research. Can you tell me how your journey has been?”

Erwiana:

“Sebelumnya saya tidak tahu FPAR apa. Ketika kuliah juga ada beberapa metode riset yang saya pelajari tapi saya tidak mendalami apa itu dan bagaimana cara melakukan FPAR. Ketika ada program APWLD ini saya tertarik untuk belajar FPAR. Dari situ saya menemukan riset ini sangat menarik ya, karena risetnya lebih aksi. Kita tidak menjadikan teman-teman migran sebagai objek, tetapi jadi subjek. Kita masuk ke dalam komunitas itu, merasakan apa yang mereka rasakan, berempati dalam kegiatan mereka.

“I never knew what FPAR was. At college, I learned the many different research methodologies, but I never dug deep into what and how to do FPAR. When I heard about this programme from APWLD, I became interested in learning FPAR. I found that this type of research interesting, because it involved more action. I learned that we don’t approach our migrant worker friends as an object, but rather as a subject. We go deep into the communities and understand what they feel, try to be emphatic in their activities.”

“Di IMWU sendiri kita ingin dapat gambaran yang lebih luas mengenai overcharging yang dihadapi sendiri oleh teman-teman migran di HK. Overcharging maksudnya mereka dibebani biaya yang sangat tinggi ketika mau menjadi migran, dan itu biasanya tidak masuk akal dan melebihi standar yang ditentukan oleh pemerintah.”

“At IMWU, we learned more about what overcharging was, which many migrant workers faced in Hong Kong. Overcharging means that the workers were imposed extraordinarily high fees [by their agencies] as they were setting up to be migrant workers. The fees usually don’t make any sense and surpass the standards set by the government.”



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Andita:

“Program FPAR berlalu. Salah satu periode pelatihannya juga terjadi ketika pandemi, ada ga sih tantangan yang kamu rasakan Ketika menjalankan pelatihan dan ketika kamu kembali ke komunitas, seperti apa sih perjalanannya?”

“Your FPAR journey is now over and one of the trainings clashed with the Covid-19 pandemic. Were there any challenges that you experienced juggling all of this during the pandemic?”

Erwiana:

“Kesulitannya adalah ketika pemerintah memberikan larangan berkumpul. Teman-teman yang dulunya aktif jadi dilarang majikannya untuk keluar karena mereka khawatir kalau PRT terlalu lama di luar akan membawa virus. Padahal kan majikan juga bekerja di luar, setiap hari bahkan, cuma hari Minggu aja di rumah. Selain itu, teman-teman juga mengeluh karena mereka harus bekerja lebih banyak, kewalahan, tidak bersemangat untuk berkegiatan di hari Minggu dan mereka menggunakan kesempatan untuk mobilisasi untuk istirahat. Terakhir-akhir kami harus belajar pakai Zoom. Di IMWU kami juga terpaksa membeli juga paket Zoom untuk komunikasi. Dari situ, ada baiknya juga karena kita jadi belajar teknologi.”

“It was difficult when the government imposed lockdowns. My migrant friends who used to be active in organising were not allowed by their bosses to go out because they were worried that they might be exposed to the virus; when instead the bosses would go out all the time because of their work and only on Sundays that they stayed at home. Other than that, many migrant workers told me that they had to put in longer hours to work, and that they became overwhelmed and too tired to organise on Sundays. They instead used the day-offs to rest at home. Eventually, we learned how to use Zoom [to connect with each other]. At IMWU we had to purchase the yearly Zoom account so that we can communicate with each other. It’s a blessing in disguise too because we get to learn new technology.”

Andita:

“Tentunya lebih efektif bertemu langsung daripada virtual ya. Walaupun pelatihan FPAR sudah berlalu, temuan apa yang kamu bisa ceritakan dari penelitian kamu dan apa manfaatnya mengikuti FPAR ini bagi kamu dan komunitas yang kerja bareng?”

“In-person meetings certainly are more effective than virtual. But now that your FPAR journey has ended, what can you tell us about your research findings and if there was any benefit that you or friends in the communities felt from participating in FPAR ?”

Erwiana:

“Karena kita waktu itu topiknya adalah penempatan biaya berlebih, mayoritas teman-teman mengalami pembebanan biaya yang berlebih, yang melebihi aturan pemerintah. Mayoritas teman-teman juga dokumennya ditahan oleh agen atau PT. Sekitar 74% dari teman-teman di komunitas migran dibebankan biaya sebesar HKD 15,000 – 20,000 atau USD 1,900-2,500. Dan



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anehnya ada juga pelapor yang dituntut dengan biaya yang sangat tinggi, yaitu USD 4,500. Ini yang kita temukan. Ada tiga jenis biaya yang dibebankan kepada mereka dengan standar yang berbeda-beda. Yang pertama, biaya Ketika mereka berangkat untuk dokumen, lalu biaya untuk suntik KB, dan biaya yang tidak penting sebenarnya, yang diminta langsung oleh PT.”

“The focus of my research was the overcharging issue, where the majority of migrant workers abroad experienced this and how the standards were way off the government’s rules. Many of my friends had their documents retained by their agencies too. [We found that] about 74% of [Indonesian] migrant workers [in Hong Kong] were charged HKD 15,000 – 20,000 or USD 1,900-2,500 [by their agencies]. There was another strange case where a migrant worker was charged astronomically high fees of USD 4,500. This is what we found. There are three fee categories imposed to the workers with so many different standards. There’s one that migrants have to pay for their paperwork upon leaving their home, then there’s one for the contraceptive injection, and other unnecessary fees that the agencies ask for.”

Andita:

“Selain temuan itu, apakah kamu juga merasakan dampak positif dari mengikuti program FPAR?”

“What are the positive impacts that you felt after participating in FPAR?”

Erwiana:

“Kalau untuk saya sendiri, FPAR ini sangat bagus sekali pembelajarannya yang bisa kita terapkan dalam berkomunitas. Kita menjadi punya teori yang kita bisa gunakan untuk meningkatkan kapasitas kita. Dari situ kita dan bisa mempunyai skill yang lebih untuk memperjuangkan hak-hak kita ketika kita mengalami pelanggaran yang selama ini sudah berpuluh-puluh tahun kita alami. Itu yang penting. Misalnya dari kasus overcharging ini, teman-teman banyak sekali yang mendapat ancaman, intimidasi, selain ketidakadilan keluarga mereka juga diancam, diteror. Dari sini kita menjadi berani, bahwa kita bisa lho menuntut hak kita. Dengan FPAR ini manfaatnya kita punya arahan, pedoman jadi kita tidak jalan begitu saja tanpa arah. Dari FPAR ini ada teori yang bisa kita pelajari, bahwa perjuangan tidak berhenti di sini dan harus berlanjut.”

“I learned many good lessons from the FPAR programme that I could immediately apply to my work at the local communities. We learned these theories that we could use to strengthen our capacity. From there we could gain more skills to fight for our rights against the many violations that for years we have faced. That’s what’s important. For example, in the case of overcharging, so many of my migrant worker friends have faced threats, intimidation, and injustices; so too their families, they were terrorised. But now we have the courage to fight for our rights. We had the guidance from FPAR so we wouldn’t just fight aimlessly. We learned so many theories from FPAR; one of which was that our struggle would not stop and would keep going.”

Andita:



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“Apa perubahan terbesar yang kamu impikan, yang kamu harap kamu bisa capai setelah melalui pelatihan FPAR?”

“What is the biggest change that you wish for, that you hope you can achieve after participating in FPAR?”

Erwiana:

“Kalau harapan terbesar pastinya tidak ada lagi buruh migran yang mengalami pelanggaran seperti overcharging, juga kasus lain seperti eksploitasi, penganiayaan, dan sebagainya. Itu harapan terbesar dari saya sendiri. Harapannya juga untuk komunitas, kita terus berkembang, terus maju, dan tidak pantang menyerah karena pasti tidak ada perjuangan yang sia-sia. Dan ketika kita mau menuntut hak kita, kita pasti bisa mendapatkannya walau harus penuh perjuangan. Pemerintah pasti akan mendengar kalau kita mau berjuang...” **fade to music**

“My biggest wish is that there will be no more migrant workers who face injustices like overcharging and other cases like exploitation, physical abuse, and so on. That is my own personal dream. For the communities, we need to thrive, move forward, and never quit because there is no wasted struggle. When we are willing to fight for our rights, we will get them even though there is so much struggle. The government will hear us if we continue to fight.”