

## **Strengthening Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection: Indonesia's New Ministry and Insights from the Philippines**

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On the evening of October 20th, 2024, Indonesia's newly inaugurated president, Prabowo Subianto, announced that the Ministry for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers was officially listed as the new ministry on his cabinet. This is a new phase for Indonesian migrant workers' protection, which was previously taken care of under the names of the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency (BP2MI), Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection and Placement Agency (BNP2TKI), and the Ministry of Manpower, which also carries some functions on Indonesian Migrant Workers' affairs. Will the Indonesia new ministry on migrant workers protection became a clear path for Indonesian migrant workers interest in the future?

Minister for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers/Head of BP2MI, Abdul Kadir Karding, shared that President Prabowo outlined two key focuses on protecting Indonesian migrant workers. The first is eliminating exploitation at all stages, from pre-departure to reintegration. The second is expanding placement opportunities abroad. President Prabowo emphasized the importance of increasing foreign exchange earnings from migrant workers, with remittances being the second-largest contributor after oil and gas. These remittances reached 135.9 trillion rupiahs in 2022 and rose sharply to 227 trillion rupiahs the following year (BP2MI, 2024a; 2024b).

Deputy Minister Christina Aryani highlighted the institutional structure of the newly established Ministry for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers/BP2MI, modeled after agencies like BKKBN and BAPPENAS. It will have four directorates: Promotion and Utilization of Overseas Employment Opportunities, Placement, Protection, and Empowerment. Programs will be integrated with other ministries under the Coordinating Ministry for Community Empowerment, including the Ministries of Cooperatives, MSMEs, and Creative Economy. Additionally, Nanik Murwati of KemenPAN-RB noted the transfer of responsibilities, such as job training and recruitment, from the Ministry of Manpower to the BP2MI as a natural progression of its establishment (BP2MI, 2024c; 2024e).

In the 100-day program plan of the ministry, several points were listed, including the expansion and improvement of the job market for prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers (CPMI) in the United States, Canada, and Germany; preparation of the workforce insurance (BPJS Tenaga Kerja) program for Indonesian migrant workers; expansion of the People's Business Credit (KUR) program for financing CPMI programs with KUR for capital and mortgages; simplification and integration of one-stop services for processing CPMI documents in the Public Service Mall; improving governance of registration, supervision & guidance of Indonesian Migrant Worker Placement Companies (P3MI); and the establishment of a rapid reaction team for handling problems of Indonesian migrant workers. For these protection efforts to be carried out domestically and abroad, in this case, KP2MI

will form a Rapid Response Team to handle the problems of Indonesian migrant workers. At the Central and regional levels involving elements of the Regency/City Government, Immigration, Law Enforcement Officials, and Migrant Worker Activists (BP2MI, 2024d).

This transformation of migrant workers' protection institution also can be observed through the Philippines' experiences when, previously, the labor migration of Filipino nationals was heavily regulated by the Philippine government through three major institutions. The first institution is the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), which regulates the overseas recruitment and employment industry. The second institution is the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the lead agency that seeks to promote the well-being and welfare of member migrants and their families. Finally, there are labor attaches sanctioned at embassies, consulates, and satellite Philippine Overseas Labour Offices (POLOs) abroad to aid migrants in host countries (Lia Maulia Indrayani et al., 2015).

Later, in 2022, under President Rodrigo Duterte, the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) was established. It now assumes and performs all the powers and functions of seven merged agencies, namely: the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA); the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs (OUMWA) of the DFA; the International Labor Affairs Bureau (ILAB) and all Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLO) under DOLE; the National Maritime Polytechnic (NMP); the National Reintegration Center for OFWs (NRC) under the OWWA, and the Office of the Social Welfare Attaché (OSWA) under the DSWD. The DMW is mandated to facilitate the overseas employment and reintegration of Filipino workers while considering the national development programs of the National Economic and Development Authority. It is also tasked to promote the empowerment and protection of OFWs through continuous training and knowledge development (Department of Migrant Workers, 2024).

The transformation of Indonesia's Ministry for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers and its comparison to the Philippines' Department of Migrant Workers reveals similarities in institutional restructuring to enhance migrant worker protection. Both nations aim to consolidate previously scattered functions under a unified framework for improved efficiency and governance. Indonesia's approach, which centralizes various agencies into a new ministry, mirrors the Philippines' 2022 formation of the Department of Migrant Workers, which absorbed seven agencies. However, Indonesia's model integrates programs with other ministries, emphasizing community empowerment, while the Philippines focuses on reintegration and national development alignment. Both frameworks emphasize protecting migrants at all stages and promoting overseas employment, reflecting their reliance on migrant remittances for economic benefits.

### **Short Bio**

Mochamad Alvin Dwiana Qobulsyah is a lecturer and faculty member of the Department of International Relations at Bina Nusantara (BINUS) University, Jakarta. He also served as a research fellow at the Centre of Business and Diplomatic Studies (CBDS) at the same institution. He completed his master's degree (with high honours) in international studies, majoring in international cooperation at the Graduate School of International Studies, Seoul National University, Seoul,

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