

Home-Based Women Workers Vulnerability during the COVID-19: A Gendered Perspective of Political Economy

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Abstract

This research uses a gender perspective to explore the condition of home-based women workers during the COVID-19 pandemic and analyze coping mechanisms adopted to mitigate the social and economic vulnerability. By applying the feminist political economy framework, the research focused on the vulnerability of home-based women workers in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY), Indonesia. Home-based women's enterprises constitute a major component of the local businesses. This research used a qualitative research design. Results showed that home-based women workers (PPR) are exposed to six traits of vulnerability, namely: Workers' exploitation and low wage standard; lack of social security; nonexistence of job guarantee and weak law protection; bearing the work risk that should be the employers' obligation; low bargaining position; and unregulated working hours. In addition, compounded by inadequate education and high domestic responsibilities, these women are vulnerable to political and economic conditions that are in part attributable to the societal context they find themselves in. However, amid these vulnerabilities, home-based women workers in DIY have developed resilience through community networks supported by a local NGO called YASANTI. Thus, local NGOs have played a significant role in strengthening PPR resilience in DIY.

Keywords: *feminist political economy, home-based workers, informal workers, women workers*

INTRODUCTION

The spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) has led to the declaration of a global public health emergency and the massive global economic downturn. A spate of policy responses to the COVID-19, such as social distancing and lockdown, have led to economic contractions in many sectors including bars and restaurants, arts and entertainment, and transport providers like travel and tour operators (ILO, 2020). The closure of economic and business activities has had disastrous effects on employees, in both formal and informal sectors. However, the absence of minimum social security protection makes informal workers the most vulnerable group to policy measures that were implemented to control the spread of the coronavirus. The problems include layoffs, absence of health protection, and employment contracts that do not guarantee severance payment. Two types of informal workers dominate the informal economy in Indonesia, such as industrial workers and home-based workers. This research focuses on home-based workers because home-based workers, who are dominated by women, constitute an important component of Small, and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and are vulnerable due to their position in the society (Octavia, 2020).

In 2018, 93 percent of the world's informal workers were found in emerging and developing countries, which indicates that the informal sectors and informal workers, both dominated by women, play a significant role in the economic development of many countries (Chen, 2016; ILO, 2018). The Central Bureau of Statistics in one of its reports noted that Indonesia had a higher share of informal workers than formal workers with the former representing a proportion of approximately 57.3 percent in 2019 (Pitoyo, 2016; Pratiwi, 2020), which 52.61 percent of them were women (Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection, 2020). Nonetheless, the large contribution of women in informal employment at the country and global level does not necessarily imply better social and economic welfare than their male counterparts. In fact, the domination of women in informal sectors is partly due to the preponderance of women homeworkers

(perempuan pekerja rumahan/PPR) relative to men (Pratiwi, 2020). Consequently, women who work in the informal sectors encounter more vulnerable situations than men in informal employment. The economic contraction frequently triggers an increase in informal employment, which in turn worsens working conditions due to limited regulations. Therefore, this research uses a feminist political economy approach to assess the vulnerability of home-based women workers.

Literature on labor, gender, and informal economy adopts two dominant approaches that explain the relationship between formal and informal economy. The first approach is the political economy approach, which can be considered the dominant one. It analyzes the development of the informal economy and how that influences informal labor. Two other similar theories include modernization and neoliberalism. From the political economy perspective, the growth of the informal sector and its accompanying informal employment is a consequence of economic liberalization and deregulation of production activities (Aliyev, 2015; Dibben & William, 2012; Gallin, 2001). In other words, the informal sector is an offshoot of globalization, market competitiveness, and withdrawal of government involvement in economic activities as a direct consequence of policies that are imposed by multinational financial institutions as a precondition for providing financial and technical development assistance. Consequently, this approach underscores fundamental issues related to the relationship between workers and their employers, the structural exploitation of informal workers, and the role played by the growth of the informal sector as an integral part of workers' coping strategies (Breman, 2010; Peterson, 2010; Rogan & Cichello, 2020; Ward, 1990; Williams, 2019b). One of the weaknesses of the approach is its limited consideration of female workers in the informal working system.

The second approach is the feminist economic approach, which is based on the critical feminist theory that focuses on gender segregation in the workplace. This approach criticizes mainstream economists for

their conducting research. The argument is that mainstream economists do not take into account feminists deliberations and concerns in conducting their research. There are three areas that feminist economists try to explore, namely the measurement of women's unpaid work; intra-household issues (labor allocation, power relation, and distribution of income); and gendered processes in the paid labor market. Even though this approach focuses on women in the labor force, there is not much literature that discusses the relationship between women workers in the informal economy and the global political economy (Carr, Chen, & Tate, 2000; Chen & Sinha, 2016; MacDonald, 2003; Woodhull, 2003). Moreover, feminist economic research still lacks serious discussion of the association of gendered division of labor with the vulnerability of female workers in the informal working system. Therefore, the thrust of this research is that the vulnerability of women workers has a strong relationship with the industrialization and global economic system.

Political economy and feminist economic approaches confine their discussion to the increase in the number of women involved in the modern economy and industry, and how these processes help them escape from the throes of the kitchen. However, those approaches do not address one of the key problems for female workers, especially those who are involved in the informal economy, namely socio-economic vulnerability. It is an issue that constitutes the focus of this research. Specifically, the research uses the feminist political economy approach to analyze the phenomenon of home-based women workers and their vulnerability by exploring their work experience before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is because feminist political economy recognizes the essence of discussing the treatment of female workers in the global economic system including women's domestic 'responsibilities', which puts them in lower positions and status than men (Runyan & Peterson, 2014; Strober, 2003).

Previous research on gendered division of labor and informal economy argued that women who tend to dominate the informal sector occupy more vulnerable positions (Breman, 2020; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2014;

Peterson, 2012). From a political economy perspective, this is due to the patriarchal view on the economic production and reproduction realm that considers the role of men as the breadwinner to support the household, while women predominantly provide care for their families at home. Such a patriarchal view of the role of women in the economy assumes that women who work only contribute additional income (not basic income) to their male counterparts (Chen & Sinha, 2016; Rau & Wazienski, 2003; Runyan & Peterson, 2014). Moreover, the results of the study by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2018 indicated that the informal sector is a big source of economic development, especially in emerging countries. The sector becomes even more important because more than half of employees from 100 countries in the world are in informal employment, which is a sector that is dominated by women. Thus, being employed in the unregulated informal sector in most low- and lower-middle-income countries (ILO, 2018) makes women vulnerable to vagaries of working conditions, including low and unpredictable remuneration as well as poor safety and health protection. Nonetheless, home-based workers, who are mostly women, suffer from the highest employment-related vulnerability. COVID-19-related social and health restrictions have aggravated the vulnerability of informal workers in general and those working in the home-based subsectors in particular. The adverse impact of COVID-19 restrictions on home-based enterprises has been severe. This is due to the decrease in demand for goods produced, which is exacerbated by difficulties in obtaining raw materials (Homenet SEA, 2020; WIEGO, 2020).

COVID-19 has hurt the economy largely due to restrictions on mobility and social interaction that were implemented to control the spread of the virus. The Indonesian economy contracted by 2.19 percent in the fourth quarter of 2020, which was reflected in the weakening of home-based informal sector production and employment. Based on the argument that women home-workers (PPR) are some of the most vulnerable employees, this research argues that the onset of COVID-19 and its aftermath has increased the precariousness and vulnerabil-

ity of women homeworkers who are already vulnerable due to the existing social, cultural, and structural factors. Women are, for instance, more susceptible to being laid off by enterprises as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions which affect production costs. Like in other provinces in Indonesia, women homeworkers in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY) experienced massive layoffs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tourism, which is one of the key contributors to the DIY economy, has been severely affected by a decline in domestic and foreign tourists as a consequence of restrictions on mobility and social interaction. Inevitably, the sluggish performance of the tourism sector has reduced the demand for goods that are produced by SMEs, which in turn impacted adversely on the employment of women homeworkers.

The research addresses two questions as follows: what treatment women homeworkers (PPR) have experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic; and what vulnerabilities women homeworkers (PPR) are facing and how they tried to cope. This study uses DIY as a case study, considering the fact that the tourism sector is a major contributor to the DIY economy. For instance, in 2019, tourism contributed to 17.46 percent of the DIY economic growth (Rusqiyati, 2020). As a consequence, it is apparent that any contraction that affects the tourism sector should have an adverse impact on the economic growth in DIY and the demand for goods produced by women homeworkers (PPR).

As demonstrated in table 2, while Pebayuran Subdistrict has the highest priority development proposals (130 requests) East Cikarang Subdistrict had the least proposals (34 requests for development activities). Thus, the focus of this study is on whether aspects of Open Government have been adopted in development planning in Bekasi District. The objective of this study is to analyze elements of open government in development planning in Bekasi Regency and proposes recommendations for an ideal development plan that incorporates such aspects.

METHOD

This research was based on a qualita-

tive research design. The location of the research was in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. This study was conducted from February to June 2021. Primary and secondary data were used. Secondary data was obtained from journal articles, books, research reports, and official documents related to PPR published by relevant agencies. Meanwhile, primary data was obtained using an in-depth interview of representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that are involved in informal women workers. Representatives are drawn from Yayasan Annisa Swasti (YASANTI) and Trade Union Rights Centre (TURC). YASANTI provided information on the condition of PPR in Bunda Creative Home-Based Women Workers' Union Group Yogyakarta. Meanwhile, TURC was selected as an informant because of its previous involvement in research related to home-based workers in various regions in Indonesia, including Yogyakarta. Thus, TURC had a wealth of information on the condition of home-based women workers before and during pandemics from TURC in Yogyakarta. The decision to use third-party representatives (NGOs) rather than women workers who are practitioners of home-based activities was based on the practical consideration that due to COVID-19 restrictions limited access to individual women workers involved in home-based SMEs. In any case, the two organizations have had a long track record and experience in tackling issues that relate to working conditions that employees in home-based SMEs face.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. *The industrial women labor force in Indonesia's rural area: Feminization of labor*

It is essential to use the gendered perspective in discussing the global economic process that is responsible for informality by focusing on the impact that economic restructuring has on female workers. If the analysis goes beyond numbers, we may find some interesting facts about women's participation in the global market in the Global South. Wolf (2018) attempted to link the global economic restructuring to women's labor by analyzing female factory workers and their families in rural Java, Indonesia. She argued that analyzing the connection

between female workers, their families, and their role in the agricultural and industrial sectors deepens the understanding of the relationship between gender, labor, and the global economy. Wolf identified the first relationship between female workers and the industrial factories in Java, which was characterized by Indonesian factories not paying their female workers the minimum standard living wage. Regardless of the importance of their contribution to the family economy, daughters and wives are considered dependents of their fathers or husbands, hence the justification for the low wages.

Industrial development in Java's rural areas began to happen during early 1970s when the provincial and sub-district officials began to encourage foreign and urban domestic investments (Pitoyo, 2016; Pratiwi, 2020). At the time, the average wage of female factory workers who were the majority of workers in this sector was \$24 per month for 48 hours per week. Women workers sometimes also had access to additional income that amounted to a few more dollars. However, the main source of income was cash transfers from their families, savings, or loans. Indonesian manufacturing wages were among the lowest in the world, and wages for female workers were lower than those paid to their male counterparts. For instance, Mather in Wolf (2018) found that in Java and some other regions in Indonesia, producers paid male workers in their industry 40 percent higher than the average wage female workers earned. This is because, in most regions in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, wages paid to female workers were considered merely as additional income. Such perspective undermines the strong economic contribution of women to their families and strengthens the patriarchal control over them. The gender norms perspective is used to justify the wage structure in the Asian industrial sector.

Capitalists and transnational corporations hire informal workers, especially women, instead of formal workers to avoid labor law and keep wages low (Fernández-Kelly & García, 1989; Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987). Consequently, there has been an increase in informal work for the working-class society and the development of gender-based discrimination against workers in the

informal sector. When women are involved in economic activities such as the informal economy, they face the double jeopardy of low wages and income disparity (Chen, 2001). The informal economy, which provides low income due to the high production inefficiency and the gendered division of labor that relegates women to the second place in the realm of economic activities, shifts their position even further.

Breaking down jobs to the smallest part is the simplest way to expand a multinational company. For example, a device, such as the Apple iPod and iPhone, is assembled in various countries in Asia. Other sectors such as clothing, textiles, and footwear are also increasingly recruiting many female workers in several countries (Taylor, 2008). The domination of patriarchy and masculinity in the global economy plays a part in the increasingly systematic marginalization of women's participation in the labor force. Runyan & Peterson (2014) argued that gendered division of labor puts women and men in starkly different positions. Women tend to work in the domestic reproduction and marginal employment in the informal economy, while men work in the paid formal economy with competitive characteristics of employment. Recruitment of female workers in the informal sector is based on the assumption that they can be paid less, are more compliant, and are suitable for complex, demanding, and skilled workers compared to male workers (Chen, 2001; Leach, 1996; Salzinger, 2003; Ward, 1990).

Female workers are recruited to work in either factories or home-based economic activities. This research focuses on the vulnerability of women homeworkers. According to the Convention No. 177 of 1996 of the International Labor Organization (ILO), home-based work includes: (1) work that is done at home or at a chosen place, which is not at the employer's location; (2) work that is done to earn money; and (3) work that produces goods or services that are appropriate to the demands of the employer, regardless of who provides the equipment, materials, or other inputs used in the work process (Rahayu & Ulfa, 2020). Although many countries have implemented the ILO convention, the incorporation of working conditions for home-based workers in their legis-

lation remains elusive. Recognition of the status of home-based workers has not been given since they are considered housewives who work in their spare time (Hassan & Azman, 2014).

Moreover, many female workers do not have employment contracts (Pratiwi, 2016). This is because, in order to reduce production costs and maximize profits, employers have implemented precarious employment contracts and subcontracts in several sectors including home-based workers. One of the reasons for this is the flexibility of women in doing their work, while at the same time engaging in household chores (Pratiwi, 2020). Women homeworkers experience exploitation that is reflected in the low wages they earn, lack of social protection guarantee, and susceptibility to job insecurity. In addition, home-based workers are often overworked, have limited or no access to dispute resolution mechanisms, have no recourse to appeal, and bear work risks that are part of the employers' obligation (Pangaribuan, Manalu, Akbar, & Achmadi, 2020; Sivasubramanian et al., 2020). The vulnerability of all home-based workers can also be gauged from the perspective of occupational health and safety, which is not assured (Tipple, 2006). Research in Australia that compared home-based workers and industrial workers in the apparel sector found that the injury rate of home-based workers was three times higher than industrial workers (Martha A. Chen & Sinha, 2016; Mayhew & Quinlan, 1999). This is because home-based workers do not have, use, adopt, or implement safety mechanisms while at their place of work.

2. *Factory and the middleman*

Home-based women workers are employed by local and international companies. There are two forms of recruitment of home-based women employees. First, middleman connect capital owners (companies) with freelancers (female workers). The middleman is often a person close to the worker's environment, which is used to gain the trust of PPRs who are the target of recruitment. In addition, in some cases, the middleman also acts as an advocate for the welfare of informal workers. Second, workers have a direct

relationship with the company that hires them. The informal workers who have connections with the company also have strong relationships with the workers in their environment and often are members of workgroups.

The logical analysis of the feminist political economy perspective contends that factories as owners of capital always try to produce as much output as possible using many female workers each of whom contributes minimal effort. Consequently, female workers are paid lower wages than their male colleagues. Capitalists pay female workers less than male workers under the assumption that women do not bear the responsibility of meeting their family's basic needs; informal female workers are considered unskilled due to their low educational attainment level; women tend to choose jobs that can be done with flexible time schedules allowing them time for taking care of their households. Unsurprisingly, these assumptions put women in a very vulnerable situation, especially during conditions that are characterized by high uncertainty such as in a raging pandemic.

This section presents the results obtained through analysis of TURC and YASANTI cases with regards to the vulnerability experienced by home-based women workers in Yogyakarta. Analysis results show that home-based women workers face six types of vulnerabilities, namely: 1) exploitation and low wages 2) absence of social security; 3) absence of job guarantee and weak law protection; 4) bearing the work risk that should be the employers' obligation; 5) low bargaining position; and 6) Unregulated working hours. The following section presents a detailed analysis of each of the six types of vulnerability home-based women workers (PPR) have faced before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. *Home-based Women Workers before the COVID-19 Pandemic*

Based on YASANTI, DIY (Special Region of Yogyakarta) had 1200 PPR workers in 2019. YASANTI's grouped them based on industrial sectors where they are employed, including food, apparel/textiles, paper, cardboard packaging and boxes, and

other paper, and paperboard products. Even though they come from various sectors, PPR tends to have low skills, which they often acquired in their original village. Members of the education and training staff of YASANTI noted that there are villages where all PPRs have skills in jumputan batik; other villages have and thus teach sewing skills, making air fans, making sausages, and many others. Based on the data obtained from YASANTI in 2016, there were 1186 PPR, and the highest percentage came from Bantul Regency (816 workers), followed by Sleman Regency (209 workers), and Yogyakarta City (161 workers) (YASANTI, 2018). Furthermore, there was only one worker who earned wages of up to one million rupiah and above. This amount was still far below the DIY regional minimum wage which ranges between Rp 1,235,700 to Rp 1,452,400 in 2016 (Kompas, 2015).

a. Workers' exploitation and low wages

Home-based informal work is generally categorized as low-paid work. The data interview from TURC shows that PPR in several regions in Indonesia experienced vulnerability related to the very low wages and far below the minimum standard. Apart from the responsibility for the family income, another reason that female workers who work in the informal sector tend to be paid less than male workers is due to their level of education.

Based on the YASANTI report, female workers are 62.84 percent of junior high school graduates, 35.24 percent of elementary school graduates or not attending school, and only 1.95 percent of college graduates. This low level of education is the reason they do not have many job choices with high salaries.

The problem of low levels of education faced by female workers in the informal sector is in line with the research by Wolf (2018). Wolf found that female workers in Java are less educated than female workers in a peri-urban or urban area in Indonesia. This is one of the factors that influenced producers to establish their factories in a semi-rural area such as DI Yogyakarta. Even though there are additional costs needed, such as technology transfer, transportation,

and distributive aspects in setting up factories in economically less-desirable locations, producers realize the substantive savings they will make through low wage costs. In any case, low educated women in rural areas are unlikely to demand higher wages. Consequently, earning low wages makes many female workers vulnerable to debt and often have to borrow money from next of kin to cover their daily expenses. Thus, only a small number of female workers have additional income beyond their living expenses to give to their families to support their daily basic needs (Wolf, 2018).

b. The absence of social security

PPRs experienced another vulnerability that is attributable to the failure of employers to provide Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) protection to workers. In a discussion with the head of the PPR workers' federation in Bantul with YASANTI in 2019, There were 1200 PPRs which was recorded by YASANTI, but only 200 PPRs had access to employment Insurance and Social Security (BPJS) (RRI, 2019). To address the problem, YASANTI has facilitated negotiations between PPRs and their employers to register their workers to BPJS (employment insurance protection).

c. The absence of guarantee and weak law protection

Few PPRs in DIY have binding written work contracts from their employers. Almost all PPRs are only bound by verbal contracts, which cannot be used in legal proceedings or litigation in the case of violations. The bargaining position of PPR is still very low, especially in the legal protection of their work rights. Consequently, the absence of written contracts also implies that there are no job guarantees. The implication is that workers are easily laid off during the pandemic without any proper severance payment. Based on Article 156 paragraph 2 of Law Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation, employers who impose severance payments for workers who have served less than 1 year are required to pay one month's equivalent in wages. Unfortunately, the home-based workers are not included in the category of the law so there are no binding provisions re-

garding the severance payment.

The vicious circle of PPR vulnerability in the economic system in Indonesia cannot be addressed through existing laws and regulations. Laws in Indonesia do not accommodate advocacy of the central and local governments tailored to improving PPRs work conditions to companies. However, there are good examples of advocacy by YASANTI. In collaboration with Advocacy Network to Protect Informal Workers (JAMPI) DIY, YASANTI succeeded in overseeing the initiation of local regulations that protect informal workers. Academic background reports to support the implementation of the regulations have been underway since 2017. The draft local government regulations on protecting informal workers are expected to be issued by the end of 2021. Unfortunately, not all local governments could accommodate grassroots proposals related to employment practices and protecting PPR.

Local governments face extreme difficulties in advocating for PPR work rights despite the fact that employers do not fulfill all the rights of workers including job protection, decent remuneration, and others. Considering that home-based workers are not covered by existing law on labor relations, and do not violate any provisions of any existing law or regulation. PPR protection has come from community network groups and PPRs form small groups that support each other. If a member of the groups lose their jobs or are unable to find work because of a contraction in demand, they help each other in various ways including acquiring skills to produce products they can sell to earn for living.

d. Bearing the work risk that should be the employers' obligation

Most of the PPR in DIY pay for the work equipment in carrying out their work. For example, PPRs who work stitch souvenirs, they procure their sewing tools, pay for the electricity, thread, scissors, and gasoline cost for transport, and so on. On the contrary, employers pay the amount of goods PPRs can produce, and often at very low prices. Thus, PPRs face a very disadvantageous situation because they pay for production costs while employers only

reimburse for the number of goods they can produce per piece. As a result, PPR barely earns an income that can cover their living and production costs as well as savings.

e. Low bargaining position

Low bargaining position is also one of the challenges faced by the PPRs. The results of an interview with TURC show the difficulty that is faced by informal workers in Indonesia in trying to demand an increase in wages. Only a few local governments are committed to supporting advocacy and communication designed to improve remuneration of factory workers. One of the problems identified is the local government's lack of interest in the long remuneration bargaining process of increasing workers' wages.

Several key factors explain the weak bargaining position of PPR, including low skills and inability to do professional work; lack of opportunities provided by employers to improve the skills of workers; and weak organizational capacity.

f. Unregulated working hours

The patriarchal perspective that places women in domestic work hinders the ability to choose and do work that sufficiently contributes to their incomes. As housewives, PPRs prefer jobs that provide flexibility in working time because they have an obligation and responsibility towards domestic chores. Thus, PPRs often do work that is done at home, and without leaving their domestic obligations, even though the wages are lower than work outside the home. In Yogyakarta, 85.27 percent of PPR are married, 6 percent are not married, and 8.73 percent are widows. Most of the PPR under the supervision of YASANTI are involved in the informal sector as home-based workers because of the need to earn supplemental income to support their families. Meanwhile, those workers also have to fulfill their homemaking responsibilities. Therefore, home-based work offers the best option for them to earn additional income while at the same time doing homemaking chores.

4. Home-based Women Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic: What's changed?

The characteristics of PPR owners or

employers in DIY are different from other regions in Indonesia. As a province that is the target of the Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition (MICE) area, DIY relies heavily on the tourism industry. Therefore, employers of PPR in the province are not big companies but Small, and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). It also implies that employers of PPRs in the DIY region are mainly in the informal sector, PPRs obtain jobs through middlemen who are also PPR members.

The general condition of PPR in DIY during the pandemic has worsened. PPR in DIY continues to face types of vulnerability, while also dealing with other ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Some points need to be highlighted regarding PPR conditions in DIY during the pandemic.

First, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an adverse impact on the tourism sector in DIY. The tourism sector in DIY, which is a major contributor to the regional income, was forced to close (Suwardi, 2020). This situation led to a decrease in demand and subsequent production of SME goods related to tourism activities, such as souvenirs, local textiles, and food. Demand for manufactured goods that are usually shipped overseas. Most of the PPR group in DIY surveyed by YASANTI no longer receive job orders. Thus, even though they are not officially laid off because the majority of PPR work based on verbal employment contracts, a drastic drop in production by 60 percent forced many PPR to stop working.

Secondly, the low bargaining position of PPR relative to their employers means that they do not have livelihood security during the pandemic provided by their employer. The situation remains uncertain for many PPRs because as this report is written they do not know when they will return to work and earn again.

The collapse of the tourism sector in DIY posed a serious threat to all PPR. Facing six main types of vulnerability has aggravated economic and social uncertainty. Loss of income because there are no job orders. Most women in Indonesia, and other developing countries, enter into the informal sector as home-based workers not because they want to, but forced by necessity to survive. Nonetheless, there is an argument that

without demand for their services resulting from drastic drop in production, PPRs will no longer be a target for exploitation in the workplace. Therefore, they should choose whether to work under unfair conditions or having no source of income at all.

Without employment, PPRs lost their economic and social power. Their position in the family has become more uncertain than prior to the pandemic, a situation made worse by the fact that they are now completely dependent on their husbands. Under such circumstances, PPRs position in society is expected to decline, as their bargaining position has become even weaker than prior to the onset of the pandemic.

5. Promoting Resilience Amidst Vulnerability of Home-Based Women Workers (PPR)

To deal with difficult situations, PPRs in DIY take recourse to build social resilience. It is an area where YASANTI as the local NGO plays a significant role. Thus, one of the ways PPRs reduce and mitigate their economic vulnerability is to become participants of YASANTI's supervision and guidance. In DIY, organizations are open and provide opportunities to strengthen the livelihoods of individuals and the regional economy. Some of the activities that YASANTI provided included conducting group-based advocacy and assistance programs that involved 10 PPR groups, 5 of them are located in Bantul Regency, and 5 others are drawn from Yogyakarta City. PPRs continued to be members of the groups which helped in strengthening economic resilience against the economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, groups of PPRs which are supervised and supported by YASANTI formed a strong building block for social resilience of informal female workers during the crisis.

YASANTI also builds resilience during the pandemic by holding certain classes, one of them is cooking classes. For example, in Bangunjiwo Village, Kasihan, Bantul, there is a fan production house that experienced a significant decrease in production during the pandemic. Most of the PPRs in Bangunjiwo Village are no longer working. Some of them switch their profession to

making food, such as cake (personal communication with Education and Training of Yasanti's staff, May 23, 2021). They got these skills from YASANTI's training. During the pandemic, YASANTI acts as a middleman. The YASANTI network which is spread throughout Indonesia makes there always a demand for services. For example, YASANTI collaborates with the Indonesian Women Entrepreneurs Association (IWAPI). IWAPI requires a supply of masks during the pandemic that is ordered through YASANTI. YASANTI handed the order to the target group who had sewing skills. From these collaborations, PPRs get wages.

Moreover, some PPR groups build social resilience by getting directly involved in food production, thereby contributing to community food security. In Bawuran Village, Bantul Regency, the Bunda Mandiri Women's Home Worker Union (SPPR),-one of the PPR groups under YASANTI, cultivated vegetables using polybags (Harian Jogja, 2021). Once ready to harvest, the vegetables are used as a side dish for family members of SPPR Bunda Mandiri. Thus, by growing vegetables around the house, PPR can reduce spending on groceries when there is no main source of income.

CONCLUSION

The research assesses the state of vulnerability of PPR before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study has identified six types of vulnerabilities PPR in Yogyakarta are facing, including 1) exploitation and low wages; 2) lack of social security; 3) absence of job guarantee and weak laws on worker protection; 4) Bearing the work risk that should be the employers' obligation, 5) Low bargaining position; and 6) Unregulated working hours.

The persistence of vulnerability is significant because of the failure of decision-makers to consider the PPR issue a crucial matter. Despite the fact efforts to draft local governments have gained pace, there are no indications that the regulations will translate from legal drafts to regulations anytime soon.

PPR is considered a secondary income for PPR families despite the reality that PPRs' income is higher than what their hus-

bands earn in many cases. The assumption that PPRs earn is a secondary income for the family is in line with the stigma that men are the family heads and hence primary breadwinners, while women are supposed to do domestic work. However, it is also true that PPRs' decision to accept home-based work is because of the time flexibility it affords them to not only work on that generates income and domestic chores. Low education attainment and little or no experience requirements for home-based work are also key considerations.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, almost all PPRs in DIY and other cities were laid off due to a decline in the demand for goods. To cope with being laid offs, many PPRs used networking among PPRs to strengthen their economic resilience. Many switched to using online platforms to continue working. The opportunity has been used to share orders of products one PPR receives with others. The process involves employers and NGOs. PPRs submit requests for goods to NGOs, which use their wide networks to obtain goods from providers that they distribute to PPRs under their supervision and guidance.

The government plays a crucial role in placing home-based workers in strategic jobs to support development. For example, 60 percent of 740 million female workers in the informal sector lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Loss of work implies loss of a source of income to support their households and communities. As long as there are no specific laws and regulations that protect home-based workers, especially women, the government is expected to play an essential role in filling the gaps that the absence of regulations has created regarding employment and financial security.

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