

Indonesia and circular labor migration: Governance, remittances and multi-directional flows

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The World Bank estimated the number of documented and undocumented Indonesian labor migrants to be nine million in 2016, equivalent to about 7 percent of the national labor force, with around 38 percent of them involved in domestic and caregiving work (World Bank, 2017: 11). In 2019, Indonesia was the third-largest migrant-sending country in East and Southeast Asia after China and the Philippines (United Nations, 2019). Yet, at a time when circular labor migration has become a key feature of the global political economy, it is not the figures alone that make Indonesia a compelling case study to examine a wide array of labor migration issues. The Indonesian experience offers useful insights into understanding broader labor migration problems, namely, (1) the problem of contested governance and transnational advocacy; (2) the oft-debated links between remittances and development; and (3) issues arising from the multi-directional nature of labor migration. This special section provides a close examination of these key global challenges in the Indonesian context. In our introduction, we situate each of these issues within their broader

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