

SMERU RESEARCH REPORT

INVESTING IN CARE WORKERS: POSITIONING DOMESTIC CARE WORKERS IN INDONESIA'S CARE ECONOMY

Valentina Y. D. Utari, Asep Kurniawan, Sylvia Andriyani, Hening Wikan Sawiji, Hartika Arbiyanti, Esha Adnan

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Abstract

Investing in Care Workers: Positioning Domestic Care Workers in Indonesia's Care Economy

Valentina Y. D. Utari, Asep Kurniawan, Sylvia Andriyani, Hening Wikan Sawiji, Hartika Arbiyanti, Esha Adnan

This study investigates the evolving role of domestic workers (*pekerja rumah tangga*, PRT) in Indonesia's care economy. Their labor enables families to participate in paid employment, education, and public life. Despite their central role in household functioning and the broader economy, PRT are still viewed as informal care workers, shaped by colonial legacies and cultural norms that associate caregiving with low-skilled, private labor. They continue to face limited legal protection and public recognition.

This study's findings show that PRT—many of whom are women who migrate from rural areas and start working at a young age—operate under precarious conditions. Most are hired without written contracts and face unclear compensation structures, limited mobility, and minimal protection under labor law. The work is increasingly complex, involving tasks such as infant stimulation, older people's care, dietary monitoring, and appliance management, yet few workers receive formal training. Cultural ideas continue to normalize unequal working relationships between PRT and their employers, while public perceptions label domestic work as menial tasks.

The 2025–2045 Roadmap and National Action Plan on the Care Economy for a Transformative, Gender-Equal, and Just World of Work (Peta Jalan dan Rencana Aksi Nasional Ekonomi Perawatan untuk Dunia Kerja yang Transformatif, Setara dan Adil Gender 2025–2045) marks a significant policy milestone by positioning care work as essential to gender equality and economic justice. However, major gaps persist. Local governments are largely unaware of the roadmap, and national planning documents scantily mention domestic care work as labor. There is also a significant lack of data on PRT, which limits evidence-based policymaking. Meanwhile, formal recognition of domestic workers within Indonesia lags behind policies for migrant labor.

To close these gaps, the study strongly recommends passing the Domestic Workers Protection Bill (RUU PPRT) with clear labor standards, safeguards against exploitation, and recognition of PRT as skilled workers. Additional priorities include public campaigns to shift the narrative from *pembantu* (helper) to *pekerja rumah tangga* (domestic worker), accessible training opportunities, and better coordination among government agencies, NGOs, and employers. Formal integration into the care economy and inclusion in national labor surveys are also recommended. These reforms are critical not only for achieving fairness but also for building a more inclusive and resilient care infrastructure for Indonesian families.

Keywords: domestic worker, PRT, care economy, RUU PPRT, Indonesia

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List of Abbreviations

BPJS Kesehatan	Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Sosial Kesehatan	health insurance
BPJS Ketenagakerjaan	Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Sosial Ketenagakerjaan	employment insurance
BRIN	Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional	National Research and Innovation Agency
CSO		civil society organization
Dinsosnakertrans	Dinas Sosial, Tenaga Kerja, dan Transmigrasi	Agency of Social Affairs, Labor, and Transmigration
DIY	Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta	Special Region of Yogyakarta
DPPA	Dinas Perlindungan Perempuan dan Anak	women and children protection agency
DPR	Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat	House of Representatives
DPRD	Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah	Regional House of Representatives
DP3AKB	Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan, Perlindungan Anak, dan Keluarga Berencana	Agency of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Family Planning
DP3AP2KB	Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan, Perlindungan Anak, dan Pengendalian Penduduk dan Keluarga Berencana	Agency of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Population Control and Family Planning
FDPY	Forum Diskusi Perempuan Yogyakarta	Yogyakarta Women's Discussion Forum
FGD		focus group discussion
IDI		in-depth interview
ILO		International Labour Organization
JALA PRT	Jaringan Nasional Advokasi Pekerja Rumah Tangga	National Network for Domestic Workers Advocacy
Kesbangpol	Badan Kesatuan Bangsa dan Politik	National Unity and Political Agency
Komnas Perempuan	Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan	National Commission on Violence Against Women
KUPI	Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia	Indonesian Women Ulama Congress
LBH	*lembaga bantuan hukum*	legal aid institution
LPPRT	*lembaga penyalur pekerja rumah tangga*	domestic worker placement agency
NGO		nongovernmental organizations
NTT	Nusa Tenggara Timur	East Nusa Tenggara
NU	Nahdlatul Ulama	Nahdlatul Ulama

operata	*organisasi pekerja rumah tangga*	domestic workers' organizations
PDI-P	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan	Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle
perda	*peraturan daerah*	regional regulation
P3RT	*perusahaan penempatan pekerja rumah tangga*	domestic worker placement company
Prolegnas	Program Legislasi Nasional	National Legislation Program
PRT	*pekerja rumah tangga*	paid domestic workers
raperda	*rancangan peraturan daerah*	draft regional regulation
RT/RW	*rukun tetangga/rukun warga*	neighborhood association
RTND	Rumpun Tjoet Nyak Dien	Tjoet Nyak Dien Women's Forum
RUU PPRT	Rancangan Undang-Undang Pelindungan Pekerja Rumah Tangga	Domestic Workers Protection Bill
SAHdaR	Sentra Advokasi untuk Hak Dasar Rakyat	Center for Advocacy for Basic People's Rights
Sekolah PRT	*Sekolah Pekerja Rumah Tangga*	Domestic Workers' School
SP	Solidaritas Perempuan	
SPRT	*serikat pekerja rumah tangga*	domestic workers' union
THR	*tunjangan hari raya*	religious holiday allowance
UMR	*upah minimum regional*	regional minimum wage

Executive Summary

Introduction

Indonesia stands at a critical juncture in its demographic and economic transition, where the recognition of care work—especially paid domestic care work—has become an urgent development priority. As more families shift toward dual-income arrangements and gender roles evolve, the invisible labor that sustains households demands formal recognition. Nevertheless, the provision of care in Indonesian homes, predominantly by women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, has long been taken for granted. Domestic workers, or *pekerja rumah tangga* (PRT), carry out essential care tasks—childcare, care for older people, care for people with disabilities, as well as cooking and cleaning—often under informal and precarious arrangements, without legal recognition or protection.

This study aims to fill the critical data and policy gaps in understanding paid domestic care work in Indonesia. It is situated within the broader context of feminist political economy and guided by intersectional analysis (Arivia, 2020; Chopra, Kelbert, and Iyer, 2013), aiming to reposition domestic workers as skilled contributors to the care economy in Indonesia (see also Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, 2024). In critically analyzing the position of domestic workers in Indonesia's care economy, we referred to the International Labour Organization (ILO) 5R Framework for Decent Care Work (ILO, 2018). The framework aims to *recognize* the contributions of care work to economic and social well-being, *reduce* the burden of unpaid caregivers, and advocate for the equitable *redistribution* of care responsibilities between genders, families, communities, and the state. It emphasizes the need to *reward* care workers fairly and support care workers to *represent* their voices in policymaking through collective bargaining (ILO, 2018).

This study supports Care Connect: Action for Care Workers in the Philippines and Indonesia. Care Connect in Indonesia is supported by the Government of Canada through collaboration with Penabulu Foundation. The organizations in partnership with this initiative are The SMERU Research Institute, Kalyanamitra, and the National Network for Domestic Workers Advocacy (JALA PRT).

This study has the following objectives:

1. To identify the impact of paid care work on family and community dynamics
2. To review the position of domestic workers within Indonesia's care economy
3. To explore the fulfilment of rights and compensation for domestic workers
4. To identify the impact of existing policies on paid care practices and domestic workers
5. To propose general recommendations for improving the protection and fulfilment of domestic workers' rights in Indonesia.

This study has five research questions:

1. What is the broader impact of domestic care work on families and local communities in Indonesia?
2. How do the key policies on paid care work in Indonesia impact the provision of care?
3. How do the key policies on paid care workers in Indonesia impact their welfare?
4. How are domestic workers compensated, and what challenges do they face in realizing their rights?
5. How are domestic workers positioned within Indonesia's care economy policies?

This study explores three key areas: the employment practices of domestic work, the role of domestic workers within Indonesia's care economy, and the policy and regulatory frameworks that shape their conditions. Together, these components offer a nuanced view of how domestic workers' lived experiences intersect with systemic challenges and gendered policy gaps.

Methodology

To capture the lived realities of domestic workers and assess the systemic structures that shape their labor, the study adopts a qualitative research design combining multiple methods. It comprises a systematic literature review, in-depth interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and a validation workshop. Drawing on feminist and participatory approaches (Arivia, 2020; Chopra, Kelbert, and Iyer, 2013), the study emphasizes power asymmetries, historical legacies, and sociocultural factors that influence care work.

Data collection was conducted at the national level and in three urban areas, i.e., Kota Bandung, Kota Medan, and Kota Yogyakarta. These three cities were selected for their significance in domestic labor advocacy, urbanization patterns, and diverse cultural contexts. Key informants included domestic workers (both live-in and live-out), their employers, government officials, placement agencies, domestic workers unions, NGOs, and media representatives. We used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques to reach the study's subjects.

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the data collection period. Interviews and FGDs were conducted in safe and confidential settings. Informants were offered the option to pause or decline participation at any stage. Special attention was given to trust-building with domestic workers, many of whom shared deeply personal accounts of exploitation, loss, and resilience.

A total of over 100 participants contributed to the study, representing a wide cross-section of Indonesia's care economy (see Appendices for lists of informants). This rich dataset provides a multidimensional understanding of domestic care work, combining historical insights, policy analysis, and personal narratives.

Paid Domestic Care Work Practice in Indonesia and Its Challenges

Paid domestic care work in Indonesia is shaped strongly by sociocultural values, gender roles, and economic gaps. PRT— predominantly women—are often hired informally, with verbal agreements instead of written contracts. Employers—mostly from middle- to upper-income families—depend on PRT to handle daily household tasks, so they can continue working, especially when both spouses are employed. Even though their role is essential, PRT still face economic hardship and legal invisibility.

The need for domestic workers continues to grow in urban areas. This study identifies two types of PRT: live-in and live-out PRT. Many employers now prefer live-out PRT to keep household privacy, while workers see this as a way to gain more freedom and work for more than one household. Live-in PRT are often more vulnerable, with long hours, restricted mobility, and limited rest. Unfortunately, both types are excluded from labor protections, social insurance, and skills development programs.

The relationship between PRT and employers tends to rely more on empathy and tradition than on legal regulations. In Kota Yogyakarta, some domestic workers express "*nrimo ing pandum*", a Javanese value that means accepting what is given sincerely. While this reflects emotional resilience, it also normalizes inequality. This contrasts with unionized workers, such as those from Tunas Mulia Domestic Workers' Union (SPRT Tunas Mulia), who are more vocal about their rights. Although the number of domestic workers participating in educational programs, such as *Sekolah PRT*, has begun to increase, access to these initiatives remains generally limited due to employer restrictions or a lack of support from local systems.

PRT handle a wide range of tasks—from basic cleaning and cooking to more specific caregiving, such as caring for children, older adults, and people with disabilities. Many employers have high standards and provide informal training. In some cases, they look for certified PRT through agencies, especially for older people's care, such as those with *pramurukti*[1] qualifications. Infant care is seen as especially demanding, requiring emotional strength and physical stamina. This shows that domestic work involves real skills, even if it is often misunderstood as unskilled labor.

Most PRT migrate from rural areas to the cities due to economic pressure. Many start young—some as early as 12 years old—and become breadwinners for their families. The reality is heartbreaking: while some care for others' children, they often leave their own behind. In Kota Bandung, some workers manage to send their children to school, even with low pay. In Kota Yogyakarta, those with certifications receive better wages and use the income for their children's university education or older family members' care.

Domestic workers not only support their own families—they also help their employers maintain professional lives. Their labor enables employers, especially women, to participate in the workforce, indirectly supporting national economic growth. Some families sometimes hire multiple PRT to divide responsibilities between childcare and household chores. These examples show how central PRT are to the care economy and why fair treatment and proper recognition are urgently needed.

Despite this, there are no strong legal mechanisms to resolve conflicts between workers and employers. Most disputes are handled through informal dialogue, and sometimes neighborhood-level authorities (RT/RW) are involved—though some view this as less appropriate. While serious cases, such as abuse, may be reported to the police, informal workers often remain invisible in reporting processes and in efforts to seek justice. Workers hired through official agencies have better access to mediation via the Ministry of Labor because they are registered.

In this gap, civil society groups help domestic workers who are facing violence, wage issues, or other problems. In Kota Medan, advocacy organizations handle harassment and unpaid wages. In Kota Yogyakarta, SPRT Tunas Mulia and networks such as the Tjoet Nyak Dien Women's Forum (RTND) provide shelter and legal aid. Workers accused of harming children are supported through legal partnerships with legal aid institutions (LBH). Unfortunately, some domestic workers receive no help from their spouses, who simply advise them to quit

[1] *Pramurukti* is a caregiver who focuses on providing care and support to older individuals, both those who are healthy and those who are ill. They are trained in basic caregiving skills and work under the supervision of healthcare professionals, such as nurses or doctors. *Pramurukti* plays a vital role in ensuring the well-being and comfort of older persons during their later years (Suara 'Aisyiyah, 2021).

instead of helping to resolve conflicts. This shows how strong the power imbalance is between domestic workers and employers—many remain unheard and unprotected.

Behind Closed Doors: The Unrecognized Contribution of Domestic Care Workers

PRT have long been the quiet backbone of Indonesia's formal economy. Their labor makes it possible for employers to pursue paid work, education, and civic participation. Yet, their contributions remain absent from economic data and public policy design.

Historically, domestic work in Indonesia has roots in colonial hierarchies (*baboe*) and cultural traditions (*ngenger*), both of which entrenched patron-client relationships. These legacies continue to shape employer attitudes and social perceptions, casting domestic work as personal service rather than professional labor. As the country modernized and dual-income families became more common, the demand for PRT grew. Women's increasing participation in formal sectors—especially during the Suharto era—was supported not by state reforms in caregiving responsibilities, but by the invisible labor of domestic workers.

In urban areas today, domestic care workers are expected to perform complex tasks: from operating appliances and managing household waste to caring for infants and older people with specific health conditions. Employers seek emotional intelligence and reliability, yet structured training remains limited and informal. At the same time, the stigma of low-status work discourages younger people from joining the profession. Many prefer factory jobs, even with a lower net income, simply because factory work is perceived as more respectable.

Interestingly, the government has treated migrant domestic workers very differently. Since 2016, the Ministry of Labor has developed official training programs and skill standards for them—including emotional development, household management, and care for older people. These efforts have professionalized migrant domestic work and helped workers prepare for international employment. In contrast, PRT employed within Indonesian households continue to lack comparable formal recognition and support.

The launch of the 2025–2045 Roadmap and National Action Plan on the Care Economy for a Transformative, Gender-Equal, and Just World of Work (commonly referred to as the Care Economy Roadmap) is a significant policy milestone led by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection. This roadmap frames care work as a strategic sector for gender justice, economic resilience, and social well-being. It acknowledges domestic workers as key actors in this ecosystem and proposes seven strategic areas—including childcare services, older people's care, disability inclusion, and maternity protection.

However, implementation remains incomplete. Care work only receives brief mention in the 2025–2029 National Development Plan, as the plan focuses more on grassroots service provision than labor rights. Moreover, interviews with officials in the study *kota* (cities) reveal that many had not heard of the roadmap or even the term "care economy". This underscores the weak policy dissemination and lack of training beyond central agencies.

Another major problem is the lack of detailed data on care work. Without reliable, disaggregated information on domestic workers, it is hard for national and subnational governments to assess needs, plan programs, or invest properly. The roadmap identifies data development as a top priority, demonstrating the critical role of evidence-based policy in strengthening support for care work.

Policies on Care Economy and Domestic Workers

Legal recognition is the cornerstone for transforming domestic care work. International comparisons offer actionable models. The Philippines' Batas Kasambahay Act ensures domestic workers' rights via contracts, social insurance, and minimum wages. Brazil and Argentina have formally integrated domestic work into its national labor law, extending pension, health, and workplace protections. Uruguay offers collective bargaining rights. These examples illustrate how legal reform can dismantle exploitation and enhance worker dignity.

Indonesia's existing labor laws—particularly the 2003 Labor Act—exclude PRT from formal classification. As a result, they are denied access to health insurance, employment protection, regulated working hours, and dispute resolution mechanisms. Regulation of the Minister for Labor No. 2 of 2015 on the Protection of Domestic Workers attempts to offer protection but is undermined by ambiguous language. Phrases such as "while still respecting local customs, culture, and traditions" dilute enforceability and perpetuate informality. The regulation lacks clear standards for wages, hours, and task assignments, and offers no monitoring framework for household-based employment.

In the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY) and Kota Yogyakarta, the local government has established regulations through Gubernatorial Regulation of the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province No. 31 of 2010 on Domestic Workers and the Regulation of the Head of Kota Yogyakarta No. 48 of 2011 on Domestic Workers. These regulations were pioneering efforts but remain largely unenforced due to lack of national mandates. In North Sumatra Province, attempts to pass the draft regional regulation (*raperda*) on the protection of female home-based workers, including domestic workers, have also stalled since 2017 due to the absence of a clear legal framework at the national level.

The long-anticipated Domestic Workers Protection Bill (RUU PPRT), first proposed in 2004, remains mired in legislative delay. Although acknowledged as a House of Representatives (DPR) initiative in 2023, its content has been significantly compromised. One reason for the many compromises in the legislative process is the different opinions among DPR members. Some of them are employers of PRT, and their personal experiences shape how they see the issue. According to Amnesty International Indonesia (2025), these legislators are reluctant to support the Bill due to apprehensions that its enactment would formalize domestic work, require the payment of minimum wages, and increase employers' legal liability.

The following key concerns of the Bill must be revisited to establish clear standards for regulating the rights of PRT in Indonesia:

a) Employment is defined as "sociocultural", not contractual.
b) Written agreements are mandated only through placement agencies; direct hires may rely on verbal arrangements.
c) No minimum standards are set for wages, rest, leave, or working hours.
d) The right to unionize is not explicitly recognize.
e) Labor exploitation is not classified as a criminal offense.

Despite the Bill's shortcomings, it includes provisions for BPJS Ketenagakerjaan (employment insurance) enrolment and government-funded health insurance. The Bill also enables employers to request skill documentation.

The current government has renewed its commitment to ratifying the Bill in 2025, with President Prabowo and DPR leadership pledging passage within the year. Advocacy organizations argue that legal recognition—even in compromised form—provides a foundation for future reforms.

Our stakeholder mapping, using a power–interest matrix, reveals that high-power players, such as the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, support reform. Local civil society organizations, including JALA PRT, SPRT Tunas Mulia, Rifka Annisa, SAHdaR, and Solidaritas Perempuan, continue to lead advocacy, mobilization, and education. Innovative strategies include community performances, public murals, and intergenerational storytelling. Yet, significant challenges remain in engaging low-power stakeholders, such as non-unionized workers and employers with limited awareness.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Indonesia's domestic workers are essential to the functioning of families, communities, and the national economy. Yet, they remain unseen in policy discourse and are unprotected. Improving the lives of PRT means acknowledging their central role in both family and national development. Legislative change, social acceptance, and strong partnerships are necessary to build a just and inclusive future for domestic workers in Indonesia.

To improve their situation, this report recommends:

a) **Legal reform**: Pass the **RUU PPRT** (the Protection of Domestic Workers Bill) with clear definitions of rights, fair wages, and protections. The meaning of "*hubungan sosiokultural*" (sociocultural relations) should not weaken the legal standing of PRT.

b) **Public awareness**: Promote a campaign to shift the view from *pembantu* (helper) to *pekerja rumah tangga* (domestic worker) so that respect and recognition can be fostered.

c) **Training access**: Ensure that employers respect the rights of PRT to take time off and attend training. Learning programs can be offered outside of their designated days off or through digital platforms to help improve their skills and confidence.

d) **Multistakeholder collaboration**: The government, NGOs, agencies, employers, and PRT must work together to implement and monitor improvements in working conditions.

e) **Integration into formal economy**: Develop policies that create career pathways and formal recognition for PRT, including specific education and skill-building programs.

f) **National survey**: Conduct a comprehensive survey to map out the conditions and numbers of domestic workers. This will help in designing better policies and optimizing resource allocation.

I. Introduction

This document is the report of a study entitled 'Investing in Care Workers: Positioning Domestic Care Workers in Indonesia's Care Economy.' The study examines the role of domestic workers, or *pekerja rumah tangga* (PRT), and the persistent lack of protection afforded to them.[2] It is part of the Care Connect: Action for Care Workers in the Philippines and Indonesia initiative.[3] Care Connect is a collaborative effort to empower women and girls by advancing their socioeconomic well-being and protecting their rights. Care Connect addresses gender imbalances in care work—an area largely dominated by women—which includes essential but undervalued tasks such as caring for the sick, cooking, and cleaning.

The SMERU Research Institute, Kalyanamitra, and the National Network for Domestic Workers Advocacy (JALA PRT) are implementing partners of the Care Connect initiative in Indonesia. The initiative is supported by the Government of Canada through collaboration with Penabulu Foundation and runs from 2024 to 2028, focusing on both paid and unpaid care workers. It adopts a gender and human rights-based approach that promotes the recognition of care work as real work, advocates for fair wages for paid care workers, and calls for a more equitable distribution of unpaid care responsibilities.

Discussions surrounding the care economy frequently emphasize the need to retain women in the workforce, as many leave due to caregiving responsibilities traditionally seen as their primary role. This raises critical questions about which women are being prioritized—those from specific demographic groups or across all socioeconomic levels? It is crucial to consider whether focusing on middle- and upper-class women, for example, is justified even if it overlooks the rights of care workers, who typically come from lower socioeconomy classes.

Domestic workers are essential not only to the care sector but also to the broader national economy, providing peace of mind to their employers by, among other things, managing household duties and childcare (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak[4], 2024). Despite their vital contribution, domestic workers remain unrecognized as formal essential workers largely due to the domestic nature of their work environments. In light of this, the study critically analyzes the positioning of domestic workers in Indonesia's care economy.[5]

Care work is a shared societal concern—it affects families, communities, and economies—and should not be seen solely as a "women's issue". Acknowledging it as such encourages broader participation in developing solutions, supports inclusive policymaking for all caregivers, and promotes an equitable distribution of care responsibilities across genders. Such an approach not only addresses structural gender disparities but also enhances societal well-being.

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[2]In this report, the terms domestic care workers, domestic workers, and PRT are utilized contextually. All terms refer to paid domestic workers. In sections addressing the situation of domestic workers within Indonesia, PRT and domestic workers are often used interchangeably.

[3]In the Philippines, the initiative partners with the Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK), Labor Education and Research Network (LEARN), and the United Domestic Workers of the Philippines (UNITED).

[4]Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection

[5]The SMERU Research Institute is conducting two studies as part of the Indonesian consortium of Care Connect. These two studies are independent of each other. One focuses on social norms surrounding the care economy—referred to as the unpaid care work study. The other one, the report of which you are reading at the moment, focuses on the protection and promotion of the rights and needs of female care workers, with particular attention to domestic workers—referred to as the paid care work study.

Following this section is Research Rationale, which delves into the background and urgency of this study, emphasizing the need to acknowledge domestic workers as skilled labor and to safeguard their rights through appropriate labor policies. The subsequent subsections elaborate the research objectives and research questions and the chapter concludes with an overview of the report's structure.

I.1 Research Rationale

The care economy and care work have long been central to feminist and feminist economic discourse. However, these issues gained broader attention, including from development policymakers, during the COVID-19 pandemic. As companies shifted to remote work or laid off employees, studies revealed that when both partners worked from home, women typically assumed greater responsibility for household management and childcare, significantly increasing their domestic workload (de Paz et al., 2020; UN Women, 2020; UNICEF et al., 2021; Martin-Anatias et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, many employers chose to terminate the employment of domestic workers either to cut expenses after layoffs or due to fears that live-out workers might carry the virus between households (Arivia, 2020; Syakriah, 2020). Despite their dismissals, domestic workers often received no severance pay, even though Indonesia's labor laws mandate it for terminated employees. Their status as informal workers employed in private households renders them particularly susceptible to unilateral job termination (Ruwaida, 2017).

At global and national levels, discussions about the care economy are inseparable from the 3R and 5R frameworks offered to address the importance of care work. The 3R framework emphasizes the recognition, reduction, and redistribution of unpaid care work (Budlender and Moussié, 2013). The International Labour Organization (ILO) 5R Framework for Decent Care Work complements this by highlighting the crucial role of domestic workers as care workers in the domestic sphere, while remaining unrecognized as workers entitled to workers' rights (ILO, 2018).

The ILO 5R Framework for Decent Care Work is a strategic initiative designed to enhance working conditions within the care economy by addressing five critical areas (ILO, 2018). It aims to *recognize* the essential contributions of both paid and unpaid care work to economic and social well-being. The framework seeks to *reduce* the burden of unpaid care, particularly on women, by improving access to childcare, older people's care, and other support services, and investing in infrastructure and technology. It advocates for the *redistribution* of care responsibilities more equitably between genders, families, communities, and the state, supported by policies such as parental leave and flexible work arrangements. The framework also emphasizes the need to *reward* care workers with fair wages, decent working conditions, and access to social protection, facilitated through legal frameworks and professional development opportunities. Finally, it aims to *represent* care workers by strengthening their voice in policy-making through unions, collective bargaining, and legal protections (ILO, 2018).

Recognizing domestic workers as skilled labor could significantly enhance their working conditions in several ways. For example, acknowledging their skills could lead to better compensation packages, including fair wages, benefits, and possibly bonuses, reflecting their expertise and contributions. Next, formal recognition could lead to stronger legal protections under labor laws, including rights to severance pay, regulated working hours, and safe working conditions. Then, recognized as skilled workers, domestic workers could gain access to social security benefits, such as health insurance and retirement plans, providing them with greater financial security.

Unfortunately, efforts to recognize and protect domestic workers in Indonesia remain stagnant, as the Domestic Workers Protection Bill (RUU PPRT, hereinafter the Bill) has been

stalled since 2004, when Jala PRT and its network first submitted a draft to the House of Representatives (DPR). Nevertheless, launched in March 2024, the 2025–2045 Roadmap and National Action Plan on the Care Economy for a Transformative, Gender-Equal, and Just World of Work (hereinafter the Care Economy Roadmap)[6] recognizes the existence and importance of domestic workers for Indonesian families (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, 2024).[7] This policy document comprehensively covers the landscape of Indonesia's care economy.

The Care Economy Roadmap states that the ecosystem of Indonesia's care economy does not solely rely on paid or unpaid care labor but also on low-paid care workers, such as PRT, (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, 2024: 39) who are striving to be recognized as workers (Adinda, 2022; JALA PRT, The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, and Institut Pekerja Domestik-Pekerja Rumah Tangga, 2020; Pelupessy, 2017; Ruwaida, 2017). The lack of recognition has resulted in a loss of labor rights, including safety protections (Izzati, 2024; Eddyono, 2023).

The Care Economy Roadmap outlines the initial five years following its launch as a consolidation phase for relevant ministries and agencies. The consolidation phase shall take into account the seven priority strategies of the Roadmap, including the "recognition and protection of care workers (across various sectors and types of care work)" (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, 2024: 9).[8] A fundamental concern about developing the care economy ecosystem is the lack of data. Therefore, one of the priority programs during this phase is to identify the needs of data and information (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, 2024: 56). This study is part of the collective efforts to supply data on the current situation of domestic workers and policies affecting them in Indonesia.

1.1.1 Global Domestic Workers Protection Models

The protection and recognition of domestic workers remain at the center of informal labor rights, gender equality, and social protection discourses. While some countries have made progress in formalizing domestic work through social security protections and labor legislation, others continue to face legislative barriers and persistent cultural perceptions that view domestic work merely as an extension of household duties rather than as formal employment. Comparing the policies of countries such as the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Nepal, as well as global contenders, such as Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, and Uruguay, highlights both the challenges and possibilities of legally protecting this vulnerable workforce. The Philippines stands out as the only Southeast Asian country that has a law on domestic workers. In contrast, Bangladesh and Nepal do not have legal protections for domestic workers. Meanwhile, Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, and Uruguay offer examples of good practices in protecting their domestic workers.

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[6]The Care Economy Roadmap document can be accessed on the following page: https://kemenpppa.go.id/buku/peta-jalan-ekonomi-perawatan-care-economy-tahun-2024-2045.

[7]The Care Economy Roadmap promotes the recognition and protection of various categories of care workers, including but not limited to (i) domestic workers (PRT); (ii) caregivers; (iii) disability caregivers; (iv) social workers; (v) healers/massagers; (vi) home carers; (vii) early childhood education teachers and daycare caregivers; (viii) childcare and companions; and (ix) community companions (e.g., health cadres, *posyandu* cadres, and PKK cadres).

[8]The Care Economy Roadmap has seven priority strategies: (i) childcare services and programs (e.g., daycare); (ii) services and programs for older people's care (aging and long-term care); (iii) inclusive services for people with disabilities, people living with HIV, survivors of violence, and other vulnerable groups; (iv) maternity protection; (v) strengthening of the role of fathers in caregiving through paternity leave; (vi) recognition and protection of care workers; and (vii) social protection for the well-being of those involved in the care economy.

Box 1
Batas Kasambahay of the Philippines

The Domestic Workers Protection Act of 2013, or Batas Kasambahay, marks a critical step in recognizing domestic work as dignified labor deserving of legal protection. By 2013, the law had already affected two million domestic workers. It accommodates a set of minimum legal rights for domestic workers. The signing of the law was the result of collective action by women's organizations, labor movements, and human rights activists, driven by years of systemic exploitation and the lack of formal recognition of domestic workers. The ratification of the ILO Convention No. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers by the Philippines in 2012 had pushed the government of the Philippines to act.

Batas Kasambahay provides for minimum wage guarantees, written employment contracts outlining payment terms, working hours, and job responsibilities, as well as access to health and social insurance. It also ensures rest days and holidays in an ordinary schedule, as well as protection for children against work. The law sets up formal means of resolving disputes between employers and employees, and gives domestic workers a legal channel to file claims. Although gaps in enforcement remain, this law laid a foundation for systemic change rooted in human rights and social justice.

Source: Eddyono (2023), Luviana (2020), King-Dejardin (2018)

In Bangladesh, domestic workers have yet to be covered by labor laws and included in social protection programs, according to WIEGO (2020a) Policy Brief No. 19 on The Cost of Insecurity: Domestic Workers' Access to Social Protection and Services in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Their lack of formal status denies them essential benefits such as health insurance, pensions, and maternity leave. Domestic workers in Dhaka, for example, are excluded from the national social security system due to their informal employment status, making them incapable of availing themselves of basic benefits (WIEGO, 2020a). Failure to have the workers protected by the law usually means low wages, job insecurity, and limited legal recourse, which further amplify gendered labor disparities, as domestic work in South Asia is predominantly feminized. The WIEGO brief highlights how these vulnerabilities persist, with domestic workers in Bangladesh remaining at the mercy of systemic constraints when trying to access state-sponsored benefits like healthcare and pensions (WIEGO, 2020a).

Similarly, Nepal faces issues with informality and inadequate protections for its domestic workers, according to WIEGO (2020b) Policy Brief No. 20 on Domestic Workers, Risk, and Social Protection in Nepal. The vast majority of Nepal's domestic workers, accounting for about 250,000 people, are internal migrants, many of whom are from rural areas. These workers frequently encounter major obstacles when trying to obtain formal employment contracts, social security coverage, and workplace protections. Since there are no legal protections for these workers, who are usually employed in informal arrangements, they are extremely susceptible to exploitation (WIEGO, 2020b). As in other South Asian countries, domestic work in Nepal is undervalued, and the majority of the domestic workers are not protected by national labor laws. This contributes to economic disparities and gendered labor inequalities (Kabeer, Sudarshan, and Milward, 2013). Chen (2012) and Blackett (2011) drew attention to the precarious circumstances faced by these workers: low pay, job insecurity, and legal invisibility. The situation is worsened by weak enforcement and insufficient political will to address the needs of domestic workers. This systemic exclusion from social protection, including health insurance, pensions, and maternity leave, is a common challenge across the Global South, where informal employment is still largely unregulated (ILO, 2015).

Outside South and Southeast Asia, Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, and Uruguay offer useful lessons in the safeguarding of home workers. In Argentina, domestic workers are formally registered under national social insurance schemes, ensuring that they qualify for benefits

such as paid leave, medical insurance, and pensions, protections that are still rare for domestic workers in many other countries (Bamu, 2018).

South Africa, under similar principles, absorbed domestic workers into the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), offering monetary compensation in case of loss of employment (Bamu, 2018). A 2021 landmark court decision extended domestic workers' rights further by including them as eligible for compensation under occupational injury legislation (Bamu, 2018).

Meanwhile, Uruguay has one of the strongest structures with minimum wages, social security, and anti-workplace discrimination, as well as workers' right to pursue collective bargaining to negotiate terms of employment and wages (Bamu, 2018). Enforcement is key, as can be seen through Uruguay's strong legal structure and ability to enforce compliance.

Brazil has made significant strides in bolstering the rights of domestic workers through several legislative and regulatory reforms aimed at reducing labor inequality and offering social benefits. Equal labor rights, including a set eight-hour workday, overtime compensation, minimum wage protections, and unemployment insurance, were granted to domestic workers by the 2013 Domestic Workers' Law (PEC das Domésticas) and crucial Constitutional Amendment 72/2013 (Dias et al., 2014). Complementary Law 150/2015, which explicitly specified employer obligations and ensured domestic workers' access to basic social security benefits like healthcare, maternity leave, and pensions, further clarified these protections.

Alongside these law changes, Brazil also introduced the Simples Doméstico system, which simplified the tax and registration procedure, facilitating business compliance and guaranteeing a better level of formalization for domestic employment (ILO, 2022). Worldwide labor standards, especially the ILO Convention No. 189, which established worldwide norms for the rights of domestic workers, had an impact on these modifications. The changes were also part of a larger initiative to redress past injustices associated with domestic employment in Brazil, a field that has long been associated with racial and gender inequality from colonial times. Women, many of whom are of Afro-Brazilian heritage, make up the majority of domestic workers in Brazil and have historically been denied labor rights (Dias et al., 2014). These reforms influenced more than 5.9 million domestic workers by 2023, demonstrating the magnitude of the changes (Statista, 2024). Nonetheless, enforcement challenges persist. Despite the improved legal framework, many domestic workers in Brazil still face unofficial working arrangements, wage fraud, and lack of access to social security due to weak regulatory oversight.

These case studies compel governments to implement comprehensive protections for domestic workers, including legal recognition, social security coverage, and robust enforcement mechanisms. Bamu (2018) pointed out that despite domestic work being predominantly informal in the majority of the world, these countries have established the benchmark to bring about better working conditions for domestic workers through legal recognition, social protection schemes, and concerted advocacy. Moreover, Brazil's ratification of the ILO Convention No. 189 set a global standard, leading to reforms that granted crucial labor rights to previously excluded workers (Dias et al., 2014). These international initiatives demonstrate that the lives of domestic workers can significantly be enhanced when governments commit to formalizing and protecting this workforce.

1.1.2 Domestic Workers and Their Roles in Indonesia's Society

Care work encompasses both direct and indirect services, including paid and unpaid activities. Direct care work involves nurturing tasks such as breastfeeding, childcare, and caring for the ill or older persons, while indirect care work includes activities like meal preparation and house cleaning (ILO, 2018; UN Women, 2018). This work is crucial for the well-being of dependents, such as children and older persons, and requires specific skills

and a caring disposition (England, 2005). Paid care work is performed by professionals such as domestic workers, childcare providers, and healthcare workers (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, 2024; UN Women, 2018; Adriany and Warin, 2014). However, most care work is unpaid or low paid, and predominantly undertaken by women, such as domestic workers, reinforcing their economic and social marginalization (UN Women, 2018) and often excluding them from the national social protection system (Razavi and Staab, 2010).

The presence of PRT in Indonesia can be traced back to the colonial era, when many Dutch families had *baboe*, who were local, impoverished individuals living and working in their homes. There was also the practice of *ngenger* in Javanese society, where young children lived in the homes of relatives—or even with unrelated households—and were entrusted to learn work skills. In practice, this meant that they performed many domestic tasks, including caring for the children of the homeowners where they lived.

The cultural relationship between the *baboe* and Dutch families, as well as between the *ngenger* children and the relatives they lived with, gave rise to a patron-client pattern, in which clients expected protection and support such as food and shelter from their patrons, while patrons expected obedience from their clients. These patterns continue to shape the undervaluation of domestic work.

Our findings show that domestic workers are essential to household functioning and to the broader Indonesian economy. Their labor enables others—especially women—to work, study, or participate in public life, thereby sustaining formal labor productivity. However, their contributions remain invisible in economic indicators due to the informal, gendered, and household-based nature of their work. We argue that without domestic workers, many Indonesian families—especially those where both parents work—would face challenges in managing paid work and caregiving responsibilities.

Domestic workers are largely absent from public discourse and policy agendas. The lives of domestic workers, with all their complexities, are rarely discussed in historical narratives. They experience both precarious and vulnerable working conditions. Many of them have uncertain job arrangements and limited legal protection, and face significant risks of exploitation. These problems arise not only from the nature of their work but also from deeper systemic issues like gender inequality, informality, and the position of migrant workers.

Media coverage often focuses on sensational topics, such as a domestic worker becoming involved with her male employer, without examining the significant power imbalance between them. Even when domestic workers are reported as victims of violence by their employers, the coverage tends to be overly dramatic or even vulgar, failing to explain that these incidents stem from the lack of legal protection afforded to domestic workers in the domestic sphere.

Because of these overlapping challenges, we use a human rights and care economy perspective when analyzing the situation of domestic workers in Indonesia. This approach helps to highlight the valuable role of domestic workers in supporting households and the national economy. It also pushes for policy changes that respect their dignity, ensure their protection, and fairly include them in socioeconomic development.

1.1.3 Advocating for the Rights and Protection of Domestic Workers

The history of advocacy for the Domestic Workers Protection Bill cannot be separated from the histories of the Yogyakarta Women's Discussion Forum (FDPY), the Tjoet Nyak Dien Women's Forum (RTND), and JALA PRT. In 1989, FDPY was founded by a group of women activists, including Lita Anggraini—now the national coordinator of JALA PRT—alongside Damairia Pakpahan, Maria Pakpahan, Aida Milasari, Yuni Satya Rahayu, Hening Tyas Sutji, Siti

Noor Laila, and Rebeka Harsono. In 1991, FDPY advocated for a domestic worker in East Java who had experienced violence from her employer. This case became a turning point, prompting the group to transform into a *rumpun* (women's forum) in 1992, shifting its focus to the specific needs and rights of domestic workers and initiating research related to them (Austin, 2022; Adinda, 2022; Sargini, Jumiyem, and Muryanti, 2017; Eddyono et al., 2016).

In 1995, FDPY formally changed its name to the RTND Foundation. RTND focused on organizing domestic workers and advocating for policies to protect them. One reason for the name change was that FDPY had been targeted by the military at that time. Between 1999 and 2000, RTND's support for domestic workers contributed to the formation of eight domestic workers organizations (*operata*), all of which were led and managed by domestic workers themselves. In 2003, the Tunas Mulia Domestic Workers' Union (SPRT Tunas Mulia) was established in Yogyakarta. In the same year, RTND and SPRT Tunas Mulia founded a domestic workers school in Yogyakarta (Austin, 2022; Adinda, 2022; Sargini, Jumiyem, and Muryanti, 2017; Eddyono et al., 2016). (See also Box 2 in Chapter 5.)

RTND's grassroots organizing efforts was hand-in-hand with policy advocacy at the regional level. Together with other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—such as Rifka Annisa, the Yogyakarta Legal Aid Institute (LBH Yogyakarta), Yogyakarta Women's Secretariat (SBPY), and the Annisa Swasti Foundation (Yasanti)—RTND proposed a draft regional regulation in Yogyakarta (see also Box 6 and Figure 2 in Chapter 5). The results of these sustained advocacy efforts came more than ten years later. In 2010, the governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY) issued a gubernatorial regulation on domestic workers in Yogyakarta (Gubernatorial Regulation of DIY No. 31 of 2010 on Domestic Workers). The following year, the head of Kota (City of) Yogyakarta issued a corresponding *kota* head regulation (Regulation of the Head of Kota Yogyakarta No. 48 of 2011 on Domestic Workers) (Sargini, Jumiyem, and Muryanti, 2017; and the results of an IDI with a representative of SPRT Tunas Mulia). (See Chapter 5, which analyzes key policies related to domestic workers.)

RTND believed that domestic workers' rights should become a national issue. In 2004, Lita Anggraini—representing RTND—along with colleagues from various organizations, formed JALA PRT, with the aim of expanding the efforts initiated by FDPY and RTND to the national level. JALA PRT has three main objectives: (i) advocating for policies to protect the rights of domestic workers; (ii) organizing and educating domestic workers to establish domestic workers' unions across Indonesia; and (iii) raising public awareness about decent working conditions and domestic workers' rights. ILO Convention No. 189, adopted in 2011, became one of the international legal instruments that strengthened JALA PRT's efforts in advocating for policies in the form of laws and regional regulations, and the ratification of ILO Convention No. 189 for the protection of domestic workers' rights in Indonesia (Austin, 2022; Adinda, 2022; Sargini, Jumiyem, and Muryanti, 2017; Eddyono et al., 2016).

RTND started drafting the Domestic Workers Protection Bill (RUU PPRT) in 2001. JALA PRT formally submitted the Bill to the DPR in 2004 and began a series of dialogues with both DPR and the government. The objective was to encourage either the DPR, the government, or both to take the legislative initiative in passing the Bill. Despite these efforts, the Bill has been caught in a cycle of delay and inaction within the DPR for years (Izzati, 2024; Adinda, 2022; Eddyono et al., 2016). On 30 September 2024, the final official day of the 2019–2024 DPR term, the Bill remained untouched. (See Chapter 5 for a more detailed analysis of the winding legislative process of the Bill.)

1.2 Research Objectives

This study has two overarching aims: (i) to support efforts to enhance the protection and promotion of women's rights and needs related to paid care work in Indonesia and (ii) to generate evidence for effectively influencing the fulfilment of Indonesian female care workers' rights and needs in both national and international spaces.

These aims are further detailed in the following specific objectives:

1. To identify the impact of paid care work on family and community dynamics
2. To review the position of domestic workers within Indonesia's care economy
3. To explore the fulfilment of rights and compensation for domestic workers
4. To identify the impact of existing policies on paid care practices and domestic workers
5. To propose general recommendations for improving the protection and fulfilment of domestic workers' rights in Indonesia

1.3 Research Questions

This study addresses five key research questions:

1. What is the broader impact of domestic care work on families and local communities in Indonesia?
2. How do the key policies on paid care work in Indonesia impact the provision of care?
3. How do the key policies on paid care workers in Indonesia impact their welfare?
4. How are domestic workers compensated, and what challenges do they face in realizing their rights?
5. How are domestic workers positioned within Indonesia's care economy policies?

The study comprises three distinct research components. The first focuses on the practice of domestic worker employment. The second looks at how domestic workers are positioned in Indonesia's care economy. The third gathers data concerning relevant policy and regulatory framework on domestic workers, evaluating whether the policies perpetuate gender inequalities. This comprehensive approach seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of both the policy landscape and the lived experiences of domestic workers in Indonesia.

1.4 Structure of the Report

This introductory chapter explains the rationale of the study, and the research aims and questions, and provides a synthesis of the situation of domestic workers in Indonesia, along with a synthesis of gendered care norms and the care economy in the country. It is followed by four main chapters:

a) Chapter 2 explains the methodology of the research. The chapter details the methods and techniques for data collection and analysis, the selection of informants and study locations, and the conceptual framework underpinning the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of research ethics and reflections from the research team.

b) Chapter 3 discusses the experiences of PRT, examining their roles within the families that employ them in Indonesia. Addressing research questions 1 and 4, the chapter starts with examining the characteristics of both employers and domestic workers, and the dynamics of their employment relationships, which are largely shaped by sociocultural norms. It then analyzes the impacts of domestic workers' labor on their families and employers, signifying the socioeconomic value of paid domestic care in Indonesian households. The chapter concludes with the challenges domestic workers face, highlighting the benefits and shortcomings they experience as care workers, including the obstacles they encounter to secure their rights.

c) Chapter 4 explores and analyzes the findings to address research questions 2, 3, and 5. The chapter critically looks at trends in the utilization of domestic worker services in Indonesia, including the historical development of the practice and contemporary challenges of the occupation. It continues with discussing the socioeconomic and gender dynamics that have shaped care work in Indonesia, the role of PRT in the broader context of Indonesia's care economy, and the structural barriers that hinder their recognition and

protection. The chapter offers insights into how the Care Economy Roadmap can serve as a strategic framework for developing an inclusive and equitable care economy.

d) Chapter 5 further addresses research questions 2, 3, and 4. The chapter explores the diverse challenges as well as initiatives aimed at enhancing the legal safeguards for domestic workers in Indonesia. It starts with critically examining the existing ministerial regulation on domestic worker protection and the complexities of passing the Domestic Workers Protection Bill into law. The chapter further explains the importance of collaborative endeavors to advocate for domestic workers' rights. It concludes with a critical analysis of various challenges to enhance legal protections for PRT with detailed insights into the systemic issues involved.

The need for regulations specifically protecting domestic workers has become increasingly pressing. Chapter 6 synthesizes the study's key findings and analyses, and offers policy recommendations to support the recognition of domestic workers as essential workers, to advocate for the enactment of laws protecting domestic workers in Indonesia, and to anticipate the passing of the Bill with continued public education—including for policymakers—to reinforce the understanding that PRT are workers, not *just* helpers.

II. Methodology

II.1 Research Design

In this chapter, we explore the relationship between our research aims and the conceptual framework that underpins this research project. We detail the research methods and techniques employed for data collection and analysis, while also addressing critical aspects such as the study locations, the number of participants involved, and the ethical considerations that accompany our work. Our position as researchers will be discussed, along with the ethical dilemmas we navigated throughout the research process. This foundation sets the stage for a deeper understanding of our study's design and implementation.

II.1.1 Data Collection Methods

We employed a qualitative approach for this research, which we found ideal for exploring the nuances of paid care work in Indonesia. Unlike a quantitative approach, which typically addresses questions of frequency or magnitude, a qualitative approach allows for a deeper exploration of participants' perceptions and experiences. We applied a literature review, in-depth interviews (IDIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs) to collect data.

The literature review involved collecting policy documents, such as laws, regulations, journal articles, research reports, and news articles, related to domestic workers (PRT) in Indonesia. Microsoft Excel was used to organize the data, which informed the research design, stakeholder mapping, and the development of IDI and FGD guidelines. This matrixed data also supported referencing during the writing and analysis process.

The IDIs aimed to capture the nuances of the lives of PRT and to gather insights from PRT and other stakeholder groups on the recognition of PRT as essential workers and on the Domestic Workers Protection Bill. The IDI guideline consists of unstructured and open-ended questions to understand informants' perspectives (Creswell, 2014). Following a participatory feminist approach (Reinharz, 2005), the IDIs sought to reveal informants' hidden perceptions and understand their worldviews. The IDIs were conducted at both national and regional levels.

FGDs were employed to explore new topics and examine potential outcomes that might deviate from initial assumptions, offering deeper insights into the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of a specific population (Seal et al., 1998). In this study, separate FGDs were conducted for domestic workers and employers, ensuring that no domestic worker participating in their respective FGD was employed by any employer involved in the employer FGD.

Data collection at both national and regional levels involved key stakeholders, including government and nongovernment agencies, the private sector, professional organizations, domestic worker suppliers, PRT unions, academics, domestic workers (PRT), and employers. The aim was to map the key actors and factors influencing advocacy for legal protection for PRT.

In terms of interviewing PRT, we recognized the challenge of locating them, so we enlisted the help of regional researchers and field assistants in the three *kota* where the study was conducted to identify potential participants before commencing fieldwork. We employed

snowball sampling, a method used when target informants are not easily accessible (Naderifar, Goli, and Ghaljaie, 2017).[9]

II.1.2 Research Participants

This qualitative approach was particularly suitable given the complexities of domestic workers' experiences, for instance, enabling us to compare the responsibilities of live-in and live-out domestic workers (PRT) and to capture their perceptions of paid care work.

Our fieldwork spanned from December 2024 to January 2025 and consisted of four phases. *First*, we conducted pilot research in December 2024 in Depok, West Java, to test our research instruments. *Second*, we collected primary data in January 2025 through IDIs and FGDs with both live-in and live-out PRT, their family members or partners, and domestic worker employers, as well as with local advocacy and government institutions concerned with PRT issues. *Third*, we interviewed national informants, including media representatives, advocacy groups, and government agencies from December 2024 to April 2025. The *final* stage of data collection was a validation workshop that was conducted in May 2025. The validation workshop served as a tool to confirm our findings and to sharpen our analysis and recommendations.

Sampling was conducted using the purposive sampling method (Nyimbili, 2024),[10] allowing the research team to select informants based on an initial mapping of stakeholders involved in, or referenced by, the Care Economy Roadmap. The age range of the research participants was from 17 to 61 years old. Most of the participants were women. In total, we had 102 people interviewed and invited to the FGDs. The validation workshop was attended by 14 people. (See Appendices for details on the tabulation of IDIs, FGDs, and the validation workshop.)

[9]Snowball sampling is a convenience sampling method. This method is applied when it is difficult to access subjects with the target characteristics. In this method, the existing study subjects recruit future subjects among their acquaintances. Sampling continues until data saturation. In another definition, snowball sampling may be less reliant on a reference sample, but it is still suitable to find unattainable populations. For example, when the research is aimed at a group of domestic workers, meeting the first group of samples will probably lead to other samples; thus, the study sample grows like a rolling snowball.

[10]Purposive sampling procedures are used to help in ensuring that quality sample is located without biases so as to increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings.

Table 1. List of Research Participants

No.	Category	Level	#Informants (persons)			
			National Level	Kota Medan	Kota Bandung	Kota Yogyakarta
1	Live-in and live-out PRT: ● who do domestic tasks (e.g., washing, sweeping, and cooking) ● who take care of babies (0–59 months) ● who take care of children (<18 years) ● who take care of older people or people with disabilities	Regional	0	IDI = 4 FGD = 10	IDI = 4 FGD = 8	IDI = 4 FGD = 11
2	Employers of: ● live-in PRT ● live-out PRT	Regional	0	IDI = 2 FGD = 7	IDI = 2 FGD = 5	IDI = 2 FGD = 4
3	Spouses or family members of PRT	Regional	0	2	2	2
4	Government agencies/ministries	National, Regional	2	5	6	4
5	NGOs advocating for domestic worker issues	National, Regional	3	1	1	2
6	The private sector: companies that recruit domestic workers	Regional	0	1	1	1
7	Domestic workers' unions	National, Regional	0	1	0	1
8	The media	National	3	0	0	0
9	Academics	National	1	0	0	0
10	Parliament members	Regional	0	0	0	1

II.1.3 Study Locations

We chose three cities as the study locations: Kota Bandung, Kota Medan, and Kota Yogyakarta. Kota Bandung and Kota Medan were selected because they were among the seven major cities in Indonesia where residents heavily depend on domestic workers. The other five cities were Palembang, Bandung, Semarang, Surabaya, and Makassar (Suryomenggolo, 2020). Kota Yogyakarta was selected because of its strong history of domestic worker advocacy by women activists, domestic workers' organizations and unions, civil society, and academics. Our study location selection was based on a comprehensive literature review.

a) **Kota Bandung, West Java Province**

Kota Bandung, the capital of West Java Province, encompasses an area of 167.67 km^2. In 2022, its population reached 2,545,005 people. As in other regions in Indonesia, there are currently no updated records on the number of domestic workers in Kota Bandung or West Java Province. However, in 2015, West Java Province was recorded as having the largest number of domestic workers in Indonesia, numbering approximately 859,000 workers (ILO, 2011).

As a major trade center in West Java Province, Kota Bandung is assumed to have a high demand for domestic workers. The city attracts a large number of migrant workers seeking domestic jobs, many of whom face substantial risks. This provides an opportunity to study migration patterns, socioeconomic pressures, and employment risks associated with domestic work in urban settings.

Kota Bandung also has a history of research and advocacy on domestic worker issues, evident in recent events such as talk shows and case studies on child labor and domestic workers' welfare. This background not only enriches the context of our research but can also provide local contacts, community partnerships, and additional resources for conducting fieldwork.

b) **Kota Medan, North Sumatra Province**

Kota Medan, a metropolitan city and the capital of North Sumatra Province, covers an area of 265.10 km^2. In 2022, the city had a population density of approximately 9,413 people per km^2 and a total population of around 2,5 million people. Most residents work in the trade sector. Kota Medan was also one of the three cities selected by the DPR's Commission IX for a public hearing on the Domestic Workers Protection Bill in 2012. The other two cities were Kota Malang and Kota Makassar.

Kota Medan and North Sumatra Province offer a unique blend of cultural, economic, and political contexts, making them ideal locations for research on domestic and informal work. Their history of labor activism, high concentration of informal labor, and dynamic labor advocacy efforts provide a rich context to examine the challenges and advancements in informal labor rights.

North Sumatra Province presents a compelling case study for examining the dynamics of labor movements, particularly within the context of informal work and domestic labor. The region's rich history of union activism provides a fertile ground for exploring organized labor movements and collective action. This historical foundation is evident in the strong union presence, which facilitates the study of labor rights mobilization and advocacy for informal workers. Additionally, in areas such as Kecamatan (Subdistrict of) Tanjung Morawa, the legacy of generational domestic work over more than 40 years highlights the unique aspects of intergenerational labor reliance and social adaptation.

Cultural norms in many rural and semi-urban areas of the region restrict women's participation in decision-making and rights advocacy, particularly concerning economic and employment issues. This setting allows for an examination of the intersections between gender, labor, and rural socioeconomic structures. Meanwhile, NGOs such as BITRA Indonesia play a key role in empowering domestic workers through advocacy, training, and rights awareness campaigns, offering a lens into grassroots empowerment and the social effects of NGO interventions.

The collaboration between NGOs, such as BITRA Indonesia and the Alliance of Home Workers, and regional governments in North Sumatra Province is noteworthy. These entities are pushing for regional regulations (*perda*) to protect domestic workers in the absence of national legislation. These advocacy efforts provide a unique opportunity to study bottom-up approaches to labor rights policy and their potential to influence national policy agendas.

c) **Kota Yogyakarta, the Province of the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY)**

In 2022, Kota Yogyakarta had a population of around 412,797 residents. Covering an area of approximately 32.5 km^2, the city is characterized by a diverse range of occupations among its inhabitants, including farming, trading, and craftsmanship. Additionally, Kota Yogyakarta is known as a center of learning, hence the affectionate nickname the "City of Students", or *Kota Pelajar* in Indonesian.

Yogyakarta—both the city and the province—serves as a crucial focal point for understanding the complexities faced by one of Indonesia's largest marginalized working populations: domestic workers. They encounter a range of challenges, from low wages to insufficient legal protections, within a diverse socioeconomic landscape that spans urban instability and rural migration pressures. Despite these challenges, Yogyakarta has become a beacon of advocacy, with local efforts setting influential precedents for domestic workers' rights across Indonesia.

The advocacy initiatives in Yogyakarta, led by organizations such as JALA PRT, FDPY, and RTND, have been instrumental in pioneering legislative efforts such as Gubernatorial Regulation of DIY No. 31 of 2020 and the Regulation of the Head of Kota Yogyakarta No. 48 of 2011 on Domestic Workers (see also Chapter 5). Although these regulations are not yet fully implemented, they signify a major step forward for domestic workers' rights in the country. The city's early adoption of policies and inclusion of domestic workers in the regional regulation on labor affairs since 2009 underscore its commitment to recognizing these workers as legitimate laborers. This historical progression—supported by political figures such as Herry Zudianto, former mayor of Kota Yogyakarta—highlights the potential of effective government-NGO collaboration in advancing public welfare.

Furthermore, Yogyakarta's robust network of legal aid organizations, including LBH Yogyakarta, offers a rich repository of case studies and legal frameworks. These resources are invaluable for analyzing practical interventions and the success of policy changes. The ongoing negotiations conducted by JALA PRT and its allies with the DPR exemplify the resilience and strategic approaches necessary to advocate for marginalized groups amidst political challenges.

II.2 Conceptual Framework

We conceptualize a framework to make sense of the research findings by building on concepts of intersectionality and feminist policy analysis. Our conceptual framework is also grounded within the ILO 5R Framework for Decent Care Work (see 1.1 Research Rationale).

II.2.1 Intersectionality

Arivia (2020), in her journal article titled "Feminist Theoretical Perspective: Intersectionality and Covid-19", discusses that intersectional feminism is crucial for understanding the diverse challenges faced by women and marginalized groups. In this research context, increasing household burdens disproportionately affect women. Domestic work, predominantly performed by women, is particularly vulnerable to exploitation, with domestic workers (PRT) often not receiving additional wages despite increased workloads. Intersectional feminism helps reveal the multiple layers of marginalization experienced by PRT, who are mostly women. Applying intersectionality enables us to understand that PRT allow their employers or service users to engage in paid work in the formal sector.

II.2.2 Feminist Policy Analysis

Paid care work is crucial for the economic empowerment of women, with most domestic workers (PRT) being women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Extensive evidence highlights the significant contributions of paid care work to both economic and human development. Chopra's (2013) report, "Analysis of Public Policies Related to Care: A Thematic Review", discusses that feminist political economy analysis sheds light on how unpaid care work gains visibility in national policy agendas. This analysis also applies to paid care work, examining institutions, interests, and incentives, as well as the interplay of gendered ideas, discourses, and actors in policy creation, implementation, and evaluation. Successfully incorporating care work into national policy involves recognizing women's contributions, reducing the burdens of care, and redistributing care responsibilities to the state, community, and men. Policies are assessed at three stages: intent (aims and design), implementation (action), and outcomes (results).

II.3 Data Analysis

We established preliminary themes through a systematic literature review, organizing the literature into issues concerning domestic workers both at the national level and within the three selected study areas, as well as policies pertinent to care work and domestic workers. These preliminary themes served as subheadings in our IDI and FGD guidelines and were consistently used in our field notes. After completing fieldwork, we revisited these themes and reviewed our field notes to determine whether any data required the creation of new themes due to inconsistencies with the initial ones. During the analysis phase, we continuously engaged with literature on domestic workers and the care economy to ensure the development of priority themes that addressed the study's research questions.

II.4 Research Administration

II.4.1 Ethical Concerns

During the design phase of our research, we identified the potential for informant participation to create tensions between domestic workers (PRT) and their employers. Such participation might lead to the termination of employment for some PRT. While acknowledging this risk, we also considered the possibility that these tensions might be minimal.

To address these concerns, we developed a series of measures to minimize any negative impacts on PRT and ensure that the research was conducted ethically and responsibly. These strategies were designed to safeguard the well-being of the PRT and maintain the integrity of our research. The steps we implemented included:

a) **Building trust and ensuring confidentiality of informant identity:** We informed the PRT that their identities would remain confidential and that the data collected would be used solely for research purposes.

b) **Providing a safe space:** We created a secure and comfortable environment for IDIs and FGDs, allowing the PRT to pause or terminate the interview if they experienced stress or discomfort.

c) **Preparing for potential scenarios:** We anticipated employer inquiries about the interviews and provided the PRT with guidance on how to respond appropriately without revealing sensitive information.

d) **Minimizing potential conflicts between the PRT and their employers:** The PRT whom we interviewed and invited to FGDs for domestic workers did not work for the employers whom we interviewed and invited to FGDs for employers.

II.4.2 Ethical Clearance

Ethical Approval for this study numbered 13112024000008 was granted by the Ethics Commission of Social Humanities Research of the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) of the Republic of Indonesia.

II.4.3 Research Permits

To conduct fieldwork, we required approvals from both BRIN and the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Additionally, we sought approval from the National Unity and Political Agency (Kesbangpol) in the Provinces of West Java, the Special Region of Yogyakarta, and North Sumatra, followed by city-level approvals in Kota Bandung, Kota Yogyakarta, and Kota Medan.

II.5 Researchers' Reflections

The study involved a careful process of recruiting and building trust with domestic workers (PRT). However, the research posed potential risks of conflict between PRT and their employers due to the nature of the interview questions. Sensitivity was essential throughout the extended process of establishing and maintaining trust with PRT. For instance, in an FGD during our pilot, one PRT became emotional when discussing her employer's unfair treatment, revealing that she worked overtime for inadequate pay. We prioritized her well-being by considering the best response, offering comfort, and providing her with the option to pause the FGD when she showed distress, which she took. After expressing her feelings, she was able to continue with the FGD. Ultimately, it is crucial to be attuned to the PRT's body language and facial expressions and to empathize with their comfort levels during IDIs or FGDs.

III. Paid Domestic Care Work Practice in Indonesia and Its Challenges

The employment of domestic workers has become increasingly commonplace among the middle and upper classes in Indonesia, in line with the rising demand for domestic labor and caregiving within the household. This chapter explores domestic work in Indonesia, beginning with an examination of the characteristics of both employers and workers, as well as the dynamics of their employment relationship, which remains largely shaped by sociocultural norms. The following section discusses the impact of paid care work practices, highlighting the indispensable role of domestic workers. These workers function as 'invisible powers' who sustain the functioning of economic life, governance, services, and other public sectors (Komnas Perempuan[11], 2024). They support public labor by taking on domestic responsibilities, thereby enabling both male and female employers to remain productive in the labor market. Moreover, the nature of domestic work is evolving, requiring domestic workers to possess increasingly advanced skills in order to enhance their bargaining power with employers.

The chapter concludes with an analysis of the challenges faced by domestic workers in Indonesia. Despite the considerable demand for domestic workers, their labor remains largely unrecognized and legally unprotected. Yet, acknowledging domestic workers as workers is, in essence, an affirmation of their full humanity—recognizing that their fundamental rights must be respected and fulfilled. The fundamental rights of domestic workers in Indonesia are inadequately safeguarded by the 2003 Labor Act, as their employment—predominantly situated within the informal sector—falls outside the law's coverage. As a result, they are highly susceptible to various forms of abuse and exploitation, including excessive working hours, low wages, forced confinement, physical and/or sexual violence, forced labor, and trafficking (ILO, 2015). It is common practice for employment relationships with domestic workers to be perceived as sociocultural rather than contractual, leading to the absence of written employment agreements. Consequently, the provision of wages and rest days is often left to the employer's discretion. While verbal agreements are widely accepted as substitutes for written contracts (Muryanti et al., 2015), they are inherently vulnerable to violations, given the absence of tangible evidence in cases of dispute.

III.1 Paid Care Work Practices in Indonesia

As a middle-income country experiencing high economic growth and an expanding middle class, Indonesia has witnessed an increasing demand for domestic workers (PRT). This rising demand, particularly among the upper-middle class, is supported by findings from the 2021 National Labor Force Survey (Sakernas), which indicate that most domestic workers (76%) are employed on the island of Java—the region that dominates Indonesia's economic growth (CNBC Indonesia, 2024). Households that can afford to hire domestic workers often report that their presence significantly improves quality of life and enhances child well-being by providing care in the absence of parents.

A rapid assessment by JALA PRT in 2009 estimated that the number of domestic workers in Indonesia reached 10,744,887, employed by 67% of middle- and upper-middle-income households. Of this total, 93% were women originating from rural areas and the urban poor, generally with low educational attainment; many of them were under the age of 18 (ILO,

[11]Indonesia's National Commission on Violence Against Women

2015; LPEM FEB UI[12], 2023). Notably, up-to-date data on domestic workers remain difficult to obtain due to limitations in the legal definition of domestic work and restricted data sources. Without accurate data, identifying and addressing the challenges faced by domestic workers—and designing effective policy interventions to protect them—remains a significant challenge.

Beyond data limitations, one of the more concerning issues in the current landscape of domestic work pertains to living arrangements. These arrangements are closely tied to the fulfillment of domestic workers' rights, particularly in relation to wages, working days, and working hours. Studies have shown that live-in domestic workers are more vulnerable to exploitation due to undefined and extended working hours, as employers may request their services at any time. In contrast, live-out domestic workers tend to have more control over their work schedules, often governed by informal verbal agreements with employers. This arrangement also enables them to work for multiple households, thereby increasing their income.

The following subsection presents field findings on the prevailing practices of domestic work in Indonesia. It includes an overview of employer characteristics, the living conditions and demographic profiles of domestic workers, as well as the scope of tasks they perform. This subsection also distinguishes between live-in and live-out domestic workers, offering insights into their respective working arrangements.

III.1.1 Characteristics of Employers of Domestic Workers

Employers who hire domestic workers generally come from middle- to upper-class families, such as office workers, lecturers, doctors, and entrepreneurs. These employers typically have full-time jobs or occupations that require long hours outside the home, necessitating support to assist with daily household chores. Employers require support with tasks such as cleaning the house, washing clothes, cooking, and caring for children. Additionally, PRT may also be employed as store workers if the employer owns a business.

Typically, employers first seek potential domestic workers from their immediate surroundings, such as family members, because they are perceived as more trustworthy than others. Other employers may choose PRT from service providers, hoping that these workers are more experienced and trained. Since care work is still viewed as a traditional job, the majority of PRT are employed based on verbal agreements without written contracts. This often results in wages that do not align with the workload. However, some PRT in this study reported having good employers who care about not only the well-being of their workers but also that of the workers' families.

Table 2. Characteristics of Employers and Their Care Workers' Arrangements

Employer # Age, Sex, Education	Occupation Area	Sex, Work-Living Arrangements, Tasks of the Domestic Worker(s)	Notes
Employer #1 39, male, N/A	Marketing professional Kota Bandung	Female, full-time, live-in Cleaning and tidying the house, washing dishes, washing and ironing clothes, cooking, childcare, house-sitting	N/A
Employer #2 36, female, N/A	Sales associate Kota Bandung	Female, full-time, live-in Cleaning and tidying the house, washing dishes, washing and ironing clothes, childcare, house-sitting,	Employer #2 usually buys food for their family, including for

[12]Institute for Economic and Social Research – Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Indonesia

		cooking (only preparing breakfast for children)	their domestic worker.
Employer #3 31, female, N/A	Customer service specialist Kota Medan	All females, all live-out Worker 1: Cooking Worker 2: Cleaning the house Worker 3: Assisting with the children's psychological and academic needs (in-house daycare service)	N/A
Employer #4 49, female, N/A	Auctioneer Kota Medan	Female, live-out Cleaning the house, doing the laundry, ironing, assisting with the children's needs	N/A
Employer #5 39, male, master's degree	Self-employed, owner of a fruit business Kota Yogyakarta	Female, part-time, live-out - Three times per week; two to three hours per visit - Mopping the floors, bathrooms, and terrace	Employer #5 and his wife cook by themselves because they love cooking.
Employer #6 38, female, Ph.D. candidate	Lecturer at a private university Kota Yogyakarta	All females, full-time, live-in Worker 1: taking care of children Worker 2: cooking, doing the laundry, cleaning the house	- Employer #6 replaces her mother-in-law's responsibility in recruiting and managing the domestic workers. - The house has three generations, from grandparents to grandchildren.

Source: researchers' field notes on interviews with employers

When hiring PRT, employers prioritize those with previous work experience due to the skillset associated with such experience. For example, when caring for children and older persons, employers require specific skills such as the ability to care for infants, cook, or assist older persons with daily activities. In caring for children, one informant in Kota Medan preferred unmarried PRT to balance the energy of their very active children. For families with toddlers, PRT are not only seen as workers but as an integral part of the families, ensuring the well-being of the children. Given the importance of this role, employers strive to provide appropriate facilities and treat both the PRT and their family members well.

In addition to work experience, employers prefer PRT who can meet their standards. An informant in Kota Yogyakarta personally cleaned the bathroom and demonstrated the level of cleanliness expected, with the PRT observing to understand the details of the standard. Another informant regularly monitored their PRT's work and conducted nightly evaluations with the PRT to ensure that the quality of work met expectations. These evaluations also serve as a platform for PRT to express complaints to the employer if they find certain tasks too burdensome.

Box 2
Relationship between an Employer and a Domestic Worker

Wasingatun Zakiyah, or Zaki (41), lives in Kota Yogyakarta. She leads Caksana Institute, a collective that promotes legal and policy reform, and also works as a lecturer. Her relationship with Sarikem, or Sar (64), her live-in domestic worker from Gunung Kidul,

highlights a progressive partnership between an employer and a domestic worker.[13] Zaki and Sar's 29-year relationship began before Zaki was married, when Sar worked at a boarding house where Zaki resided. Sar has now worked and lived with Zaki's family for 22 years.

Zaki's guiding principle, *memanusiakan manusia secara manusiawi* ("treating people with dignity"), forms the bedrock of their working relationship. This principle elevates Sar to a dignified partner with inherent human rights, fostering equality and acknowledging her equal standing within the family, society, and spiritual life. Their collaboration thrives on clear, mutual understanding, reinforced by both formal and informal agreements outlining duties and rights. Zaki is committed to providing comprehensive benefits, including a monthly salary adhering to the regional minimum wage (UMR), generous religious holiday allowance (THR), health and old-age insurance, regular leave, and essential needs such as nutritious food, appropriate clothing, and secure accommodation.

Zaki maintains certain standards for Sar's care work, fostering mutual reciprocity. For instance, Zaki trained Sar on proper waste sorting, and Sar willingly learned and improved her work. Zaki also supports Sar's social integration within the community, where Sar actively participates in neighborhood activities such as *dasawisma*[14] gatherings. Additional support includes educational assistance for Sar's family and interest-free loans. While Zaki's resources might not be typical of most employers, her perspective—viewing the employer-domestic worker relationship as a partnership—offers a vital lesson for anyone employing domestic workers.

This model of partnership suggests that differences in perspectives should be viewed as opportunities for dialogue and capacity building. It fosters a dynamic where employers and domestic workers grow together toward a better future, moving beyond traditional dynamics to prioritize respect and shared progress.

Source: researchers' field notes
Note: Waingatun Zakiyah participated in the FGD for employers in Kota Yogyakarta.

III.1.2 Characteristics of Domestic Workers

The domestic workers identified in this study come from lower-income families with low levels of education. The majority of PRT began working at a young age, with some starting as early as 12 years old due to their parents' inability to afford schooling. Working as a care worker became a logical choice because it does not require advanced skills, and the tasks are closely related to everyday life.

The lack of promising job opportunities in their villages encourages several PRT to migrate, even at the cost of being separated from their families. Informants from Kota Medan mentioned that migrating was the only way to earn a better income, as the wages in their hometown were insufficient to make ends meet. One informant from Kota Yogyakarta also had to leave her child, who has a disability, at home with her 97-year-old grandmother, so she could work effectively as a live-in domestic worker. Despite the perception that care work is easy because it involves daily household tasks, these female workers often face an emotional struggle for leaving their families. This challenge becomes even more burdensome when they are the sole breadwinners.

The decision to become a PRT is often discussed with family members; however, it is more difficult for those whose husbands have passed away. Several informants had to make the decision on their own to become a PRT after their husbands died or after they went through

[13]We have received consent from Waingatun Zakiyah dan Sarikem to publish their names. They hope that by disclosing their attribution, people will learn from them.

[14]*Dasawisma* is a group of 10–20 neighboring households within a neighborhood association (RT) that are organized under the Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK) program. These groups play a vital role in implementing PKK programs at the grassroots level, particularly in health and social welfare initiatives.

a divorce, as seen in Kota Bandung, Kota Medan, and Kota Yogyakarta. As the primary earners, they had to find ways to continue their lives, meet their needs, and ensure that their children could continue their education. For some informants, becoming a PRT was the only viable option because it did not require higher education. For those whose husbands were still alive, the decision to become a PRT was made because their husbands had irregular jobs, and even if they worked, their earnings were insufficient to support the family.

Although PRT must leave their homes, their relationship with their families is generally quite good, as family members are willing to participate in household chores. For example, in Kota Yogyakarta, an informant's husband is willing to share household responsibilities when his wife works. Similarly, in Kota Medan, an informant shares household duties, such as sweeping the house, washing clothes, and preparing food, with her husband and grandchildren. Sharing household responsibilities with family members allows informants to focus on their work because their domestic affairs are not neglected. As a result, working as a PRT does not significantly disrupt their family life. However, in an FGD for domestic workers in Kota Yogyakarta, some participants cried out, "When I got home, I was exhausted [of cleaning other people's houses], [but I must] *still* take care of the [my] house, [and] take care of my husband." This implies that women who get paid as a domestic worker cannot escape from the unpaid care work in their families.

Nevertheless, not all PRT experience the same ease as domestic workers whose partners or family members share their unpaid care responsibilities, especially those who are the sole breadwinners. The absence of a husband compels several informants to work harder to complete household chores before leaving for work. In Kota Bandung, one PRT must wake up earlier to prepare her children's needs, such as cooking and washing clothes, before going to work. Meanwhile, one informant in Kota Yogyakarta must leave her child at home alone while she works. However, she is somewhat fortunate, as her employer occasionally allows her to bring her child to work. Despite the challenges faced, these PRT demonstrate resilience in their lives, remaining dedicated to their families and the work they undertake.

Table 3. Background of Domestic Workers

PRT #, Age, Sex, Education	Area	Family Background
PRT #1 43, female, elementary school	Kota Bandung	Born in Garut to sharecropping parents, the informant is the fourth of six surviving children. She has worked as a domestic worker for 25 years, including 6 years as a caregiver. Fewer women from her village now choose domestic work, preferring instead jobs in Garut's growing tourism sector.
PRT #2 51, female, vocational high school, specializing in Economics	Kota Bandung	Born and raised in Kota Bandung to comfortably-off parents, the informant is the third of five siblings. With both parents deceased, she has one child. After working 15 years as a tailor and 10 years in a garment factory, she became a domestic worker five years ago. Her work has shifted from childcare and older people's care to general household tasks.
PRT #3 60, female, (-)	Kota Bandung	The informant was born in Kota Bandung. Her father died young, leaving her family struggling and dependant on her mother's income as a laborer. After her mother's passing, she moved to Garut to live with her aunt and help with household chores. The third of five illiterate siblings, she has nine years of domestic work experience, eight of them with her current employer, after years as a homemaker.
PRT #4	Kota Bandung	Born in Tegal, the informant and her sister were raised by their grandmother after their parents divorced. Her mother worked as a domestic worker and later a canteen keeper.

PRT #, Age, Sex, Education	Area	Family Background
44, female, elementary school		The informant began domestic work at 12, quitting at 20 for marriage. Divorced, she resumed domestic work three years ago to support her two children, one of whom is now attending university.
PRT #5 27, female, senior high school	Kota Medan	The informant's parents have worked as palm oil laborers for 20 years. She is the middle child. Her older sister is married and lives in Aceh. Her younger brother, in his twenties, helps occasionally at the plantation but is looking for other work, while still residing with their parents.
PRT #6 61, female, (-)	Kota Medan	The informant has three children: two married daughters and an unmarried son. Her husband passed away 15 years ago.
PRT #7 17, female, junior high school	Kota Medan	The informant's parents work irregularly as palm oil harvesters, typically three days every one or two weeks. Most of her siblings are married, except for one older sibling who remains unmarried due to speech and hearing impairments.
PRT #8 60, female, (-)	Kota Medan	The informant's husband works as a security guard at a betel nut factory, and was previously a driver at a mineral water factory where the informant also worked. She currently lives with two grandchildren, aged 16 and 15; one is working, while the other is still in school.
PRT #9 50, female, elementary school	Kota Yogyakarta	A widow from Wonosobo, PRT #9 has been a domestic worker since graduation due to poverty. She resumed work in Kota Yogyakarta to support her 16-year-old daughter after her husband's death, eventually returning to her current domestic role after a brief caregiving job.
PRT #10 34, female, senior high school	Kota Yogyakarta	A live-out domestic worker for a physician for seven years, PRT #10 handles chores and bills. Her supportive employer aided her through a surgery. She also sells baked goods and home products to support her daughter. Pressured into two unhappy marriages by family, she began prioritizing her mental health in 2021 due to psychosomatic health issues.
PRT #11 45, female, senior high school	Kota Yogyakarta	A live-out domestic worker who was widowed in 2022, PRT #11 now lives with her child in her childhood home and reluctantly took over her ailing mother's domestic work. After quitting for marriage, she resumed work for a physician following her husband's death. She now earns Rp1.9 million monthly.
PRT #12 51, female, junior high school	Kota Yogyakarta	A live-in caregiver for an older widow from 2013–2014, PRT #12 trained for the role after her second husband's passing. Previously, she worked for 17 years as a decorator following an early, short-lived marriage. She finds that her current salary supports her children's education and she commits herself emotionally to her caregiving work.

Source: researchers' field notes on interviews with domestic workers

III.1.3 Job Description and Living Arrangements of Domestic Workers

The demand for domestic workers in Indonesia has exhibited a consistent upward trend, particularly in urban centers, where dual-income households increasingly rely on external assistance for household management. In cities such as Kota Bandung, domestic workers are commonly employed by young families, particularly working couples with small children,

who require additional household assistance. A comparable trend is observed in Kota Medan, where the growing number of newly formed families, especially those in which both spouses work, has contributed to the rising demand for domestic workers.

However, there has been a notable shift in employment preferences, with a growing preference for live-out domestic workers. This arrangement benefits both parties: domestic workers can serve multiple households and maximize their income, while employers can maintain household privacy and avoid the increasing difficulties of securing live-in domestic workers.

In Kota Yogyakarta, Kota Medan, and Kota Bandung, domestic workers perform routine domestic tasks that are generally similar. These tasks are adjusted according to the needs of the employers, with some requiring specialized skills, such as caring for infants and older persons, while others need general domestic work. In general, people assume that domestic workers' tasks do not require high skills or even a high education; however, many employers require their domestic workers to adhere to their specific standards. To help workers meet these standards, employers typically provide training on how tasks should be carried out.

The following section is a summary of the routine tasks performed by domestic workers based on our IDIs and FGDs with informants at the national and local levels. Below is a table of tasks that are entrusted to domestic workers whom we interviewed across the three study locations.

Table 4. A Summary of PRT's Tasks

Routine Domestic Tasks	Explanation
Domestic work	• Cleaning the house, washing and ironing clothes, and cooking • Cooking for store employees • Cleaning the shop
Caring for infants and toddlers	Responsible for caring for infants, including stimulating their development through talking and teaching them to walk; bathing them; putting them to sleep; and preparing food
Caring for children	Assisting school-aged children by monitoring their diet and supervising their daily activities
Caring for older people and people with disabilities	Providing care for both active older individuals and those requiring special bed care, including monitoring diet and specific dietary restrictions, changing clothes, and bathing
Managing waste	Sorting household waste into organic, non-organic, and recyclable categories
Baking	Assisting employers who sell baked goods

Source: researchers' field notes on interviews and FGDs with informants at national and local levels

In non-live-in care work arrangements, PRT typically perform specialized tasks. For instance, one PRT may be responsible for specific cleaning duties such as sweeping, mopping, washing dishes, drying, and ironing clothes. Others may serve as child caregivers, not only looking after children but also teaching specific routines, such as nap schedules and helping them memorize religious verses.

Live-out PRT have more flexible working hours, especially those who work for multiple households. In Kota Medan, for example, a PRT responsible for house cleaning can set her own working hours based on an agreement with her employer. Similarly, a PRT in Kota Yogyakarta expressed gratitude for her flexible working hours, which allow her to take care of her child at home before and after work. A similar sentiment was expressed by an

informant in Kota Bandung, who was able to monitor her child's development while working as a live-out PRT.

By contrast, live-in domestic workers tend to have more tasks and denser work schedules. A live-in PRT residing in the employer's home can be responsible for various tasks, such as washing, ironing, house cleaning, and cooking. In both Kota Medan and Kota Yogyakarta, there are PRT employed to care for older people, undertaking tasks such as changing clothes and bathing them. In Kota Yogyakarta, families can hire PRT with *pramurukti*[15] certification through formal recruitment agencies. These PRT regularly attend training sessions on medical equipment and older person care to improve their caregiving skills.

Findings from the three study areas indicate that infant care constitutes a form of paid care work necessitating specialized skills. PRT are typically employed to bathe toddlers, soothe them to sleep, and prepare their meals. Employers often seek PRT who demonstrate patience, competence, an affinity for children, and sufficient energy for caregiving tasks. Both PRT and employers acknowledge that infant care is particularly demanding. As a result, some households hire PRT specifically for this role, with other domestic tasks considered secondary. These examples underscore that domestic workers are skilled laborers, countering the common misconception that they are unskilled.

However, live-in arrangements result in longer working hours, as employers can request assistance from the PRT at any time. One informant from Kota Bandung explained that her working hours were not fixed when she became a live-in PRT. Her work would start very early (after the dawn prayer) and continue until noon, depending on her employer's needs. This contrasts with her experience as a live-out PRT, where her schedule was more structured, typically from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Table 5. Domestic Workers' Job Descriptions and Living Arrangements

PRT #	Area	Work-Living Arrangement	Tasks
PRT #1	Kota Bandung	Live-in	Cleaning the interior of the house, preparing meals for all residents, paying bills, and grocery shopping The informant is entrusted with managing household operational funds. All expenses are recorded and reported to the employer.
PRT #2	Kota Bandung	Live-in	Cleaning and tidying both floors of the house, cooking, washing and ironing clothes, and preparing daily necessities for the employer's 27-year-old adult child, who is a lawyer
PRT #3	Kota Bandung	Live-out	Cleaning the house, washing dishes, and washing and ironing clothes
PRT #4	Kota Bandung	Live-out	Preparing the employer's child for school (breakfast, school uniform, and pick-up/drop-off), cleaning the house, cooking, and washing and ironing clothes

[15] *Pramurukti* is a caregiver who focuses on providing care and support to older individuals, both those who are healthy and those who are ill. They are trained in basic caregiving skills and work under the supervision of healthcare professionals, such as nurses or doctors. *Pramurukti* plays a vital role in ensuring the well-being and comfort of older persons during their later years (Suara 'Aisyiyah, 2021).

PRT #	Area	Work-Living Arrangement	Tasks
PRT #5	Kota Medan	Live-in	Cleaning the house, doing the laundry, ironing, assisting with children's needs, and cooking
PRT #6	Kota Medan	Live-in	Cooking, doing the laundry, and assisting with children's needs (feeding, school pick-up, and looking after them during their free time)
PRT #7	Kota Medan	Live-in	Cleaning the house, washing dishes, cooking, and taking care of an older person (changing clothes, bathing, and meeting her daily needs)
PRT #8	Kota Medan	Live-out	Assisting with children's needs (she previously provided babysitting) and cleaning the house
PRT #9	Kota Yogyakarta	Live-in	Doing the laundry, sweeping, cooking, and other tasks as assigned by her employer
PRT #10	Kota Yogyakarta	Live-out	Doing the laundry, sweeping, and cooking The informant is also entrusted with taking care of bills, such as electricity, water, and house tax
PRT #11	Kota Yogyakarta	Live-out	Doing the laundry, sweeping, cleaning the kitchen, and helping *Uti* (the employer's mother)
PRT #12	Kota Yogyakarta	Live-in	Cleaning the house, cooking, and taking care of an older person

Source: researchers' field notes on interviews with domestic workers

III.2 Impact of Paid Care Work Practices on Families

III.2.1 Impact of Domestic Work on Domestic Workers' Families

PRT play a crucial role in supporting the economic survival of low-income families. Although working as a PRT does not guarantee an immediate improvement in quality of life, particularly in material terms, this job still contributes significantly to the sustainability of family life.

In Kota Bandung, even though the salary of a domestic worker is insufficient for a decent living, the PRT whom we met stated that they can support and educate their children. For them, being able to send their children to school is considered a form of success, as, despite the lack of guarantees of prosperity, the job provides an opportunity to meet the basic needs of the family. On the other hand, because the profession of PRT is more of a survival effort rather than an achievement of economic well-being, one informant emphasized the arduous nature of working as a PRT, especially without respite.

In contrast to the situation in Kota Bandung, in Kota Yogyakarta, some domestic workers stated that their profession had a more positive impact on their family's economy. This work is seen as sufficient to meet daily needs and even enables children to continue their education up to the university level. Furthermore, PRT who hold professional certifications, such as *pramurukti*, receive higher wages and better facilities, allowing them to support both their children and their aging parents. Not only do they receive better wages, but the informants also have opportunities to continually enhance their life skills through training programs provided by professional organizations. In this regard, the profession of PRT not only helps improve their job quality but also opens opportunities for them to earn a better income.

However, the sense of contentment that the PRT in Kota Yogyakarta expressed is likely closely related to Javanese cultural values, specifically the philosophy of *"nrimo ing pandum,"* a principle of accepting all gifts or circumstances with sincerity and an open heart, without demanding or complaining and remaining grateful for what is given. This sense of contentment differs from the perspectives shared by the FGD participants, most of whom are SPRT members and are more aware of their labor rights. During one FGD, one domestic worker who expressed this sense of contentment made her peers somewhat frustrated. This indicates that education and membership in social organizations have enabled domestic workers to develop a clearer understanding of their rights as workers. This contrasts with unaffiliated domestic workers who often accept compensation without question or negotiation.

Despite their significant contributions to their families' economic well-being, domestic workers—who are predominantly women—often face the difficult reality of having to leave their own children and families behind in order to care for others, as observed in all three research locations. One informant in Kota Yogyakarta, for example, shared that she had to leave her child with a disability in the care of her mother, who is advanced in age, so she could work. This situation highlights a stark irony: while domestic workers play a crucial role in caring for their employers' children, they are often compelled to leave their own children at home, frequently with inadequate care and support.

III.2.2 Impact of Domestic Work on Employers' Families

Domestic workers play a crucial role in maintaining the day-to-day functioning of households, particularly in middle- and upper-income families. By managing domestic responsibilities such as cleaning, cooking, childcare, and older person care, they enable their employers—especially women—to engage in professional, educational, and entrepreneurial activities outside the home. This redistribution of domestic labor is not merely a matter of convenience; it is fundamental to the productivity and stability of many dual-income households.

The contributions of domestic workers extend beyond the private sphere and into the national economy. Their labor effectively subsidizes the formal workforce by freeing up time and energy for employers to participate in the labor market, thus increasing overall economic productivity. Without their support, many professionals—particularly working mothers—would face significant barriers to sustained employment. In this sense, domestic workers act as indirect enablers of economic growth, making visible the hidden labor that underpins broader systems of production and service.

Furthermore, domestic workers are central figures in the care economy, which is increasingly recognized as a critical component of economic resilience and social well-being. Their caregiving roles—whether for children, older persons, or individuals with special needs—are essential. By ensuring the continuity of care within the home, domestic workers contribute to intergenerational health and education, and overall social stability, which are fundamental to sustainable development.

This study revealed that in Kota Yogyakarta, without domestic workers, employers—particularly those with young children—would find it difficult to manage household affairs. An informant argued that childcare facilities or daycare often pose health risks for children, making the presence of a PRT who can care for the children at home a safer and more effective option. Due to the importance of the role of PRT in ensuring the smooth functioning of families, employers strive to provide adequate facilities and fair treatment as a form of appreciation for their contributions.

In Kota Medan, the role of PRT is increasingly recognized in supporting family life, particularly for dual-income couples. PRT not only assist with household chores but also play a vital role in the growth and development of children. Well-trained caregivers can ensure that children

continue to receive optimal attention and care, even when parents are unable to always be with them. This provides parents with the space to maintain their professional lives without worrying about the well-being of their children.

This study finds cases in the three study *kota*, where families even employ more than one PRT to divide tasks more specifically. For example, one PRT may be responsible for household chores, while the other focuses on childcare. This division of labor not only eases the household workload but also ensures that children receive full attention without neglecting other responsibilities that parents may have.

> Without them [the domestic workers], we would be completely overwhelmed. Especially since having a toddler—there's no way I could manage without them. One of them focuses on caring for the child while also cleaning the child's room and the second floor. The other is responsible for preparing meals for the adults, doing the laundry, and ironing adult clothes, as well as sweeping and mopping the first floor. Every evening when I get home, I make a point to talk with them—asking whether the workload was heavy that day, or why a certain task wasn't completed. Was it because the baby was fussy? Things like that, you know. (IDI, female, working parent, PRT employer, Kota Yogyakarta, 22 January 2025)

> The main task [of the domestic worker] is definitely taking care of the child. As for cleaning the house, she does it as time allows, when she has a chance. Her presence is incredibly helpful—she knows the child's school schedule and even reminds me about it. I usually send her the class schedule first, and then she's the one who reminds me if, for example, a class is canceled that day. She's also the one who contacts the private tutor, checks what exams are coming up, and arranges the tutoring sessions. The child also gets along really well with her caregiver. (IDI, female, working parent, PRT employer, Kota Bandung, 20 January 2025)

III.3 Challenges of Paid Care Work Practices in Indonesia

III.3.1 Domestic Workers in Indonesia: A Stigmatized and Undervalued Labor Force

Domestic workers are often socially marginalized and viewed as subordinate due to the gendered and private nature of their work. Their informal employment status further entrenches gender inequality by undervaluing women's labor and limiting their access to empowerment programs.

Contrary to common misconceptions, this study reveals that domestic work is not a low-status occupation devoid of skill. In fact, being a domestic worker requires distinct competencies tailored to the specific nature of each task performed. Domestic workers should be recognized as professionals on par with other workers across sectors. Like migrant workers, domestic workers make courageous decisions to leave their families in pursuit of livelihood, and this choice deserves equal recognition and respect. It is essential to affirm their status both as workers and human beings, whose rights must be fully protected and upheld.

> Because we view the issue of domestic workers through the lens of our Islamic mission—that domestic workers are human beings, they are citizens, and they have equal rights. (Indonesian Women Ulama Congress II, November 2022)

> They work in our homes while leaving their own families behind, and sometimes they even have children they cannot care for directly. *Masya Allah*, it is remarkable how they can leave their families in order to work [to earn a living], performing tasks that are essentially the same as those they would be doing in their own homes. (IDI, female, government official, Labor Agency of West Java Province, Kota Bandung, 23 January 2025)

Despite rising demand, recruiting domestic workers has become increasingly challenging due to its persistent social stigma and shifting labor preferences. In Kota Bandung, for instance, many individuals opt for factory work despite earning a lower net income—after rent and transportation expenses—because factory employment is perceived as more respectable than domestic work, which is often stigmatized as a profession for widowed women. Younger job seekers are particularly reluctant to enter the domestic work sector, preferring occupations that offer higher social status. This reluctance is also evident in Kota Medan, where recruitment agencies struggle to find local domestic workers, as many prefer alternative careers such as social media influencers.

However, interest in domestic work in Kota Medan remains strong among job seekers from economically disadvantaged regions such as East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), South Tapanuli, and Aceh. Additionally, employers often prefer hiring workers from distant regions, as they are perceived as more likely to remain committed to their jobs, unlike those from Kota Medan, who may leave abruptly due to proximity to their home.

III.3.2 Employment Relationships Based on Sociocultural Norms rather than Professional Standards

The study reveals that the working relationships between domestic workers and their employers in Indonesia is predominantly shaped by sociocultural dynamics, rather than formal professional frameworks. The job is viewed not as a formal arrangement but as one based on empathy and informality. The continued practice of employing domestic workers informally persists because the fundamental rights of domestic workers in Indonesia are inadequately safeguarded by the 2003 Labor Act, as their employment—predominantly situated within the informal sector—falls outside the scope of the law.

In Kota Yogyakarta, for example, the employment of domestic workers remains closely tied to cultural practices known as *rewang* and *ngenger*, which frame domestic work as a form of service or devotion, rather than a professional occupation. Although Kota Yogyakarta has a regulation of the head of *kota* that governs the employment relationship between domestic workers and employers (see Chapter 5), there appears to be no effective monitoring of its implementation. Furthermore, this also does not guarantee the recognition of domestic workers in Kota Yogyakarta as professional laborers.

One of the employers interviewed in this study expressed the belief that employment relationships grounded in sociocultural principles reflect the layered and communal nature of Indonesian society. According to this informant, the dynamic between domestic workers and employers is often shaped by values such as mutual respect, loyalty, and familial bonds, rather than formal legal agreements. They voiced concern that introducing a strict legal-formal framework could potentially disrupt the social relations that have defined these employment relationships. This perspective highlights a broader tension in Indonesia between modern labor regulation efforts and deeply rooted cultural norms, suggesting that any policy interventions must carefully balance legal protection with respect for local sociocultural contexts.

> The formal regulation or standardization approach, as proposed by activists or through formal training on domestic worker standardization, tends to conflict with the multilayered aspects of community life. Such an approach risks overlooking the complexity of social structures, and rigid standardization may damage the social relationships that have long been established within the community. (IDI, male, self-employed, owner of a fruit business, PRT employer, Kota Yogyakarta, 23 January 2025)

On the other hand, recruitment of domestic workers through informal channels—such as family connections, neighborhood ties, and social networks—also perpetuates these sociocultural work practices. Many households in Indonesia recruit domestic workers through informal channels, rather than formal placement agencies. This method is perceived

as more convenient, as formal agencies are often seen as overly complicated due to payment procedures and administrative requirements, according to a regional government informant in West Java Province. Another informant noted that a common concern regarding agency-based recruitment is the perceived lack of transparency in tracking the background of domestic workers, which raises fear among employers about potential criminal behaviors, such as theft or child abuse.

> I chose not to hire domestic workers through agencies due to unfavorable reviews. Some acquaintances who did use agency services reported having to replace workers every three months, by which time the warranty period had expired and the administrative fees were non-refundable. Moreover, clients who hire domestic workers from agency were unable to access the workers' background information, which is a critical concern, particularly when the responsibilities involve childcare. (IDI, female, government official, Labor Agency of West Java Province, Kota Bandung, 22 January 2025)

III.3.3 Verbal Agreements Reinforce the Vulnerability of Domestic Workers

Due to the informal nature of the working arrangements, employment agreements—covering job responsibilities and workers' rights—are typically established verbally rather than through written contracts. This reflects unequal treatment of domestic workers, as their bargaining position is clearly inferior to that of the employer. The weak bargaining position of domestic workers in relation to their employers often renders them voiceless. In Kota Medan, while some domestic workers attempt to voice their concerns directly to their employers, their ability to negotiate remains severely limited. Employers often respond to requests—such as for wage increases—by citing their own financial constraints, including stagnant salaries. Faced with the risk of job loss, domestic workers are left with little power to challenge these explanations or push for better conditions. This dynamic highlights the structural imbalance in the employment relationship, where domestic workers are effectively voiceless, compelled to accept unfavorable terms in order to maintain their livelihood.

The absence of formal employment contracts leaves domestic workers vulnerable to exploitation. Without legal documentation, many are excluded from protections under Indonesia's labor laws, including minimum wage regulations, standardized working hours, and occupational health and safety rights. Noncontract workers typically receive lower and irregular wages, often without any benefits such as paid leave, overtime compensation, and severance pay. This economic instability perpetuates poverty and limits opportunities for upward social mobility, especially for women from rural or urban poor communities.

> I started working when I was 16 years old. Back then, I worked at a restaurant in Jakarta, but I was never paid for a whole year—even until now. So, I left. After that, I got a job at a neighbor's house in Demakan, but the working hours were only from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The wage, however, was just Rp35,000 per day. Later, I got another job in Pingit, and I still haven't been paid there either—not even a single rupiah. They owe me a million rupiah, but I've never received it. And when I ask about it, they get angry. (FGD for domestic workers, female, Kota Yogyakarta, 26 January 2025)

> So then, in ... what year was it ... 2023, I decided to leave, but I didn't receive anything—not even severance pay. They [the employer] just said, "Well, you're the one who chose to leave, so I'm not giving you anything.' So yes, I left in 2023 with nothing. No severance, no compensation—nothing at all, and I had worked for her for 12 years. (FGD for domestic workers, female, Kota Yogyakarta, 26 January 2025)

Without a formal employment status, noncontract domestic workers are frequently excluded from national social protection schemes such as BPJS Kesehatan (health insurance) and BPJS Ketenagakerjaan (employment insurance), thereby heightening their vulnerability in cases of illness, injury, or unemployment. Fortunately, there are domestic workers who are covered under the government-subsidized BPJS Kesehatan scheme (PBI), which alleviates

some of their concerns related to healthcare access. In certain cases, empathetic employers also voluntarily cover medical expenses when their domestic workers fall ill. These instances underscore the critical importance of ensuring access to comprehensive social protection for domestic workers, enabling them to work with greater security, dignity, and peace of mind.

> When I was sick and needed fibroid surgery, I required two weeks for recovery. I didn't work during those two weeks, but my salary was still paid in full, and I even received additional funds to cover my medical expenses. (IDI, female, domestic worker, Kota Yogyakarta, 20 January 2025)

Furthermore, the lack of formal employment contracts for domestic workers significantly contributes to the underreporting of abuse, harassment, and wage-related violations. Many workers lack access to and knowledge of legal assistance due to their low education background, which discourages them from filing complaints (Farbenblum, Taylor-Nicholson, and Paoletti, 2013). Furthermore, the informal nature of their employment presents substantial challenges for authorities, limiting their ability to monitor, regulate, or intervene effectively in cases of misconduct or exploitation.

In Kota Medan, a case was reported involving a domestic worker who became seriously ill and was no longer able to work. Despite this, the employer failed to pay her final wages, which were rightfully owed. Severance compensation was only obtained only after an advocacy organization intervened and facilitated a negotiation process with the employer. This case illustrates the vulnerability of domestic workers in the absence of legal awareness and institutional support.

An extreme case documented by an advocacy organization in Kota Medan involved a domestic worker who was not permitted to leave the employer's residence for a period of three years, until she eventually managed to escape. This situation highlights the urgent need for clear regulations, as the absence of legal safeguards allows paid care and domestic employment practices to persist under unjust and highly exploitative conditions.

III.3.4 Aware of Their Rights, but Lacking the Power to Negotiate Them

Domestic workers who are members of a workers' union or involved in domestic worker education channels are more aware of their rights compared to those who are not affiliated with such channels. Domestic workers who are not affiliated do not necessarily lack interest in their rights, but their daily lives rarely intersect with advocacy activities. As a result, they tend to focus more on practical tasks rather than voicing their aspirations.

The FGD with domestic workers in Kota Yogyakarta revealed that the participating PRT have a relatively broad understanding of their rights compared to the general population of domestic workers. As a context, the domestic workers involved in the FGD were primarily participants of the *Sekolah PRT* (Domestic Workers' School) or members of SPRT Tunas Mulia. Additionally, long-term participants of the *Sekolah PRT* and members of the SPRT Tunas Mulia were familiar with the Domestic Workers Protection Bill (RUU PPRT) and aware of the delays in its discussion at the national level.

Box 3
SPRT Tunas Mulia Yogyakarta

SPRT Tunas Mulia, Indonesia's first domestic workers' union, was established in 2003 as a result of grassroots activism that began with a religious study group initiated by domestic worker Yuli Maheni. With support from Rumpun Tjoet Nyak Dien (RTND), Forum Diskusi Perempuan Yogyakarta (FDPY), and JALA PRT, this group evolved into a union advocating for domestic workers' rights. RTND facilitated the formation of 21 domestic worker-led groups, known as *operata*, which provided training on advocacy and organizing skills. Despite resistance from employers, the movement persisted through newsletters and outreach efforts

across neighborhoods. In 2003, SPRT and RTND launched *Sekolah PRT* (Domestic Workers' School) to empower PRT through skills training and political awareness campaigns.

SPRT Tunas Mulia's formal registration in 2004 represented a major step in labor rights history, supported by publications like *Kabar PRT*, which helped attract new members. The union expanded its advocacy efforts via the media, theaters, and grassroots campaigns, building broad-based support for legal reform. It took them almost a year to get recognition from the local government as a union, something that labor unions might not experience (see Chapter 5 on policies on domestic workers).

Today, SPRT Tunas Mulia operates across Kota Yogyakarta and beyond, promoting an inclusive membership model. Its persistent mobilization and collaboration with civil society organizations have been pivotal in pushing for Indonesia's long-delayed Domestic Workers Protection Bill.

Source: formulated from researchers' field notes; Adinda (2022)

However, knowledge of domestic workers' rights does not always translate into the ability to internalize this information—nor does it necessarily enable them to negotiate with their employers. Our analysis suggests that this is due to several factors, including the following.

a) Domestic workers do not receive adequate support from more knowledgeable fellow domestic workers.
b) Domestic workers are relatively new to the *Sekolah PRT*, such as one FGD participant who is overworked and underpaid.
c) Domestic workers' family and work environment do not support them in negotiating their rights with their employer—for instance, they may be told to simply accept the situation or find a new job.

On the other hand, there is a lack of public awareness regarding the Bill and unwillingness among PRT to join domestic workers' unions. During an IDI in Yogyakarta, it was revealed that both PRT and their families were largely unaware of the Bill. This lack of awareness is not a sign of indifference, but rather the fact that the political agendas and policies related to the Bill are outside their daily experiences. As a result, they prefer focusing on practical tasks that provide direct economic benefits, such as managing household chores or fulfilling family responsibilities. For them, understanding broader policies or regulations does not have a direct impact on their day-to-day well-being, leading them to overlooking such issues.

A similar situation is observed in Kota Medan, where most PRT are unaware of the existence of labor unions that could protect their rights. Some PRT explicitly expressed their reluctance to join domestic workers' unions, citing that they did not plan to remain in domestic work long term. However, they acknowledged that the conditions for other PRT, especially live-in workers, are much more difficult due to the absence of clear working hour limits. Several PRT also reported witnessing the unfair treatment of peers by employers, with some even feeling as though they were being treated like "slaves". This situation raised their desire for regulations that would govern working hours and ensure proper rest periods. Despite this, the lack of sufficient motivation to join labor unions persists, as many prefer other jobs perceived to offer more promising opportunities, such as factory work.

Joining a domestic workers' union is challenging for PRT because they must seek permission from their employers. Their availability is always tied to their employers, who often do not allow time off to join a union or attend advocacy activities, as cited by an informant from Komnas Perempuan. On the other hand, while some PRT in Kota Yogyakarta are members of SPRT Tunas Mulia, PRT in general are more actively involved in activities focused on improving job-related skills, such as cooking or enhancing service quality, rather than advocacy or discussions about regulations related to their rights. One informant even preferred to join professional organizations, such as the Jogja Pramurukti Association (PPJ) and the Family Association of Pramurukti (IKPP), which focus more on skill development and knowledge updates.

III.3.5 Domestic Workers' Reliance on Employers' Goodwill amid Persistent Challenges

The absence of legal employment contracts indeed contributes to the vulnerability of domestic workers; however, some receive work-related compensation at the personal discretion of their employers, as observed in this study. In Kota Medan, childcare workers in live-out arrangements often receive additional overtime compensation, generally between Rp25,000 and Rp30,000 per hour, based on agreements with daycare centers. Conversely, live-in domestic workers, such as those in Kota Yogyakarta, usually earn a monthly salary between Rp2,000,000 and Rp5,000,000. Some receive overtime pay, while others are compensated through the provision of basic living necessities instead.[16]

Perceptions of the adequacy of compensation and facilities vary significantly, depending on the subjective views of domestic workers. In Kota Yogyakarta, all informants interviewed reported that the benefits and generosity of their employers were sufficient, as they received wages, facilities, bonuses, and religious holiday allowance (THR) that were considered adequate to meet daily needs and support their children's education up to university level. Furthermore, research findings show that domestic workers who work through placement agencies and have certified skills (including live-in workers) receive higher salaries and benefits compared to those without certified skills. In contrast to Kota Yogyakarta, families of care workers in Kota Bandung expressed dissatisfaction with the limited compensation their mothers received as domestic workers. The wages earned were not proportional to the hard work performed from morning until evening, resulting in both physical and mental exhaustion.

As the duration of service increases, some domestic workers experience wage increases as a form of appreciation for their loyalty. In Kota Medan, one domestic worker who initially earned 1,100,000 rupiah per month received incremental wage increases until reaching 1,800,000 rupiah after six years of service. Additionally, the worker received various additional benefits, such as THR, annual zakat, and a cash bonus before Ramadan. In Kota Yogyakarta, a small number of domestic workers also receive wage increases every six months, following periodic evaluations of their work performance.

THR is another form of compensation provided to both live-in and live-out care workers. The amount is typically equivalent to one month's salary, plus an Eid al-Fitr package containing basic groceries or gift parcels. However, in Kota Medan, the mechanism for distributing THR varies, particularly for childcare workers employed through daycare centers. Some daycare management requires that THR be given to them for collective distribution, while other employers prefer to give it directly to the caregiver for transparency and clarity in work performance assessments. Meanwhile, according to the experiences of care workers in Kota Yogyakarta, THR is given to those whose employment exceeds one year. Employers also cover transportation costs for workers to return to their hometowns before the holiday season.

Moreover, live-in domestic workers typically receive additional benefits, including daily meals (and snacks), toiletries, and other allowances such as transportation for home visits and mobile phone credit. Some employers also cover healthcare expenses, either by providing medications or paying for doctor visits. However, care workers in both Kota Medan and Kota Yogyakarta still do not receive social security benefits, such as BPJS Kesehatan, from their employers. In contrast, employers in Kota Bandung are willing to arrange the activation of BPJS Kesehatan and pay the monthly contributions for their

[16]The research team recognizes potential biases in the sampling process, given that snowball sampling was employed to identify domestic workers and employers for interviews. As a result, the figures presented may not accurately represent broader trends due to this methodological approach. Nevertheless, the study's qualitative approach has yielded detailed insights that might not have been captured through a survey.

workers. Informants believe that it is important for domestic workers to have social security coverage.

III.3.6 Dispute Resolution between Domestic Workers and Employers

Both national and subnational governments have yet to establish clear mechanisms for resolving employment disputes involving domestic workers, hence leaving them without institutional recourse when conflicts arise. When tensions occur, informal negotiation is the first course of action before any party escalates the matter. According to a national-level government informant, the neighborhood association (RT/RW)[17] is responsible for taking necessary action, such as mediation, in times of conflicts involving domestic workers and their employers. In more serious disputes, legal institutions such as the police are expected to intervene. However, other informants disputed the involvement of neighborhood associations, arguing that these entities are not appropriate mediators since they were not involved in the original labor agreements. The absense of a clear dispute resolution mechanism marginalizes domestic workers and reflects the generally limited legal protections for their rights.

Furthermore, domestic workers recruited through informal channels are increasingly disadvantaged, as cases of violations and conflicts involving them often go unreported. As a result, many of the conflicts they experience remain unaddressed. This situation differs significantly from that of domestic workers placed through licensed agencies. According to a national-level government informant, in disputes between employers and agency-recruited domestic workers, the Ministry of Labor can serve as a mediator, thereby enhancing the potential for worker protection. This is possible because these workers are officially registered, allowing for more effective tracking and the reporting of disputes to the appropriate authorities.

In relation to the protection of domestic workers, local civil society organizations (CSOs) have played a crucial role in addressing disputes involving domestic workers and their employers. In Kota Medan, for instance, an advocacy organization handled a case involving a domestic worker who experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. Due to the absence of a legal framework specifically protecting domestic workers, the case was resolved with the victim receiving compensation equivalent to one month's salary, while the perpetrator faced no significant legal consequences.

Another case involved a domestic worker who became seriously ill and was no longer able to work. Despite her condition, the employer failed to pay the wages owed. It was only through the intervention and negotiation efforts of the advocacy organization that severance pay was eventually secured.

In Kota Yogyakarta, domestic workers who are union members typically raise workplace issues directly through SPRT Tunas Mulia. When RTND was still active, it functioned as a support system for domestic workers facing challenges, including by providing temporary shelter (safe houses) when necessary.

In cases of violence or harassment, participants in FGDs indicated that such incidents are best reported directly to Rekso Diah Utami (RDU), an organization responsible for handling cases of violence against women in Kota Yogyakarta. When domestic workers face legal issues—such as being reported to the police for allegedly harming a child in their care—SPRT Tunas Mulia collaborates with local legal aid institutions (LBH) and law enforcement to provide legal assistance and support to the affected worker.

[17]RT is a neighborhood unit consisting of a number of households; RW is a unit of local administration consisting of several RT.

This study also finds that reporting workplace issues to family members, particularly spouses, is often ineffective. Domestic workers in Kota Yogyakarta noted that discussing their problems with their husbands rarely leads to meaningful support or resolution. Husbands often advise them either to resign or confront their employers directly. However, as the study's analysis highlights, the power imbalance between domestic workers and their employers significantly limits the workers' ability to assert themselves, leaving them effectively voiceless in such situations. This lack of spousal support further contributes to the vulnerability of domestic workers when facing workplace conflicts.

IV. Behind Closed Doors: The Overlooked Contribution of Domestic Care Workers within the Care Economy Landscape in Indonesia

This chapter examines the evolving landscape of Indonesia's care economy by reviewing its historical development, the roles and challenges of domestic care workers, and recent policy initiatives to formalize and strengthen the sector. It begins by outlining the socioeconomic and gender dynamics that have shaped the emergence of care work in the country. It then assesses the position of domestic care workers, underscoring their contributions and the persistent structural barriers to their recognition and protection. Finally, the chapter analyzes the Care Economy Roadmap as a key policy document, highlighting the government's current policy direction, strategic priorities, and institutional preparedness to support a more inclusive and equitable care economy.

IV.1 The Making of Indonesia's Care Economy

In Indonesia, domestic care work has historically served as a crucial source of employment for women from impoverished backgrounds. Archival census data compiled by Dutch colonial authorities in the early 1930s indicates that, in certain areas, approximately 6% of women were employed in domestic service. These women worked for both Indonesian elites and the Dutch colonial population (Locher-Scholten and Niehof, 1992). What marks a significant shift in recent decades is the corporatization of care services and the expansion of the domestic care labor market beyond elite households into broader segments of society.

Indonesia's modernization trajectory has primarily been characterized by a transition from an agriculture-based economy to one centred on industrialization and service sectors. This transformation coincided with the emergence of an urban middle class and changing patterns of household consumption. However, this modernization process has also been deeply gendered (Sen and Stivens, 1998). Under the Suharto administration, women's labor became a specific focus within the broader development agenda. Consistent with liberal "women-in-development" frameworks (Moser, 2010), the government actively promoted women's participation in the labor force, particularly in formal sectors of the economy.

Between 1980 and 1990, the proportion of women employed in urban formal sectors (e.g., manufacturing, retail, and clerical occupations) increased from 25% to 31% (Oey-Gardiner, 1993). Women's engagement in paid employment was framed as integral to national development, with their roles as wives, mothers, and professionals seen as complementary rather than contradictory. However, this increase in workforce participation was not accompanied by significant government efforts to redistribute domestic responsibilities between men and women. As a result, some scholars argue that women's entry into the formal labor market was enabled not by state policies or support from men, but through the labor of domestic care workers (Heyzer and Weerakoon, 1994). The increasing integration of women into the formal workforce has, in turn, intensified household reliance on paid domestic care workers. This dynamic has made the domestic care sector essential to Indonesia's socioeconomic development.

The demand for domestic care workers in Indonesia has shown a consistent upward trend. Although the exact number remains difficult to determine, given underreporting by both employers and workers, available data indicates the sector's growing significance. The ILO estimated that approximately 2.6 million domestic care workers were employed in Indonesia in 2002 (Ratnawati, 2015). According to data from JALA PRT, this number had increased to around 10 million by 2009. These figures suggest that domestic care remains a sustained, and possibly expanding, sector of employment.

This study finds that rising demand for domestic care workers is particularly evident in urban centers, where dual-income households increasingly rely on external help to manage domestic responsibilities. With the pressures of daily routines, many employers find it challenging to complete household tasks independently, making the hiring of domestic care workers a practical necessity. In cities such as Kota Bandung, domestic care workers are commonly employed by young families, especially by working couples with small children who require additional support at home. A similar trend is observed in Kota Medan, where the growth of the newly formed families, particularly those in which both partners are employed, has contributed to the rising demand for domestic care workers.

Beyond growing demand, there is also a notable shift in the skills now expected of domestic care workers. Table 2 illustrates that, for example, in the management of household tasks, domestic care workers today are often required to operate specific electronic appliances or manage household waste in ways that may be unfamiliar to them. In addition, personal care tasks have become increasingly complex. For example, domestic workers are now expected to monitor the diets of family members with specific dietary restrictions and to support the stimulation of infants' motor skill development.

> For domestic care workers from NTT, they actually tend to have lower education level. So even something as simple as plugging in electricity still scares them. Sometimes, there are arguments [between employer and domestic care worker]. Sometimes, they grab things the wrong way, mishandling the employer's belongings. Clothes, or ceramics, that kind of thing. (IDI, male, government official, Labor Agency of Kota Medan, Kota Medan, 23 January 2025)

Box 4
Sentra Advokasi untuk Hak Dasar Rakyat (SAHdaR)

Sentra Advokasi untuk Hak Dasar Rakyat (SAHdaR), or the Center for Advocacy for Basic People's Rights, was founded in 2003. Today, it is run by five members who actively advocate various public interest cases, including those involving violations of domestic care workers' rights.

SAHdaR's involvement in domestic worker advocacy began in 2007, after they took on a case of physical abuse against a domestic worker who had previously received no legal support. Following a request from JALA PRT, SAHdaR's legal team stepped in and successfully secured protection for the worker. This milestone prompted SAHdaR to establish the domestic workers' union to protect domestic workers from exploitation, violence, and labor rights violations. Since then, SAHdaR's office has functioned as a gathering space for domestic workers, where they can attend the Domestic Workers' School (*Sekolah PRT*), get legal counseling, and access advocacy support.

In pushing for the Domestic Workers Protection Bill, SAHdaR played a crucial role in the early drafting stages. They worked closely with academics from Universitas Sumatera Utara to conduct preliminary legislative research. Additionally, SAHdaR actively engaged in policy dialogues with subnational decision-makers, including the Deputy Chairperson of the North Sumatra Regional House of Representatives (from the PDI-P faction), as well as representatives from the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in the Regional House of Representatives of Kota Medan.

Source: formulated from researchers' field notes

IV.2 The Position of Domestic Workers in Indonesia's Care Economy

Despite the increasing complexity of their responsibilities, the roles of domestic care workers remain inadequately recognized and valued within the broader care economy. The perception that domestic care work is unskilled labor remains deeply entrenched in both societal norms and institutional frameworks. This perception is often rooted in the traditional association of domestic tasks with gendered and routine responsibilities, which are often culturally undervalued. As a result, such work is often viewed as requiring neither specialized qualifications nor formal training.

From the labor force perspective, this perception diminishes the attractiveness of domestic work as a viable profession. Younger job seekers, in particular, are increasingly reluctant to enter the sector due to its association with low social status. In Kota Bandung, for instance, many individuals prefer factory jobs—even when their net income is lower after rent and transportation costs—because factory jobs are seen as more respectable. Domestic work, by contrast, is often stigmatized as employment for older persons or widowed women. Consequently, domestic work tends to attract individuals with limited employment alternatives, often due to social discrimination and exclusion.

> According to the neighbors, being a domestic care worker is considered less prestigious, especially compared to factory work. In the village, working in someone's household is often said to be a job for widows ... . [Even though] Factory workers actually earn less because they must pay for rent and transportation. (IDI, female, domestic worker, Kota Bandung, 25 January 2025)

> These days, it is very rare to find young women willing to work as domestic workers. Financially, live-in domestic care workers may earn more net income than factory workers since they do not need to pay for lodging, and meals are provided by the employer. But there is the issue of social status; there is a sense of shame around becoming a domestic care worker. Young people feel prouder to be identified as factory workers than as someone's

> maid. (IDI, male, government official, Bappeda[18] of West Java Province, Kota Bandung, 24 January 2025)

At the policy level, this perception has also led to the frequent exclusion of domestic workers from government-supported capacity-building and vocational training programs. Policymakers often assume that domestic care work does not require specific skills, despite growing evidence of a gap between employers' expectations and the actual competencies of domestic workers, particularly those caring for infants and young children. Subnational governments have prioritized training for informal workers perceived to offer higher economic returns, such as tailors or baristas, while overlooking the training needs of domestic workers within their jurisdictions.

> There are no training programs [for domestic workers]. We focus more on baristas [and] tailors. Those [who are perceived to] have added economic value. Content creators, or ... [digital] marketing. The hope is that after attending training, people can earn the minimum wage. But domestic workers typically do not receive wages according to the minimum wage standard. If people must pay the minimum wage, they prefer hiring through an agency [domestic worker placement institution]. (IDI, male, government official, Bappeda of Kota Medan, Kota Medan, 23 January 2025)

In contrast, the government has taken a more proactive and structured approach in supporting migrant domestic workers. Since 2016, the Ministry of Labor has introduced regulations aimed at formalizing and standardizing the competencies required of migrant domestic workers. This began with Regulation of the Minister for Labor No. 3 of 2016, which set out the standards of occupational competencies for migrant domestic workers. Building upon this regulation, the government subsequently issued two important decrees: Decree of the Minister for Labor No. 239 of 2022, which established the Occupational Competency Standards in the Domestic Work Sector, and Decree of the Minister for Labor No. 28 of 2021, which outlined similar standards for the older person caregiver sector.

These regulatory frameworks have led to the development of competency-based training curricula, providing structured guidelines for both public training centers (BLK) and private vocational training institutions (LPK). These curricula demonstrate a structured governmental effort to equipping migrant domestic workers with skills needed to meet international labor market demands. Examples include modules on emotional maturity development and work motivation, household management, caregiving techniques, and effective communication skills.

Table 6. Competency Unit: Developing Emotional Maturity and Work Motivation

Elements of Competency	Competency Outcome	Performance Criteria	Key Topics
1. Understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses 2. Self-motivation 3. Emotion regulation	Readiness to develop personal potential	1. Conducting self-analysis using SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) 2. Demonstrating self-motivation 3. Formulating a personal development plan	1. Self-awareness, talents, and potential identification 2. Planning for the postcontract period 3. Techniques for self-motivation 4. Workplace ethics
Estimated training duration: six sessions (45 minutes each)			

Source: Kementerian Ketenagakerjaan[19] (2022)

[18]Regional Development Planning Agency
[19]Ministry of Labor

The formalization of competency standards for migrant domestic workers indirectly signifies state recognition of the profession and its economic contribution. These measures not only affirm the legitimacy of domestic work as a professional occupation but also create pathways for workers to enhance their capabilities and, eventually, strengthen their bargaining power in the labor market.

Table 7. Competency Unit: Assisting Older Adults with Bowel and Urinary Elimination

Elements of Competency	Competency Outcome	Performance Criteria	Key Topics
1. Conducting preparation 2. Assisting the patient with defecation and urination 3. Conducting evaluation 4. Performing documentation and reporting	Accuracy in assisting bowel and urinary elimination procedures in accordance with the needs and conditions of older adults	1. Preparing tools and materials based on specific needs 2. Assisting older adults with defecation and urination following standard operating procedures (SOPs) or specific instructions 3. Reporting the older adult's responses and condition during bowel and urinary elimination	1. Effective communication with older adults 2. Use of older adult data recording forms 3. List and function of tools and materials according to care needs 4. Documentation of evaluations and responses of older adults 5. Techniques for assisting with elimination in bed 6. Basic knowledge of elimination needs
Estimated training duration: 10 sessions (45 minutes each)			

Source: Kementerian Ketenagakerjaan (2022)

By contrast, Indonesia's domestic care economy has been slow to adapt to evolving socioeconomic changes. The growing disconnects between employers' expectations and the actual skills of domestic care workers, particularly those assigned to care for infants and young children, underscore the lack of institutional support and investment in domestic care labor. This discrepancy suggests that the care sector within the country has yet to keep pace with evolving demands and standards, thereby limiting the potential for the professionalization of care work at the national level.

Moreover, the government's relative inattention to strengthening domestic care infrastructure, especially when compared to the regulatory and training frameworks that have been developed for migrant domestic workers, signals a broader neglect of the care needs of Indonesian households. While significant resources have been allocated to prepare workers for employment abroad, comparable efforts to support the rising care demands of Indonesian households remain inadequate. This disparity suggests a policy orientation that treats care work primarily as an economic export, rather than as a critical component of domestic social welfare.

Box 5
Rifka Annisa

Rifka Annisa, Indonesia's first women's crisis center, has long worked to prevent violence against women through integrated services, referrals, and advocacy. While not focused solely on domestic workers, their support for women fits within a broader feminist mission. They have partnered with unions such as SPRT Tunas Mulia to provide training materials and shelter for vulnerable workers, especially those facing gender-based violence.

In crisis situations, Rifka Annisa coordinated with other organizations to ensure support reaches those in need. They also take part in advocacy networks pushing for the Domestic

Workers Protection Bill, offering backing when others lead. While recent efforts have centered on Law No. 12 of 2022 on the Crime of Sexual Violence, they continue to raise awareness about how domestic workers, especially those living in poverty, remain structurally unprotected.

Rifka Annisa sees legal protection as a key to preventing exploitation and abuse. With strong networks, a gender lens, and trust in local communities, they are well-placed to help build support for domestic workers' rights among policymakers and employers.

Source: formulated from researchers' field notes

IV.3 Understanding the Policy Landscape of the Care Economy Roadmap

In March 2024, the Government of Indonesia introduced a landmark policy initiative with the issuance of the Roadmap and National Action Plan on the Care Economy for a Transformative, Gender-Equal, and Just World of Work (commonly referred to as the Care Economy Roadmap). Although the Care Economy Roadmap was issued earlier, its official launch was conducted by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection in May 2025. The Care Economy Roadmap represents a growing policy interest in restructuring the care economy as an integral part of inclusive and gender-just development in Indonesia. At its core, this initiative signals the state's recognition of care work as a key driver of both economic productivity and gender equality.

Framed within the broader agenda of gender justice transformation, the Care Economy Roadmap seeks to affirm women's rights to equality and fairness in both domestic and public spheres. It emphasizes the need to redefine care work, most of which is still performed by women, as economically significant and on par with other forms of labor. The document outlines two principal outputs. *First*, it recognizes that all forms of care work, whether paid or unpaid, direct or indirect, should be considered productive and of equal value to other types of employment. *Second*, it proposes the development of comprehensive policy and service investments, including the expansion of social protection schemes and improved access to care services across the nation.

The Care Economy Roadmap offers a detailed overview of the current state of the care economy in Indonesia and identifies seven strategic issues (see footnote number 6) requiring urgent attention. Among these, the recognition and protection of paid care workers, especially domestic care workers, are emphasized. Challenges previously outlined in this study (e.g., low wages, the absence of occupational protection, vulnerability to violence and exploitation, a lack of union representation, and limited access to grievance mechanisms) are all addressed within this strategic priority. Importantly, the Care Economy Roadmap sets forth policy directions and priority programs to guide ministries and government institutions in aligning their medium- and long-term development agendas. The Ministry of Labor has been appointed as the lead coordinator for the working group on issues related to domestic workers.

The initial five-year period following the roadmap's launch is envisioned as a consolidation phase. During this period, relevant ministries and institutions are expected to align their activities with the roadmap's seven strategic priorities. However, a review of the 2025–2029 National Medium-Term Development Plan reveals a limited incorporation of the care economy agenda. Care work is only briefly mentioned under Priority 6, which focuses on village and grassroots development, economic equity, and poverty reduction. Even within this context, the discussion remains focused on providing service for vulnerable groups and strengthening caregiving capacities within families and communities, while neglecting core issues such as the recognition and protection of care workers as labor contributors.

At the subnational level, the development of the care economy faces its own significant challenges. Most notably, care-related considerations are largely absent from regional development planning documents. This study finds that a number of local government officials were unfamiliar with the concept of "care economy" prior to their involvement in the research process. This highlights a significant gap in both knowledge and policy dissemination. In addition, representatives from local agencies acknowledged that they had not received any formal information, training, or public dissemination related to the Care Economy Roadmap.

> We at the local level do not know about this [Care Economy] Roadmap yet. In fact, this is the first time we have heard the term "care economy". (IDI, female, government official, Labor Agency of West Java Province, Kota Bandung, 23 January 2025)

> We have never received the Roadmap and National Action Plan on the Care Economy. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection has not disseminated the [Care Economy] Roadmap either. (IDI, female, government official, the Agency of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Population Control and Family Planning, Kota Yogyakarta, 22 January 2025)

Such limited awareness may be attributed to the internal preparatory processes within the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, particularly its working group assigned to the care economy. At the time of this study, the working group was still in the process of refining the roadmap's objectives, especially the targets set for the first five years of implementation. In this initial phase, most of the working group's efforts have been directed toward building a foundation for future implementation. This includes initiating the development of relevant data systems.

A key structural challenge remains the lack of reliable, comprehensive, and disaggregated data on care work and care workers at both the national and subnational levels. This data gap hampers evidence-based planning, makes it difficult to assess care needs, and constrains efforts to design effective interventions or equitably allocate resources. The Care Economy Roadmap acknowledges these constraints and accordingly prioritizes the generation and systematization of care-related data and information as a foundational step in its implementation. This emphasis reflects a vital recognition that evidence-based policymaking is essential to meaningfully integrate the care economy into Indonesia's broader development framework.

V. Policies on Care Economy and Domestic Workers in Indonesia

Various problems and situations experienced by PRT, as described in the previous chapters, are believed to occur because the regulatory framework governing paid domestic work in Indonesia remains inadequate. One of the root causes is that national labor regulations—most notably Law No. 13 of 2003 on Labor as amended by Law No. 6 of 2023 on Job Creation—do not fully recognize PRT as part of a broader definition of workers (LBH APIK, 2024; Rofiatul et al., 2017; Wiandani, Satyawanti, and Susanti, 2024). Legal provisions tend to regulate only formal employment relationships, while the employment relationship between PRT and their employers in the household tends to be informal. The absence of legal acknowledgment for PRT and the informal nature of their employment relationship make it difficult for the state to supervise and enforce protections, leaving them without the same legal protections afforded to other labor sectors.

The need for regulations specifically governing PRT protection has become increasingly urgent. This chapter examines the multifaceted challenges and efforts in advancing legal protection for domestic workers in Indonesia. It begins by dissecting the ministerial regulation on the protection of domestic workers, highlighting its inadequacies and the precarious status it creates for PRT. Following this, the chapter delves into the formulation of the Domestic Workers Protection Bill, revealing the complexities and obstacles in legislative progress that have led to various compromises within the draft. Subsequently, the chapter identifies key actors and strategies for collaborative efforts to champion the rights of domestic workers. Finally, it unpacks the various barriers to advancing legal protection for domestic workers, providing a comprehensive understanding of the systemic issues at play.

V.1 The Lack of Policies on Domestic Workers

The regulatory gap has been addressed through government policies, both at the ministerial and subnational government levels. The Minister for Labor issued Regulation of the Minister for Labor No. 2 of 2015 on the Protection of Domestic Workers. Meanwhile, at the subnational government level, initiatives to protect domestic workers had even been undertaken much earlier by the government of the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province. The governor of the province enacted Gubernatorial Regulation of DIY No. 31 of 2010 on Domestic Workers and the Head of Kota Yogyakarta issued the Regulation of the Head of Kota Yogyakarta No. 48 of 2011 on Domestic Workers. These regulations may be considered a foundational step toward formally acknowledging domestic workers' status and entitlements.

Despite their intentions, these policies have not been effective in protecting the rights of domestic workers. Ministerial Regulation No. 2 of 2015 on the Protection of Domestic Workers, which governs the employment relationship between domestic workers and employers, is very lax, leaving the terms to the agreement of both parties. This ineffectiveness also stems from the fact that these policies lack binding legal authority, which limits their effectiveness in ensuring comprehensive protection for paid domestic workers (Kurnianingrum and Yamin, 2024). Inadequate policies exacerbate PRT's precarious status, making their rights and entitlements entirely dependent on the goodwill of individual employers.

V.1.1 Lax Ministerial Regulation on the Protection of Domestic Workers

As mentioned above, the existence of Ministerial Regulation No. 2 of 2015 provides recognition of PRT's status as individuals working for private persons in a household and receiving wages. In the considerations section, it is clearly stated that this regulation was created to protect PRT. This protection is then outlined in several provisions as follows:

First, Article 7, which guarantees PRT's rights in their workplace. In this article, the rights granted to PRT include the right to receive wages, adequate rest time, leave entitlement, religious holiday allowance (THR), communication with family, respectful treatment from employers and their families, and access to nutritious food and drinks. Reciprocally, these rights of the PRT are regulated as obligations of the employer in Article 11. This article even stipulates employers' obligations that are not explicitly listed among the rights of PRT in Article 7, specifically the obligation to enroll PRT in social security programs.

Second, regarding the requirements for domestic workers, Article 4 of the regulation stipulates that only individuals aged 18 and above are eligible to work as domestic workers, and those who are married must obtain permission from their spouse. The minimum age requirement reinforces the government's commitment to preventing child labor, in line with the principles outlined in Law No. 13 of 2003 on Labor, which prohibits companies from employing children, and Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, which protects children from economic exploitation.

Third, Article 6 of the ministerial regulation also mandates an employment agreement between PRT and the employer that is comprehensible to both parties. This employment agreement includes, among other things, the rights and obligations of each party and the duration of the employment agreement. Furthermore, this ministerial regulation even states that the employment agreement lasts for two years and can be extended or terminated with the mutual consent of both parties. Although it can be done in written form or verbally, the mandatory nature of this employment agreement at least protects both parties.

However, the provisions in other articles weaken the protective intent already mentioned. *First*, the most fundamental example can be found in Article 3, which states that the purpose of this regulation is to protect domestic workers, but it is followed by the phrase "while still respecting local customs, culture, and traditions". This phrase results in lax stipulations in subsequent articles, especially concerning PRT's rights. Article 7, which regulates the rights of PRT, does not establish clear standards in regard to this phrase, instead leaving these matters to be negotiated between domestic workers and their employers.

Empirically, culture and customs still strongly influence the employment relationship in domestic work. For example, in Kota Yogyakarta, paid domestic labor is often viewed through the lens of traditional practices, such as *ngenger* or *rewang*. These customs frame domestic work as an act of devotion or voluntary service rather than professional employment, which distorts the perception of wages as an employer's kindness rather than a contractual obligation. Consequently, fair remuneration and standardized working conditions are frequently disregarded. The blurring of social dependency and employment relationship results in significant power imbalances, leaving workers without clear mechanisms for asserting their rights.

> Initially, I just helped my mother [who works as a domestic worker] when she was sick. After my mother passed away, I continued to work here [at her mother's employer's house]. My duties include sweeping the house, washing clothes, cooking and preparing meals, and cleaning the kitchen. I don't have days off, but I've never complained because the work hours aren't long either. [Now] I'm paid 1.9 million rupiah per month; it used to be 1.5 million rupiah, but I forget what year that was. (IDI, female, domestic worker, Kota Yogyakarta, 20 January 2025)

Second, this regulation does not contain provisions requiring clarity regarding the specific types of tasks assigned to PRT in the employment agreement with their employers. In many cases, however, PRT often end up performing additional tasks beyond the primary duties agreed upon at the beginning of their employment (see Chapter 3 for discussions on domestic workers' tasks).

Third, this regulation primarily outlines provisions for domestic worker placement agencies (LPPRT) regarding requirements, business licensing procedures, work areas, obligations, and prohibitions. The amendments introduced through Regulation of the Minister for Labor No. 18 of 2024 on the Placement of Domestic Workers primarily address the legal entity requirements and operational scope of LPPRT, which has been rebranded as domestic worker placement companies (P3RT).[20]

Fourth, neither ministerial regulations protect independent domestic workers nor those not registered with placement agencies, leaving those who are employed outside agency channels unprotected. Government oversight, specifically by subnational governments, is also limited to LPPRT/P3RT and does not extend to the workplaces of domestic workers within households. IDIs with labor agencies at both the provincial and local levels revealed that the protection of domestic workers in their workplaces is not within their jurisdiction.

> We don't have the authority [to supervise up to where domestic workers work]. We only act when there's a report, and even then, only if the domestic worker is listed with a placement agency/company that's already registered with the labor agency. (IDI, male, Labor Agency of Kota Medan, Kota Medan, 23 January 2025)

Limited authority of government oversight of workplaces denies PRT's access to essential benefits, such as health insurance, paid leave, and legal recourse in cases of abuse or exploitation. This exposes them to severe risks, including physical and sexual violence. In such cases, live-in domestic workers tend to face greater barriers to seeking assistance since their restricted mobility limits their ability to report abuse or seek support. Many endure extreme conditions before seeking help and in the most severe cases, abuse escalates to fatal outcomes. A particularly harrowing case in Kota Medan involved a live-in domestic worker who was forced not only to perform household chores but also to work in her employer's business. She endured severe physical abuse, including being doused with hot water, before finally managing to escape. These realities underscore the urgent need for comprehensive legal protections, enforcement mechanisms, and accessible justice pathways to safeguard the rights and dignity of domestic workers in Indonesia.

Violence experienced by PRT can be addressed using Law No. 23 of 2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence (UU PKDRT). Initiatives to handle reported cases have been undertaken by the women and children protection agency (DPPA)[21] at the provincial and local levels. Reporting mechanisms vary, ranging from direct submissions to government offices to monitoring cases that gain public attention through the media. Cases are handled by the local technical implementation unit (UPT) based on the location of the incident and the domicile of the perpetrator or victim. Services for victims of violence include assistance, physical and psychological health assessments, and placement in safe houses pending repatriation to their home regions. Additionally, the women's and children's protection task force (Satgas PPA) and community-based integrated child protection (PATBM) units have been established at the village level to assist in handling cases of violence.

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[20]Under this revised regulation, business establishment permits are now issued by the central government rather than provincial governments. Consequently, the operational scope of these companies has been expanded to the national level, allowing P3RT to recruit and place PRT across Indonesia.

[21]The name of this agency varies from place to place. In Kota Yogyakarta, for example, the official name is Dinas Perberdayaan Perempuan, Perlindungan Anak, dan Pengendalian Penduduk dan Keluarga Berencana (DP3AP2KB) or the Agency of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Population Control and Family Planning. In Kota Bandung, the official name is Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan, Perlindungan Anak, dan Keluarga Berencana (DP3AKB), or the Agency of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Family Planning.

However, despite having handled cases of violence against PRT in its jurisdiction, DPPA at the subnational government level acknowledges the difficulty in detecting such violence. This challenge arises not only because data on cases of violence against PRT is difficult to obtain due to the informal nature of their work, but also because a clear mechanism is currently unavailable for reporting instances of PRT's rights violations. Furthermore, the law only applies to live-in domestic workers. According to interviews with JALA PRT, UU PKDRT cannot be applied to live-out domestic workers (PRT *pocokan*), as they are not legally considered part of the household.

The reluctance of subnational governments to implement stronger domestic worker protections is perceived as being largely driven by the absence of a comprehensive legal foundation at the national level. Without clear national directives, subnational authorities hesitate to take independent policy initiatives.

V.1.2 Ineffectiveness of Subnational Government Policies Due to the Absence of a Legal Basis at the National Level

In Yogyakarta, the subnational governments have already established regulations through Gubernatorial Regulation of DIY No. 31 of 2010 and the Regulation of the Head of Kota Yogyakarga No. 48 of 2011. These regional policies share common objectives, namely (i) legally recognizing domestic work as a form of employment with economic and sociological values, as well as the existence of domestic workers; (ii) regulating harmonious and productive employment relationships based on moral, humanitarian, and familial values; (iii) providing protection for domestic workers and employers; and (iv) establishing mechanisms for resolving disputes between domestic workers and employers or placement agencies.

However, upon closer examination, these regulations fall short of providing optimal protection for PRT. *First*, the determination of basic rights such as wages, working hours, and leave follows the same approach as the RUU PPRT, leaving these matters to be negotiated between workers and employers. Moreover, these regulations classify full-time domestic workers as those working seven or more hours per day. This provision implicitly allows for potential exploitation by permitting unlimited working hours. *Second*, the regulations do not explicitly stipulate employer obligations. The absence of such provisions effectively allows employers to disregard the rights of domestic workers.

Third, while PRT are granted the right to join a domestic workers' union, this right is accompanied by the stipulation that it must be exercised "under prevailing laws and regulations". However, as previously discussed, no formal legal framework recognizes domestic workers as employees. Law No. 21 of 2000 on Labor Unions and Law No. 13 of 2003 on Labor both specify that labor unions are only established by workers employed in companies. For SPRT Tunas Mulia, it took nearly a year to secure official recognition for their union from the local labor agency (see Box 3 on SPRT Tunas Mulia Yogyakarta).

Fourth, these regulations still allow for the employment of children as domestic workers. Although the recruitment of child workers is conditional on parental or guardian consent and their working hours must comply with child protection standards, such provisions still leave room for child labor in domestic work.

Empirically, the implementation of these long-established policies has been inconsistent. The primary reason remains the absence of a national legal framework. Informants from the labor agency and the Regional House of Representatives of DIY Province stated that subnational governments are hesitant to take concrete policy initiatives for domestic worker protection due to the lack of legal grounding and weak political will at the national level. Although the subnational government has fostered constructive dialogue with activists to accommodate the aspirations of domestic workers, these discussions have not led to concrete policy actions due to the government's limited commitment to enforcing the rights

and obligations of domestic workers. An informant from the Regional House of Representatives expressed willingness to support the implementation of domestic worker protection policies if a robust national legal framework were established.

> In the Special Region of Yogyakarta [DIY] Province, even with existing gubernatorial and *kota* head regulations, these [domestic worker protection policies] cannot be effectively implemented due to the absence of a strong legal basis at the national level. To this day, the Labor Agency of DIY Province does not dare to address domestic worker issues because there is no legal basis. (IDI, female, member of a provincial house of representatives, DIY Province, 23 January 2025)

In North Sumatra Province, efforts to establish regulations protecting PRT were initiated in 2016. At that time, Commission E of the Regional House of Representatives of North Sumatra proposed a draft regional regulation on the protection of female home-based workers, including domestic workers. In 2017, this draft was reportedly set to be included in the regional legislation program (Prolegda). However, to date, there has been no further progress on this initiative.

Informants from the Labor Agency and the DPPA of North Sumatra Province stated that discussions on the draft regional regulation were stalled due to the absence of a clear legal framework at the national level. An NGO focusing on domestic worker education mentioned that they had conducted multiple hearings with the provincial and local labor agencies to discuss the proposed regulation. However, they encountered the same obstacle: subnational governments adhered strictly to a legalistic approach, prioritizing alignment with existing legal frameworks at the national level. As a result, advocacy efforts have not led to concrete policies for the protection of domestic workers. Legal protection for domestic workers remains a low priority on the regional policy agenda.

V.2 The Winding Road and Compromises in the Formulation of the Domestic Workers Protection Bill

Given the limitations, the enactment of the Domestic Workers Protection Bill is expected to provide a robust legal framework that guarantees the rights and welfare of PRT. The passing of the Bill plays a critical role in granting legal recognition to domestic workers by embedding their rights and protections within a formalized legal framework. The Bill would define domestic work as a legitimate profession, which ensures that care workers receive explicit, consistent, and enforceable legal protections. By codifying fundamental labor rights, the Bill should safeguard domestic workers from exploitation by securing fair working hours, leave entitlements, social security benefits, and the right to terminate employment contracts under equitable conditions. Additionally, the Bill should also address the longstanding power imbalance between domestic workers and their employers by mandating legally binding employment contracts, which further establish a structured and enforceable framework that prevents abuse and guarantees fair treatment.

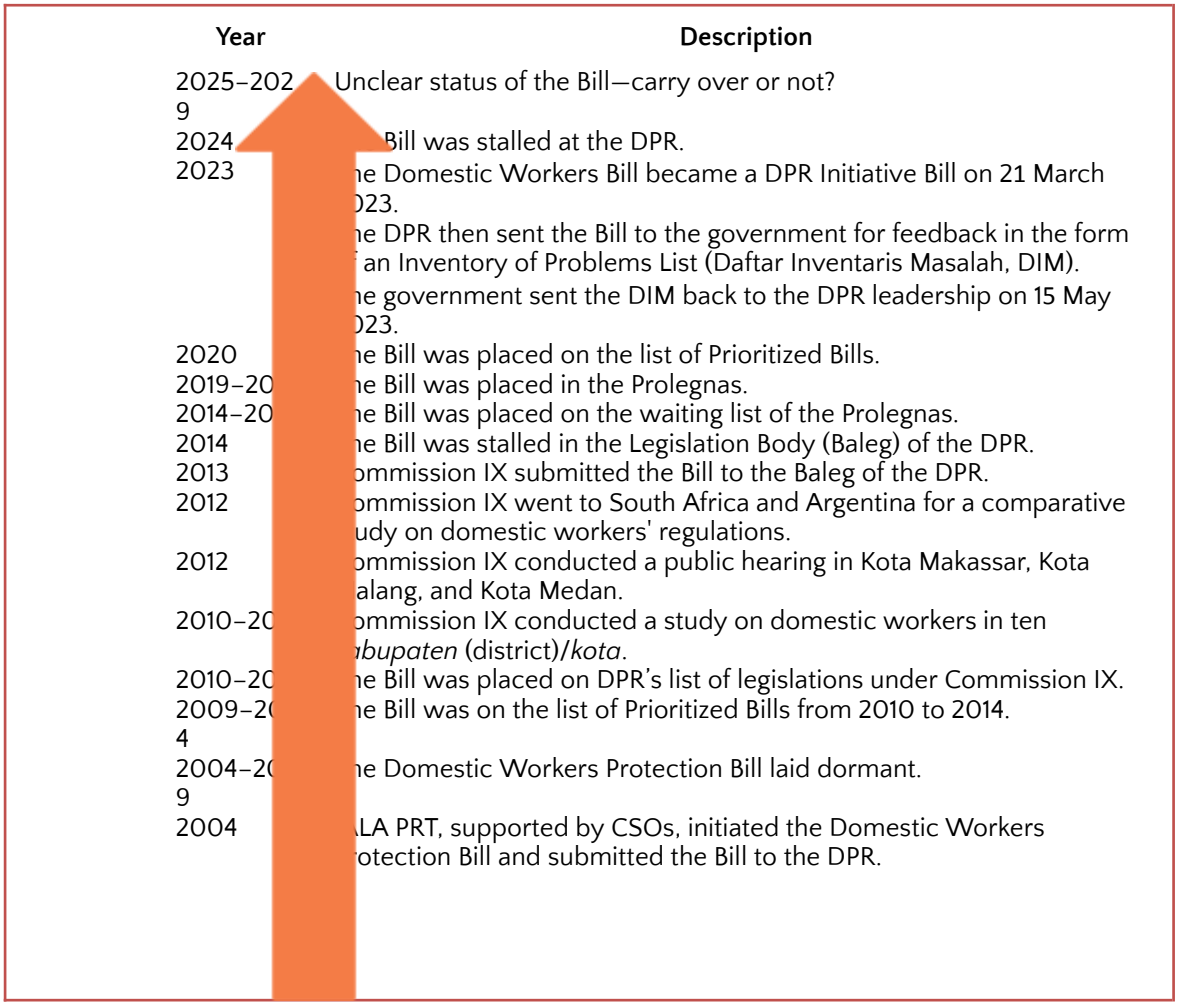
Initially proposed by JALA PRT in 2004, the of Domestic Workers Protection Bill entered the national legislation program (Prolegnas) during the 2005–2009 period but faced repeated setbacks. Although it was eventually designated as a DPR Initiative Bill (RUU Inisiatif DPR) in March 2023, it failed to pass before the 2019–2024 legislative period ended (for details, see Figure 1). This situation has raised concerns that the deliberation of the Bill in the 2024–2029 legislative period may need to restart from the beginning.

The continued delay in the Bill's enactment has resulted in the persistent neglect of domestic workers' rights. They continue to face low wages, unpredictable working hours, increasing job demands, and the absence of leave entitlements or social security. For instance, regarding wages, data from JALA PRT indicates that in 2022 domestic workers' earnings were only about 20%–30% of the UMR. Furthermore, many domestic workers are subjected to

violence and various forms of mistreatment by their employers. Between 2021 and February 2024, JALA PRT recorded 3,308 cases of violence against PRT. These cases commonly involved multiple forms of abuse, including psychological, physical, and economic violence, as well as human trafficking (LBH APIK, 2024).

Throughout the lengthy process at the DPR, the content of the Bill has significantly shifted from the initial draft proposed in 2004. An informant from Konde.co, part of the Civil Society Coalition (KMS) for the Domestic Workers Protection Bill, revealed that many compromises were made during discussions at the DPR, resulting in the final draft retaining only 10% of the original 2004 proposal. In a separate interview, an informant from Komnas Perempuan confirmed the statement.

Figure 1. The Interrupted, Long Journey of the Bill in the DPR



One of the reasons for numerous compromises is that legislative discussions have encountered differing viewpoints, as some members of the DPR have expressed concerns influenced by their personal experiences as employers of domestic workers. Amnesty International Indonesia (2025) reported that misunderstandings regarding the Bill—such as apprehensions that it would formalize PRT employment and introduce mandatory minimum wages for PRT or impose legal risks on employers—have contributed to the hesitancy among legislators. During a 2020 parliamentary hearing, one legislator voiced concerns about the Bill's potential impact on employers, stating, "What if we, as employers, end up being

criminalized? Before we know it, we might be constantly facing complaints." (Amnesty International Indonesia, 2025)

In contrast, the government's view on the Bill is more progressive than that of the DPR and stands in stark opposition to it. Based on information obtained from the validation workshop participants, the government desires that PRT be recognized as formal workers, on par with those in other sectors. The Ministry of Labor has also acknowledged that once the Bill is enacted into law, the enforcement of its provisions will fall under their authority.

Based on experiences in other countries, such as Brazil and Argentina, recognizing domestic workers on par with other workers significantly impacts the protection of their rights. Box 6 explains how domestic workers in these countries gain a clear legal basis for negotiating their rights with employers.

Box 6
Brazil and Argentina: Recognizing Domestic Work as a Formal Occupation

Brazil's legal progress stands as a landmark example, primarily grounded in constitutional law. The 2013 constitutional amendment that guaranteed domestic workers "equal social protection rights" on par with other worker categories further strengthened the 1988 Constitution's explicit recognition of domestic labor as a formal occupation.

Law No. 150 of 2015, which governs domestic employment contracts and mandates social security and tax contributions, formally codified the legal recognition of domestic labor. Employers are constitutionally required to provide contributions to workers' health insurance, pensions, and unemployment benefits, and the legislation places a strong emphasis on written employment contracts and mandatory social security participation. Even though only 28% of domestic workers have registered contracts, the law's comprehensiveness guarantees 100% legal coverage, offering a crucial basis for worker claims and enforcement.

Argentina's Law 26.844 similarly marks a significant legal milestone by formally aligning domestic workers' rights with those of other salaried employees and superseding laws from 1956. The law legally establishes regulated working hours, paid holidays, maternity leave, and occupational hazard protections—rights explicitly guaranteed by statute.

Due to the legal classification of domestic work as formal employment, domestic workers in Argentina now have access to protection previously exclusive to the formal sector. Representing a distinctive statutory provision for domestic labor, the law facilitates the establishment of a joint commission for collective bargaining, thereby institutionalizing domestic workers' right to negotiate wages and conditions collectively. While this legal framework offers protection, only a quarter of domestic workers are officially registered, underscoring gaps in enforcement. Argentina's legal framework, for instance, incentivizes compliance by offering fiscal benefits to employers who register workers and by implementing legally sanctioned inspection strategies.

Source: ILO (2022) and Pereyra (2017)

In its final draft,[22] the Bill does articulate commendable intentions. Article 3 states that the protection of domestic workers aims to (i) provide legal certainty for domestic paid workers and employers; (ii) prevent all forms of discrimination, exploitation, and harassment against domestic workers; (iii) regulate a harmonious employment relationship based on human dignity and justice; (iv) enhance domestic workers' knowledge, expertise, and skills; and (v) improve their overall well-being. However, these intentions are not adequately reflected in the subsequent provisions due to numerous compromises made during the drafting process.

[22]This final draft can be accessed from the official DPR website: https://berkas.dpr.go.id/setjen/dokumen/persipar-RUU-Usul-Inisiatif-DPR-RI-Draft-RUU-TENTANG-PELINDUNGAN-TENTANG-PEKERJA-RUMAH-TANGGA-1679384071.pdf.

First, the most fundamental issue lies in the definition of the employment relationship between PRT and employers as a sociocultural relationship (Article 1, paragraph 3) and the principle of familial ties as one of the protection principles (Article 2). On the one hand, situating the phrase "sociocultural relationship" within this definition can be understood in a rural context, where it is difficult to enforce strict employment relationships, as this might disrupt social relations between PRT and employers. However, on the other hand, this phrase is feared to legitimize the status of PRT as a form of devotion or service that is subordinative in nature, rather than as a professional occupation. Meanwhile, the establishment of the principle of familial ties, while seemingly a form of respect for PRT, at the same time insinuates that PRT should always be obedient and not demand too much in their relationship with employers. These phrases and principles do not encourage the development of a professional employment relationship; rather, they risk undermining PRT's rights, fostering exploitation, and obscuring fair dispute resolution for PRT.

The experience from South Africa offers valuable lessons. Elena Moore's analysis of South Africa highlights a complex interplay between statutory and customary law, particularly concerning legal responsibility for care work, much of which falls to domestic workers. Although the South African Constitution guarantees social rights, customary norms frequently undermine statutory caregiving obligations, creating significant legal ambiguity (Moore, 2019). This unresolved legal uncertainty between these two legal systems reduces the state's accountability for providing care, thereby exposing domestic workers to potential abuse.

Second, such compromises are evident in the provisions concerning employment agreements (Article 8). Under the Bill, a written employment contract between a domestic worker and an employer is required only when recruitment is conducted through an agency. In contrast, if the employer directly recruits a domestic worker, the agreement may be made verbally. This provision indicates unequal treatment of domestic workers. Moreover, although there is no precise supporting data, direct recruitment by employers is widely believed to be the predominant practice, rather than recruitment through agencies.

Third, another compromise concerns the fundamental rights of PRT—including wages and religious holiday allowances, working hours, and rest periods, as well as leave entitlements—none of which are provided with clear standards (Article 11). Provisions regarding wages, religious holiday allowances, and leaves are left to agreements between domestic workers and their employers. Meanwhile, working hours are vaguely defined as needing to stay within 'humane' limits, a term opens to subjective interpretation. This provision potentially disadvantages domestic workers, as they generally have a weaker bargaining position relative to employers.

If this Bill does not stipulate clear standards, it risks perpetuating the precarious employment conditions currently prevalent. Some employers voluntarily provide fundamental benefits, such as a religious holiday allowance equivalent to one month's salary and designated days off. Meanwhile, other employers subject their workers to exploitative conditions, including excessive working hours and wages far below a livable standard. Many domestic workers—lacking formal awareness of their rights—perceive substandard conditions as preferable to unemployment. The situation is particularly dire in Kota Medan, where government agencies openly acknowledge the absence of wage standards or labor protections for PRT. An advocacy organization has documented extreme cases where workers earn as little as Rp400,000 per month yet remain responsible for their housing rent expenses. Without a clear regulatory framework capable of balancing the employer-worker relationship, PRT are left with little to no bargaining power regarding wages, working hours, or fair treatment.

The DPR's reluctance to establish clear standards in regulating the rights of domestic workers contradicts the provisions they enacted in the Law on the Protection of Migrant Workers (Law No. 18 of 2017). In that law, workers' rights are explicitly secured. These include

receiving wages according to the standard wage in the destination country; obtaining protection before, during, and after employment; and having a written employment agreement. The content of this agreement must cover working hours, wages and payment methods, leave entitlements and rest periods, facilities, social security and/or insurance, and the duration of the employment contract. That law also includes provisions stating that migrant workers can only be placed in countries that (i) have laws and regulations protecting foreign workers; (ii) have a written agreement between the government of the destination country and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia; and/or (iii) possess a social security system and/or insurance that protects foreign workers. It raises a significant question why similar guarantees and protections are not applied to domestic workers within their own country.

Similar to Indonesia's situation, the Philippines, which also sends many domestic workers abroad, has successfully established clear standards in ensuring the rights of domestic workers within its domestic worker regulation law (see Box 1). This law has significantly improved the legal framework and welfare provisions for domestic workers in the Philippines, aiming to ensure decent work and protection of domestic workers' rights. While full compliance remains a challenge, its establishment is a crucial step toward formalizing this essential labor sector.

Fourth, the Bill does not explicitly grant PRT the right to form labor unions. Such recognition is necessary because domestic workers cannot rely on Law No. 21 of 2000 on Labor Unions or Law No. 13 of 2003 on Labor. Both laws stipulate that labor unions can only be formed by workers in business entities, whereas domestic workers are employed within private households. During the validation workshop held in May 2025 in Jakarta, representatives from JALA PRT acknowledged this. They stated that if the provision regarding the right to form labor unions is not present once the Bill becomes a law, they will use the human rights law as the legal basis for forming unions.

Fifth, while the Bill does include criminal sanctions for employers and recruitment agencies, these sanctions are limited to cases of discrimination, threats, intimidation, harassment, and both physical and nonphysical violence against PRT (Article 30–32). However, potential forms of labor exploitation are not categorized as criminal offenses. Common forms of exploitation include excessive working hours, additional unpaid tasks, wage deductions, or the withholding of salaries. Implicitly, the Bill frames these issues as matters of employment agreements to be resolved through mediation. Yet, once again, without proper legal assistance and a strong commitment to protect domestic workers, mediation is likely to disadvantage them, as they generally hold a weaker bargaining position in negotiations with their employers.

According to informants from JALA PRT, given the various compromises made, the primary goal of the Bill's passage is merely to secure the legal recognition of domestic workers as workers. While this may seem like a minimal target, such recognition is considered crucial as a foundation for advocating for domestic workers' rights. Ensuring their protection and access to rights will be significantly easier once their status as workers is legally recognized, including the right to form labor unions.

Beyond the legal recognition of domestic workers as workers, the Bill includes provisions that offer benefits to domestic workers. It explicitly states that PRT are entitled to health and employment protection guarantees. The health insurance contributions will be covered by the central government, while employment insurance contributions will be jointly borne by domestic workers and their employers (Article 12). Additionally, domestic workers are granted skills training. However, the implementation of these provisions requires strict oversight, as the Bill does not specify any sanctions for employers who neglect or obstruct the fulfillment of these rights.

At the same time, the Bill is not solely intended to safeguard the rights of domestic workers; it also aims to protect the interests of employers. By establishing a formal employment agreement that delineates the rights and obligations of each party and specifies the scope of work for which the domestic worker is responsible, the employment relationship becomes clearer and more equitable, thereby reducing disputes. Employers can focus on their professional responsibilities with assurance, as household matters are secured by the presence of a domestic worker who understands their duties and obligations. The Bill includes provisions granting employers the right to obtain information regarding the domestic worker's work skills and qualifications. For employers with children, there is an assurance that their children will be well cared for amidst their busy work schedules. Furthermore, concerns about sudden resignations from domestic workers will be alleviated, as there is a provision requiring one month's prior notice.

The deliberation of the Bill has already recommenced in May 2025. Although the discussion appears to commence from scratch, both the DPR and the government are determined to pass the Bill this year. In his speech to workers on 1 May 2025, President Prabowo conveyed his promise that the Bill would be enacted within three months (Naibaho, 2025). Echoing this sentiment, the chairperson of the DPR's Legislation Body (Baleg) guaranteed that the Bill's enactment into law would take place in August or September 2025 (Hafiez, 2025).

V.3 Engaging Allies to Accelerate the Deliberation of the Domestic Workers Protection Bill (RUU PPRT)

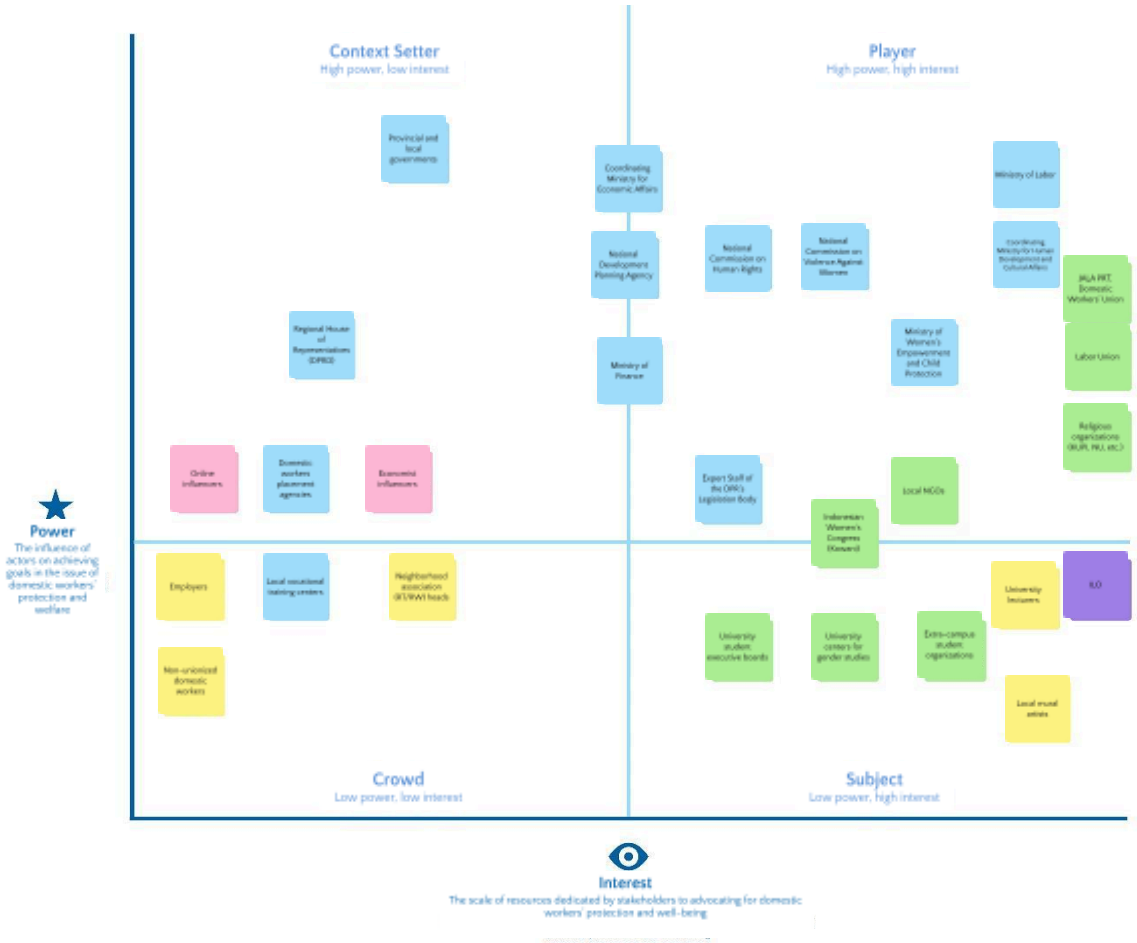
Even with the positive news regarding the commitment from the government and the DPR to promptly conclude discussions and ratify the Bill, the process still requires vigilant oversight. Therefore, support from various stakeholders needs to be expanded. The fact that the Bill has been stalled in the DPR for over 20 years, despite being backed by more than 100 civil society organizations and individuals within a large coalition, illustrates to us that the existing support is still insufficient. To secure additional appropriate support, a mapping of various stakeholders involved in the issue of domestic worker protection is necessary.

The approach must also be broadened by integrating the issue of domestic workers as part of economic development (see Chapter 4). The experience of the Philippines and other countries has shown that attempting to include domestic work as part of the formal economy provides better conditions for workers and enhances the labor market as a whole. The experiences of Uruguay and Brazil also suggest that institutional support, activism, and legal reform can create change. If Indonesia is to experience meaningful progress, legal recognition should be prioritized, social security coverage secured, enforcement mechanisms enhanced, and partnerships with civil society organizations established to ensure that domestic workers are represented.

Stakeholder mapping plays a crucial role in advancing policies that enhance the welfare and protection of PRT at the subnational level. This study uses the stakeholder power–interest matrix, a framework that categorizes stakeholders based on their influence on policy outcomes and levels of interest in the issue. The matrix classifies stakeholders into four groups: crowd, subjects, key players, and context setters (Olander and Landin, 2005).

Stakeholder mapping was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, the research team conducted the mapping based on an analysis of preliminary interviews at the national level and field data from three study locations. Subsequently, this analysis was presented in a validation workshop attended by representatives from civil society organizations, the government, and academia. Within this forum, the stakeholder analysis was jointly conducted until a consensus was reached. Findings from the stakeholder analysis reveal both challenges and progress in advocacy efforts (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Matrix of Stakeholder Power-Interest



The upper-right quadrant (Player) comprises several key stakeholders who possess significant influence and whose interests or mandates align with efforts to protect domestic workers. Some of these include ministries and state institutions. Stakeholders within this quadrant need to be managed intensively to optimize their contributions and influence, especially the Ministry of Labor, which, once the law is enacted, will hold control over supervision and law enforcement. So far, based on information provided by participants of the validation workshop, this ministry's support for domestic workers' protection is very strong. This ministry has also prepared a dispute resolution mechanism at the *kecamatan* (subdistrict)/village level.

Other important ministries include the Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs and the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, which, together with the head of the National Development Planning Agency, have formed a working group to formulate policies for implementing the Care Economy Roadmap. As discussed in Chapter IV, the recognition and protection of care workers, including domestic workers, is one of the strategic issues within the Care Economy Roadmap. Additionally, support from the Ministry of Finance and the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs must also be maintained to ensure adequate budgetary support for ministries implementing domestic workers protection and empowerment programs.

On the nongovernmental side, the support garnered thus far needs to be maintained and enhanced, especially from religious organizations such as the Indonesian Women Ulama Congress (KUPI) and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Both organizations have expressed their support for the ratification of the Bill. NU conveyed its support at its 34th congress (*muktamar*) in

Bandar Lampung in December 2021 (Syakir, 2021), while KUPI stated its position at its second congress in Jepara in November 2022 (KUPI, 2022).

Stakeholders who must not be overlooked are local CSOs. Despite multiple challenges, local advocacy networks have demonstrated remarkable strength and inclusiveness. Advocacy coalitions at the local level have successfully engaged alternative digital media platforms, labor unions from other sectors, and civil society organizations that focus not only on labor rights but also on gender equality, democracy, and anti-corruption issues. This broad-based coalition has reinforced the visibility of domestic worker issues and fostered cross-sectoral solidarity, which enables more sustained advocacy efforts.

Box 7
Solidaritas Perempuan Kinasih Yogyakarta

Solidaritas Perempuan Kinasih (SP Kinasih) Yogyakarta is part of the Solidaritas Perempuan (SP) federation, a feminist organization with 12 affiliated communities across Indonesia, rooted in the struggle for women's rights. Though not exclusively focused on domestic workers, it plays an active role in advocating for their protection, especially through partnerships with JALA PRT.

SP Kinasih Yogyakarta supports the Domestic Workers Protection Bill by organizing social media campaigns, joining policy dialogues with legislators, and participating in demonstrations and public forums. This focus grows from their earlier work on agrarian conflicts, where they saw a pattern: women facing land loss often end up in vulnerable work like domestic labor. SP Kinasih Yogyakarta argues that the issue must be viewed within the larger framework of inequality—labor rights, gender injustice, poverty, education, and lack of access to land and housing.

Although some subnational regulations exist—such as the gubernatorial and *kota* head regulations on domestic workers—SP Kinasih Yogyakarta notes that enforcement remains weak due to limited awareness, low prioritization by the government, and a lack of understanding of gender-based labor rights. With Yasanti and the Informal Workers Network, SP Kinasih Yogyakarta continues to do outreach and education, despite limited funding.

Most importantly, they believe that the hardest barrier is the patriarchal mindset that sees domestic work as less valuable. SP Kinasih Yogyakarta's work is a form of resistance, to make visible the dignity of domestic workers.

Source: interview with SP Kinasih Yogyakarta, January 2025; Solidaritas Perempuan (2021)

The strength of civil society organizations at the subnational level should indeed not be underestimated. While many engagements with key policymakers have not resulted in concrete policy changes, several advocacy initiatives have successfully influenced subnational government actions. For instance, sustained dialogue with the Social Affairs Agency of Kota Medan led to the inclusion of members of SPRT Sumatera Utara in the national security (BPJS Ketenagakerjaan) scheme under the Nonwage Recipient Program (BPU). Similarly, advocacy efforts in Kota Yogyakarta secured some level of support from the Agency of Social Affairs, Labor, and Transmigration (Dinsosnakertrans) for domestic worker education programs. Most notably, advocacy progress at the subnational level has contributed to the enactment of regulatory frameworks that provide legal recognition for domestic workers. The issuance of Gubernatorial Regulation of DIY No. 31 of 2010 and the Regulation of the Head of Kota Yogyakarta No. 48 of 2011, for example, benefited from substantial backing by the deputy head of Kota Yogyakarta during the 2010–2015 period.

Box 8
SPRT Sumatera Utara

SPRT Sumatera Utara was established in 2010. In 2011, Wagini was appointed as the chairperson and has remained in this position ever since. The organization now represents

more than 300 domestic workers, mostly residing in Kota Medan, while some members are based in surrounding areas like Deli Serdang. Most members are employed as part-time workers, performing household tasks under informal arrangements.

Every Tuesday, members convene at the *Sekolah PRT* (Domestic Workers' School) to discuss fundamental labor rights, including fair wages, entitlement to days off, and access to the social security schemes for health and employment. The organization also holds monthly social gatherings in the form of *arisan*, where members contribute a membership fee of Rp5,000 and consumption fee of Rp10,000. SPRT also provides advocacy support for members facing workplace disputes by collaborating with SAHdaR to ensure legal assistance.

At a broader level, SPRT actively engages in advocacy campaigns. One of its widely covered mass protests was the "Silent Kitchen" protest held in 2023 in front of the Regional House of Representatives of North Sumatra Province. Key figures such as Wagini, Nur Kasih, and Heni voiced the pressing issues faced by domestic workers, highlighting the urgent need for legal recognition and protection of their rights.

Sources: data collection results; Tribun-Medan.com (2023)
Note: *Arisan* is an informal community rotating savings group.

The lower-right quadrant (Subject) appears to be populated by diverse stakeholders, including student organizations, research institutions, and individuals such as university lecturers and artists. These stakeholders indeed possess significant concern regarding domestic worker issues, yet their driving force or influence in the ratification of the Bill is low. This substantial level of concern could foster greater power if managed intensively. This study's findings reveal that at the subnational level, advocacy networks have extended their collaborations to artists and academics, further enriching their outreach strategies. Artists have played a crucial role in creative campaigning, such as producing murals that highlight the need for domestic worker protection. Academics, including research institutions and student organizations, have also contributed by conducting research on domestic worker policies and participating as expert speakers in several public discussions on employer-worker relations. Notably, some academic figures have even served as a role model in campaigns to demonstrate equitable and respectful employment relationships between PRT and their employers.

In the upper-left quadrant (Context Setter), online influencers and economist influencers are compelling parties to engage in public advocacy for domestic worker issues. In line with their designation, both possess significant power to influence the public, especially their followers/subscribers. Involving these parties in producing educational content has the potential to establish them as key opinion leaders (KOLs), thereby expanding public awareness regarding the importance of domestic worker protection.

The last one is the lower-left quadrant (Crowd). In power-interest matrix analysis, this quadrant is typically not extensively discussed due to its perceived lack of influence (low power and interest). However, within the context of this study, this quadrant warrants close examination because it includes non-unionized domestic workers and employers. Both groups are precisely those directly impacted by the Bill. For employers, providing adequate information is crucial to alleviate various concerns they might harbor if the Bill is enacted into law. Concurrently, it is essential to clearly inform them that the law's existence will, in fact, bring numerous benefits to them (see Section 5.2).

On the other hand, limited awareness and engagement among non-unionized domestic workers present a significant challenge to advocacy efforts. Many domestic workers who are not part of a union have little exposure to information about their rights, which makes them less likely to participate in initiatives aimed at improving their welfare and legal protections. The absence of interactions with SPRT in their area further isolates them from advocacy networks and leaves them unaware of the available support systems. One of the union representatives mentioned that the nature of domestic work also creates structural barriers to organizing. Unlike industrial workers, domestic workers work in isolated environments,

particularly those who reside with their employers. This isolation, combined with long working hours and personal family responsibilities (for live-out domestic workers), significantly limits their ability to engage in collective action. Another challenge is that domestic workers' unions have not yet been established in all regions, provinces, or particularly major cities. One such example is Kota Bandung and West Java Province, despite the very large domestic worker population in this province.

V.4 Addressing Obstacles in Advancing Legal Protection for Domestic Workers

Besides overseeing the ongoing deliberation of the Bill, preparations must also be made for when the Bill is passed into law. Various structural and cultural challenges that have persisted must be overcome to achieve meaningful change. The process will undoubtedly take time, but various efforts need to begin to accomplish significant progress.

Three challenges have emerged during the deliberation of the Bill. *First*, the prolonged delay in passing the Bill has affected the morale of domestic worker organizations. One union, which initially had approximately 400 members, has seen its membership decline to around 300 with decreasing levels of participation. With the promise from the president and the leadership of the DPR's Baleg, the momentum for the ratification of the Bill has re-emerged. Recognizing the need for progress at multiple levels, in addition to strengthening their organizing efforts again, domestic workers' unions and advocacy groups should increasingly focus on advocating for regional policies (when needed) and engaging regional authorities that support domestic workers' welfare and protection. These efforts aim to prepare improvements in working relationships and conditions in accordance with the provisions that will soon be in effect. The experience of advancing regional policies that support domestic workers' welfare and protection is a strong asset.

Box 9
Silenced Labor, Loud Agendas

Legal and policy advocacy plays a crucial role in advancing domestic workers' rights, but alternative approaches are increasingly proving to be powerful tools for amplifying their voices and broadening their influence.

One effective approach is by actively engaging several local government officials in Kota Medan, such as village heads and *kecamatan* leaders, to introduce and promote the objectives of the local domestic workers' union. These interactions successfully enhance institutional recognition of domestic workers, as evidenced by the invitation of the union's representatives to participate in village council (Badan Permusyawaratan Desa) meetings. By securing a formal presence in local decision-making spaces, domestic workers gain direct access to institutional support and advocacy opportunities.

Beyond direct stakeholder engagement, cultural advocacy, particularly through theatrical performances, serves as an innovative method for raising public awareness of domestic workers' struggles. By dramatizing real-life experiences and labor rights issues on stage, these performances create an engaging and socially accepted platform for addressing sensitive topics. This approach reduces resistance from the public while fostering greater empathy and understanding.

Source: data collection results

Second, misconceptions surrounding the Bill persist among various stakeholders. Many informants interviewed in this study, both government officials and employers, mistakenly believe that the Bill would mandate employers to pay PRT at least the provincial minimum wage, despite no such provision exists in the draft.

> If [domestic workers' wages] are equated with the UMR, it'll be difficult for employers because many families also earn just the UMR. They are compelled by necessity to use domestic workers, for example, to look after children when they work outside the home. (IDI, male, government official, Labor Agency of Kota Bandung, Kota Bandung, 23 January 2025)

These misunderstandings highlight a broader issue: the limited awareness among policymakers regarding the rights of PRT and the legal framework needed to protect them. In this context, the protection of domestic workers will once again face obstacles and even backfire on domestic workers themselves. It requires sufficient information to both mitigate policymakers' apprehension regarding the Bill's enactment and understand the distinct advantages the new law will provide.

Third, Indonesia has not yet ratified ILO Convention No. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers. The Convention serves as an international benchmark for protecting the rights of domestic workers. It could also resolve various compromises found in the provisions of the Bill because, among other things, it ensures domestic workers a level of respect and protection equal to that of other workers. The government's reluctance indicates the need for further dialogue to align national policies with global labor standards while considering the socioeconomic landscape.

Box 10
ILO Convention No. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers

ILO Convention No. 189 defines domestic work as labor performed in or for a household, and domestic workers as individuals engaged in such work within an employment relationship. The Convention explicitly excludes those who perform domestic tasks only occasionally or on a nonprofessional basis. It applies to all domestic workers, though ratifying states may make partial exclusions only after consulting relevant stakeholders and providing justification.

The Convention underscores the obligation of member states to protect the human rights and fundamental labor rights of domestic workers. These include the freedom of association; the right to collective bargaining; and the elimination of forced labor, child labor, and employment discrimination. It also mandates that domestic workers be granted the same level of respect and protection as other workers in terms of fair working conditions, minimum wage coverage, social protection, and occupational safety and health.

The Convention requires that domestic workers be provided with clear and verifiable employment terms, preferably through written contracts. These contracts should outline the nature of work, wages, hours, leave entitlements, living arrangements (if applicable), and termination provisions. Additional protection is afforded to migrant domestic workers through enforceable written job offers prior to deployment. States are also encouraged to coordinate across borders to prevent abuse and to ensure rights such as repatriation.

The Convention affirms that domestic workers must not be compelled to live in their employers' homes and have the right to retain their identity documents. It requires that periods of rest, normal working hours, and overtime be treated with parity to general labor standards. Furthermore, domestic workers must have direct access to their wages and are entitled to fair compensation—including in-kind payments only under specific, regulated conditions.

To ensure effective implementation, the Convention mandates that member states develop appropriate labor inspection, enforcement, and complaint mechanisms tailored to the specific context of domestic work. This includes establishing access to justice, regulating private employment agencies, and ensuring compliance with national and international labor standards. Lastly, the Convention allows for progressive application and anticipates further improvements through future revisions, without undermining more favorable protections that may already exist under national or international law.

Source: ILO (2011)

VI. Conclusion & Recommendations

This chapter concludes the report by summarizing main findings and offering key policy recommendations.

VI.1 The Significance of Domestic Workers for Families in Indonesia

Domestic workers or *pekerja rumah tangga* (PRT), play an essential role in the daily functioning of Indonesian households. Predominantly employed by middle- to upper-class families, PRT manage a wide range of domestic caregiving tasks, enabling their employers to engage in formal employment. This arrangement has become increasingly common, driven by the rise in dual-income households and shifting urban lifestyles that require external support in managing home responsibilities.

Most PRT migrate from rural areas and enter domestic work out of economic necessity rather than informed choice. Their duties typically include cooking, cleaning, and caring for children or older persons—tasks critical to the well-being and productivity of urban households. Despite their significant contributions, PRT often face undervaluation and social invisibility, limiting both their opportunities and professional growth.

VI.2 The Position of Domestic Workers in Indonesia's Care Economy

The Government of Indonesia's Care Economy Roadmap aims to incorporate care work as a vital component of gender equality and economic productivity. The Care Economy Roadmap recognizes care workers as strategic priorities. However, concrete actions to ensure fair treatment and protection for PRT are still lacking. Meaningful measures are highly encouraged to achieve these goals because continued institutional neglect would position PRT as low-status workers within the care economy. The perception that their work lacks skill fosters stigma and restricts their access to training and development opportunities. Like their counterparts globally, PRT in Indonesia must be recognized as skilled professionals to improve their status and educational prospects in the care economy.

A key element of the roadmap's first five-year phase is improving national data system, including through a dedicated survey on domestic work. Such data would be invaluable for various stakeholders, including policymakers, employers, and advocacy groups, as it can provide a clearer understanding of the landscape of the domestic workforce.

VI.3 Lack of Legal Support and Protection

Indonesia currently lacks comprehensive legal protections for domestic workers, falling behind regional peers such as the Philippines, which has enacted a robust legislative framework for domestic work. Indonesia still struggles with the sociocultural perception of domestic work as a familial role rather than a formal job. This perspective hinders progress toward better legislation. The absence of formal legal status for domestic workers prevents them from accessing benefits typically available to workers, such as health insurance, and leaves them vulnerable to exploitation.

The current legislative gap underscores the urgent need for the Domestic Workers Protection Bill. The Bill aims to recognize PRT as workers with rights that must be upheld. Enacting this legislation would not only lay groundwork for labor rights for PRT but also contribute to societal reform by prioritizing the well-being and dignity of domestic workers.

VI.4 Key Recommendations

Improving the regulatory framework: Expediting the passage of the Domestic Workers Protection Bill into law is both crucial and urgent. The legislation must clearly define the rights of PRT, establish standards for fair compensation, and protect PRT from exploitation. Care must be taken to ensure that the ambiguous phrases—such as "*hubungan sosiokultural*" (sociocultural relationship)—do not undermine PRT's rights, even while respecting cultural contexts.

Raising public awareness and shifting cultural norms: A national campaign should be launched to emphasize the value of PRT as essential workers. Shifting the narrative from *pembantu* (helper) to *pekerja rumah tangga* (domestic worker) will empower domestic workers and foster respect and recognition for their contributions.

Expanding training and development opportunities: Employers must respect the rights of domestic workers to take breaks and leave, and to attend training. While training is essential to help domestic workers improve their skills and advance their personal development, it should not come at the expense of their right to rest. Ideally, opportunities for training should be provided outside of their designated days off so that workers can benefit from capacity building without sacrificing their much-needed time for rest. Training centers and digital platforms can offer accessible educational resources to help bridge the gap between low status and high expectations.

Strengthening multi-stakeholder engagement: Collaboration among government bodies, NGOs, placement agencies, employers, and PRT is critical. Involving employers in programs that encourage them to improve the working conditions of PRT is essential. All stakeholders must work together to ensure that anticipated policies regarding PRT are effectively followed up, implemented, and monitored.

Promoting formal integration into the care economy: Policies should be developed to formally integrate domestic workers into the care economy. Recognizing PRT as dignified professionals requires a clear career path and opportunities for professional development. Collaborating with educational organizations may enable the creation of specific curricula that enhance PRT's economic skills and empower them.

Conducting a national survey on domestic work: This initiative should aim not only to record the total number and types of PRT but also to investigate their socioeconomic conditions and the precariousness of their situations. Comprehensive data collection will enhance strategic planning, leading to more informed policy formation and resource allocation.

VI.5 Conclusion

Domestic workers are essential to the economic and social fabric of Indonesia. They support family functioning, enable labor participation, and contribute to national productivity. Legislative reform, cultural transformation, and multi-stakeholder engagement are urgently needed to elevate the status of domestic workers, transform the care economy, and ensure fair treatment. Achieving this requires ongoing commitment and collaboration. Legislative reform will yield significant benefits in social justice, economic prosperity, and human

dignity. By addressing systemic challenges, Indonesia can set an example of fostering a just and inclusive environment for PRT.

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Appendices

Appendix 1
Key Informants at the National Level

Table A1. List of Informants of the Interviews at the National Level

Classification of Informant	Organization	Interview Date
Advocacy organization for PRT	JALA PRT	26 November 2024
Advocacy organization for PRT	Rumpun Gema Perempuan	5 December 2025
The media	Konde.co	9 January 2025
The media	Project Multatuli	10 January 2025
The media	Marsinah.id	24 January 2025
The media	Project Multatuli	18 February 2025
Advocacy organization for PRT	Perempuan Mahardhika	27 February 2025
Ministry/government agency	Ministry of Labor	7 March 2025
Ministry/government agency	Komnas Perempuan	14 March 2025

Source: researchers' notes

Appendix 2
Research Participants in Kota Bandung, West Java Province

Table A2. List of Informants in Kota Bandung

Type of Informant	Data Collection Method	Date of Data Collection
Live-out domestic worker	IDI	26 January 2025
Live-out domestic worker	IDI	24 January 2025
Live-in domestic worker	IDI	25 January 2025
Live-in domestic worker	IDI	26 January 2025
Adult daughter of a domestic worker	IDI	24 January 2025
Adult son of a domestic worker	IDI	26 January 2025
Employer of a live-in domestic worker	IDI	20 January 2025
Employer of a live-in domestic worker	IDI	20 January 2025
Labor Agency of West Java Province	IDI	22 and 23 January 2025
Labor Agency of West Java Province	IDI	23 January 2025
Bappelitbang of Kota Bandung	IDI	21 January 2025
Bappeda of West Java Province	IDI	24 January 2025
DP3AKB of West Java Province	IDI	23 January 2025
DP3AKB of Kota Bandung	IDI	21 January 2025
Yayasan Karya Buana Abadi - LPPRT	IDI	22 January 2025
Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia - Bandung	IDI	21 January 2025
Employer	FGD	25 January 2025
Employer		
Employer		
Employer		
Employer		
Domestic worker	FGD	25 January 2025
Domestic worker		
Domestic worker		
Domestic worker		
Domestic worker		
Domestic worker		
Domestic worker		
Domestic worker		

Source: researchers' notes

Appendix 3
Research Participants in Kota Medan, North Sumatra Province

Table A3. List of Informants in Kota Medan

Type of Informant	Data Collection Method	Date of Data Collection
Live-in domestic worker (older person care)	IDI	20 January 2025
Chairperson of the Domestic Workers' Union (SPRT) of North Sumatra Province	IDI	20 January 2025
Coordinator of SAHdaR	IDI	20 January 2025
Live-in domestic worker (general domestic work)	IDI	20 January 2025
Live-out domestic worker (infant care)	IDI	21 January 2025
Employer of a live-out domestic worker (child care)	IDI	21 January 2025
Staff of the Labor Agency of Kota Medan	IDI	23 January 2025
Employer of a live-in domestic worker (general domestic work)	IDI	23 January 2025
Head of the Bappeda of Kota Medan	IDI	23 January 2025
Owner of Amanah Education	IDI	23 January 2025
Head of the Gender Mainstreaming and Women Empowerment Section of DP3AKB of North Sumatra Province	IDI	24 January 2025
Head of the Job Placement and Employment Opportunity Expansion Section of the Labor Agency of North Sumatra Province	IDI	24 January 2025
Employer of a live-out domestic worker	FGD	24 January 2025
Employer of a live-out domestic worker		
Employer of a live-out domestic worker		
Employer of a live-out domestic worker		
Employer of a live-out domestic worker		
Employer of a live-in domestic worker		
Employer of a live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker	FGD	24 January 2025
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		

Type of Informant	Data Collection Method	Date of Data Collection
Live-in domestic worker (child care)	IDI	25 January 2025
Husband of a live-out domestic worker	IDI	25 January 2025
Husband of a live-out domestic worker	IDI	25 January 2025
Head of the Child Protection, Women Protection, and Special Child Protection Section of the Women Empowerment, Child Protection, Community Empowerment, and Population Control and Family Planning (P3APMP2KB) of Kota Medan	IDI	31 January 2025

Source: researchers' notes

Appendix 4
Research Participants in Kota Yogyakarta, Special Region of Yogyakarta Province

Table A4. List of Informants in Kota Yogyakarta

Type of Informant	Data Collection Method	Date of Data Collection
SPRT Tunas Mulia	IDI	20 January 2025
Live-out domestic worker	IDI	20 January 2025
Live-out domestic worker	IDI	20 January 2025
Labor Agency of DIY Province	IDI	21 January 2025
DP3AP2 of DIY Province	IDI	21 January 2025
Live-in domestic worker	IDI	21 January 2025
Husband of a domestic worker	IDI	21 January 2025
Employer of a live-in domestic worker	IDI	22 January 2025
CV Edi Daya - LPPRT	IDI	22 January 2025
Husband of a domestic worker	IDI	22 January 2025
DP3AP2KB of Kota Yogyakarta	IDI	22 and 23 January 2025
Household employing a domestic worker	IDI	23 January 2025
Solidaritas Perempuan Kinasih - domestic worker advocacy organization	IDI	24 January 2025
Rifka Annisa - domestic worker advocacy organization	IDI	24 January 2025
Live-in domestic worker	IDI	24 January 2025
Employer	FGD	25 January 2025
Employer		
Employer		
Employer		
Live-out domestic worker	FGD	26 January 2025
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		
Live-out domestic worker		

Type of Informant	Data Collection Method	Date of Data Collection
Member of the Regional House of Representatives of the DIY Province from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) faction	IDI (online)	1 February 2025

Source: researchers' notes

Appendix 5
Participants of the Validation Workshop

Table A5. List of Participants of the Validation Workshop

No.	Organization
1	Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs (Kemenko PMK)
2	Kemenko PMK
3	Kemenko PMK
4	Fahmina Institute
5	Yayasan Penabulu
6	Yayasan Penabulu
7	JALA PRT
8	JALA PRT
9	Sarinah Institute
10	Directorate of Labor (Ditnaker) of the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas)
11	Ditnaker of Bappenas
12	Emancipate Indonesia
13	PEKKA
14	Academic

Source: researchers' notes