

Completion Report

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Title of the Research: “The Improvements of Work Conditions for Indonesian Migrant Fishers in Japan: Key Challenges in the Application of the Specified Skilled Worker Program in the Japanese Fishing Industry”.

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This research investigates constraints which have affected Indonesian fisher migration under Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) system, actual working conditions of Indonesian fishers employed under Technical Intern Training (TIT) system and Specified Skilled Worker system, and the key challenges facing the prevailing legal framework and measures relating to working conditions of Indonesian fishers in Japan’s coastal and offshore fisheries.

The results of this research show the obstacles that affected the effectiveness of SSW system in the early years of the system operation included lack of information on SSW system relating to fisheries in Japan’s Prefectural Government, and lack of guidelines on system operations among the government agencies in Indonesia. Job seekers and educational institutions have faced limitation to access information on verified job vacancies in the official job information channels. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic led to the cancellation of Indonesian SSW candidates to migrate. The research results reveal that Indonesian fishers in Japan still faced poor working conditions. The standard of wages of Indonesian fishers under the TIT system are smaller than those who under the SSW system and these wages are lower than wages of Japanese fishers. Moreover, a significant portion of their basic wage is deducted for paying social insurance. The Indonesian TIT and SSW fishers experienced excessive working hours with uncertain rest periods and days off and unsafe working environment onboard fishing boats. Despite significant improvements in the management systems of migrant workers in Japan during 1990-2018 period, this research found the labour-related laws are key challenges to remedy poor working conditions in Japan’s fisheries. Japan’s Labour Standards Act does not stipulate working hours, rest periods and days off in fisheries industry, meanwhile Japanese Seafarers’ Act does not apply to fishing boats weighing less than 30 tons. The key challenges for Japan include a measure under the SSW system that expects the Registered Support Organization to explain working conditions to the SSW candidates after signing employment contract rather than before signing the contract. Meanwhile, currently the Indonesian national regulation does not provide an oversight system for employment contract for Indonesian specified skilled workers as well as technical interns in Japan’s fisheries.

The authors recommend both governments to reform labour-related law and regulation and revise measure that will help in improving working conditions of Indonesian fishers under SSW system. It is highly recommended that both governments should conduct an immediate review of the 2019 Memorandum of Cooperation on Specified Skilled Worker to ensure the commitments of both governments to provide verified job vacancies for the SSW applicants through the official labour market information system.

To increase this research contributions, authors plan to publish the research results in international academic journal and to conduct disseminations of the research results to relevant government agencies.