

# International Migration, Livelihood Strategy, and Poverty Cycle

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## Abstract

Poverty drove Indonesian poor households (e.g. their family members) to find other livelihoods. One popular choice is becoming an international migrant. This paper describes and analyzes the change in agrarian structure which causes dynamics in agrarian poverty. The study uses qualitative approach and constructivism paradigm. Research results showed that even if migration was dominated by farmer households from lower social class; it also served as livelihood strategy for middle and upper social classes. Improved economics brought dynamics on social reality. The dynamic accesses to agrarian resources consist of (1) horizontal social mobility (means that they stay in their previous social class); (2) vertical social mobility in the form of social climbing; low to middle class, low to upper class, and middle class to upper class; and, (3) vertical social mobility in the form of social sinking: upper class to middle class, upper class to lower class, and middle class to lower class. The dynamic in social classes indicates the presence of agrarian poverty cycle, they are social climbing and sinking.

**Keywords:** international migration, poor, agrarian change, poverty cycle

## 1. Introduction

Poverty drives many Indonesians to migrate (permanent and non-permanently, internally or externally). Additionally, Indonesian (unequal) development program added more reasons to migrate for Indonesian people (Wahyuni, 2000). Indonesian population census in 2010 recorded that 5 396 419 people or equal to 2.5 percent of total population are cross-provincial recent entry migrants. The number of internal migrants is higher than international migrants. The data shows that recent and international migrants is increasing over time. Total number of international migrants until 2012 is 2.998.592 people, spread across the world, i.e.; Saudi Arabia (1.427.928), Malaysia (1.049.325), Taiwan (381.588), Singapore (228.875), United Arab Emirates (220.820), Hong Kong (214.476), Kuwait (106.594), and other countries. (Note 1)

Poverty faced by Indonesian household drove poor households (i.e. their household member) to explore another source of livelihood. An option often taken is to become labor (*Tenaga Kerja Indonesia*, TKI (Note 2)) in overseas countries (international migration). The same reason drove the poor to conduct permanent or non-permanent population migration; becoming workers in formal or informal sectors – in intra-village, cross-villages, cross-sub-districts, cross-cities/districts, or even cross-provinces.

The study focused on population migration that change agrarian structure (including access towards agrarian resources, before and after becoming a migrant). The paper describes and analyzes the change in agrarian structure that bring dynamics on agrarian poverty.

Other common term for migration in demography is population mobility, or territorial mobility, in particular, which refer to a spatial, physical, and geographical mobility (Rusli, 2012); which consists of permanent and non-permanent population mobility dimension. Migration is permanent population mobility dimension, while non-permanent population mobility consists of circulation and commutation (Rusli, 2012). Population mobility is a demographical dynamic that influences population distribution. For rural depressed areas, out population mobility is one way to solve economic issues faced by many households. It serves as a way to distribute income more equally between more developed and minus/depressed areas (Rusli, 2012).

Migration is a form of geographical, spatial, or territorial population mobility among geographical units that involves residential change from the originto destination area. Permanent population mobility: migration, characterized by residential change (permanent domicile, population mobility/migrant actors). Young labor

out-migration from rural agricultural area might be a result of lack demand of labor in agricultural sector, due to more use of machinery. Labor out-migration may be beneficial to solve unemployment issues in rural areas. It is closely related to working opportunity and wage/income rates. The incoming various information through population mobility actors will influence various aspects in rural community's life.

Common population mobility theory is the push-pull theory. Pushing factors, in this case, are reasons to leave the origin area. Further, the pulling factors are reasons for choosing destination area. According to this theory, the number of people moving towards particular distance is directly proportional to the number of opportunity on that distance, and inversely proportional to the intermediate opportunity. According to Rusli (2012), the weakness of both theories are that they does not consider various personal, social, and cultural factors (Rusli, 2012).

International migration is one of population mobility categorized as external migration. The following theories can explain international migration phenomena comprehensively. According to Massey et al. (1993), there are five main approaches can be used for international migration. They are: (1) macro neo-classical economic; (2) micro neo-classical economic; (3) new economic theory; (4) labor market theory; and, (5) world system theory.

Macro neo-classical economic theory emphasizes that it is the differences on geographical aspects in terms of labor stock and demand between origin and destination areas that serve as the main factor to encourage migration decision. Further, new economic theory views migration as a family's (or group or community) strategy to diversify income sources, reduce household risks, as well as to overcome obstacles on credit and capital limitation.

Labor market theory views that demand on low-level workers in more developed countries is the critical factor to shape international migration. The world system theory focuses on world market, which is a penetration of capitalist economic relation into peripheral areas, a non-capitalist society, occurs through various acts of neocolonial government, multinational enterprises, and national elites. International migration occurs after land, raw material, and labors in origin area entered the world economic market and thus intrude the traditional system. Transportation, communication, culture, and ideology relations that come along with the globalization co-facilitate the international migration. Therefore, international migration can be analyzed using sociological theory.

The first sociological theory used to understand social reality as the focus of the paper is Karl Marx's materialism sociology. According to Marxian theorization, material is the basis of social interaction. (Note 3) According to this theory: (a) capitalistic social production relation that acknowledges the fetishism of commodities has eliminated worker's contribution in the value addition process of traded products/commodities. Reflected in agrarian social relation, the role of labors refers to the farmers; and (b) (capitalist) social class conflict with [labor] social class as a result of material accumulation interest and transfer of surplus of values from a production process. To understand poverty, unequal access over agrarian resources (interaction among subjects) influences migrants to decide on their livelihood strategy, for example, by opting on population mobility.

According to Boeke (1953), the influence of economic culture has brought rural peoples to experience social change from multiple to pre-capitalist "production mode" face to face with capitalist. Poverty in rural areas was getting more in line with the change of "production mode" type of local agrarian resources accessors.

According to Geertz (1984), ecological adaptation on food production resulted in two types of societies. They are: rice-field based society with its complex social-production organization and shifting cultivation society with its simple social-production organization. In our research context, due to people's power lacking to control significant agrarian resources— i.e. plantations, Javanese people were forced to conduct their livelihood activities on narrow rice-field parcel (shared poverty theory in Java). Javanese farmers were never in fact escape from shared poverty; even if they received capitalist 'like' economic incentive, the value given was not in line with actual price. Thus, what happen next was involutedly social change (agricultural involution).

The Bogor social experts provided response – further known as Bogor School of thought (*Mazhab Bogor*) towards Indonesian development by developing a thesis stated as follows: the genuine form of social-societal system is reflected on how the people build the livelihood strategy. In this context, poverty (will) picture a more complex social organization for survival strategy than the economically settled societies. The options of survival strategies might be based on: (1) *spatial*: doing migration; (2) multiple livelihood pattern; (3) stage of development: survival, consolidating, and accumulating stage of development; (4) division of labor within family resources: household allocation strategy; (5) individual: straddling strategy. One focus in Bogor School's study was that rural crisis drive population mobility, not only between rural – urban area in the same country, but

also rural – urban areas in different countries. In this case, poor people migration (internal and external) were driven by lacking rural area's (including national's) carrying capacity to provide minimum prosperity assurance to its people. Further, Sajogyo (2006) added that the green revolution only alters the agricultural pattern from traditional to modern, but does not develop the entire entity of agriculture (i.e. farmers' structure and institutions).

In equal access on agrarian resource (interaction among subjects) affects villager in choosing their livelihood strategy, for example by becoming a migrant. This theory is face to face with poverty, population mobility, and agrarian structure change. Analysis on theory is expected to be able to generate ideas on poverty cycle in West Java rural areas. Specific question to be answered by our research are: (a) How does international migration work as household livelihood strategy to alleviate poverty? (b) How and why does international migration as livelihood strategy bring "dynamics" on agrarian poverty?

In line with previous questions, the research aimed to describe and analyze: implication of international migration as a livelihood strategy to alleviate poverty and to bring dynamics on social classes (climbing, sinking, or un-changed) within the community.

## 2. Methodology

The research methodology paradigm is constructivism, in particular, we used its rational/utilitarian tradition paradigm. According to Hardiman (2003), by using constructivism paradigm, researchers can depict social reality, both objectively (outside) and subjectively (inside) researched object.

We conducted our research in Wargabinangun Village, Kaliwedi Sub-district, Cirebon Regency, West Java Province (Note 4). One of the main reason for site selection (in village level) was that there were prior studies stated that most of the villagers are migrants, both internal and external. The villages also have high number of Indonesian Labors and Women Labors (TKI and TKW) (hereafter stated as 'migrant'), and high number of poors (62%). Another reason was that the village is categorized as rice-field typology. One of its indicators was that agricultural sector became the main livelihood of its people, especially rice-field farmer (Data of Podes 2011, and Poverty Data 2012). We collected data during the period of October 2013 to April 2015.

The methodological approach we used were case study and biographical study. Case study refers to historical case study. In our research design, historical explanation was needed to understand the events that occurred before certain social phenomenon in real-life. Further, the approach is also useful to understand the reason behind the similarities and difference among events across the years.

Referring to Yin (2004), case study can be distinguished from other approaches and strategies, due to its characteristics: (a) it is an empirical enquiry that explore real life; (b) when the border between phenomena and contexts is not distinctly visible; and, (c) it uses large number of resources to obtain data. Case study is also useful to answer research question on how and why. These characteristics are in line with our research question.

Data collection method used was the triangulation technique. Several techniques we used were: (1) in-depth interview, (2) focused group discussion, (3) observation—including participating observation, and (4) document/literature study. In-depth interview was conducted to obtain data and information from migrants (Interview Guide, Appendix 3). Focused group discussion was conducted to obtain data and information from several groups in certain village area, those who relevant with our research. Observation was conducted on informants who became our research object and on migrants' life. We collected documents from village and sub-district level, and from relevant institutions, for example, the Bureau of Statistic (*Biro Pusat Statistik*) of Cirebon District.

Crosscheck on data and information validity were using triangulation technique. One of the way was to conduct interview with figures or migrants originated from neighboring villages. Further, interview with key informants was conducted in sub-district and district level.

Our unit of analyses and (qualitative) interview focus were household and individual. Household refers to households with minimum one member being migrant. To enrich our data, we also interviewed other key informants, i.e. village head and apparatus (both the incumbents and the exes), and other public figures. Further, collected data was qualitatively analyzed.

## 3. Results and Discussions

### 3.1 Agrarian Condition and Migration Preference Destination

According to the Wargabinangun Village 2014 profile, rice-field has the larger proportion, i.e.±250.3810 hectares/ha (66.6%). Occupations in agricultural sector are farm workers, farm owners, and farmers.

Agricultural sector has become part of Wargabinangun people's life/livelihood. One of its common problems was the lack of water, especially during the dry season. On the other side, water excess management was a problem during the rainy season. According to an informant, since 1968, the rainfall was sufficient that farmers were started to plant twice in a year, as an attempt to overcome food shortage problems. The villagers have experienced with a long dry season and severe famine in the previous years. One of the way chosen to overcome the problem was by planting rice during the dry season which resulted in descent harvest. In the coming year, the *Bimas Project* was introduced by the government to villages including Wargabinangun. Thus in 1970s, its villagers were able to plant rice twice in a year.

Based on several literatures and confirmed with our interview with several public figures in Wargabinangun, there were several types of farmers: (a) Owner; (b) Owner-tenant/sharecropper; (c) Owner-renter/sharecropper-farm worker; (d) Owner-farm worker; (e) renter/sharecropper-farm worker; and (f) farm worker.

Wargabinangun, compared to its neighboring villages, is lacking of natural resources, especially the non-rice field resources. Alternative livelihood that used to be done and became scarce in present time was red brick production. Red bricks were made from dry irrigation canals soils.

Farmland was one of valuable assets that become a symbol of Wargabinangun people's wealth. According to Wargabinangun Village 2014 profile, the majority of Wargabinangun people (1218) worked in agricultural sectors (3 farmers, 886 farm workers, and 329 farm owners). Despite the fact that farmland occupied most areas in Wargabinangun Village, farm worker was the occupation of most villagers. This shows that there were more people who landless, or, had land less than one *bau* (1 *bau* = 0.7 ha), Table 1.

Table 1. Household number and percentage based on land ownership area

No	Area (hectare=ha)	Quantity (Household)	Percentage
1.	More than 7 ha	4	0.40
2.	3.5-7 ha	10	1.00
3.	1.5-3.49 ha	30	3.00
4.	0.7-1.4 ha	155	15.52
5.	<0.7 ha	800	80.08

Poverty in rural area was still determined by the low access to agrarian resources. One of farmers, named Mr. JAE (56 years old), stated that:

*"...the economy of Wargabinangun Rural is still low. Farmers who have enough money are able to rent land annually, while the poor they can only become farm workers with wages Rp 45,000 for men and Rp 35,000 for women, daily..."* Mr. JAE (56 years old).

Different strategies were employed to meet daily life needs, including by working outside the farm, outside the village area, and outside the city/country. This survival strategy is applicable to all type of population mobility, both internal and international migration. In internal migration, this phenomenon is distinctly visible mainly on circulation and commutation type of population mobility. Both type of population mobility always exists, from across villages, rural – urban, urban – urban area, and from place of origin to destination overseas. According to Young (1994), migration between villages was commonly found in pre-industrial era due to long distance transportation means limit. Further, according to White and David (2005), two factors as the driver were preference on place to stay and work.

Wargabinangun people who chose to migrate overseas were mostly went to Saudi Arabia. Lately, other countries that become their destination were Abu Dhabi, Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Oman, Qatar, Korea, Brunei, etc. Besides international migration, there were also villagers who worked in big city such as Jakarta, Tangerang, Bekasi, etc.

Types of work performed by migrants at the destination country were maid for women, and drivers or company's workers for men. Types of job performed by villagers who work in town/city were informal sectors workers (e.g. mongers, coolie, factory worker, *ojeg* (motorcycle used for public transport) driver, clerks, and maid).

Migrant households (especially those who have success stories) tended to go abroad again. Due to their lifestyle—especially the so-called ‘three points pattern’ habit, - ‘work-eat-sleep’ that have become a “culture with a clear standard operating procedure”. Commonly, they only “rest” for half a year to one year, and once they finished their saving, they would try to get another contract overseas. Even those who had sad stories of working abroad, for example, “worked for a grumpy employer”, were still willing to go abroad again to try their fortune, commonly with new destination country. The ‘resting/going home’ period of migrants were commonly at every end of contract (approx. 1 – 3 years), such as the following story told by Mrs. SME (45 years old) and Mrs. KAR (47 years old)

*“...I used to work overseas for around 8 years. My employer was a nice person. It was the needs to raise two children that made me chose to work overseas. Thank God I can buy 1 hectare rice field parcel with the money I earned from abroad....”* (Mrs. SME, 45 years old).

*“...my son used to work in Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi. He got unpleasant experiences (wages were under the value stated in his contract). As for his third trial, he went to Oman, and now he works for a nice employer....”* (Mrs. KAR, 47 years old).

Today, there are more sponsors or international worker agencies in Wargabinangun Village. According to an informant, sponsors were competing to get applicants. In previous years, applicants should pay a certain amount of money to be eligible for working abroad, both for maid and company worker’s applicants. Now, there are some sponsor offer free application for maid applicants. However, some villagers do still paying for a reason. Mrs. Saripah, daughter of Mr. Suryani prefers paid application instead of the free. She believes that the paid one is safer and well facilitated, as stated by Mrs SYI (42 years old):

*“...there are more sponsors and they are competing to get applicants. Since 2010, there were several sponsors offered women applicants certain amount of money (5-7 million rupiahs). The amount of money varies across sponsors...”* (SYI, 42 years old)

The money by sponsors results in the growing number of people who interested in working abroad. However, despite their interest to become international migrants; the administrative requirements, according to some informants, were more complicated compared to previous years. Before 2000s, the administrative requirements were only Identity Card (KTP), Family register (KK), and application fee ranged from 300,000 to 1,500,000 rupiahs. An informant, Mr. SMH (60 years old), stated:

*“...requirements to become an international migrant nowadays are more complex, more items need to be provided than previous years, such as Identity Card, Family Register, medical checkup and educational background. Previously in 1994, there were only 10 males become international migrants from our village. Now, the males are 30% of all migrants. Not every man is willing to work overseas due to the lack of money and courage...”*

One factor that contribute to the small number of men-migrants compared to women-migrant is the application fee. According to some informants, those fees could range between 6-7 million rupiahs, even up to 30 million rupiahs. The informants had their own way to pay their initial fees. A common way was to borrow money from their siblings or neighbors with an agreement to pay after they received remittance. Some other used the money from yield harvest. The others sold assets such as land, or put it under mortgage.

The number of women-migrants in the Wargabinangun village today reaches nearly 700 people. Almost every household in Wargabinangun had one of their members became a migrant. In previous years, most of migrants worked in Middle East countries such as Saudi Arabia. Now, they also worked in Asian countries such as Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Korea. According to some informants, application to work in Saudi Arabia was currently closed.

Economic conditions of migrants’ households were generally experience a slight change after. Most of them experienced economic improvement when one or some of their members being migrant. The household would shift from lower to the middle social class since they could renovate their houses, buy lands to build houses, and meet their daily needs. However, when those members returned home and no longer worked as migrants, those households returned to lower class, seen by the difficulties to meet their daily needs.

The village government has tried to overcome this poverty issues. Some poverty alleviation programs were conducted, according to some informants, they were *Raskin* (rice for poor people), *BLSM* (Direct Social Aid), house renovation program, donations for orphans and the aged, and *Kartu Pintar* (education card). In addition, there were also programs as stated by Mrs. WET (40 years old):

*“...based on my knowledge, there are some village [government] programs to reduce the number of women – international migration, such as sewing class, beauty salon training, and small business development program for rural’s women. However, until today, only few women interested in such programs. Those women only attend to the training, but have no courage or willing to start a business...”*

### 3.2 The Preference of International Migration as Livelihood Strategy

Most of Wargabinangun villagers became migrant workers for economic reasons. Lack of working opportunity in the village and surrounding areas, lack of interest to work on rice-fields, high wage rates in destination countries/cities, as well as success story from their neighbors who used to be migrant workers stimulate the youths and husband-wife couples to find working opportunities in the cities or overseas.

The preference of becoming a migrant is closely related to the potential variety across regions in Indonesia. Responding to available resources potential and doing migration are believed as a way out from poverty. This solving problems effort is called a “survival strategy” (Ellis 2000; Mazhab Bogor). This is in line with Deere and de Janvry (1979) explanation on household survival effort. Household needs to manage four basic processes: (1) *home production*, (2) *wage labor production*, (3) *circulation*, and (4) *reproduction-differentiation*. In a certain time, household has control over several production tools, i.e. raw material (land, water), working facilities (seeds, fertilizers, farming tools and machineries) and family labors (working division based on age and gender), conduct the production activities at household level, and its circulation process. Further, according to Deere and deJanvry (1979), household’s production (economic) and reproduction (domestic) processes are run under the influence of macro structural factors outside the household. Individuals within household will migrate to find jobs in cities or other villages. Indeed, in an extreme situation, the whole family can move permanently (Deere and de Janvry, 1979).

Overseas migration in Wargabinangun Rural was closely related to education and social condition. Before 1970 and during 1970s, it would be difficult to find villagers (commonly women) of Wargabinangun who graduated from elementary or junior high school, especially those who were from the lower social class. On the other hand, efforts on finding (formal) jobs at cities were difficult, while informal works would require capital and skill (for example, a business/trading skill), and the courage to work overseas/far away from their homeland and family.

The people of Wargabinangun have experienced a long dry season. They found it difficult to meet daily needs during the 1970s, especially in 1976. This was when population mobility began to become an alternative for peoples’ survival. According to some informants, those who became international migrants were commonly from: (a) lower social class: landless, or own land less than 1 *bau* (1 *bau* = 0.7ha); (b) relatively low level of religiosity; and (c) have difficulty to meet daily and other needs such as children’s education. Migrant workers were commonly maiden or divorced women. For poor divorced women with kids (and landless), becoming a migrant worker was seen as the most visible option for family’s survival, as experienced by Mrs. SUN (48 year olds):

*“...my husband and I used to have a tempe business in Jakarta. After we divorced, I returned to my village. I have no job while I need money to send my kids to school. Thus, I decided to become a migrant in Saudi Arabia...”*

The year of 1997/1998 was the awakening years for lower class families of Wargabinangun Village. It marked with various changes, such as: (a) prior to 1997/1998, the number of migrant worker was less than 500 people, and in 1998/1999 it reached around 800 people; (b) preference to be a migrant worker was no longer for only lower class, but also for those who came from middle class and upper class (mainly the second generation of upper class); (c) decision to become a migrant was not only from families with a relatively low level of religious understanding, but also from families with high level of religiosity. For example, Mr. SHN (46 years old) and some people (such as Islamic priests’ wives, village’s priests) decided to become migrant workers. In addition to economic issues, the main driving factor was the success stories of ex-migrants; (d) Wargabinangun villagers, whose wives or daughters were migrant workers (in Saudi Arabia), did not experience economic problem/crisis that commonly experienced by the villagers (and most of Indonesian people). In 1997/1998, for example, Indonesian Rupiah wore away to IDR 18,000 per US Dollar, the monthly salary of a public servant (which was regarded as favorite and prideful job) at that time was around IDR 500,000; whereas a monthly remittance from a migrant worker for his /her family in Indonesia could reach IDR 3-5 million; and, (e) change on houses’ physical features were evident rapidly since 1998.

Until today, becoming a migrant is a livelihood strategy preference – considered as reliable by most of Wargabinangun villagers. It was confirmed by our interview with informants, nearly 90% of households in

Wargabinangun had one or more of their members who was still or used to be a migrant worker, both in town or overseas. The number of migrant worker in Wargabinangun was increasing over years, along with the growing number of sponsors who facilitated the applicants. In fact, during the recent years, applicants were not required to pay some money for the application. Instead, applicants were given a quite huge amount of money—ranged from IDR 3,000,000 – 7,000,000, as stated by Mr. SYI (42 years old).

*“...since 2010 until now, women migrants received money around 5-7 million (rupiahs). The amount of money was different for each sponsor...”* (SYI, 42 years old).

Coming home period for migrants was usually at every end of contract period (approximately 1-3 years). There were also migrants who did not come home for two or three contract periods. However, most of the migrants came home at every end of their contract period. After that, they would reapply for different or same destination countries. According to informants, there were villagers who became migrants for 8, 9, even 15 years. Usually, those who became long-time migrants were those who experienced success working overseas, such as Mrs. SMI (52 years old):

**Box 1. Remittance was used to buy 1 ha field (SMI, 52 years old)**

Mrs. SMI became a migrant to Saudi Arabia for around 8 years. She worked for a nice employer. Her reason to become a migrant was to fulfill her family's needs, especially since she was a divorced woman. At first, she sent her remittances regularly. However, she noticed that the money was spent uncontrolled, and therefore, she decided to send the remittance only if there was an urgent need. She saved her salary for 3 years and enabled her to buy 1 hectare of paddy fields. It was her dream to own a paddy fields so that she would not rely on her children when she is older.

The average period of sending remittance was monthly or once in three months. It differed according to their respective family's needs. According to some informants, remittance was usually used to fund daily needs and school fees, hold family occasions, build or renovate houses, buy home appliances, electronic devices and motor cycles, buy lands, and to open or improve small business.

### 3.3 Population Mobility Dynamic: Poverty Cycle

Geertz (1984) principally shows that if population mobility does not occur, social condition will difficult to change. Farmer's economic condition will stay the same and might even worse as they share a narrow farmland with more families. In line with it, Singarimbun and Penny (1976) noted that rural poverty is the reason that drive Srihardjo people to do the population mobility. Further, Tauchid (2009) stated that agrarian (farmers) problems are basically livelihood issue of Indonesian people. Thus, implicitly, the three authors stated that new strategy is needed for survival (especially if there was no population mobility).

Study by Kolopaking (2000) in Wargabinangun, Central Java Province showed that most migrants who worked in Malaysia came from the poor. Their migration to Malaysia was, basically, due to their unsuccessful effort to improve their life in their origin area. Today, migration tends to be conducted by middle class women. Therefore, (national) and international migration direction moves towards better areas to improve migrants' life, since their stay in origin area keep migrants' families poor.

According to Wahyuni (2000), increase in population mobility does not only involve certain ethnic mobility, such as Minangkabau and Bugis tribes in Indonesia but it has spread across other ethnics in non-institutional ways. Population migration, as part of population dynamic in Indonesia, is more closely related to the development process. Further, Wahyuni (2003), in her analysis of West Java immigration, stated that West Java Province attracts migrants, since it is regarded as national industrial development area that provides working field for a huge number of people.

Research results showed economic improvement after migration. Murdiyanto (2001) noted that there was a symptom of societal structural changes due to circular migrant. Those symptoms are (a) change of migrants' their families' living standards, (b) change of migrants' and their families' lifestyle, and (c) emergence of Migrant Union. Nurmalingda (2002) noted that sub-urban society poverty is caused by natural and structural factors, e.g. land-use conversion, low education, lack of access over capital, and lack of social network. Sumartono (2012) noted a relatively similar result in terms of the change in social-economic and cultural status of migrants' household, which is better than previous state. In addition to evidence from asset and capital ownership, the improvement is also seen from increasing score of economic improvement index (*indeks peningkatan ekonomi, IPE*) – before and after migration.

Elizabeth (2007) noted that remittance from overseas job has positive effect on the diversification of rural household business (West Java and West Kalimantan). She noted that migrant's household business diversification refers to source of income directed towards non-farm sectors which are able to provide higher income than those on-farms and off-farms. Wulan (2010) succeeded to identify three forms of social remittance of women migrants (*Buruh Migran Perempuan, BMP*) during their overseas work. *First*, various knowledge (ability to speak English, Arabic, and Cantonese; operate modern machineries; traveling by plane; better nutrition, sanitation, and cleanliness). *Second*, working ethics such as discipline, on time and hard work, mindset change in terms of children education, self-reliance, marriage, and gender relation in the family. *Third*, the formation of social network due to the involvement of several BMPs in organization (migrant advocacy, art and culture, as well as religious organizations). Wulan (2010) concluded that social remittances are knowledge, idea, and social capital owned by women migrants. They, become better women with abilities of empowerment, protection, and struggle against commodification process. Similarly, result of research by Zid (2012) (Note 5) in two villages (Panyingkiran and Ciherang rural), West Java Province shows that the reason of international migration for rural women in West Java is to improve family's economic condition so that they can escape from rural poverty.

Our result in Wargabinangun Village (West Java) showed that (a) migrants were from lower social class, landless, farm worker families, families with economics constraints, and before 1960s and 1970s have sold their land to landlord in the village; (b) those who became migrants were able to improve their livelihood and at several cases have reached upper social class, and most of them were able to reach middle class category (when similar criterions applied). However, there were cases where migrants' families became poorer – experienced mostly by children of the migrants (second generation). They became middle or lower social class, and became migrants themselves (Table 2).

Table 2. Number and percentage of strata before and after becoming a migrant

Strata	Before		After	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
<b>Upper</b>	22	2.23	41	4.15
<b>Mid</b>	208	21.07	355	35.97
<b>Lower</b>	757	76.70	591	59.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>987</b>	<b>100.00</b>	987	100.00

Table 2 shows an increase at mid-class (to 35.97%) and upper-class (to 4.15%), and decline at lower-class. This is an evidence that becoming a migrant can improve migrant families' economics. However, Table 2 further shows dynamic after becoming a migrant. Declining household percentage was on middle class to lower class (36.96%); highest percentage of declining household was middle class to lower class (1.23%); and highest percentage that did not experience social class change was the lower class (35.93%). The dynamic of social class change shows the "agrarian poverty cycle". That is social climbing and sinking process.

Generally, migrants who were able to improve their economic and able to reach upper social class were those who could afford to buy rice field and/or use their income as capital to start or improve their private business. Rice field price several years ago was much cheaper than it is now. During the past few years before migrant workers were not as much as recent years, the price of 1 hectare of land ranged from 50-70 million rupiahs. Therefore, a farm worker family whose one of family members became migrant worker was able to afford to buy or rent rice-field by the saving money they earned from becoming migrant workers. Rice field price in Wargabinangun today is around 500 million rupiahs per 1 *bau* (0.7 hectare); and 1 hectare rice field costs 750 million rupiahs. For example, the case of Mrs. HLI (57 years old).

**Box 2. Case of Mrs. HLI (57 years old): Climbing from lower social class**

Mrs. HLI became a migrant to Saudi Arabia in 1992 – 2001 (9 years) for the same employer – as he/she was a kind employer. Just after her first two working months, she was able to send remittance sufficient to buy a television, install electricity network (PLN) connection, and buy a rickshaw. In 1998, she came home to Indonesia, brought 120 million rupiahs of fresh money. Back at that time, that amount of money could buy 2 ha of land (1 ha = 52 million rupiahs), and the rest was used to renovate her house. Her house stayed in a good condition until today.

The reason to become migrant for lower social class families was to fulfill daily needs and children's school fees, to rent more land, renovate or build house, and to improve families' economic. However, most migrants were only able to reach the level of renovating their houses. They were still unable to fulfill their daily needs after coming back from overseas countries. For middle class and upper class families, the reason of working overseas was to collect money to fund their private business development and to buy lands.

Economic situation of migrant family generally only experiences little change, before and after member's migration. Most of them, have improved their life only when the family's member is still a migrant. They climbed their social status by renovating their house, buying land to build their home, and fulfill their daily needs (meal). However, when the migrant returned home, her/his family went back to their previous class, indicated by difficulties to fulfill their daily needs; was called "poverty cycle" phenomenon.

The only permanent change was the house. Most migrants' families could fix and build a home. Other success story came from migrants whose remittance was used to develop a small business; they could move permanently from lower to upper social class (case of Mr. SHI family, 57 years old, Box 3).

**Box 3. The story of Mr. SHI (55 years old): Climbing from lower social class**

Both Mr SHI and his wife, Ibu RKI have worked in Saudi Arabia; 1994 to 2011 and 2009 to 2010 respectively. Mr SHI worked as a translator, while Mrs RKI worked as a maid. They paid the registration fee to go there, 2 million rupiahs for Mr. SHI and 300 thousand rupiahs for Ibu Rika. Prior to leaving to Saudi Arabia, they only owned a decent house; but now after returning, they could renovate their house, bought rice field and started a business on empty bottles. In his village, Mr. SHI is considered as a successful person because of his skill and ability to get the opportunity. He said that back then, his salary was equal to 15 million rupiahs per month. According to them, working abroad becomes the best solution as they can develop their self-potential and have more experience.

By having the chance to become a migrant, poor peasant household (whom succeed) can improve their family economic and become the land owner (upper class based on local standard/local agrarian structure). Most Wargabinangun villagers have their own rice field, and it became an indicator of wealth. The larger rice field, the richer s/he is. Lower class consists of those who landless, worker, or in low-paid non-agricultural work, and usually receive government aid under poverty alleviation program.

The village profile shows that in 2014, most land in the village is rice field, for about 250.3810 hectares (or 66.6%). Agriculture serves as the main source of livelihood for all Wargabinangun families, as workers, owners or farmers. Most are landless workers, or if they own land, it is less than 0.7 hectares. Our informants stated that at least there were 6 landlords in 1970s era (i.e. each had more or equal to 5 hectares' land).

The village profile of Wargabinangun in 2014 shows that out of 1,382 households in the village, 930 are considered as poor. Other fact we found from our research is consistent increase in the number of poor households due to youth marriage (without ability to fulfill their needs). Similarly important, the poverty is caused mainly by low accessibility to agrarian resource. This has become the main reason for opting migration (internal or international) to improve life (as a household livelihood strategy).

**Box 4. The story of Mrs. MMN (58 years old): Sinking from upper class to middle class, to lower class, and climbing to middle class**

Ibu Mrs MMN is a widow with 5 children. Before the divorce, she was in upper social class. Her family has an education institution and wide land. However, after the divorce, she experienced sinking social class. To fulfill her family daily needs and pay her children school fee, she sold some of her land. At one point, her wealth was finished and drove one of her son to become a migrant. He worked as a hotel employee in Medina from 2007 until now. His application via sponsor charged him 14,000,000 rupiahs. He got the money by putting his family's field to mortgage. His reason of becoming a TKI was to get a job with higher salary, so that he could improve his family's economic condition.

Our result shows that migrant household could improve their family's life and even climb to upper class, while most were able to climb to middle class (especially when the same criterion applied). However, most of our informants stated that there is only a little change in migrants' family's economics. The family's life was improved during the time when the migrant works. They could fulfill their daily needs, renovate the house or build a new house; thus, they climbed from lower to middle class. But, once the migrant returned home, they returned to their lower social class, and found difficulties to fulfill their daily needs. Moreover, there are some migrants whose social economic condition deteriorated after returned from being a migrant. Thus, the "poverty cycle" is a common/ phenomenon in Wargabinangun village.

#### 4. Conclusion and Impications

Our result shows that (a) migrants were from lower social class, landless, farm worker families, families with economics constraints, and before 1960s and 1970s have sold their land to landlord in the village; (b) those who became migrants were able to improve their livelihood and at several cases have reached upper social class, and most of them were able to reach middle class category (when similar experienced social sinking to the middle, or lower social class, and thus, tried their fortune as migrant workers.

There was increase in middle class (58.52%) and upper class (3.90%), as well as decline in lower class. Therefore, preference of becoming a migrant worker could improve the economic of migrant household. The dynamic accesses to agrarian resources consist of (1) horizontal social mobility (means that they stay in their previous social class); (2) vertical social mobility in the form of social climbing; low to mid-class, low to upper class, and mid-class to upper class; and, (3) vertical social mobility in the form of social sinking: upper class to mid-class, upper class to lower class, and mid-class to lower class. The dynamics in social classes indicates the presence of an agrarian poverty cycle. It is the social climbing and sinking that categorized as the poverty cycle.

Our research concludes that special assistance for migrants' families is needed to build their capacity in managing remittance, to improve the families' life. The program can be interlinked with agriculture, a livelihood that has a long history and already institutionalized within the community. In the context of knowledge development, migration's goal can show the significance of poverty cycle. Therefore, conducting comparative research on destination area of other international migrants will be beneficial.

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## Notes

Note 1. Source: <http://www.bnp2tki.go.id/statistik-penempatan/6756-penempatan-per-tahun-per-negara-2006-2012.htm>, Accessed in 22 April 2012.

Note 2. generally presumed as predominated by economic reasons of economic status and life quality improvement.

Note 3. Dialectic idea that builds complex argumentation and way of thinking.

Note 4. To continue the study of William Collier, et al., in 1996 who researched 25 rurals in Java. The main focus of this research was Wargabinangun Village. Whereas, comparative analyses was done mainly by relevant research results and literature sources, especially in West Java.

Note 5. Paper of Postgraduate Seminar at IPB. Migration of Women International Worker and Rural Land Ownership: Case of Wetland Rural Community Type in West Java. Presented on Monday, 5 March 2012.

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