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Service Continuity in Empowering Returnee Indonesian Migrant Workers in East Java

Achmad Donny[1], Tjitjik Rahaju[2], Suci Megawati[3]
[1-3]*Department of Public Administration, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia*
Email: [1]achmaddonny.23008@mhs.unesa.ac.id; [2]tjitjikrahaju@unesa.ac.id; [3]sucimegawati@unesa.ac.id
**Corresponding author:* achmaddonny.23008@mhs.unesa.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Economic reintegration following overseas employment is a public service challenge in Indonesia's migrant-sending regions. This article examines how East Java organises assistance for returnee migrant workers and whether training and institutional partnerships connect beneficiaries to sustained productive services. It offers a focused thematic reanalysis of interviews, observations, and documents reported in a 2026 master's thesis on the provincial migrant-worker protection centre. The case identifies entrepreneurship training, business groups, community support, and referrals to financial institutions, but reveals fragmented programme coordination, uneven beneficiary participation, and insufficient follow-up records of enterprise survival and income. Documentary checking also indicates that a 2024 banking agreement concerned financing for prospective workers' placement, not demonstrated loans for returnee businesses. In response, the article develops a continuity-of-service framework that links needs assessment, differentiated skills pathways, verified financing referrals, market support, and long-term mentoring. The contribution is an evaluable distinction between programme outputs, actual service access, and sustainable reintegration outcomes.

ABSTRAK

Reintegrasi ekonomi setelah bekerja di luar negeri merupakan tantangan pelayanan publik di daerah asal pekerja migran. Artikel ini menganalisis penyelenggaraan dukungan bagi purna Pekerja Migran Indonesia (PMI) di Jawa Timur, khususnya perubahan kegiatan pelatihan dan kemitraan menjadi akses layanan produktif yang berkelanjutan. Penelitian menggunakan analisis tematik atas wawancara, observasi, dan dokumen dalam tesis magister tahun 2026 mengenai Balai Pelayanan Pelindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia Provinsi Jawa Timur. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pelatihan kewirausahaan, pembentukan kelompok usaha, dukungan komunitas, serta rujukan layanan keuangan telah menjadi bagian dari ekosistem pemberdayaan. Akan tetapi, forum program masih terpisah, partisipasi purna PMI dalam perencanaan belum merata, dan data tindak lanjut mengenai keberlanjutan usaha serta perubahan pendapatan belum disajikan secara memadai. Penelusuran perjanjian perbankan tahun 2024 menunjukkan bahwa objek formalnya adalah pembiayaan penempatan calon PMI, bukan bukti pendanaan usaha purna PMI. Artikel ini menawarkan kerangka kesinambungan layanan yang menghubungkan asesmen kebutuhan, peningkatan keterampilan, akses pembiayaan yang terverifikasi, pemasaran, dan pendampingan jangka panjang. Kontribusinya adalah pemisahan tegas antara keluaran kegiatan dan hasil reintegrasi berkelanjutan serta rancangan layanan pascakepulangan yang dapat dievaluasi.

INTRODUCTION

The return of Indonesian migrant workers (Pekerja Migran Indonesia, PMI) does not mark the end of their need for protection and public services. Many returnees have to readjust their skills, social relationships, financial management practices, and livelihood choices to the economic conditions of their communities of origin. Overseas work experience may provide valuable human and financial resources, but these resources do not automatically translate into viable enterprises or secure local employment. Evidence from Indonesia indicates that the management of remittances, investment choices, and preparedness for self-employment influence the reintegration challenges faced by returning workers (Kusumo et al., 2023). Accordingly, empowerment should be understood as an ongoing public service process rather than an isolated training event that ends when participants obtain certificates.

East Java offers an important setting because it is among Indonesia's principal regions of migrant-worker origin. National administrative data indicate that East Java accounted for 26.67% of the 297,434 overseas placements recorded in 2024 (Ministry of Manpower, 2025). These figures describe outward placements, not the number of returnees or beneficiaries of empowerment programmes. Post-return support involves the Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection Service Centre in East Java (BP3MI), local government agencies, financial institutions, training providers, and community organisations. Ministerial Regulation No. 33 of 2025 also identifies registration, needs assessment, and social and economic empowerment as components of migrant-worker support (Ministry of Migrant Worker Protection, 2025). The existence of these institutional responsibilities raises a practical question about whether services are linked across the returnee's reintegration journey.

Recent scholarship has examined stakeholder networks in the empowerment of former migrant workers. Mindarti et al. (2025) discuss the contributions of relevant actors to returnee empowerment in Blitar, while Mardhotillah and Sofhani (2024) emphasise social capital and institutional assistance in developing community enterprises among return migrants. Setijaningrum et al. (2023) explore the contribution of social entrepreneurship to the reintegration of Indonesian workers returning from South Korea. These studies indicate that empowerment requires more than a single institution. Nevertheless, documenting the availability of separate activities does not settle a critical administrative question: do beneficiaries receive coordinated assistance that remains accessible after training and supports a realistic prospect of sustaining their livelihoods?

This article examines the gap between programme activity and service continuity in East Java. It reanalyses the qualitative evidence presented in Achmad Donny's 2026 master's thesis on the BP3MI partnership network, concentrating on post-return services rather than repeating the interorganisational governance analysis developed in the companion article. The study has three objectives: to identify the forms of support reported in the source material, to locate interruptions in the service pathway, and to propose an evaluable model of coordinated assistance. Its analytical novelty is the distinction between administrative outputs, verified access to productive services, and longer-term reintegration outcomes. This distinction provides a public management lens for assessing whether dispersed empowerment initiatives constitute a coherent service system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reintegration is a multidimensional process. The International Organization for Migration (2019) distinguishes economic, social, and psychosocial dimensions and recommends support at individual, community, and structural levels. This framework challenges approaches that equate returnee empowerment with grants or entrepreneurship workshops alone. Sustainable reintegration may involve the ability to generate stable earnings, mobilise community connections, reach public services, and make economic decisions without persistent dependence on temporary projects. The relevant unit of evaluation is therefore not merely an activity completed, but the sequence of assistance and opportunities available to returning migrants.

Kusumo et al. (2023) highlight the management of remittances and investment decisions as important concerns for returnee reintegration in Indonesia. Mardhotillah and Sofhani (2024) show how community leadership and institutional support contribute to the formation of collective businesses. Pratama et al. (2025) likewise situate sustainable livelihoods alongside socio-cultural support. Together, these studies point towards differentiated assistance, ranging from initial assessment to business mentoring and community-based support. A uniform intervention is unlikely to fit returnees with different skills, financial resources, family obligations, and employment aspirations. A service-continuity perspective makes these differences visible to public administrators.

Multi-agency public programmes face the risk that responsibility is transferred, diluted, or interrupted between service stages. Research on inclusive collaborative governance suggests that symbolic representation does not ensure genuine participation; institutions must create opportunities for affected groups to influence decisions (Ansell et al., 2020). In the present study, empowerment is therefore assessed through the capacity of the service system to connect needs assessment, skills support, appropriate financing, market access, and follow-up. This is an interpretative framework for assessing programme design and available evidence, not an assertion that a causal effect on household welfare has already been statistically demonstrated.

RESEARCH METHODS

The article adopts a descriptive qualitative approach using a focused reanalysis of a 2026 master's thesis concerning migrant-worker services in East Java. The source thesis describes in-depth interviews, field observations, and the examination of organisational and programme documents. The categories of informants identified in the study include BP3MI personnel, labour-related agencies, local cooperatives and microenterprise offices, financial-sector partners, community organisations, and returnee migrant workers. The supplied thesis file does not allow the final number of interviewees or complete interview transcripts to be verified. Consequently, this article does not introduce respondent counts or direct quotations that cannot be traced to an auditable source.

The unit of analysis is the *post-return empowerment service pathway*. Evidence concerning entrepreneurship training, business groups, financing support, market connections, beneficiary participation, and programme follow-up was organised by stage of service provision. These categories were considered in relation to the multidimensional reintegration framework of the International Organization for Migration (2019), relevant empirical studies, and the 2025 empowerment regulation. As a separate documentary check,

the stated scope of the cooperation agreement between BP2MI and Bank Jatim, announced on 12 September 2024, was examined using the bank's published institutional account (Bank Jatim, 2024). This additional check helps distinguish documented financial-service arrangements from claims that would require beneficiary-level verification.

Analysis proceeded through data condensation, thematic matrix construction, and interpretation and cross-checking of conclusions, following established qualitative research principles (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The tables report qualitative syntheses rather than statistics or newly collected survey findings. This study is limited by its single-case design, the absence of longitudinal earnings or enterprise-survival records, and possible differences in institutional actors' perceptions. For these reasons, *improved welfare* is treated as a policy objective, not as an empirically established impact of the empowerment programme. The proposed indicators and service model should be tested with primary follow-up data before their effectiveness is claimed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of Support Identified in the Case

The thesis describes an empowerment ecosystem involving BP3MI East Java, labour offices, local cooperatives and small-enterprise agencies, Bank Jatim, returnee communities, civil society organisations, and training partners. Reported activities include entrepreneurship training, support for business groups, introductions to financial services, and initiatives connected with local employment opportunities. Their presence in the case material indicates that returnee assistance is pursued across institutional boundaries. However, the available information does not establish what proportion of returnees received each service, how many enterprises resulted, or whether beneficiaries maintained businesses after programme activities ended. Accordingly, these accounts provide evidence of programme activity rather than measured economic impact.

Each participant in the service network possesses distinct capacities. BP3MI can connect institutions and provide migration-related information; cooperatives and small-enterprise offices can offer business-development instruments; financial institutions assess credit applications; and community organisations can help make information accessible to returnees. Complementarity is an important potential strength. Yet it can become a source of discontinuity when no referral arrangement connects an initial needs assessment to the eventual completion of support. Table 1 maps the documented service stages against the limits of the available evidence. The key public management issue is not simply the number of participating agencies but whether beneficiaries can navigate the responsibilities that connect them.

Table 1. Post-return empowerment services and limits of the available evidence

Service stage	Finding reported in the thesis	Evidence limitation
Needs assessment	BP3MI and local agencies maintain different information sources	Beneficiary data integration not quantified

Training and business groups	Training and group formation activities are reported	Participant totals and competencies not verified
Financial services	Banking partnerships are discussed	The 2024 KUR document concerns prospective workers
Market support	Cooperatives and enterprise offices may provide assistance	Market outcomes are not reported
Follow-up mentoring	Community groups and agencies have supporting roles	Enterprise survival data are unavailable

Source: Authors' qualitative synthesis, 2026

The Gap Between Training and Enterprise Sustainability

Training is among the most visible and easily reported forms of empowerment. The source thesis identifies entrepreneurship courses as an intermediate product of interagency cooperation. Nevertheless, training completion and the ability to operate a sustainable business are distinct outcomes. Participants must convert new knowledge into viable business plans, reliable supplies, financial records, marketing practices, and decisions that fit local demand. The findings of Mardhotillah and Sofhani (2024) on social capital and institutional support reinforce the importance of examining mentoring and business assistance after the training event rather than treating the number of sessions as a measure of livelihood success.

The case material also indicates limited systematic reporting of subsequent beneficiary outcomes. It does not present a verified time series showing how many businesses were launched, how many remained active after six or twelve months, or whether household income and resilience changed. This article therefore does not claim that the programme has increased returnees' incomes. The evidence gap is itself an administrative concern: an organisation may demonstrate that its activities were delivered without being able to establish whether its empowerment objectives were achieved. Table 2 proposes outcome-oriented indicators that could address this weakness. These are suggested measures, not statistics derived from a completed evaluation.

Table 2. Proposed indicators for evaluating post-return empowerment

Dimension	Suggested indicator	Verification approach
Coverage	Unique returnees registered and served	Linked beneficiary and service records
Service fit	Share referred according to assessed needs	Assessment and referral documentation
Enterprise finance	Decisions on eligible returnee business loans	Consent-based lending records
Economic continuity	Businesses active at 6 and 12 months	Follow-up cohorts and business verification
Inclusion	Beneficiary suggestions acted upon	Meeting records and response tracking

Source: Authors' qualitative synthesis, 2026

Financial Access: Distinguishing Placement Credit from Post-Return Enterprise Finance

Limited capital is repeatedly presented in the thesis as a challenge for returnees wishing to mobilise their skills and savings. Bank Jatim is accordingly considered a potentially relevant institutional partner. A review of the bank's official announcement dated 12 September 2024, however, indicates that its agreement with BP2MI specifically concerned the use and exchange of data for subsidised credit (KUR) associated with *prospective migrant-worker placement*. The document addresses applications and verification procedures for placement-related financing; it does not demonstrate the disbursement of enterprise-development loans to workers who have already returned (Bank Jatim, 2024).

Distinguishing these financing objectives is necessary for evidence-based recommendations. Placement credit may address the cost of going abroad, while productive investment after return requires eligibility assessment, enterprise risk appraisal, financial-management support, and access to markets. Both needs occur within the broader migration cycle, but they are not interchangeable measures of public service performance. Statements in the thesis about easier financing after return should be interpreted as field accounts requiring corroboration from banking products, loan criteria, borrower numbers, and documented use by returnees. The available records do not permit a reliable estimate of business-credit access among returnee workers. An integrated service model must therefore specify a verified referral route rather than assume that a placement-finance agreement automatically resolves the post-return capital gap.

Returnee Participation and Holistic Reintegration Services

The thesis suggests that programme coordination is more established among implementing organisations than between those organisations and returnee communities. Beneficiaries do not consistently appear to have equivalent opportunities to shape training needs, select appropriate assistance, or provide feedback on administrative barriers. A programme designed principally around available departmental budgets may fail to respond to the diversity of beneficiaries' circumstances. Some returnees already operate enterprises and require market expansion, whereas others need basic skills development or assistance finding local employment. A responsive service pathway should begin with these differences rather than presuming that entrepreneurship is the preferred or feasible choice for everyone.

Effective reintegration also entails social and psychosocial support. The International Organization for Migration (2019) and Pratama et al. (2025) identify the interrelationship between livelihoods, families, and community ties. In East Java, community organisations may help to identify needs, support social adjustment, and follow up on access barriers. Nevertheless, the source thesis does not provide independent measurements of psychosocial recovery or of the effects of such assistance. Psychosocial support is therefore identified here as a relevant dimension to incorporate and evaluate, rather than as a proven programme achievement. This distinction helps avoid conflating desirable service characteristics with demonstrated results.

A Continuity-of-Service Model for Post-Return Empowerment

Synthesising the findings yields the five-stage continuity-of-service model presented in Figure 1. The first stage registers beneficiaries and assesses their goals and needs with their participation. The second offers differentiated pathways for entrepreneurship, competency

development, or local employment. The third provides referrals to appropriate and verified financing instruments, with all credit decisions remaining under the authority of the financial institution. The fourth connects enterprise-oriented beneficiaries with markets, licensing assistance, and cooperative networks. The fifth maintains mentoring and periodic assessment of livelihood outcomes. These stages represent a proposed administrative design derived from the identified service gaps, not a complete operational system demonstrated to exist in East Java.

Implementing the model requires clear institutional accountability. BP3MI could provide data coordination and referral services; local governments could designate responsible service units; financial partners could transparently communicate credit requirements and outcomes; and returnee associations could assess accessibility and programme relevance. Ministerial Regulation No. 33 of 2025 provides a policy basis for registration, needs identification, and economic and social empowerment (Ministry of Migrant Worker Protection, 2025). Operational implementation would nonetheless require agreed procedures, personal-data safeguards, funding arrangements, and service standards that can be monitored. The proposed model thus adds an accountability dimension to programmes that have often been assessed primarily through the activities delivered by each organisation.

The theoretical implication is that returnee empowerment barriers arise not only from limited individual capabilities or financial capital but also from breaks in the public service chain. From a public administration perspective, service quality depends on whether institutions jointly help people resolve needs that cross organisational boundaries. This contribution differs from local stakeholder-role analyses such as Mindarti et al. (2025) by foregrounding the continuity of services and the evidence needed to demonstrate post-return results. The model invites further studies to follow beneficiary trajectories from assessment through actual service receipt and enterprise conditions twelve months later. Its value lies in providing a testable service architecture rather than overstating an unverified outcome.

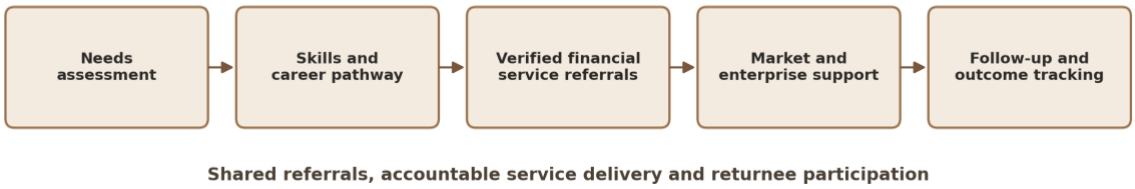


Figure 1. Proposed service-continuity framework for the empowerment of returnee migrant workers

Source: Authors' synthesis, 2026

CONCLUSION

Empowerment initiatives for returnee Indonesian migrant workers in East Java involve an interorganisational network and reported services such as entrepreneurship training, business-group support, community assistance, and financial-service referrals. Yet the available case evidence does not sufficiently establish continuity between these activities and measurable reintegration outcomes. The principal concerns are fragmented programme coordination, uneven beneficiary participation, and a lack of longitudinal records on enterprises and income. Documentary verification also demonstrates that Bank Jatim's 2024 placement-credit arrangement should not be cited as proof of enterprise finance disbursed to

returnees. These findings underscore the importance of distinguishing administrative activity from documented service access and sustainable livelihood change.

The article contributes a continuity-of-service framework linking beneficiary assessment, differentiated skills pathways, verified financial access, market connections, and sustained mentoring. It provides a basis for clarifying referrals between BP3MI and local government while proposing indicators centred on returnee experiences and outcomes. The interpretation remains constrained by its single-case setting, descriptive data without a verified beneficiary count, and the absence of impact measurements. Future research should longitudinally track returnee cohorts, compare conditions before and after support, and meaningfully engage beneficiaries in the design and assessment of reintegration services. Such evidence would help determine whether an integrated public service approach improves sustainable reintegration in practice.

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