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Labour on the Net

As the Indonesian labour movement increasingly churns without booming, Indonesian labour issues are getting sustained scholarly study internationally after decades of languishing. Here is a very small sample of English-language studies available online.

Heavy stuff

So many scholars in numerous countries have done solid work.

Work by Michele Ford (full disclosure, Deputy Chair of the IRIP Board and a member of Inside Indonesia's editing committee) exhibits particular breadth and depth. You might start with her thesis,

NGO as Outside Intellectual: A History of Non-Governmental Organisations' Role in the Indonesian Labour Movement (2003)

(<http://www.library.uow.edu.au/adt-NWU/uploads/approved/adt-NWU20040324.163022/public/02Whole.pdf>),

then work backward from *Accountable to Whom: Trade Unions, Labour NGOs and the Question of Accountability in Indonesia* (2005)

(http://www.cityu.edu.hk/searc/WP81_05_Ford.pdf),

Economic Unionism and Labour's Poor Performance in Indonesia's 1999 and 2004 Elections (<http://airaanz.econ.usyd.edu.au/papers/Ford.pdf>),

and *Indonesian Women as Export Commodity: Notes from Tanjung Pinang* (2001) (<http://eprints.anu.edu.au/archive/00002113/01/2-5-mford.pdf>).

American Teri Caraway's recent dissertation, *Engendering Industrialization: The Feminization of Factory Work in Indonesia*, may be purchased from Dissertation Express (http://www.umi.com/products_umi/dissertations/disexpress.shtml).

Chris Manning, head of the legendary Indonesia Project at ANU,

prepared the ILO report, *The Economic Crisis and Child Labour in Indonesia*

(<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/publ/policy/papers/indonesia/indonesia.pdf>).

From Singapore, prolific Indonesian researcher at ISEAS Aris Ananta has given us

The Impact of Migration Status on Household Financial Resilience

during the Indonesian Crisis (<http://www.iseas.edu.sg/sc12001.pdf>).

A major compendium by Indonesian authors is

Labour Migration in Indonesia: Policies and Practices, originally a

Gadjah Mada University 1998 workshop

(links to full-text of all chapters at <http://www.unesco.org/most/apmrlabo.htm>).

Read Graeme Hugo's global benchmark *Indonesia's Labor Looks Abroad*

(<http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=53>).

See Amarjit Kaur's regional analysis, *Workers, Employment Relations, and Labour Standards in Industrialising Southeast Asia*

(<http://coombs.anu.edu.au/ASAA/conference/proceedings/Kaur-A2-ASAA2004.pdf>).
For an historical overview of Indonesian workers specifically in Malaysia, read her *Mobility, Labour Mobilisation and Border Controls: Indonesian Labour Migration to Malaysia since 1900* (2004)
(<http://coombs.anu.edu.au/ASAA/conference/proceedings/Kaur-A-ASAA2004.pdf>).

Outrage

Human Rights Watch has produced a related major series of controversial reports, *Maid to Order: Ending Abuses Against Migrant Domestic Workers in Singapore* (<http://hrw.org/reports/2005/singapore1205>), *Help Wanted: Abuses against Female Migrant Domestic Workers in Indonesia and Malaysia* (<http://hrw.org/reports/2004/indonesia0704>), *Always on Call: Abuse and Exploitation of Child Domestic Workers in Indonesia* (<http://hrw.org/reports/2005/indonesia0605>), and *Bad Dreams: Exploitation and Abuse of Migrant Workers in Saudi Arabia* (<http://hrw.org/reports/2004/saudi0704>).

You can also read Rachel Silvey's timely contemporary analyses, *Transnational Domestication. State Power and Indonesian Migrant Women in Saudi Arabia* (<http://www.iisg.nl/~clara/publicat/clara17.doc>) and *Spaces of Protest: Gendered Migration, Social Networks, and Labor Activism in West Java, Indonesia* (<http://www.colorado.edu/ibs/POP/silvey/pubs/SpacesofProtest.final.pdf>).

Dark history

Workers' struggles in Indonesia have a dark, tragic history. A prospective study by Vedi Hadiz, a prolific Indonesian writer on labor issues, appeared as *Reformasi Total: Labor After Suharto* (<http://cip.cornell.edu/Dienst/UI/1.0/Summarize/seap.indo/1106954801> , access for subscribers to the journal *Indonesia* only). Moving backward in time, for a cogent review of the rise in worker opposition toward the end of the New Order, see Akiko Kodama's *The Participation of Women Workers in the Indonesian Labor Opposition Movement in the 1990s* (<http://www.hawaii.edu/cseas/pubs/explore/v3/akiko.html>). Specific accounts of martyred labor activist Marsinah (<http://www.asia-pacific-action.org/southeastasia/indonesia/publications/doss1/marsinah.htm>) and still struggling Dita Sari (<http://www.asia-pacific-action.org/southeastasia/indonesia/publications/ditasari/ditasari.htm>) have grown into popular lore of the brutal Soeharto era.

The story of SOBSI, the strongest labor union in Indonesian history, figures in many print accounts of the PKI during the Soekarno years. View over 300 pages from the free Google Book Search

(<http://books.google.com/books?q=sobsi&btnG=Search+Books&hl=en> -- Google may ask you sign in if you don't yet have a free 'account').
Going still further back in history, the CLARA (Changing Labour Relations in Asia) project at the International Institute of Social History in the Netherlands has made available its working papers (see <http://www.iisg.nl/~clara/clarawp.htm>), including a half dozen on Indonesian labor spanning the Dutch colonial period, the Japanese occupation, and independence eras.

Current situation

Through a new create-your-own-search engine tool called a searchroll, it is now fairly easy to keep up with everything connected with labor in Indonesia today. Using the Rollyo site, I created a searchroll called Indonesian Press consisting of 25 major Indonesian print media sources. Go to http://rollyo.com/apakabar/indonesian_press and type in a word or two-- any person, place or thing which might bring up stories about labor.

Current news stories appear at the top of the display. Hit the heading Latest Searchroll News Results to see them all. You can also view all stories which have ever appeared on the Web from any of the 25 sources by clicking on its name in the left sidebar.

For a start, try simple search words like worker, labor, labour, buruh, pekerja, karyawan, petani, tenaga kerja, upah, pengangguran, pabrik, and mogok. These will then lead you to other words for particular labor organizations and leaders, contentious officials and government institutions, and, not least, troublesome companies which you can input in further searches. Fascinating!