

## Epilogue

As of writing this epilogue, I am reading Stiglitz's (2004) *Globalisation and Its Discontents* in my cosy apartment in New Taipei City—on the outskirts of Taipei City, Taiwan. Stiglitz argues the importance of sequencing and timing. The Nobel Prize-winning economist notes one of the major policy mistakes performed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in the twentieth century was overlooking the importance of sequencing and timing when applying national and regional policies and interventions. While these national and regional policymaking outputs were supposed to raise the quality of life and national competitiveness of the Global South, very often any improper sequenced policy implementation would counter-discourage developing countries from reaching economic growth and social development.

I am thinking about the importance of sequencing and timing when curbing Indonesia's sex work. It is noteworthy that Indonesia's parliament passed the criminal code against the practice of extramarital sex upon the end of the global public crisis of Coronavirus. While I don't think the timing of passing such a criminal code was intentionally designed (as Indonesia had endeavoured to pass such a code for years), criminalizing extramarital sex soon after the declaration of the end of a pandemic could be beneficial to Indonesia's crackdowns on prostitution and sex trafficking. Owing to the economic downturns caused by the pandemic, Indonesia experienced a budget deficit of 3.0 per cent and 2.4 per cent in 2021 and 2022, respectively. However, upon the end of the public health crisis, the IMF (2023) forecasts that Indonesia will enjoy a 5.0 per cent national economic growth in 2023. These figures presented by the IMF demonstrate that Indonesia is recovering well from the economic downturns and repositions itself on the trajectory to reach more economic success ahead.

Under the climate of positive national economic development, more foreign and domestic investments are plausibly recorded, more job opportunities are created, unemployment rates fall, the availability of public funds that can be used for implementing social protection and pro-poor policies increases, and fewer underprivileged women and children in Indonesia shall experience transitorily or chronically financial hardships. With improved and improving economic climates, the Indonesian government has to take this golden opportunity, upon passing the anti-extramarital sex law, to socio-economically empower more disadvantaged women and children. Such cohorts have to be able to gain access to a fairer share of job, education or vocational training opportunities in order to keep them socially engaged and facilitate their enjoyment of the benefits of human investment.

Institutional reform has to be incorporated into Indonesian policymaking development simultaneously. I already mentioned four times that with the practice of corruption in Indonesia's law enforcement, justice and political mechanisms, more public funds that are supposed to be distributed to underprivileged cohorts are stripped by government officials. The Indonesian government has to champion for a higher degree of transparency and accountability shared among political leaders and law enforcement authorities. Without sufficient transparency and accountability, not only are the efficiency and consistency of the crackdowns on the sex industry hampered, but Indonesia fails to understand clearly how extramarital sex criminalization has progressed. Therefore, heightening the levels of transparency and accountability is the foundation to help Indonesia enhance the desirability and efficiency of its policymaking outputs.

So long as the institutional gaps in curbing sex work are addressed more adequately, Indonesia should tighten its frontline operations, such as applying more regular police raids and online surveillance against any form of cyber-sex crime. As mentioned, with more effective and consistently tightened law enforcement outputs, organized sex crime groups and sex tourists have to assume higher costs if they violate the relevant laws and regulations by expressing criminality. As such, they are discouraged from being involved in sexual transactions, child or adult pornographic production and sex trafficking activities. By then, a shrinking sex trade market can foreseeably be attained in Indonesia.

This book analyses how prostitution is never a stand-alone problem. Prostitution, sex trafficking, poverty, socio-economic inequality, gender inequality, racism, sexism, poor governance, corruption and sex tourism are all interrelated and interdependent within and beyond Indonesian

contexts. That is why cracking down on the sex industry is never as simple as criminalizing commercial sex. Indonesia has to strategically and systematically crack down on the underlying unequal power relations by addressing the socio-economic and institutional root causes of prostitution in proper sequencing and timing. So long as the unequal power structure is disrupted and cracked down, Indonesia can, then, realize the development of a more sustainable, liveable and equitable habitat for its population.

### **References**

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- Stiglitz, J. 2004. *Globalisation and Its Discontents*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.