

Legal Protection for Workers in Gorontalo: Towards a Civilized Justice System

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Abstrak (Indonesia)	Penelitian ini mengkaji perlindungan hukum bagi tenaga kerja di Provinsi Gorontalo, dengan fokus pada sektor informal yang mendominasi struktur ketenagakerjaan daerah. Data menunjukkan bahwa hingga Agustus 2024, sebanyak 61,45% angkatan kerja bekerja di sektor informal dengan pendapatan rata-rata Rp1.608.048 per bulan, lebih rendah dari UMP Gorontalo dan rata-rata nasional. Rendahnya akses terhadap skema jaminan sosial seperti BPJS, minimnya pendidikan hukum, serta lemahnya pengawasan ketenagakerjaan akibat keterbatasan personel dan anggaran memperparah kerentanan pekerja, terutama perempuan yang menghadapi ketimpangan upah hingga 23%. Upaya pemerintah daerah seperti program PBI dan perlindungan tenaga kerja non-ASN menunjukkan kemajuan, namun masih jauh dari menjangkau seluruh populasi pekerja rentan. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya reformulasi kebijakan berbasis keadilan substantif, dengan mengintegrasikan aspek gender, perlindungan sosial, dan penegakan hukum yang efektif. Tujuannya adalah membangun sistem ketenagakerjaan yang berkeadaban dan inklusif, sesuai prinsip-prinsip negara hukum yang melindungi martabat dan hak asasi setiap pekerja.
Abstrack	<i>This study examines legal protection for workers in Gorontalo Province, focusing on the informal sector that dominates the regional employment structure. Data shows that until August 2024, as many as 61.45% of the workforce works in the informal sector with an average income of IDR 1,608,048 per month, lower than the Gorontalo UMP and the national average. Low access to social security schemes such as BPJS, lack of legal education, and weak labor supervision due to limited personnel and budgets exacerbate the vulnerability of workers, especially women who face wage inequality of up to 23%. Local government efforts such as the PBI program and the protection of non-ASN workers show progress, but they are still far from reaching the entire vulnerable worker population. This research emphasizes the importance of substantive justice-based policy reformulation, by integrating aspects of gender, social protection, and effective law enforcement. The goal is to build a civilized and inclusive labor system, in accordance with the principles of the rule of law that protect the dignity and human rights of every worker.</i>
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I. INTRODUCTION

Labor is a vital asset in national development. Their existence not only supports the production sector, but also becomes an indicator of welfare and social justice in a country¹. Within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, the protection of labor has gained strong legitimacy in various laws and regulations, ranging from the 1945 Constitution, the Manpower Law, to other implementing regulations². However, the reality in various regions shows that legal protection for workers is still far from expectations, including in Gorontalo Province. The province, which is known for its customary philosophy of "Adat Bersendikan Syara', Syara' Bersendikan Kitabullah³", faces serious challenges in ensuring fair and civilized legal protection for workers, especially those working in the informal sector, female workers, and daily laborers spread across rural and urban areas.

Legal protection in the context of employment concerns not only guarantees of workers' basic rights⁴, such as minimum wage, social security, occupational safety and health, but also includes aspects of distributive justice, power relations between employers and workers, and access to fair and speedy⁵ settlement of labor disputes. Unfortunately, in local contexts such as Gorontalo, this protection is often nominal, formalistic, and does not touch the needs and realities of workers' lives in the field. The gap between ideal law and practice in society raises complex problems, ranging from the uncertainty of employment status, weak labor supervision, to the existence of informal workers who are not yet protected in the national legal system.

¹ Catur J. S. et al., "Legal Protection of Worker Welfare through Law Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation," *Lex Specialis* 1, no. 2 (2020): 178.

² Ujang Charda, "Reformasi Politik Hukum Ketenagakerjaan Dalam Kebijakan Pemerintah Indonesia," *Jurnal Wawasan Hukum* 31, no. 2 (2014): 121–53, <http://ejournal.sthb.ac.id/index.php/jwy/article/view/79%0Ahttp://ejournal.sthb.ac.id/index.php/jwy/article/download/79/61>.

³ Dian Bakti Setiawan and Neneng Oktarina, "Institutionalization of the Traditional Philosophy of Basandi Syara', Syara' Basandi Kitabullah in the Institutional Structure of Nagari as the Lowest Governing Unit in West Sumatra," *UNES Journal of Suara Justisia* 6, no. 4 (2023): 547, <https://doi.org/10.31933/ujsj.v6i4.300>.

⁴ Tiberius Zaluchu Sinaga, Niru Anita, "Legal Protection of Workers' Rights in Employment Relations in Indonesia," *Journal of Industrial Technology* 6, no. 1 (2017): 56.

⁵ Agus Mulya Karsona et al., "Perspectives on Labor Dispute Resolution through Industrial Relations Courts in the Face of the Asean Economic Community," *Journal of the Padjadjaran Legal Axis* 1, no. 2 (2020): 158–71, <https://doi.org/10.23920/jphp.v1i2.225>.

This situation is exacerbated by the low legal awareness of the working community of their rights, the lack of strengthening of labor supervision institutions at the regional level, and the lack of a sensitive approach to the local socio-cultural context in formulating labor policies. Gorontalo as one of the regions with a growing economic growth rate⁶, shows the paradox of development on the one hand infrastructure development and investment continue to be encouraged, but on the other hand social inequality and injustice to the workforce still take place. In Gorontalo society, the dominant workforce comes from the informal sector such as farm laborers, fishermen, builders, and day laborers in the service sector, often in vulnerable positions. They don't have a written employment agreement, don't get employment social security, and often don't get fair treatment when disputes occur. This shows that general national regulations have not been able to answer the specific needs of local communities. Therefore, a contextual and civilized approach is important to be developed.

The concept of civilized justice refers to efforts to present a legal system that is not only normatively just, but also humane, inclusive, and respects cultural values and local religiosity⁷. In the context of Gorontalo, this approach is important because the society has a distinctive value system, namely a combination of positive laws, customary values, and Islamic teachings. Thus, the development of a fair labor law system must pay attention to these local peculiarities so as not to get caught up in legal formalism that actually distances the law from its own society.

The importance of integrating local values into the labor protection system is also in line with the spirit of regional autonomy and legal decentralization. The local government has the authority to form regional regulations that are in accordance with the needs and characteristics of their regions, as long as they do not conflict with higher regulations⁸. This is where the opportunity is to build a more responsive and humane labor justice system. For example, through regional regulations or regional head regulations that encourage the protection of informal

⁶ Yolanda Pateda, Vecky A.J. Masinambow, and Tri Oldy Rotinsulu, "The Influence of Investment, Economic Growth and Government Spending on Poverty Levels in Gorontalo," *Journal of Regional Economic and Financial Development* 19, no. 3 (2019): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.35794/jpek.d.16455.19.3.2017>.

⁷ Anisa Ananda et al., "Islamic Education as a Pillar of Social Harmony and Legal Justice in a Multicultural Society," *Al I'tibar: Journal of Islamic Education*, 12, no. 2 (2025): 148–57.

⁸ Regulation Making et al., "The Binding Power of Harmonization and Facilitation in the Formation of Provincial Regional Regulations," *Journal of Policy Research and Development* 19, no. 1 (2025): 35–52.

workers, the provision of legal aid for workers, and the establishment of community-based labor mediation forums⁹.

However, building civilized legal justice is certainly not enough with a normative approach alone¹⁰. A sociological, anthropological, and participatory approach is needed so that the policies produced truly reflect the reality and expectations of the working community¹¹. This research tries to answer the fundamental question: to what extent has legal protection for workers in Gorontalo been realized? What are the forms of legal and structural inequality faced by workers, especially in the informal sector? And how to formulate a civilized protection concept in the local context of Gorontalo?

Various previous studies have discussed the issue of legal protection for workers, but most of them still focus on the national level or big cities in Indonesia. This research offers a new approach by highlighting in particular the conditions of workers in the Gorontalo region, an area that has distinctive socio-cultural, economic, and political dynamics. Using a juridical-sociological approach, this paper not only analyzes the normative aspects of labor law protection, but also pays attention to social practices and structural challenges faced by workers in their daily lives.

In addition, this introduction also highlights the importance of non-discriminatory legal protection for vulnerable groups such as working women, persons with disabilities, and child laborers that are still found in various informal sectors in Gorontalo. Protection of them is not only a matter of compliance with national and international law, but also of respect for human rights and the responsibility of the state in ensuring a decent life for every citizen.

Normatively, labor protection in Indonesia has been guaranteed in various legal instruments, such as Law No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower, Law No. 11 of 2020 on Job Creation and its derivative regulations, as well as ratification of a number of international conventions such as ILO Convention No. 87 on

⁹ Paulus Israwan S Tasroh, "Deliberative Governance in the Formulation of Labor Protection Policies in Banyumas," *JAP Journal of Public Administration* VIII, no. 118 (2022): 57–63.

¹⁰ Raisha Rahmadewi; Nadhif TanzilHaika IHarahap; Rian Hidayatulloh GarudaNusantara, "Philosophy of Law and Social Justice: A Theoretical Analysis of the Role of Law in Realizing Community Welfare," *Nusantara: Journal of Education, Arts, Science and Social Humanities* 5, no. 1 (2025): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.11111/nusantara.xxxxxxx>.

¹¹ Wulan Suhariati and Binti Maunah, "The Sociological and Anthropological Basics of Education," *WIDYA DIDAKTIKA - Scientific Journal of Education* 3, no. 1 (2024): 77–84, <https://doi.org/10.54840/juwita.v3i1.260>.

Freedom of Association and ILO Convention No. 98 on the Right to Collective¹² Bargaining. However, implementation in the field often encounters many obstacles, especially in terms of supervision, law enforcement, and limited access to justice. Gorontalo is no exception in this regard.

Various cases that have emerged in Gorontalo such as non-payment of wages according to the provisions, unilateral dismissal without compensation, and the exploitation of women's labor, show the weak legal protection system available¹³. Local media reports and the results of investigations by non-governmental organizations show that the protections that should be carried out by local governments have not been maximized. In some cases, workers don't know where to report when facing violations of their rights, or are reluctant to report for fear of losing their jobs.

This problem of legal protection is also inseparable from the lack of capacity and number of labor supervisors in the regions¹⁴. Data from the Gorontalo Provincial Manpower Office shows that the ratio of supervisors to the number of companies and workers is very uneven¹⁵. In addition, many entrepreneurs do not understand or even ignore the provisions of labor law for reasons of efficiency or limited capital. This shows that the aspect of education and coaching to business actors is also an important part of building a civilized labor protection system.

Legal civilisation also means that the law must be able to balance the rights and obligations of the parties fairly. In the context of industrial relations, legal justice is reflected when workers get protection for their rights, while employers are also not overburdened that can interfere with business sustainability. Therefore, the employment law system must be able to be a fair bridge between

¹² Shafira Khairunnisa, Agus Pramono, and Sonhaji, "The introduction of new regulations to promote gender protection and equality in the world of work is an important step towards creating a fair and inclusive work environment. Efforts to strengthen gender equality are also reflected in cooperation between PEME," *Law and Justice* 5 (2016): 1–13, <https://ejournal3.undip.ac.id/index.php/dlr/article/view/10960/10629>.

¹³ News, "Tangled Ropes in Workers' Wage Payments, DPRD Prepares Further Mediation.," 2025, <https://gorontalo.totabuan.news/terkini/tali-kusut-pembayaran-upah-pekerja-dprd-siapkan-mediasi-lanjutan/%0A%0A>.

¹⁴ Prokopim of the Pohuwato Regency Secretariat, "Deputy Regent Iwan Adam: Labor Protection Must Be a Priority." Prokopim Pohuwato, June 30, 2025, <https://prokopim.pohuwatokab.go.id/berita/bacaberita/4565/wakil-bupati-iwan-adam-perlindungan-tenaga-kerja-harus-jadi-prioritas>.

¹⁵ Condro S Riyadi and Mutia C H Thalib, "Guarantee of Legal Protection for Occupational Health and Safety for Construction Workers," *Journal of Legality* 13, no. 2 (2022): 82–96.

the interests of labor and employers. This is where the role of the state becomes crucial as a guarantor of justice and a regulator of industrial relations.

Thus, legal protection for workers in Gorontalo cannot be seen as a purely sectoral issue, but is an integral part of fair and sustainable regional development. Equitable development requires recognition and respect for workers' rights, as well as a law system that is responsive, participatory, and based on local values. It is within this framework that this research will contribute to strengthening the theoretical and practical basis to realize legal justice for the workforce in Gorontalo in accordance with the character of the local community and culture.

II. METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study is a juridical-sociological approach¹⁶, which is an approach that views law not only as a set of normative rules, but also as a social phenomenon that lives in society¹⁷. This approach is relevant to be used to examine the effectiveness of legal protection for workers in Gorontalo because it is able to capture the reality of legal practices that occur in the field¹⁸. In this case, the law is understood in the context of social interaction between labor, employers, and local government institutions, as well as local cultural values that also influence the implementation of labor law. This research is non-doctrinal (empirical),¹⁹ focusing on the implementation of employment law in society and the gap between written legal norms and social reality²⁰. Therefore, this approach was chosen in order to produce a more contextual and in-depth analysis, especially related to civilized labor practices in Gorontalo.

¹⁶ Saharuddin et al., "Tayade System Land Rights: The Concept of Unification of Customary Law and Indonesian Positive Law," *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 1430, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/1430/1/012005>.

¹⁷ Muhammad Ilham Arisaputra Saharuddin, Andi Suryaman M. Pide, Yunus Wahid, "Legal Construction of Land Rights Transfer Under the Indigenous System (Tayade) in Gorontalo in Relation To The Principle Of Horizontal Separation," *Russian Law Journal* XI, no. 5 (2023): 3033–39.

¹⁸ Saharuddin Sahar et al., "Transfer of Land Rights in the Tayade System," *Petita: Journal of Legal and Sharia Studies* 10, no. 1 (2025): 195–210, <https://doi.org/10.22373/petita.v10i1.412>.

¹⁹ andi azizah Hastia, "From Clicks to Contracts: Legal Considerations in Online Sale and Purchase Agreements," *Indonesian Civil Law Review (ICLR)* 1, no. 1 (2025): 37–52.

²⁰ Ilham, "Law Enforcement Against Gorontalo City Police Area Gambling Crime In," *Indonesian Civil Law Review (ICLR)* 1, no. 1 (2025): 1–17, <https://ejurnal.mgpublishing.co.id/index.php/iclr/article/view/1/4>.

The data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data²¹. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with workers in the formal and informal sectors²², local entrepreneurs, officials of the Manpower Office at the provincial and district/city levels, and civil society organizations engaged in labor advocacy. In addition, field observations were also carried out to see firsthand the working conditions and interaction between workers and employers. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from literature studies²³, including relevant laws and regulations, scientific journals, previous research reports, and regional policy documents. All data collected were then analyzed qualitatively using descriptive-analytical techniques, namely explaining and interpreting the legal and social facts found to answer the research problems in a complete and systematic manner.

III. LEGAL PROTECTION FOR WORKERS IN GORONTALO: HAS IT BEEN REALIZED

Legal protection for workers is one of the important indicators of the state's alignment with the welfare of the people. In the context of employment, legal protection not only includes the fulfillment of workers' basic rights, but also ensures justice in industrial relations, work safety, legal certainty in employment relations, and fair and speedy settlement of labor disputes. At the national level, the legal framework has been outlined in various regulations such as Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower, Law Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation and its derivative rules, and various ILO conventions that have been ratified. However, the realization of this legal protection is not uniform throughout Indonesia, including in Gorontalo Province. The fundamental question that needs to be asked is: to what extent has such legal protection been realized in Gorontalo?

Formally, the local government of Gorontalo Province has adopted and implemented various labor regulations that apply nationally. The Gorontalo

²¹ Irmawati Nasadi and Suhartin I Akdaji, "The Dynamics of Marriage in the Modern Era : Between Tradition and State Law," *Indonesian Civil Law Review (ICLR)* 1, no. 1 (2025): 69–83.

²² Eril Boli and Muh Nur Hidayat M, "Agrarian Law Reform in Indonesia : Between Legal Certainty and Social Justice," *Indonesian Civil Law Review (ICLR)* 1, no. 1 (2025): 53–68, <https://ejournal.mgpublishing.co.id/index.php/iclr/article/view/5/6>.

²³ Nurul Fadhillah, "Perspectives on Criminal Law and Its Enforcement Against the Crime of Cockfighting Gambling in Pohuwato Regency," *Indonesian Civil Law Review (ICLR)* 1, no. 1 (2025): 18–36.

Provincial Manpower and Transmigration Office also has a number of coaching and supervision programs for the implementation of employment relations, skills training for workers, and the provision of mediation services for labor dispute resolution. In recent years, there have also been efforts to increase the socialization of labor regulations, including counseling on the rights and obligations of workers and employers. However, these measures are still not sufficient to ensure the implementation of comprehensive and equitable legal protection, especially in the informal sector and rural areas.

One of the main challenges in labor protection in Gorontalo is the dominance of the informal sector which absorbs the majority of the workforce. Informal sectors such as farm laborers, fishermen, small traders, builders, and domestic workers generally have no formal employment relationships, are not bound by written employment agreements, and do not have access to employment social security programs. In these conditions, the basic rights of labor become very vulnerable to being ignored. Field research shows that most workers in this sector are unaware of the legal regulations that protect them, let alone access to dispute resolution mechanisms or social protection from the state. This shows that although normative regulations are available, their implementation is still very weak and does not touch the most vulnerable groups.

On the other hand, workers in the formal sector still face various forms of rights violations, such as paying wages below the Provincial Minimum Wage (UMP), unilateral termination of employment without severance pay, and excessive workload without adequate occupational safety and health protection. In several cases that occurred in the service and trade sector in Gorontalo City, it was known that the company did not comply with the provisions of working hours and did not provide health and employment insurance to contract and part-time workers. When workers try to voice their objections, they often face threats of termination or other repressive actions. The weak labor bargaining position is caused by the absence of active trade unions, as well as the lack of legal assistance from the government or NGOs.

In terms of supervision, the capacity of the Manpower Office in Gorontalo is also still limited. The ratio of the number of labor supervisors to the number of companies or workplaces is very unbalanced. As a result, many labor violations are not detected or are not followed up optimally. In addition, supervision tends

to be administrative and has not touched on substantial aspects of fair employment relations. The mediation process is often formalistic and does not reach workers from marginalized groups. Not to mention bureaucratic problems and a lack of budget that cause legal protection to be slow, ineffective, and far from justice.

The ideal legal protection should not only be based on laws and regulations, but also take into account the cultural and social values that develop in the region. In the context of Gorontalo, where the community still upholds customary values and the principles of Islamic justice, a civilized legal approach is very important to be applied. Unfortunately, existing regulations have not fully accommodated these local values. There are still few regional policies that integrate the customary principles and cultural values of the Gorontalo people in developing employment protection strategies. For example, the principle of social justice in Gorontalo customs, which upholds fair treatment of all members of the community, has not been concretely adopted in regional labor policies.

In practice, a number of alternative efforts have been made by civil society organizations and academics in Gorontalo to increase awareness of labor law. Several worker rights training programs, community-based legal counseling, and assistance in resolving labor disputes began to grow. However, the scale of this initiative is still limited and has not been fully supported by formal local government policies. For this reason, synergy is needed between the government, academics, entrepreneurs, and civil society in building an effective and civilized legal protection system. Local governments must play the role of facilitators and regulators who not only implement national regulations, but are also able to formulate regional policies that are sensitive to local conditions and worker needs.

One concrete example that can be developed is the establishment of a regional tripartite forum that actively involves representatives of workers, employers, and the government in formulating and evaluating labor policies. This forum can also be a more participatory and inclusive community-based mediation tool. On the other hand, it is also important to encourage the formation of trade unions at the company and community level, especially for informal workers, so that they have a forum to fight for their rights collectively. Increasing the capacity of supervisory apparatus, providing labor legal assistance services, and digitizing

employment complaint services are also strategic steps that can strengthen legal protection in the regions.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that legal protection for workers in Gorontalo is still in the implementation stage that is not optimal. Although normatively regulations have been available and several government programs have been implemented, major challenges still exist in the form of weak supervision, lack of legal awareness of workers, dominance of the informal sector that has not been reached by law, and lack of approaches based on local values. Therefore, to realize a fair and civilized protection system, it is necessary to reformulate labor policies at the regional level that are more responsive, participatory, and contextual. True legal protection not only guarantees the existence of workers in the law, but also glorifies their dignity as human beings who contribute to the progress of the region and nation.

A. Dominance of the Informal Workforce and Vulnerable Protection

The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Gorontalo Province noted that as of August 2024, as many as 388,459 people, or around 61.45% of the total labor force in this area, work in the informal sector, including self-employed workers, irregular workers, family workers, and freelancers. In contrast, formal workers only amounted to 243,725 people (38.55 %).²⁴ This shows that the majority of workers in Gorontalo live from economic activities that do not have formal employment legal guarantees.

The average income of informal workers in Gorontalo Province is recorded at only around Rp 1,608,048 per month, which is far below the national average of Rp 1,964,000 to Rp 2,000,000 in many regions and even below the Gorontalo Provincial Minimum Wage (UMP).²⁵ This low income clearly reflects structural injustice in informal labor relations that are vulnerable to poverty because they do not receive legal protections such as work safety, severance pay, and social security.

²⁴ Superman. Solihin, "A total of 388,459 Gorontalo residents work in informal activities," 2024, <https://gorontalo.antaranews.com/berita/281785/sebanyak-388459-penduduk-gorontalo-bekerja-kegiatan-informal>.

²⁵ BPS Gorontalo, "Official Data of UMP Gorontalo" (Gorontalo, 2023), https://www.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/3/VVhCTlptdExibkpyV25WM2NFNWFxa3czVDFvdmR6MDkjMw%3D%3D/rata-rata-pendapatan-bersih-sebulan-pekerja-informal-sup-1--sup--menurut-provinsi-dan-lapangan-pekerjaan-utama--rupiah---2022.html?year=2022&utm_source=chatgpt.com.

B. Regulatory Gaps and Implementation in the Field

Normatively, the Job Creation Law and the Manpower Law have indeed guaranteed the basic principles of labor protection, but applications in the field are still weak, especially in the informal sector due to three main obstacles:

1. **The limitations of Supervision and Law Enforcement** The Manpower Office in Gorontalo is still burdened by a lack of personnel and budget for supervision, especially in villages and remote areas. Supervision tends to be administrative, and mediation is often formalistic so that many violations are not detected or acted upon effectively²⁶.
2. **Limited Access to Legal Education and Social Protection** Many informal workers are unaware of their rights and are not registered in protection schemes such as BPJS Employment or Health. Although the contribution assistance program (PBI) for extreme poor informal workers has been promoted (around 10,000 informal workers are registered until November 2024), the coverage is still far from a real need. In addition, access to legal training and education is still limited, especially for women and older workers working in the informal sector²⁷.
3. **Gender Inequality and Social Burden** Research shows that female informal workers face wage inequality up to 23% lower than men, work more than 40 hours/week, while also taking full responsibility for household affairs. This combination of conditions underscores the structural vulnerability faced by women informal workers in Gorontalo.

C. Local Government Efforts: Uneven and Limited Scale

Although there are concrete steps from the Gorontalo City government through the Mayor's Regulation and cooperation with BPJS Ketenagakerjaan, the scope of the social security program is still limited to the extreme poor informal worker group. The program has been in place since 2019 and has provided accident and death protection to ~10,000 workers until November 2024. However, this

²⁶ Weny Almoravid Dunga and Abdul Hamid Tome, "Identification of Factors Inhibiting the Implementation of Employment Supervision in Gorontalo Province," *Jambura Law Review* 1, no. 1 (2019): 1, <https://doi.org/10.33756/jalrev.v1i1.1605>.

²⁷ Hulondalo.id, "Gorontalo City Strengthens Social Protection for Low-Income Informal Workers." 2024, <https://www.hulondalo.id/news/96413944612/kota-gorontalo-perkuat-perlindungan-sosial-bagi-pekerja-informal-berpenghasilan-rendah.%0A%0A>.

number is only a small part of the total ~388 thousand informal workers. This means that most of them are out of reach of the formal social security system.

Although there has been an increase in non-ASN BPJS participants to 19,647 people (2023), this number is still far from covering all informal workers²⁸. Flexible workers, the gig economy, and the agricultural or fisheries sector in rural areas still have minimal access to protection.

D. Formalistic Legal Structure

The low consistency of local regulations is an important factor in legal inequality. Many regions have not drafted local-based labor regulations or modified national regulations to suit the Gorontalo context. This weakens the principle of civilized law, because formal regulations do not differentiate between local conditions, even though the Syar' culture is a combination of the Kitabullah and local customs and demands a humane legal approach.

Legal awareness of informal communities is also low. Insight into the Labor Law, the complaint process, labor rights, and the role of labor unions is still very limited. The lack of local advocacy institutions makes workers vulnerable to exploitation, often without knowing where to report.

E. Challenges of the Global Economy and Gig Economy

The gig economy is starting to grow in Gorontalo along with digitalization but without clear regulations. Globally, the gig economy is vulnerable due to lack of protection and unstable incomes. If this phenomenon grows without local regulation, the uncertainty of informal workers will widen, undermining the value of the rule of law.

F. Wage Gap and UMP Allocation

Although the UMP of Gorontalo Province is determined, informal workers generally receive wages below this standard. Minutes from BPS (2024) show that the average informal worker in the province earns Rp 1,608,048, while a decent

²⁸ 60detik.com, "Gorontalo City Government Protects Workers with BPJS Ketenagakerjaan," 2024, https://60detik.com/pemkot-gorontalo-lindungi-tenaga-kerja-dengan-bpjs-ketenagakerjaan/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

standard of living according to BPS is above Rp 1 million per month. This shows a large gap between formal employment policies and the reality on the ground²⁹.

G. Social Impact and Sustainable Disparities

Structural inequality in the informal sector results in increased poverty, job insecurity, and gender injustice. Female workers are particularly trapped in a "double work" scenario without access to maternity leave or pension guarantees. On the other hand, male non-permanent workers are also vulnerable to being dismissed without severance pay or social security security.

This phenomenon shows that although national regulations already exist, their implementation in the regions cannot guarantee fair distribution and access to protection. The state seems to be present only symbolically, while the reality of workers remains destitute of rights.

IV. THE REALIZATION OF LEGAL PROTECTION FOR WORKERS IN GORONTALO: TOWARDS A CIVILIZED JUSTICE SYSTEM

In Gorontalo, the dominance of informal sector workers is very real. They include farm laborers, fishermen, small traders, builders, and domestic workers. This group generally has no permanent employment relationship, is not protected by employment contracts, and is often outside the scope of labor supervision. When rights violations occur such as work accidents, unpaid wages, or unilateral terminations, these groups do not have adequate access to legal justice. Therefore, talking about legal protection in Gorontalo cannot be separated from efforts to improve the structural system and expand the scope of protection for these informal groups.

So far, one form of legal protection that has begun to touch vulnerable groups of workers is through the employment social security program. This program is organized by BPJS Employment with the aim of providing protection in terms of work accidents, death, old age, and job loss. The Gorontalo Provincial Government, together with the district/city government, has taken a progressive step by making the APBD a source of contribution subsidies for low-income

²⁹ BPS Gorontalo, "Data Resmi UMP Gorontalo."

informal workers. This is a tangible manifestation of the principle of distributive justice and the state's partiality to the weak.

However, data shows that this protection is still uneven. In Gorontalo City, through Mayor Regulation (Perwako) No. 13 of 2019, as many as 10,000 informal workers have been registered as participants in BPJS Ketenagakerjaan. This is a good achievement at the city level. But in other districts such as North Gorontalo, the coverage of protection only reaches about 31 percent of the target population of informal workers. At the provincial level, the overall coverage has only touched 60 percent. This shows that there is still a huge gap between the potential workforce that must be protected and the realization on the ground.

In addition to the social security aspect, other legal protections, such as labor supervision and the existence of trade unions, are also weak. The number of labor supervisors is very limited compared to the size of the area and the number of small companies and informal sector workers scattered. On the other hand, unions have not developed massively, especially in the non-formal sector. This causes workers to have no representation in fighting for their rights, both in terms of labor negotiations and when conflicts occur.

In many cases, workers do not understand their rights due to low legal literacy. They are also often reluctant to report for fear of losing their jobs. This shows that legal protection is not only a regulatory issue, but also closely related to structural and cultural aspects. Therefore, a civilized legal system in Gorontalo must be able to reach this social reality, by strengthening institutions, expanding legal education, and building an approach based on local values such as justice, solidarity, and partiality to the weak.

To strengthen this argument, the following is presented data and supporting tables showing the labor conditions and legal protections that have been implemented in Gorontalo Province.

Table 1. Composition of Formal and Informal Workers in Gorontalo Province (2024)

Category	Number of People	Percentage (%)
Formal Workers	243,725	38.55%
Informal Workers	388,459	61.45%
Total Labor Force	632,184	100%

Source: BPS Gorontalo Province, August 2024 – gorontalo.antaranews.com

This **Table.1** shows that of the total labor force in Gorontalo Province of 632,184 people, the majority work in the informal sector, namely 388,459 people or 61.45%, while those who work in the formal sector are only 243,725 people or 38.55%. This indicates that most of the workforce in Gorontalo is not yet formally protected, as the informal sector generally does not involve written employment agreements, does not have social security, and is not included in employment supervision. The dominance of the informal sector is a major challenge in building an inclusive and fair legal protection system.

Table 2. BPJS Employment Membership Coverage (2023–2024)

Region	Target Vulnerable Workers	BPJS Employment Participants	Coverage (%)	Source of Support
Gorontalo Province	466,368	254,675	54.61%	Provincial Budget (APBD)
Gorontalo City	30,000 (estimated)	17,168	±57%	Mayor Regulation No. 13/2019
North Gorontalo Regency	28,000	5,211	31%	MoU between BPJS and Local Government
Bone Bolango Regency	20,000	20,000	100%	Bone Bolango Regional Budget (APBD)

Source: 2024 research results

This table explains the achievement of BPJS Ketenagakerjaan membership at the provincial level and several districts/cities in Gorontalo. In general, Gorontalo Province only covers 54.61% of the total vulnerable workers, indicating a gap in employment social security coverage coverage.

1. The city of Gorontalo is already relatively good, thanks to Perwako No. 13 of 2019 which explicitly regulates the protection of informal workers through the APBD.
2. North Gorontalo Regency is one of the regions with the lowest achievement (31%), showing the need for education and advanced programs to expand coverage.
3. Bone Bolango is an exemplary area, because it has succeeded in protecting all vulnerable workers (100%) through the full support of the district government.

This table confirms that local initiatives and regional policy support have a significant impact on the level of labor protection, especially in the informal sector.

Table 3. Average Wage vs UMP in Gorontalo (2024–2025)

Category	Value (IDR)
Average Income of Non-Wage Workers (BPU)	±1,600,000
Gorontalo Provincial Minimum Wage (2025)	3,220,000
Minimum Cost of Living	±2,400,000

Source: BPS Gorontalo Province (estimated 2024)

This table shows the income disparity between informal sector workers and the standard of living outlined by the government through the Provincial Minimum Wage (UMP).

1. The average income of informal workers in Gorontalo is only around IDR 1.6 million, far below the 2025 UMP of IDR 3.22 million.
2. The Minimum Living Needs (KHM) in Gorontalo is estimated at Rp 2.4 million, meaning that many informal workers live below

Legal protection for workers is an essential part of a fair, civilized, and humane labor system. In the context of Gorontalo Province, the discussion of legal protection for workers cannot be separated from the local economic structure dominated by the informal sector as well as from complex structural, cultural, and institutional challenges. Realizing civilized justice in labor protection requires an integration between positive legal approaches, local values, and substantive justice that truly touches the social reality of society.

Most of the workforce in Gorontalo works in the informal sector. Based on BPS data in 2024, around 61.45% of the total workforce is in this sector. They consist of farmers, fishermen, street vendors, construction workers, online motorcycle taxi drivers, and domestic workers. This group generally does not have formal employment relationships, written contracts, or adequate social protections. The dominance of this informal sector shows a large gap between the ideals of the labor law protection system and the reality faced by the majority

of workers in Gorontalo. In the framework of civilized justice, this becomes a starting point for reflection: whether the law is present and protects the weakest

Civilized justice is not just about presenting laws in the form of normative rules, but ensuring that the law can be reached, understood, and benefited by all circles, especially marginalized groups. In this case, informal sector workers in Gorontalo need inclusive legal protection, which is able to reach them in a real social and economic context. This means that a regulatory approach alone is not enough; The presence of the state and local governments is needed in the form of affirmative policies, legal counseling, institutional strengthening, and active social participation.

Several efforts have been made by the local government in Gorontalo in responding to these challenges. One of them is through the BPJS Employment membership expansion program which targets informal sector workers. Gorontalo City, for example, has allocated a budget from the APBD to finance BPJS contributions for thousands of vulnerable workers. This shows concrete efforts in bringing social justice through social security instruments. However, this success has not been evenly distributed in all districts/cities in Gorontalo. There are areas where the coverage of protection is still below 40%, showing inequality in the implementation and commitment of local policies.

The expansion of social security coverage not only has an impact on economic protection, but also on the recognition of the existence and dignity of workers. In the perspective of civilization, social security is a form of state recognition of the work and contribution of each individual in development. Therefore, every worker, whether formal or informal, is entitled to fair legal protection. When this protection has not reached the majority of informal workers, then the inequality is a reflection of structural injustices that must be addressed immediately.

Institutional strengthening is also an important part of realizing civilized justice. The Manpower Office, BPJS Ketenagakerjaan, and employment supervision devices in the regions need to be strengthened in terms of capacity, number of personnel, and competence. In addition, strengthening trade unions, especially in the informal sector, must be an important agenda. So far, informal workers have not had a strong collective representation to fight for their rights.

Unions can be an effective channel for advocacy, social dialogue, and peaceful dispute resolution.

It is also important to build legal literacy and collective awareness among workers. Many workers are unaware of their basic rights as workers, do not understand legal procedures, and feel they do not have access to justice. In this case, community-based legal counseling is the right strategy. This approach not only introduces the law in a normative form, but also builds critical awareness and solidarity among workers. Civilized legal counseling must use simple language, involve community leaders, and integrate local values that live in the community.

Gorontalo Customs, which are based on the principle of "Custom of Shari', Shari', Kitabullah" provides a moral and cultural foundation for the development of civilized law. In this context, law is not just an administrative tool, but a part of social values that uphold the justice, humanity, and honor of every individual. Therefore, every employment policy in Gorontalo must refer to these values. For example, in drafting Regional Regulations or labor protection policies, customary and Islamic values can be used as an ethical and moral basis to strengthen legitimacy and social acceptance.

Civilized justice also requires the presence of a dispute resolution mechanism that is easily accessible, fast, and fair. Many cases of employment disputes, especially in the informal sector, do not make it to the courts or formal institutions due to various barriers, such as cost, ignorance of procedures, or fear of social repercussions. Therefore, community-based mediation institutions, village deliberations, or legally recognized informal dispute resolution forums can be alternative solutions. This approach is in line with the spirit of restorative justice that values dialogue, reconciliation, and the restoration of social relationships.

On the other hand, the role of the state as a protector of citizens must be strengthened. It is not enough for the central and local governments to make regulations, but also to be actively present through intervention, supervision, and responsive public service programs. State and local budgets should be directed to support labor protection programs, such as social security subsidies, job training,

legal aid, and economic empowerment. Justice will not be realized without real partiality to vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Furthermore, civilized justice in employment requires synergy between various parties: the government, civil society, the business world, academia, and the media. This multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential to create a healthy and equitable employment ecosystem. The business world should be encouraged to adopt decent work practices, the government should provide incentives for law-abiding companies, and the media should raise employment issues as part of public advocacy. Academics and research institutions can also contribute through studies and policy recommendations based on data and field realities.

Thus, realizing civilized justice in legal protection for workers in Gorontalo is not an easy task, but it is very possible to achieve it if it is built on mutual commitment, a holistic approach, and awareness of the importance of human values in the law. Labor protection is not only an administrative or legalistic issue, but a reflection of the civilization of a society in respecting work, life, and human dignity.

V. CONCLUSION

Legal protection for workers in Gorontalo, especially those in the informal sector, still faces complex challenges both structurally, institutionally, and culturally. Civilized justice demands that the law not only be present in the form of norms, but can also reach and protect vulnerable groups of workers. Although there are positive initiatives, such as the BPJS Employment program which is financed through the APBD and community legal counseling, its implementation has not been evenly distributed throughout the region and has not fully touched the root of the problem. Therefore, the labor law protection system in Gorontalo needs to be strengthened systemically with an approach that upholds human values, local wisdom, and community participation.

As a suggestion, local governments need to adopt affirmative policies that are more inclusive and collaborative in protecting informal workers, through adequate budget allocation, capacity building of supervisory institutions, and strengthening community-based unions. The legal approach must also synergize with Gorontalo's local values that prioritize social justice and human honor. In addition, multi-stakeholder engagement including academia, business, and the

media must be optimized to create a fair, humane, and sustainable employment ecosystem towards the creation of a truly civilized legal system.

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