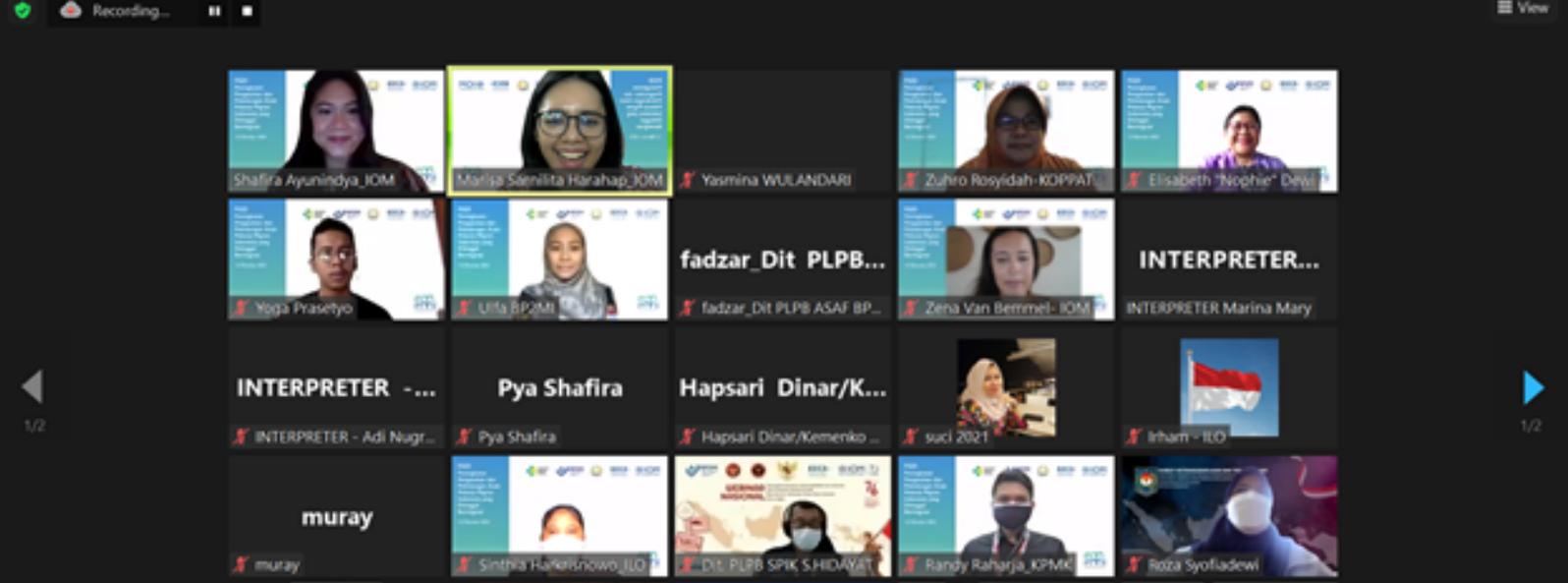


FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION ON ENHANCING THE CARE AND PROTECTION OF THE INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS' CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND



**SUMMARY
DOCUMENT**



Multi-stakeholder virtual FGD on 12 October 2021, source: IOM, 2021. Source: International Organization for Migration

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The child's perspective is still rarely considered by migrants choosing to migrate. Survey results conducted by the Ministry of Women and Empowerment (KPPPA)¹ on Indonesian Migrant Workers who migrated abroad and those who will work abroad indicate that most of these workers do not understand children's rights or pay special attention to the preparedness of children's mental and physical aspects. Children are often left without being asked about their opinions on the situation and are not involved in the decision-making process when one or both parents work as migrant workers.

The COVID-19 pandemic stands to exacerbate the situation as many returning migrant workers face sudden losses of jobs and reduced family income, which stands to push millions of children into poverty, with long-term effects on their health, welfare, and educational outcomes.

A study by UNICEF Indonesia and the Indonesian Ministry of Finance indicates that without temporary expansion of the social protection system, average child poverty might rise by 14% during this crisis.² At the same time, migrant workers stranded in destination countries are more likely to face difficulties in maintaining communication with their children given the uncertain conditions of the pandemic, in addition to factors of distance and cost.

In response, International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been in coordination with government and non-government partners to ensure the inclusion of Indonesian migrant workers households in the country's COVID-19 preparedness and response. With the support from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) through the implementation of the project "Empowerment of Indonesian Migrant Workers and Strengthening Capacities at Points of Entry" (PMPMI), IOM is working with its key counterparts to support the community of Indonesian migrant workers for the care and protection of children left behind amidst and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic through capacity development and direct support.

1 Keynote speech from Ir.Lies Rosdianty, Asdep Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Perempuan, Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak (KPPPA), Desember 2015.
 2 Ringkasan Kebijakan Dampak COVID-19 terhadap Kemiskinan dan Mobilitas Anak di Indonesia, Kementerian Keuangan and UNICEF, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/indonesia/media/8461/file/Dampak%20COVID-19%20terhadap%20kemiskinan%20dan%20mobilitas%20anak%20di%20Indonesia.pdf>

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

On 12 October 2021, a focus group discussion (FGD) was organized by IOM to generate views on Enhancing the Care and Protection of the Indonesian Migrant Workers' Children Left Behind. The FGD was undertaken to: (1) understand the general and specific situation of Indonesian migrant workers' children; (2) identify challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned from all parties related to the fulfillment of the rights and protection of Indonesian migrant workers' children; (3) collect information, suggestions, and inputs related to the next steps in an effort to fulfill the rights and protection of children, especially in responding to the current COVID-19 situation.

Prior to the discussion, presentations were delivered by two keynote speakers who presented on the migrant-centered and evidence-based perspective. The first speaker was Ms. Elisabeth Dewi, Ph.D., a lecturer and the head of International Relations Department from Parahyangan Catholic University (UNPAR), on “The Dynamics of Gender Relations on Indonesian Migrant Workers' Migration Journey and the Impact on the Wellbeing and Protection of the Migrant Workers Children”, who was followed by Mr. Yoga Prasetyo, an independent researcher, who presented on “Migrant Workers' Children Experiences and Resilience.”

Thirty-seven (women: 26; male: 11) representatives from various backgrounds participated in the FGD. They consisted of representatives from the government, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs), the private sector, and community members involved in the issue of Indonesian migrant workers and their children.

The attendees were asked to participate in the discussion and share their knowledge, highlighting examples of good practices, implementation gaps and challenges, as well as their awareness and opinions about the care for migrant workers' children left behind. The results of the discussion were to be used as a basis to support the formulation of appropriate responses and initiatives within the PMPMI Project.



Presentation from Ms. Dewi
Source: IOM 2021.



Participants during the virtual FGD on 12 October 2021
Source: IOM, 2021.

GENDER DYNAMICS

Some of the intertwining issues faced by children of migrant workers left behind cannot be disconnected from the prevailing norms of gender inequality and the concept of motherhood in the country, which mostly rests the parenting role to the women in the family. As explained by Ms. Dewi, an expert from the International Relations Department of Parahyangan Catholic University who has been observing this issue for about 14 years, “Most women who migrate do it for the sake of the family and not for their self-fulfilment, however they often become stigmatized for leaving their family and children behind.”

Furthermore, through her presentation, Ms. Dewi explained the “motherhood” dilemma, which primarily occurs to women migrant domestic workers, whereby they often have to rear others’ children, while having to leave theirs away at home. This often leads to challenges in bearing the double burden both as a primary caregiver in the family and the breadwinner. At the same time, gender stereotypes that still prevail within the society, such as on the traditional gender role of men in the family, impedes their involvement as also the primary caregiver of their children. Thus, when women migrate for work, leaving their family at home, gaps in children nurturing and care remain as a significant challenge.

In his presentation, Mr. Yoga Prasetyo emphasized the systemic factors that further tangle the issue, such as discriminatory regulations and laws in countries of destination that would not allow low-wage migrant workers to give birth while in destination countries and/or allow them to bring their families to the country. Thus, it is critically important for legal frameworks and regulations in countries of destination and origin to consider the wellbeing of migrant workers’ children and take part in resolving the issue.

Women migrant workers during economic reintegration activity
Source: IOM, 2018





Children in local communities participated in educational activities conducted
Source: IOM, 2018

ISSUES FACED BY CHILDREN

While improving economic livelihoods has often been the primary reason people migrate internally and internationally, an important consequence of this includes family separation where children are left behind from their parents over extended periods of time. Many children are left behind when they are at their critical developmental age (since birth – 3 years old). Although children aged 11-14 or above are considered old enough to express their feelings and views, in many cases they are also having limitation or have no say to influence the decision on parental migration.

Participants of the FGD also raised the issue of the absence of one or both parents, which negatively impacts the psychological, social, and educational aspects of migrant workers' children. These children are at greater risk of facing various types of abuse and violence, such as sexual abuse, exploitation, and child marriage, as well as behavioral issues, including drug use.

They stand vulnerable to be taken advantage of due to their vulnerabilities from feeling sad, isolated, and lonely.

The feelings of abandonment and emotional stress may also negatively affect their overall development and wellbeing. As alternative caregivers are often not equipped or prepared to nurture migrant workers' children, they cannot provide proper parenting and adequate attention and care. Some children who are lacking the attention and care have their psychological state impacted and leading to deviant behaviors, which then lead to stigmatization and stereotyping of children left behind. A study conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2018 reveals there is lack of motivation to pursue education due to the lack of support rendered to them, and the growing aspiration to follow their parents' footsteps in migration.³

Lack of relevant, accurate, and comparable data also proved a huge obstacle to intervene and provide assistance in supporting the needs and protection for migrant workers children left behind. The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) estimated there are 11.2 million children left behind by migrant workers, however, this number may be underreported. There is no national mechanism to track and identify the number and situation of migrant workers' children left behind. The overall impact on the absence of viable data has resulted in limited attention in analysis and discussions on this issue.

³ Anak Pekerja Migran Perempuan dan Tantangan Bonus Demografi, Pusat Penelitian dan Pengembangan Kesejahteraan Sosial, Badan Pendidikan, Penelitian, dan Penyuluhan Sosial, Kementerian Sosial Republik Indonesia, 2018.

EXACERBATED RISKS FACED DURING COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic creates more vulnerabilities to people on the move and those who are considered as marginalized groups – this would also include migrant workers and their children. Through the FGD, participants were able to identify increasing challenges faced by migrant workers and children left behind. These include:

1

Blockage in sending remittances home in addition to the excess needs resulted by COVID-19, such as extra internet quotas to support children's online education at home - these may add additional burden borne by caregivers and hinder children's access to education and services



2

Higher prevalence of physical, psychological, and sexual violence to children left behind compounded with the lack of access to services during the pandemic.

3

In West Nusa Tenggara, civil society organizations and the government observed an increasing prevalence of child marriage and trafficking among children left behind by their migrant parents.

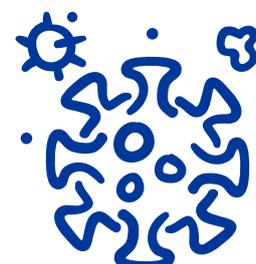


4

Loss of jobs and livelihoods of alternative caregivers also pose risks for children to fall into situations of child labor.

5

Further health risks faced by children left behind- studies have shown that children left behind are more vulnerable to nutritional health issue and stunting. COVID-19 response and recovery measures should pay special attention to their risks and efforts that could protect them better from the virus.



RECOMMENDATION

There have been several good practices and initiatives already implemented by government and non-government actors which were identified through the FGD held. These include:

Immediate

- Sensitization to teachers at school to provide special support for children of migrant workers and build good rapport with migrant parents and alternative caregivers
- Village level initiatives that involve all community members, especially men, in providing collaborative care and parenting to children of migrant workers
- Supporting migrant parents to build good communication with all stakeholders involved (teachers, neighbors, alternative caregivers, village government)
- Involvement of local influencers, community leaders, and community groups to promote the collaborative parenting approach
- Adoption of parenting modules to be rolled out at the community level in migrant workers sending areas/villages

Medium

- Utilization of village funds to support programming on the care and protection of children of migrant workers
- Day care center or children education center initiated at the village level for children of migrant workers
- Include parental planning as part of the migration planning and decision-making processes of making for migrant workers
- To include the data of children left behind by migrant workers into the data collection system on Indonesian migrant workers

Long-term

- Gender sensitization training to prevent gender stereotyping, as to ensure equal responsibility between the men and women in taking care and supporting their children
- Promotion of child sensitive policies and regulations in the labour migration governance, both in countries of destination and origin

REFERENCES TO MORE LINKS AND RESEARCH REPORTS

[Anak Pekerja Migran Perempuan dan Tantangan Bonus Demografi](#), Pusat Penelitian dan Pengembangan Kesejahteraan Sosial, Badan Pendidikan, Penelitian, dan Penyuluhan Sosial, Kementerian Sosial Republik Indonesia, 2018. Retrieved from: [18478caf3123a6f5e110366ec76fbf03.pdf](https://kemsos.go.id/18478caf3123a6f5e110366ec76fbf03.pdf) (kemsos.go.id)

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