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UNIVERSITAS
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PUSKAPA
CENTER ON CHILD PROTECTION & WELLBEING

#A Fair Chance For All Children

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN INDONESIAN CITIES



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STUDY OVERVIEW

The number of children in urban areas in Indonesia has continued to increase. Despite the fact that children in urban areas fare better on several measures of well-being compared to those in rural areas, marginalized groups still fail to survive and thrive. Access to services and opportunities for a better quality of life in cities are limited for the urban poor and vulnerable, of which children and young people account for almost a third. This study explores children's and young people's characteristics, well-being, and lived experiences, providing a critical foundation for policy and programming to turn the myth of urban opportunity into a reality for all children and young people, particularly those who are marginalized.

This study combines a quantitative overview of the leading indicators of well-being among children and young people in cities, with a qualitative, in-depth understanding of how daily life is perceived and experienced by the urban young. The quantitative analysis has predominantly employed existing national data sets, such as The National Socioeconomic Survey (SUSENAS) and the Indonesia Demographic and Health Survey (IDHS), to understand the situation of children in urban settings. The secondary analysis assessed approximately 20 indicators that are based on the SDG/Sustainable Development Goal themes, and that align with the Indonesian National Medium-Term Development Plan 2020–2024. The combination of secondary analysis, a systematic literature review, and consultations with children and young people generated insights on the constraints and opportunities faced by them and their broader urban communities.

KEY FINDINGS

Although some vulnerabilities are shared by urban and rural children and young people, they may manifest differently. Findings from this study demonstrate that

challenges for them often present opportunities; the two are not mutually exclusive. The gap between urban and rural outcomes might be partially explained by differing official definitions and classifications of urban and rural areas.

The main findings around the challenges and opportunities faced by children living in urban areas are presented by age group, gender, urban/rural comparison, and socioeconomic background, when possible.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- » SUSENAS 2019 data shows that there is little variation across the different urban/rural, urban slum, rural slum categories for smoking among adolescents. In contrast, in terms of birth weight and immunization, children in rural slums are consistently worse off.
- » The analysis of IDHS data indicates that the mortality rate is generally higher for children under 5 years old compared to other age groups, and also for this age group in rural areas, though this rate has decreased from 2012 to 2017.
- » Based on the consultations with young people in urban areas, some indifferences towards understanding and adherence to health protocols seem to relate to misunderstandings about the COVID-19 pandemic. A few participants shared that they doubted the magnitude and impact of the virus and the pandemic, and this belief appears to be also widespread in their communities.
- » Although some shared their doubts, the pandemic has created an environment of uncertainty and anxiety for children and young people in cities who participated in this study.

EDUCATION AND LEARNING

- » Overall, children in urban areas performed better on all education indicators compared to those children in rural areas, and children living in slum households in rural areas appeared to be most lacking in access to schooling and the Internet.
- » Children and young people who participated in the study also struggle to adapt to online learning modes in which they often cannot interact directly and smoothly with their teachers and peers.
- » Although urban areas generally perform better than rural areas on many indicators related to education and learning, some children and young people in cities are still struggling to attain a proper education.

PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE

- » Birth certificate ownership among children has increased over the years, in both rural and urban areas.
- » Although child marriage appears to have fallen slightly between 2015 and 2019 in rural areas, the practice has remained stable in urban areas.
- » In urban areas, the prevalence of child marriage is higher among children living in slum households, compared to children living in non-slum households.

ACCESS TO WATER AND SANITATION

- » Between 2015 and 2019, the share of children living in households with improved water declined. However, this could be explained by an increase in the use of branded packaged water and the practice of taking domestic containers to be refilled, which are two sources not included in the definition of improved water provided by Statistics Indonesia (BPS).
- » In contrast, access to improved sanitation appears to have increased between 2015 and 2019 in both urban and rural areas.
- » Access to improved sanitation remains a significantly greater issue in rural areas.

POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION

- » Child poverty rates – defined as either the percentage of children living below the poverty line, or as belonging to the bottom 40 per cent of the income distribution of households – are lower in Indonesian urban areas, compared to rural areas.

- » Although cities exhibit a lower proportion of impoverished children compared to rural areas, urban poverty remains a problem in cities across Indonesia.
- » The majority of consultation informants reported receiving support from at least one type of social assistance programme during the pandemic.

SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE SPACE

- » Some young people who participated in the consultations have mentioned that natural and human-made hazards, such as floods, drought and fire are commonly experienced.
- » The existence of slums is a symptom of the lack of affordable and adequate housing in cities. The young people in the consultation are very much aware of this issue and voice their concerns about their current and future housing situation.
- » While land reclamation brings new economic opportunities, it also increases the risk of eviction for people who live nearby. Eviction is not only prompted by massive physical or infrastructural development, but also by projects to mitigate flooding.

PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

- » Young people participating in the consultations regard community activities as a part of urban social interaction and a common platform for youth engagement.
- » The participants also explore the various formal avenues for public engagement that are dedicated to them, such as the Child Forum or the intraschool students' organization (OSIS). They also express a desire for a more inclusive and innovative platform that can reach more young people from different backgrounds including the most vulnerable and hard to reach.

DISCUSSIONS

By looking at vulnerabilities across three categories (inequality of access and opportunities, unresponsive systems, and marginalization), this study helps to show how these challenges and opportunities intersect and influence children's lives, as presented below.

- » Secondary data analysis suggests that, on average, children in urban areas fare better than those in rural areas, though the situation in rural areas has been slowly improving.

- » Nevertheless, the well-being of certain groups of children in the cities has been shown, by several indicators, to be compromised.
- » Children in urban areas may not face many barriers when accessing basic services, due to the relatively well-established nature of the infrastructure. However, children here could face challenges in meaningfully utilizing, or benefiting from, such services.
- » Regardless of their urban or rural residential status, children and young people experience external threats to their well-being. This may occur in the form of natural hazards and environmental risks, or in the form of violence and discrimination.
- » Opportunities, experience, and ability to participate in daily decision-making at home or in the public sphere, may contribute to children and young people's agency in urban areas. This study finds a multitude of ways for children and young people to form and express their views in order to influence plans and decisions affecting their lives. This includes their engagement in school and community activities.
- » This study observes how the COVID-19 pandemic intensified existing vulnerabilities experienced by urban children and young people and, consequently, how this puts such populations at greater risk of not surviving the COVID-19 pandemic.
- » Measuring the impact of vulnerabilities, including gender-related ones, on urban children and young people is beyond the scope of this study. However, the secondary literature and the consultations with children and young people offer insights into how a lack of access to services, poverty, isolation, exclusion, marginalization and unresponsive systems and services may have an impact on their well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the analysed literature and the researchers' own knowledge, this report offers recommendations and reflections for programme priorities. In general, city governments and their partners should work collaboratively to ensure access to high quality health care, education, nutrition, civil registration, social support and basic infrastructure services for those who are most vulnerable, regardless of their socioeconomic status, gender, religion, ethnicity or other social identities. The question is always how to prioritize.

Given the significant role of legal identity documents in facilitating access to public services in modernized cities, this study suggests urban areas should



continue improving the civil registration and vital statistics system that registers everyone from birth and uses the data to improve services. There is also a need to explore research collaborations with capital cities or among cities within mega-urban areas to better understand the situation of vulnerable populations, which include children living in out-of-household settings. Furthermore, city governments and their partners should implement a comprehensive child protection and welfare model for urban areas, which provides the most vulnerable population access to social protection, family support and specialized child protection services. Lastly, city governments and their partners should support inclusive participation and civic engagement.

For policymakers and other stakeholders, this study also suggests overarching recommendations that may be prioritized, such as improving the quality of services, providing urban infrastructure and enabling meaningful youth participation and civic engagement. Further dialogues about the study's findings with policymakers and relevant stakeholders is suggested to explore possible solutions.

