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Oral Presentation

The Challenges of Child Protection Social Worker in Indonesia

Abstract

Since 2009 the Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs; through the Directorate of Child Welfare, has been implementing a conditional cash transfer program targeting disadvantaged children from poor households in 6 clusters namely under 5 neglected children, above 5 neglected children, street children, children with disabilities, children in need for special protection, and children in conflict with the law . The program integrates three core elements: transfer of cash, care and social services through social worker's and community based child-care institutions assistance.

This qualitative study analyzed the challenges faced by social workers who worked with children in need for special protection and children in conflict with the law clusters of PKSA. Additionally, this study lays out recommendations to inform practice and policy changes. Data were collected from 14 social workers, child protection institution representatives, the recipients of PKSA and their parents, and local government officers in 4 districts of Surakarta, Magelang, East Jakarta, and Makassar through In-Depth Interviews and Focused Group Discussions in late 2014. Some interviews were also conducted with the representatives of the Directorate of Child Welfare.

The study found that social workers played sound roles in the program. They were the 'backbone' of the program and they mainly contributed to better utilization of basic social services, enhanced the children's and families' behaviors, and improved the well-being of the children. Nevertheless, most social workers reported their struggles in three major areas. Firstly, issues in professional competence and support due to the lack of knowledge, trainings, standard of practice and supervision; secondly, limited job security as indicated by

the absence of tenure, the absence of health insurance, and payment irregularity; thirdly, the lack of professional acknowledgment from other professionals.

Parts of those challenges were rooted in limitations of program design, the lack of coordination between central and local governments, weak advocacy for social workers as well as inadequate links with social work education institutions. The study highlights the necessities to develop social work professional development policy, improvement of social work education curriculum, and enhancement of synergy between local and national development.

Keywords: *child protection, social work competence, job-related factors, social work education and training*

Introduction

The safety and well-being of some Indonesian children are threatened by the lack of welfare and protection. The Ministry of Social Affairs (2011) suggested that approximately 4.3 million children who were categorized as neglected children, street children, children in conflict with the law, children with disability, and children who need special protection (i.e. child abuse, children living with HIV/AIDS).

According to UNICEF (2006:1), child protection covers a wide range of responses to protect the children from violence, exploitation and other harmful practices. It includes “preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children – including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage [.....]children who are uniquely vulnerable to these abuses, such as when living without parental care, in conflict with the law and in armed conflict”.

Effective child protection is crucial in guaranteeing that children’s safety and well-being are guaranteed. Child protection is a special field of social work practice that involves efforts to make sure the needs and welfare of vulnerable children are taken care of. In many developed countries, social workers are the established core of professionals involved in child protection (Barack et al, 2001; Whitaker, 2012). In developing countries, social work is a relatively new profession to be involved in child welfare/ protection.