The COVID-19 pandemic has created major challenges for countries and individuals around the entire world. However for children – a vulnerable group that already faces significant threats to their safety and well-being – the pandemic is sharply increasing these risks. Not only do children run the risk of infection, but the crisis and government responses are exacerbating other child protection risks. Information from countries such as China, the United States, Australia and Brazil reflects the emerging concerns of child protection practitioners globally and highlights several areas requiring attention in Indonesia.

The global scale of the pandemic, creating widespread fear and uncertainty, can have detrimental effects on child-friendly environments as children, families and communities face unprecedented upheaval. Stay-at-home orders and quarantines are leading to increased chances for domestic violence, sexual assault and abuse that endanger children’s lives and physical and emotional health. When parents and primary caregivers contract the virus and go into quarantine their children are deprived of parental care; those already in alternative living arrangements or detention also face intensified risks to their safety. In addition, loss of family income, school closures and limited access to health care during the pandemic can have a negative impact on children’s long-term well-being.

The Context:
Causes of Child Protection Issues

- Increased online activities
- Economic insecurity and poverty-related stress
- Inability to escape repressive household situations
- Disruption in the provision of health, education and other basic services
- Increased exposure to abusive relationships
- Disruption of family care due to death, quarantine or domestic problems
- Fear, confusion and difficulty adapting to prolonged ‘abnormal/unstable situation’
- Social isolation
Reducing Child Protection Risks during COVID-19

Governments and other decision-makers play a key role in protecting children during the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular to facilitate, monitor and promote the best interests of children in the face of increased child protection risks.

RISK 1

Children, especially girls and young women, face an increased risk of violence, abuse and exploitation.

This can be overcome by:

- Developing safe spaces and opportunities for children.
- Keeping children learning and away from exploitation due to economic difficulties.
- Providing accessible psychosocial support to parents and care givers.
- Supporting household income and overall economic welfare of each family unit.
- Strengthening reporting mechanisms and authorities’ response capacity.

RISK 2

The unique pandemic context can have a significant impact on children's emotional and mental health.

This can be overcome by:

- Ensuring that clear and simple information is available to children so they understand what is happening during the pandemic and engaging them in developing key messages on COVID-19 prevention.
- Supporting formal and non-formal positive interaction among children while maintaining pandemic-related protection requirements.
- Increasing availability of psychosocial support services that can be accessed by children in an independent and comfortable way.
- Working with parents and caregivers to ensure a positive household environment for children to continue their development and growth.
The pandemic may cause a disruption of parental care, as well as amplifying health and other risks faced by children already living outside of parental care.

This can be overcome by:

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<td>Increasing support for extended families that are required to <strong>serve as caregivers</strong> for additional children, and <strong>targeting social protection</strong> to vulnerable households and children.</td>
<td>Guaranteeing the <strong>wellbeing of children in institutional care</strong> including those in detention facilities. If children are sent home to their families, ensure that <strong>safety procedures are strictly followed</strong>, including disallowing unaccompanied travel.</td>
<td>Establishing <strong>community support mechanism</strong> for children left behind by parents or care givers due to isolation or quarantine.</td>
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Essential services may face disruptions or be more difficult for children to access, resulting in overall detriment to their development.

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<td>Ensuring equal and easy access to health and education services for children – even in new or alternative forms – regardless of the length of the pandemic.</td>
<td>Promoting healthy behaviour and providing continuous access to <strong>clean water, sanitation and hygiene</strong> in all areas frequented by children.</td>
<td>Increasing inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration to ensure responses reflect the many dimensions of child vulnerability.</td>
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Stigmatization of affected children and their families creates increased risk of violence, exclusion and psychosocial issues.

This can be overcome by:

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<td>Promoting wider dissemination of <strong>information on COVID-19 prevention</strong> through various inclusive platforms. Specific attention must be afforded to communities in remote and isolated areas, as well as people living with disabilities.</td>
<td>Enhancing the role of <strong>community, religious and customary leaders</strong> in educating communities on the facts of the COVID-19 pandemic.</td>
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A coordinated and cross-sectoral effort is required to protect children during the COVID-19 pandemic. This effort should reflect the wide-ranging impact of both the disease and the response and a unified commitment to protecting Indonesia's children.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:
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