

**SUMMARY FINDINGS OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN’S COMMISSIONER (OCC) ON THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY CHILDREN DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

NO.	ISSUES/CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS
1.	<p><b>Helplines for Children</b></p> <p>a. It has been informed that the number of calls received by NGOs on domestic violence and child abuse through their respective hotlines have drastically increased during the first 2 weeks of MCO enforcement.</p> <p>b. The current <i>Talian Kasih</i> 15999 is said to be overloaded with calls not only by children, but also of basic needs assistance.</p> <p>c. No awareness on the need of a child helpline; children are one of the most vulnerable in this crisis but there is no dedicated child helpline which required child-friendly experienced call operators.</p> <p>d. Helplines are not seen as “essential services” - reported that they are told to shut down their physical call centres.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KPWKM to provide an urgent on a nationwide, free, children-centred 24-hour helpline specifically for children with trained child-friendly operators.</li> <li>• Have all helplines information made available to the public via one agency perhaps through KPKK – with help of media and social media.</li> <li>• To promote the helplines as child-friendly measure and that all child can get help when they needed (posters/advertisements).</li> <li>• Helpline offices/centres should be able to fully operate during this time.</li> <li>• Activate or support parallel-free confidential helplines for non-BM speakers (refugees etc.) in which some NGOs can provide the call counsellors.</li> </ul>
2.	<p><b>Domestic Violence and Child Abuse</b></p> <p>a. Not enough shelters for victims and survivors.</p> <p>b. Covid-19 testing for children who are victims; few private hospitals are willing to waive the fee – matter of funding.</p> <p>c. Fear in failure of the system to protect the victims – operators are busy, welfare officers did not carry out investigation properly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Release clear SOPs on how to handle DV cases during the MCO to front-liners.</li> <li>• Ensuring survivors can apply for Emergency Protection Order (EPO) - only 10 were issued last year (2019) throughout the country. Further discussions with JKMM to determine; how children can access EPO and how exactly does it protect children and their safety.</li> <li>• Announcing the support systems available to both adult and child survivors during the RMO. Posters/announcements</li> </ul>

		<p>targeted towards children to be designed in a child-centric manner or from a child's POV.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving accessibility to temporary shelters and making it an essential service.</li> <li>• Ensuring financial assistance reaches survivors.</li> <li>• Ensuring there are adequate resources (such as JKMM staff &amp; <i>Talian Kasih</i> staff) available to ensure affective emergency responses.</li> </ul> <p><i>(suggestions by Womans's Aids Organisation)</i></p>
3.	<p><b>Mapping Children at Most Risk</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children that need medical care at home (especially for rare disorders and critically ill).</li> <li>Children in remote interiors of Borneo and rural villages.</li> <li>Children of refugees, migrants, and undocumented.</li> <li>Children in urban poor - <i>Program Perumahan Rakyat</i> (PPR) Flats.</li> <li>Orang <i>asli/asal</i> children.</li> <li>Children in detention/prisons.</li> <li>Children with special needs.</li> <li>Children detained during MCO.</li> <li>Children separated from families/custody issues.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination of a situational analysis on vulnerable children between UN Agencies, NGOs, and the Government; in Peninsular, Sabah and Sarawak.</li> </ul>
4.	<p><b>Delivery of Basic Needs</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poverty compounded by no work and no income means these families cannot buy/access food, basic needs and medical aids on daily basis.</li> <li>Unclear rules of engagement with NGOs; no proper SOP/guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Instructions for NGOs are unclear; NGOs can provide critical support to government in times of crisis to the</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JKM and KDN should consult and coordinate with related NGOs in constructing better and faster SOP for delivery of basic needs.</li> <li>• Clear information or criteria in terms of obtaining official approvals (either agency: NADMA, MKN, police, KKM, JKM).</li> <li>• Identify and map the NGOs - Who is doing What, Where, When and How on an online platform to facilitate coordination across sectors.</li> <li>• Identify leading NGOs for different clusters or areas of needs.</li> </ul>

	<p>most marginalised groups. However, since MCO, there has been conflicting directives from MOH, JKMM and MKN leading to uncertainties and fear.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication; NGOS have received most information from social media and certain govt. departments but have not been consulted by the Ministry.</li> <li>c. NGOs are unable to use delivery services as advised by JKM – extra costs and lengthy system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular consultation and feedback from NGOs and updates from KPWKM/JKMM can be established through one-stop portal and formal consultations.</li> </ul>
5.	<p><b>Support System for Children’s Mental Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Among the concerns by children in a survey conducted (by FAME) on mental health; worried about their parents’ job, concern on their future dan education (exams/classes), in need of counselling and motivational talk/help.</li> <li>b. Stress to cope with the changed of teaching and learning mechanism, and of feeling ‘trapped’ at home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child helpline should also cater this issue – provided with experts and trained operators to deal with calls from children and its next action.</li> </ul>
6.	<p><b>Children that Conflict with the Law:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. It was highlighted that some children (under the age of 18 years old) allegedly in violation of MCO, were arrested and charged by the authority – no clear guidelines given on how to deal with children.</li> <li>b. Conditions in detention - the inability to practice social distancing, insufficient on-site facilities to appropriately isolate sick detainees, detainees live in close and overcrowded blocks.</li> <li>c. Detention population that is extremely vulnerable with multiple health risks, poor nutrition, poor access to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents should be advised to supervise and monitor their children so that they will comply with MCO. Clear guidelines and SOPs should be made available to all enforcement officers, especially those who are dealing directly with children.</li> <li>• Children in remand should be released on bail as trials have been postponed during MCO.</li> <li>• Halt all new arrests and detention of children for violation of immigration offences, and/or the MCO. Further halt all transfers from prisons and trafficking shelters to immigration detention centres.</li> <li>• While awaiting release from places of detention, ensure all relevant hygiene, screening and appropriate isolation practices</li> </ul>

	healthcare, limited to no access to soap and sanitizer facilities for personnel and detainees.	are adhered to as recommended by MOH and the ICRC Guidelines.
7.	<p><b>Maternity Assistance to Undocumented/Refugee Mothers</b></p> <p>a. These women include refugee, stateless, migrant workers, domestic workers and Malaysian women who have had complications during delivery.</p> <p>b. What would cost RM100 - RM300 for a Malaysian mother to deliver a baby, now costs RM3k for a refugee/undocumented mother. It can go up to RM5k to RM8k if the mother needs caesarean.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A need to identify sustainable solution to provide financial assistance for the mothers and the babies.</li> <li>• KKM may grant delay payments or waive the charges as to enable the mothers to deliver the babies safely first; to ensure the child's safety and health, to prevent any attempt of baby selling or baby dumping. KPWKM is urged to work with KKM on this issue.</li> </ul>
8.	<p><b>Internet Safety for Children</b></p> <p>a. Risk and danger of internet usage; increase of paedophilic activity during MCO and children are not aware of such harm.</p> <p>b. Social media applications used by children are more varied than what the adults used; thus, lack of control by the adults to monitor.</p> <p>c. Inappropriate dresses and dances on the social media as parents do not know how to handle the trend.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create more awareness for children especially younger ones about the harm of internet; child-friendly advertisements or posters.</li> <li>• Children should be encouraged to share with the parents on the activities they do on internet – however, when children are in wrong, parents should not immediately punish them but teach and guide them instead.</li> <li>• Adults at home or parents should be more aware to internet usage at home.</li> </ul>
9.	<p><b>Right to Education</b></p> <p>a. Online learning is not accessible to all children in rural areas or areas without internet connection.</p> <p>b. Some teachers are not teaching; they are not used to use online materials resulting in students at home not getting education/left behind in their studies during MCO.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A need of a system to ensure that all children across Malaysia can access education via internet so that no child is left behind in their education.</li> <li>• Any advocacy or support system shall include languages and approaches that are understood by indigenous communities in Sabah and Sarawak.</li> </ul>

10.	<p><b>Bantuan Prihatin Nasional (BPN) for Single Parent/Individual with Dependant(s)</b></p> <p>a. It was pointed out that single parents with no marriage certificates or individuals with dependants are not eligible to apply for BPN as <i>Ketua Keluarga</i> despite having an urgent need for financial support, to feed, house their children and family members.</p> <p>b. There are also instances of survivors of domestic violence who are unable to claim for BPN as it has been registered under the husband's name.</p> <p>c. Also, many B40 families do not pay income tax as they are on daily wage and need to register first before they can get BPN in which such process might be detrimental to them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Government should review the entitlement to BPN so that it is inclusive of all the categories of these mentioned individuals.</li> </ul>
11.	<p><b>Leniency/Authorisation by Authority for Parents with Certain Circumstances</b></p> <p>a. Concerns were raised on the current imposition of 1 person per car ruling, which is impractical for some parents who are unable to leave their children behind.</p> <p>b. Parents with shared custody order (from Syariah and Civil Courts) require an authorisation letter from the Court in order to travel with the child/children to and from his/her residence to his/her ex-spouse's residence in accordance with the court order.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leniency by authority for single parents who are unable to leave their children unattended whilst they are out to buy food or run other daily routines.</li> <li>• Parents whose divorce and custody case are pending or who had informal agreement to custody and maintenance, should also be authorized to allow them to travel with their children. MCO should not be used as a shield to violate custody orders</li> </ul>
12.	<p><b>Caretakers during MCO</b></p> <p>a. With MCO taking place, TASKA is closed and parents who are working as front-liners do not have options to send their children – resulting in mass unregistered and unqualified caretakers services at home.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For JKMM to monitor this issue and measure be taken in order to ensure that caretakers are qualified for safety of the children.</li> <li>• Volunteering services by currently registered TASKA or caretakers.</li> </ul>

13.	<p><b>Children with Special Needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Some children and adults with disabilities find it hard to cope by staying home 24/7, although they understand the risks of being out.</li> <li>b. Parents'/guardians' stress has increased immensely (through FAME's survey), and their psychosocial wellbeing is compromised.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe spaces for outdoor activities should be provided, where children, including for children with special needs, could play and conduct their activities during MCO especially in PPRT and B40 area of residence. The space should be supervised while observing social distancing, and within a specific area.</li> </ul>
14.	<p><b>Children who are Separated with their Families</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Malaysian mothers who are equal guardian of their children were asked by the immigration for the foreign fathers to be presented for children to renew their VISA.</li> <li>b. Pregnant Malaysian women who are not able to come back to Malaysia due to MCO; children had to be born overseas.</li> <li>c. Separation of family; non-citizen husbands with no spouse VISAs are not able to come into the country.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special measures and consideration for family members who should be together and not force to be separated.</li> </ul>