

PRESS RELEASE

Forum Kajian Pembangunan (FKP) Webinar

“The Implementation of Social Assistance Program during the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Urgency to Update DTKS”

Jakarta, 29 October 2021 — In the bid to curb the spread of COVID-19, the government has issued multiple policies to restrict people’s movement and continues to make adjustments to these policies. In early July 2021, the policy was called the emergency public activity restrictions, or PPKM Darurat, and it was later renamed PPKM levels 4–2. The government also issued the national economic recovery (PEN) policy with focus on expanding the social protection program in the form of social assistance. The government has spent quite a considerable amount of funds for the social assistance programs, namely Rp220.39 trillion in 2020 and Rp187.84 trillion in 2021.

A study by The SMERU Research Institute (SMERU) discovers that the social assistance helps ease the poor and the vulnerable’s burden of coping with the impact of the PPKM policy in 2021, which is felt to be more severe than that in the previous year.

The social assistance programs serve as a safety net. It adds to the recipients’ income and reduces their spending, and it guarantees that the recipients are provided with additional money and goods

For the most part, the programs have run well and have not breached the provisions. Nevertheless, in some cases, the implementation still faced many issues. “Our findings show that some of the recipients were not the intended targets. There are some issues of overlapping with regard to the recipients, as well as some cases of late disbursements and distributions not carried out in the determined period. We also found issues regarding the distribution flow as well as the flow of recipients’ application and submission that were too complicated. And there are cases where the types, amounts, and values of the assistances that the recipients received were not the same as those stipulated in the regulation,” Hastuti, a researcher from SMERU, said.

Since the pandemic persists, the social assistance programs need to continue

Nobody knows when the pandemic will be over, and the poor and the vulnerable continue to suffer its impact. Therefore, the government needs to continue with the current social assistance programs even though some improvements need to be made. This continuance is necessary to prevent the poor and the vulnerable in particular from suffering bigger impacts of the pandemic.

However, the two rapid assessments that SMERU conducted in the period of April–May 2020 have discovered that the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) is not up-to-date and because of it, we are seeing mistargeting of assistance program recipients and late distributions of assistances.

Not all *kabupaten* (district)/*kota* (city) governments update DTKS periodically, even though it is mandated in Law No.13/2011

“As the main instrument to determine the recipients of various social protection programs, DTKS must always be up-to-date and valid so that it can perform its function as a reliable source of data,” said Dyan Widyaningsih (a researcher from SMERU).

On-target social assistance distribution to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic shows the importance of updating DTKS as the data source for determining who the recipients are. "Up-to-date data will improve the effectiveness of the social protection programs with regards to the budgeting, accuracy of recipients, and speed of distribution. This is very important, especially when we have an emergency situation, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The more effective the social protection programs, the bigger their contribution to the success of accelerating the reduction of extreme poverty in Indonesia, which the government has targeted to reach zero percent by 2024," said Dyan.

The motivation of regional governments to update DTKS and their capacity to perform it are important in updating DTKS

Meanwhile, to improve the quality of the data updating process, more focus should be given to the technical guidance, village/*kelurahan* (urban village) deliberation meeting, and data collection (through house visits) stages. According to Dyan, "Even though the *kabupaten/kota* government is responsible for updating DTKS, all levels of the government must give their support to ensure that the effort is continuous and of high quality."

The government needs to ensure the accuracy of social assistance recipients by updating DTKS periodically and maintaining the quality of the data

The government should improve the distribution chain as well as the frequency of the assistance distribution. The government also needs to ensure that the assistance reaches the recipients as per the regulation. To do these, there needs to be a support system in the form of an effective distribution, oversight, and complaint-handling system. This is to ensure that the recipients can take the maximum benefits from the assistance.

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The speakers' presentation materials can be downloaded at: <https://smeru.or.id/id/fkp-29okt2021>.

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