

## The Role and Challenges of Social Workers in Child Protection: The Case of Indonesia

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**Abstract :** Since 2009, the Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs has been implementing Program Kesejahteraan Sosial Anak (PKSA) (Child Welfare Program) a conditional cash transfer program that targets neglected children, children with disabilities, street children, children in conflict with the law, and children in need of special protection, all from poor households. PKSA integrates three elements: Transfer of cash, care and social services through social workers, and institutional childcare assistance. This qualitative study analyzed the roles and the challenges of social workers in implementing PKSA and lays out recommendations to inform policy changes. Data were collected in late 2014 from national and local government and non-government child welfare agencies, social workers, and childcare institution representatives through interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs). Field work took place in six districts in the provinces of Jakarta, Central Java and South Sulawesi. The study found that the social workers' role was significant in facilitating cash transfer, providing education and guidance, and linking children and families to basic social services. This improved utilization of basic social services enhanced children and families' behaviors and contributed to the well being of the children. However, only a small number of childcare institutions have social workers, leaving many children and families without care and social service linkages, depriving them of rehabilitative components to help them regain their social functions. Some social workers reported their struggles with heavy workloads, lack of professional competencies and training, limited job security, and inadequate professional acknowledgment from other professions. Parts of those challenges were due to the centralized nature of the program and the lack of shared vision and commitment about the child protection system among related government agencies both at the national and local levels. The study highlights the necessity to implement an integrated child protection system, decentralize the PKSA program, and increase the number, competence, case management, and management and monitoring of social workers. The most recent progress of the program and its impacts on social workers are also discussed.

**Keywords :** child protection, conditional cash transfer, program decentralization, social worker, working conditions

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