Press Release

In Addition to Preventing Stunting, the Government Needs to Expand the Focus of Its Food Security and Nutrition Policies to Address Triple Burden of Malnutrition

Jakarta, 14 October 2020. The SMERU Research Institute (SMERU) with the support of the Knowledge Sector Initiative and the World Food Program (WFP) held a seminar series Forum Kajian Pembangunan (FKP) entitled "Beyond Stunting: Challenges to Improve Food Security and Nutrition in Indonesia". This webinar was intended to disseminate and launch the results of the study "Strategic Review of Food Security and Nutrition in Indonesia: 2019–2020 Update", a study supported by WFP.

The webinar began with a welcoming speech from Christa Räder, WFP Country Representative, and Iván Cossio Cortez, Country Representative of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). In her remarks, Christa stated, “WFP greatly appreciates the analysis conducted by SMERU which has looked at all angles of food security and nutrition in Indonesia, highlighting progress and challenges and offering recommendations for the future. We hope that the results of this strategic review will benefit policymakers and other food security and nutrition stakeholders here in determining the contribution each of us can make to 'leaving no one behind' on the journey to SDG2, Zero Hunger; WFP will do this through its next Country Strategic Plan 2021–2025.

According to Sirojuddin Arif (SMERU researcher), the results of the study show that the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia is still high by international standards. He added that Indonesia also faces a triple burden of malnutrition where undernutrition co-exists with overnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. Therefore, the Government should expand the focus of its food security and nutrition policies to address not only stunting but also other aspects of malnutrition, namely wasting (underweight), obesity, overweight, and micronutrient deficiencies. Regarding the prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies, a representative survey is needed to provide a basis that can be used to make plans on food supplementation and fortification.

Dr. Rr. Dhian Proboyekti Dipo, Director of Public Nutrition from the Ministry of Health, explained that Indonesia already has balanced nutrition guidelines targeted at professionals and officers from various government and non-government agencies which implement interventions on nutrition education. The messages are aimed at the general public. Meanwhile, in an effort to meet the need for micronutrients, interventions have been made through, among others, the enrichment of micronutrients in several commercial food products.

Sirojuddin continued, "The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic since the beginning of 2020 has negative impacts on food and nutrition intake so that the dietary quality, especially of the poor and vulnerable, is likely to decline. In addition, COVID-19 also affects basic health care services for pregnant and lactating mothers as well as children at Puskesmas and Posyandu. These two problems can adversely affect the government's efforts to prevent stunting and improve the nutritional status of the population. Even though the government has allocated a quite large budget on social protection programmes to cushion the impact of COVID-19 on people’s wellbeing, the effectiveness of these programmes in helping the programme recipients to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 has been affected by several problems in the program implementation, ranging from delays in the distribution of social assistance to mistargeting."

Considering these conditions, the Government needs to continue to ensure that all poor and vulnerable households receive social assistance to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on food security

and nutrition. Efforts to expand the scope of social protection programs need to involve regional governments and non-profit organizations or community organizations. In addition, to prevent the increasing prevalence of wasting and stunting during the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the government needs to expand the provision of additional food, such as fortified biscuits, to help children as well as pregnant and nursing mothers from poor and vulnerable groups meet their nutritional needs.

About The SMERU Research Institute

SMERU is an independent institution that conducts research and studies on public policies. Since its establishment in 2001, SMERU has been at the forefront of studies on poverty and inequality. SMERU is also experienced in conducting social and economic policy research. Further information about SMERU can be found at www.smeru.or.id.

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