



## 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN CHILDREN'S FORUM (6<sup>th</sup> ACF)

### The Impact of COVID-19 and the Current Situation of Children

13 October 2020

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#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Children's Forum was convened by the Senior Officials Meeting Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD), through the leadership of Cambodia, via video conference. Guided by the theme, "*Impact of COVID-19 and the Current Situation of Children*", the forum provided a platform for children representatives from all the ASEAN Member States to discuss issues that have affected them in the areas of health, education, livelihoods and other cross-cutting issues amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to these concerns, the children of ASEAN proposed the following recommendations addressed to their fellow children, parents, communities, schools and educators, government officials, and non-governmental organisations. The recommendations are intended to lead toward actions in providing services and support for children, especially the most vulnerable ones, in accordance with their expertise and experiences in the best interest of all children during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Below are the recommendations proposed by the 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Children's Forum:

#### For children

1. Strictly follow the instructions given by government.
2. Share information to have a good understanding of the COVID-19 epidemic and infection prevention measures. Encourage friends and family to wear masks at all times, wash hands frequently, practice social distancing and do not go to crowded places.
3. Eat healthy and balanced diet, with access to supplementary vitamins and minerals to improve the body's immune system.
4. Maintain an optimistic spirit, have fun and cultivate creativity during the time of social distancing through group play activities and other activities, such as drawing, reading, playing musical instruments.
5. Share with family when there are difficulties or negative feelings so that help and support are given immediately. Support friends to seek help when feeling sad or anxious.
6. Stay positive about learning and stay motivated to learn. Know and prepare for different remote learning approaches that schools are using for lessons. Attend lessons online where possible, participate in the lesson and do the homework set.
7. Talk to teachers if they are worried about how their exams might be affected. Recognize the limitations of online learning to share with families, schools, and find solutions to overcome these challenges.
8. Learn digital solutions to participate in online learning programs. Embrace a spirit of optimism to accept and be ready for necessary skills, as it is determined that online learning is an inevitable trend of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era.
9. Do not discriminate against anyone who is struggling to make a living.

10. Speak out if there are children who may be at risk because of a difficult family situation.
11. Each of the AMS Children Delegations take a video of their opinions and ideas and collect them all on one video.
12. Explore intergenerational learning, be in touch with their parents and learn as many things as possible from their parents like cooking or other cultural practices. [Myanmar]
13. Do religious practices every day according to the respective religion, like saying the prayers, telling beads, practising meditation and sharing loving kindness with anyone in the world to be able to get mindfulness and peace in mind.

### **For parents and families**

1. Encourage children to properly wash their hands using soap, hand sanitizer, and personal protective equipment in homes, schools, health facilities and public places during epidemic. Make sure that their children have access to soap, gel or medicinal alcohol for washing their hands regularly.
2. Recognize when children might need extra support for their mental health. Seek professional support for themselves and their children if COVID-19 has had a negative impact on their own or their children's mental health.
3. Spend quality time with children.
4. Stay updated on the COVID-19 situation from reliable news sources.
5. Listen to children about the difficulties of online learning and find solutions to overcome them.
6. Encourage children to continue to study diligently even when not going to school in person. Provide their children with the materials and environment needed to do homework, course work and study to the best of their ability.
7. Not pressure children with high expectations of academic excellence when education and exams are uncertain.
8. Make sure that children have access to nutritious food in both urban and rural areas.
9. Support neighbours who are struggling by supporting their businesses.
10. Explore intergenerational learning, be in touch with their children and learn as many things as possible from their children, such like technology.
11. Allow children to do religious practices every day according to their respective religion, like saying prayers, telling beads, practising meditation, listening to sermons, sharing kindness and loving attitude with anyone in the world, to be mindfulness and have peace of mind.

### **For schools and teachers**

1. Encourage children to properly wash their hands using soap, hand sanitizer, and personal protective equipment in homes, schools, health facilities and public places during epidemic.
2. Provide children with up-to-date information about the current situation of the pandemic.
3. Provide a mask for each child every day so that all children can be safe, no matter what their circumstances. Measure children's temperatures before they go into school, and do not allow any student to enter if they have fever.
4. Make sure that children have access to engaging, socially-distanced activities. Encourage teachers to recognize the signs of mental health issues and know what to do if they see such signs in their students. Have school counsellors whom children can go to if and when they feel they need to.
5. Invest in digital technology, develop digital literacy programs, widen access to internet facilities. Train teachers to use online and distance learning methods of teaching.
6. Listen to children about the difficulties of online learning and find solutions to overcome them.

7. Provide alternative lesson options to children who do not have access to devices.
8. Ensure that every student who should be taking exams has full access to the lessons.
9. Encourage all teachers to stay motivated and continue to provide quality teaching, even though the children are not physically in the classroom.
10. Recognise when a child's behavior, attitude, health or school attendance has suddenly changed for the worse, and report to an appropriate and trusted person.
11. Reduce or cut fees and other costs for families who are struggling to support themselves.
12. Regularly monitor the condition of students, particularly those who are at-risk or affected by the pandemic.

### **For community leaders**

1. Regularly provide children with up-to-date information about the current situation. Display posters with pictures and easy to understand language so that children know how they can protect themselves.
2. Make sure there are areas and facilities where children can join in engaging, socially-distanced activities. Make it safe for people who need support with their mental health to ask for help, by reducing prejudices and stigma.
3. Follow up with the local school if lessons are not being provided. Encourage parents to get involved with supporting their children to do their school work
4. Make sure that the local schools provide children with the quality of teaching and frequency of lessons which are needed to pass their exams.
5. Recognise that the qualifications gained this year have the same value as every year, and make sure everyone knows it clearly.
6. Community leaders should ensure that children have access to nutritious food in both urban and rural areas.
7. Support local businesses. Share resources with those who are struggling to support themselves and their families.

### **For governments**

1. Ensure continuity and completeness of health care services such as prenatal and postnatal care, routine vaccinations, especially the deployment of a mobile health care team / home outreach to quickly deliver essential child health care. Join the efforts to develop a vaccine against the COVID-19.
2. Provide hygiene packages to those most at risk of catching the virus, and the most vulnerable in society.
3. Make sure that information about preventing COVID-19 is accessible to children. Regularly provide children with up-to-date information about the current situation.
4. Recognise that the COVID-19 situation can have negative effects on the mental health of both children and adults. Provide guidelines for how children can be supported to recover from mental health challenges caused by the COVID-19 situation. Provide free services for online and offline psychological consultations for children and youth, empower children and youth to create a Mental Health Awareness Campaign, and door to door socialization and education for unreached families in rural areas.
5. Make a Campaign Video about "How Important Mental Health of Children is During the Covid-19 Pandemic".
6. Invest in digital technology, develop digital literacy programs, widen access to internet facilities
7. Provide multiple options to access education outside the classroom in order that children without access to devices and internet are still able to join lessons. Provide schools with good guidelines for teachers so they know what is expected of them. Make clear announcements on decisions

that affect examinations. Ensure that the system used to grade students is the same across the country.

8. Make policies to support parents, those who are working and who have a limited capacity to make a living because they are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
9. Ensure that children have access to nutritious food in both urban and rural areas.
10. Ensure that local authorities identify how many children are now vulnerable because of negative effects of COVID-19 on their families' livelihoods.
11. Provide emergency assistance to families that are identified as in need.
12. Create & Distribute Innovative E-Book Family Resilience Guidelines Against Covid-19 and informing about this issue (provide in all AMS languages).
13. Carry out systematic surveys to know the exact number of children in need of help, give more attention to them, help them and encourage the better-off to be involved in the charity process.
14. Let the public know the difficulties so that volunteers can participate for the contribution.

### **For non-government organisation**

1. Advocate that vulnerable children (including those in alternative care, living on the streets, children with disabilities) must have the same access to information about how to prevent COVID-19 as children who live with their families.
2. Make sure that vulnerable children have access to soap, gel or medicinal alcohol for washing their hands regularly. Provide hygiene packages to those most at risk of catching the virus, and the most vulnerable in society.
3. Provide mental health services to vulnerable children (including those in alternative care, living on the streets, children with disabilities).
4. Support vulnerable children to access online and other distanced approaches to education. Guide vulnerable children with safe online learning tools and applications, especially for children in remote areas.
5. Provide support to children who are immuno-compromised or those who are disabled, and their families.
6. Provide emergency food packages to families who are struggling because of COVID-19 pandemic.
7. Support families whose livelihoods have been negatively affected by COVID-19 with income generation services.

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