

Government Strategy in Handling Stunting in Telaga Biru District, Gorontalo Regency

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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the government strategies in addressing stunting in Telaga Biru District, Gorontalo Regency. The study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. A strategy is an action chosen to achieve organizational goals; in this case, the strategy within the scope of movement refers to the actions or decisions made to address a specific issue. The strategies implemented by the Telaga Biru District Government in addressing stunting included programs focused on improving the nutritional intake of stunted children. These programs included the Foster Parent Program (Genting), Posyandu (integrated health posts), sanitation improvements, and the provision of clean water. The results indicated that the strategies of the Telaga Biru District Government in preventing stunting were effective, as they had shown a decrease in stunting rates.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian government has launched various national development programs outlined in the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). These programs cover fundamental areas, including infrastructure development, human resource development, economic transformation, and bureaucratic reform.

Strategy is a systematic planning activity of policy makers (main leaders) that is oriented towards organizational goals with a long-time span in the future, where the planning contains detailed and comprehensive steps on how to achieve the goals that have been set (Marrus 2002:31). So it can be concluded that determining a policy strategy is very necessary to attain the policy goals that have been set, because the strategy that has been prepared will help policy implementers to achieve goals effectively and efficiently.

Strategy is an action chosen to achieve an organization's goals. In this case, strategy within the government sphere is an action or decision taken to address a problem in society so that the problem can be resolved in a structured and systematic manner because it has been planned. Strategies that have been implemented to address problems in society include the Family Planning program, the Family Hope Program, Regional Health Insurance, and various other government strategies.

Stunting is one of the issues currently of concern to the Indonesian government. Stunting has become a hot topic and a focus for the government, prompting the President of the Republic of Indonesia to issue Presidential Regulation (Perpres) Number 72 of 2021 concerning the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction. This Presidential Regulation serves as

the legal framework for the National Strategy (Stranas) for the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction, which has been launched and implemented since 2018. This Presidential Regulation also strengthens the framework for interventions and institutions in accelerating stunting reduction. The government is targeting a 14 percent reduction in stunting prevalence by 2024, as stipulated in the 2020-2024 Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN).

Based on data from the Ministry of Health announced on January 25, 2023, during the BKKBN National Working Meeting, the results of the Indonesian Nutritional Status Survey (SSGI) showed a prevalence of stunting in Indonesia, and the number of cases decreased from 24.4% in 2021 to 21.6% in 2022. The Indonesian government hopes to see a decrease in cases this year. *Stunting* can be even better at achieving the reduction in targets. The target of reducing stunting prevalence to 14% by 2024 is achievable. Indonesia's target of reducing stunting prevalence is aligned with the global target, namely the World Health Assembly (WHA) target of reducing stunting prevalence by 40% by 2025. Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target is to eliminate all forms of malnutrition by 2030.

Stunting is a condition of failure to thrive in children characterized by shorter height than the average height for their age. Stunting occurs due to chronic malnutrition that persists over a long period during a child's growth and development. This malnutrition occurs during pregnancy and early postnatal life, but symptoms only become apparent after the child reaches 2 years of age.

The Indonesian government has implemented various programs to address stunting, such as the Family Hope Program (PKH), Integrated Health Posts (Posyandu), and supplementary feeding for pregnant women and toddlers. However, stunting reduction remains suboptimal. This is due to various factors, including uneven distribution of health services, a lack of public understanding of the importance of a healthy diet, and limited family participation.

This stunting problem is not a problem that can be ignored; children who suffer from it...*stunting* will have long-term impacts that can hinder children's growth and development. Addressing stunting requires a comprehensive, data-driven approach, involving various sectors such as health, education, and community economic empowerment.

Telaga Biru District is one of the areas that supports the government's program related to accelerating the reduction of stunting, as evidenced by the existence of regulations governing efforts to prevent and handle stunting in Telaga Biru District.

The Gorontalo Regency Government has made efforts to prevent stunting. However, observations revealed that 23 children in Telaga Biru District still suffer from stunting. While the stunting rate in Telaga Biru District has decreased, it remains relatively high. Previously, the number of stunted children in Telaga Biru District reached 51. This demonstrates the commitment to accelerating stunting reduction in Telaga Biru District.

The Regency Government implemented a strategy by organizing a program that could handle stunting, especially in Telaga Biru District, namely the Foster Parents Movement Program (Genting), as a form of support from the regency in tackling stunting in Telaga Biru District as a reference for Gorontalo Regency Regent Regulation No. 2 of 2019 concerning Handling Stunting in Gorontalo Regency.

To ensure the effective and sustainable implementation of the Foster Parent Program to Prevent Stunting (GENTING) in Telaga Biru District, the district government implemented a targeted and collaborative strategy. This included selecting and equipping foster parents with basic training on nutrition and healthy eating patterns.

The government also conducts regular monitoring to measure children's weight and height every month to monitor progress and identify necessary interventions. Intersectoral

collaboration is also being implemented, involving the Health Office, Social Services Office, Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda), Family Welfare Movement (PKK), and village heads and village officials to allocate budgets and resources to support the program. Foster parents also provide nutritious supplementary food for stunted children.

The Telaga Biru District Government has been successful in preventing stunting, but improvements are still needed to achieve optimal results, including in budget allocation.

Community engagement is crucial in addressing stunting, as stunting is not solely a nutritional issue but also relates to parenting, sanitation, education, and socioeconomic conditions. If the community engagement process is suboptimal, the program's intended success will not be met.

After further observation, it was discovered that many people still don't understand what stunting is, its causes, and its impacts. This is due to a lack of public awareness about stunting, especially among communities in remote and less accessible villages. Furthermore, a lack of public awareness and low participation have resulted in obstacles to program implementation.

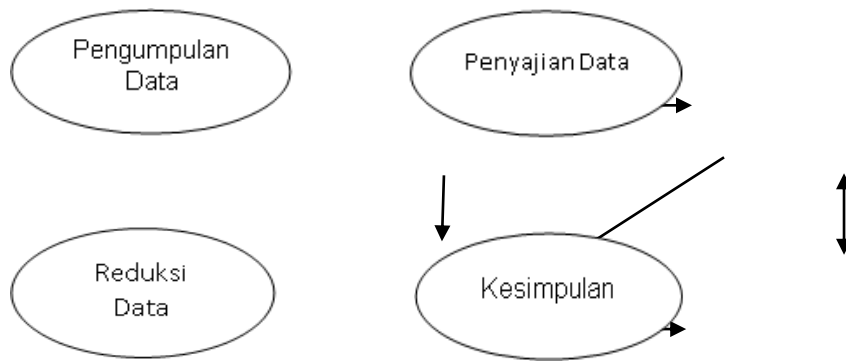
Another problem identified as a cause of stunting is the lack of toilet construction for low-income communities. Many families in the Telaga Biru sub-district lack toilets. This is because environmental conditions significantly influence growth and development within a family.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. According to Moleong (2017:6), qualitative research aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perception, motivation, actions, and so on, holistically and through descriptive means in the form of words and language, within a specific, natural context, utilizing various natural methods. The researcher used a qualitative approach and type of research to describe the government's strategy in addressing stunting.

The research location is the place where the research was conducted. Based on the research title, the research location is Telaga Biru District, Gorontalo Regency, considering the high stunting rate in that area and the government's strategy for addressing stunting.

Data analysis in qualitative research is carried out before entering the field, during the field, and after the field. Data analysis according to Sugiyono (2018:482) is the process of systematically searching and compiling data obtained from interviews, field notes, and documentation, by organizing data into categories, breaking them down into units, synthesizing them, arranging them into patterns, selecting what is important and what will be studied, and drawing conclusions so that they are easily understood by oneself and others. According to Sugiyono, there are three interactive models in data analysis: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

Figure 2.1 *Data analysis*

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research result

The government's strategy for stunting prevention is structured and comprehensive, focusing on specific nutritional interventions for vulnerable groups, namely pregnant women and children under two years of age. Research shows that the strategy includes programs such as immunization, supplementary feeding, and vitamin distribution, implemented in an integrated manner across sectors.

At the local level, sub-district governments are actively involved in utilizing village funds to establish nutrition posts as a form of direct community intervention. Stunting prevention efforts have been carried out in an integrated manner and involve various parties. Sub-district governments fully support the program to accelerate stunting reduction through the use of village funds, health screening activities, and outreach programs targeting adolescents, pregnant women, and toddlers. Research findings indicate that challenges remain in terms of community mindset, culture, and healthy lifestyles.

This highlights the need for increased education and a culture-based approach to encourage changes in community mindsets and behaviors to support the success of stunting prevention programs.

Stunting management in Telaga Biru District has been implemented through various efforts, including environmental interventions, education, and nutritional assistance programs. Research shows that the main challenges still lie in economic factors, traditional mindsets, and access to sanitation.

While the public has sufficient awareness, limited purchasing power and a less supportive environment make it difficult to implement this information. This necessitates cross-sector collaboration, which is key to reducing stunting rates and building a healthy and intelligent generation.

Government actions to address stunting include coordination with community health centers (Puskesmas), outreach, and the provision of supplementary food assistance. Furthermore, the government has established a foster parent program to involve the community in efforts to accelerate stunting reduction. Research shows that the primary obstacle to stunting management is budget constraints, which impact the effectiveness of programs at the sub-district level.

3.2.Discussion

The government's strategic objectives in stunting management improve the health and nutrition of the community, especially children. Stunting prevention and management efforts are outlined in the village government work plan (RKPDesa) and then incorporated into the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APB Desa). In this context, the local government is the agency implementing these activities, programs, and strategies.

Therefore, the village government conducted support efforts by establishing nutrition posts for toddlers affected by stunting and families at risk, and providing nutrition counseling, especially for toddlers and pregnant women. This research supports Geoff Mulgan's Purpose Theory, which states that purpose is a fundamental aspect of government strategy that provides direction and rationale behind actions. Within his strategic framework, Mulgan emphasizes the importance of goals as the basis for achieving desired outcomes within the government context.

The environment has a very important role in influencing

Individual behavior has a significant impact on their development. According to Notoatmodjo (2003), human behavior is formed through interactions between individuals and their environment. Therefore, when analyzing an institution's environment, both internal and external, it is crucial to evaluate the institution's ability to respond to various influencing factors.

In the case of stunting, two main aspects need to be considered, namely, sensitive nutrition and specific nutrition. Sensitive nutrition factors are often related to economic conditions, while specific nutrition factors emphasize meeting nutritional needs, including immunization and a healthy environment.

Research shows that environmental factors significantly influence children's health and growth in stunting management, particularly in terms of sanitation, clean water access, and residential cleanliness. However, obstacles such as the lack of sanitation facilities, such as toilet construction, remain in some areas.

The Telaga Biru District Government has implemented various strategies to address stunting. One strategic step is to collaborate with community health centers and village governments. This collaboration has led to the establishment of the Foster Parents (Genting) program and the strengthening of the role of Integrated Health Posts (Posyandu).

The Foster Parent Program aims to provide direct support, both material and non-material, to children experiencing or at risk of stunting. Meanwhile, Integrated Health Posts (Posyandu) are empowered as village-level community health service centers, focusing on monitoring toddler growth and development, nutrition education, and providing supplementary feeding.

These two programs are designed to increase active community participation in efforts to accelerate the reduction of stunting rates, while simultaneously building collective awareness about the important role of families and the environment in maintaining child health.

This aligns with Mulgan's (2009) theory that action is a clear, concrete action, with legal policies and leadership to persuade people to commit. Geoff Mulgan emphasized that social innovation must result in concrete action, involve the community, and have a direct and measurable impact on social problems. Posyandu, as a form of community-based health service, is an example of social innovation that aligns with these action indicators.

4. CONCLUSION

Government policies for addressing stunting have been effectively implemented in accordance with policies established by the Telaga Biru District government, with the cooperation of stakeholders within the district. The government has a clear policy direction focused on accelerating stunting reduction through specific and sensitive nutrition programs. Consequently, achievement of these goals remains hampered by resource limitations and gaps in implementation at the field level. In the second indicator, Environment, efforts to improve sanitation, provide clean water, and create a supportive social environment have been implemented, but still face several obstacles, including uneven infrastructure and low awareness among some communities. However, implementation is still hampered by suboptimal coordination, budget constraints, and cultural and economic challenges.

The government plays a key role in addressing stunting through comprehensive and integrated policies. Stunting prevention efforts cannot be carried out in isolation but must involve improving the quality of health services, improving sanitation and access to clean water, providing nutrition education, and strengthening parenting patterns within families. The government also needs to ensure that intervention programs reach all levels of society, especially those in remote and vulnerable areas. With strong commitment, strict monitoring, and cross-sectoral collaboration, the government can significantly reduce stunting rates and create a healthy and quality future generation.

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