



## Village Government Policy Model to Reduce Stunting Rates

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**Abstract.** Stunting is a serious challenge to health development in Indonesia, especially in rural areas. This study uses an empirical juridical approach, which is a legal research method that connects written regulations with reality in the field through qualitative descriptive analysis, to analyze village government policies in reducing stunting rates in Astanalanggar Village and Tegalgubug Village, Cirebon Regency. With the aim of identifying challenges in its implementation, assessing the effectiveness of existing policies, and providing recommendations based on the needs of rural communities, research data was obtained through interviews and direct observation. The results of the study show that despite national and regional regulations such as Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 and Cirebon Regent Regulation Number 25 of 2023, there are no special policies at the village level that regulate stunting control. Intervention programs implemented, such as supplemental nutrition, blood-boosting tablets, and nutrition education, face obstacles, including low public awareness, limited access to health facilities, and cultural barriers. Tegalgubug Village has succeeded in reducing stunting rates through collaborative approaches and innovative programs such as "BESTI ONCE," while Astanalanggar Village still faces various challenges in program implementation. This study recommends strengthening cross-sector coordination, increasing public education, and optimizing local resources to improve policy effectiveness. A data-based approach by paying attention to the local conditions of each village is the key to reducing stunting rates in a sustainable manner.

**Keywords:** Cirebon Regency, Village Government Policy, Stunting.

## INTRODUCTION

The rise of malnutrition (stunting) that occurs in children today is something that needs special attention, especially in developing countries such as Indonesia.<sup>1</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) defines stunting as a condition of failure to grow in children due to chronic malnutrition and recurrent infections that occur in the first 1,000 days of life.<sup>2</sup> This condition has an impact on stunted physical growth, decreased cognitive function, weak immunity, and an increased risk of chronic diseases in adulthood.<sup>3</sup> Stunting also has an impact on the low quality of human resources, which ultimately hampers the economic development of a country.<sup>4</sup>

Indonesia faces major challenges in reducing the prevalence of stunting. Based on data from the 2022 Indonesian Nutrition Status Survey (SSGI), the national stunting rate reached 21.6%, far above the WHO standard which stipulates that the prevalence of stunting must be below 20%.<sup>5</sup> Factors that cause stunting in Indonesia include lack of knowledge about nutrition, poverty that limits access to nutritious food, poor sanitation, and unequal access to health services, especially in remote areas. The government has adopted various strategic policies to reduce stunting rates, including through Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 concerning the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction and other cross-sectoral programs.

In Cirebon Regency, the prevalence of stunting continues to increase from 18.6% (2022) to 22.9% (2023),<sup>6</sup> which shows serious challenges in handling it. To reduce the stunting rate, handling efforts need to be focused, especially in villages with a high prevalence of stunting and able to keep the stunting rate low in villages that have succeeded in suppressing stunting,

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<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Ridho Nugroho, Rambat Nur Sasongko, and Muhammad Kristiawan, 'Factors Influencing the Incidence of Stunting in Early Childhood in Indonesia', *Obsession Journal: Early Childhood Education Journal*, 5.2 (2021), pp. 2269–76.

<sup>2</sup> Yeni Widyastuti and others, 'Socialization of Stunting and Its Prevention Efforts in Padarincang Village, Padarincang District, Serang Regency', *Community: Journal of Community Service*, 2.1 (2022), pp. 38–45.

<sup>3</sup> Priyo Sulistiyono and Jaenudin, 'Study on the Readiness of the Implementation of Integrated Stunting Reduction Interventions in Cirebon City', *Journal of Development Dynamics*, 1.April (2018), pp. 1–12.

<sup>4</sup> Rully Angraeni Safitri, Dewi Puspitasari, and Fajar Ramadhan Saputra, 'Environmental Impact of Stunting and the Economy', *Positive Activity: Journal of Community Service Work*, 1.3 (2023), pp. 133–39.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, *Pocket Book Results of the 2022 Indonesian Nutrition Status Survey (SSGI)*, 2022. pp. 5-6

<sup>6</sup> Cirebon Regency Communication and Information Office, 'Cirebon Regency Government is Very Serious About Accelerating Efforts to Reduce Stunting Rates in Cirebon Regency', *Cirebon Regency Government*, 2024.

especially in Cirebon Regency. According to data from the Cirebon Regency Health Office, Astanalanggar Village was recorded as the village with the highest stunting rate in 2024, which was 13%, while Tegalgubug Village recorded the lowest stunting rate, which was 2.25% in the same year.<sup>7</sup> This significant difference reflects the gap in policy implementation and the effectiveness of programs implemented at the village level.

Previous research revealed that discussions on stunting control policies are still limited. However, along with the development of various programs aimed at reducing stunting rates, especially through parenting approaches, there has been a significant increase in various aspects. As revealed by Ihat Hatimah and Dadang Yunus Lutfiansyah, they found that these programs focus on increasing parents' knowledge about the importance of child growth and development, which ultimately encourages parents to participate more actively in parenting activities. In addition, this program has also succeeded in forming a better family parenting pattern, which is based on an understanding of balanced nutrition and nutritious food intake.<sup>8</sup> It is hoped that this will create a healthy, prosperous, and quality family, with special attention to the overall growth and development of children. However, qualitative research that discusses government policies related to this matter in Astanalanggar Village and Tegalgubug Village, Cirebon Regency, is still very limited.

Based on the description above, is there a policy that regulates the reduction of stunting rates in rural areas, especially in Astanalanggar Village and Tegalgubug Village, Cirebon Regency and how effective are the policies implemented in their implementation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to dig deeper into whether existing policies are in accordance with the needs of rural communities and how improvement and policy strengthening measures can increase the effectiveness of interventions in significantly reducing stunting rates.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The approach method in this study is to use an empirical juridical approach, which according to Bambang Waluyo is a sociological legal research or field research that examines the applicable legal provisions and those that occur in people's lives.<sup>9</sup> This method was used to analyze government policies in an effort to reduce stunting rates in Cirebon Regency, with a

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<sup>7</sup> Teti Rostianty, Head of Public Health, Cirebon Regency Health Office, interview (Cirebon Regency, November 28, 2024. At 10.10 WIB)

<sup>8</sup> Ihat Hatimah and Dadang Yunus Lutfiansyah, 'Family Assistance Through Parenting Programs to Reduce Stunting Rates in Cirebon Regency', *E-Coops-Day*, 3.1 (2022), pp. 123–32.

<sup>9</sup> Bambang Waluyo, *Legal Research in Practice* (Sinar Grafika, 2008). p. 15

focus on research in Astanalanggar Village which has the highest stunting rate and Tegalbugub Village which has the lowest stunting rate.

Based on its nature, this study includes qualitative descriptive research, which is descriptive field research to analyze data obtained through the main data collection technique in the form of direct interviews with relevant respondents. The data collection technique is carried out through interviews, which is the main tool in collecting information directly from relevant respondents. In addition, field observation was also used to explore the implementation of the policy in more depth in the two villages.

## DISCUSSION

Policies are compiled as a guide to establish certain decisions or measures implemented by an organization or community. In general, policies include various strategies designed by leaders or authorities to achieve the goals that have been set, either within the scope of government, organizations, and individuals.<sup>10</sup>

According to Thomas R. Dye, policy is defined as "everything that the government chooses to do or not do," which indicates that the policy reflects decisions, including actions taken and intentionally not done by the government.<sup>11</sup> Policies can be manifested in the form of formal decisions, such as laws or regulations, or informal, such as traditions and practices that have developed. In its implementation, policies must consider aspects of impact, effectiveness, and relevance to applicable social, economic, and political conditions.

The emphasis on stunting rates is regulated in Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 concerning the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction, with it stated that stunting is a disorder of children's growth and development due to chronic malnutrition and recurrent infections, which is characterized by their length or height being below the standards set by the minister in charge of government affairs in the health sector. In Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 Article 1 paragraph (4), it is stated that the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction is any effort that includes Specific Interventions and Sensitive Interventions that are implemented in a convergent, holistic, integrative, and quality manner through multi-sector cooperation at the center, regions, and villages. Stunting prevention and control requires holistic and mutually consolidated efforts.

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<sup>10</sup> Abu Bakar Betan and others, *National Health Policy* (Muhammad Zaini Publisher Foundation, 2023). p. 6

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Dye, *Public Policy Theory* (Rineka Cipta, 1981). p. 2

In addition, in terms of accelerating the handling of stunting in Cirebon Regency, the Cirebon Regency Government issued Regent Regulation (Perbup) Number 25 of 2023 on Regent Regulation Number 57 of 2021 concerning the Acceleration of Stunting Prevention as mentioned in Article 2, namely (1) as a basis for the implementation of the convergence of stunting prevention programs, (2) as a guide for local governments and all elements of development actors in supporting the acceleration of stunting prevention and (3) creating a healthy, intelligent, productive and quality young generation and having an impact on increasing the Human Development Index. The purpose of this Perbup is the realization of program convergence at the regional level in preventing stunting and improving the nutritional quality of individuals, families and communities.

Based on research in the field, both in Astanalanggar Village and in Tegalgubug Village, there is no village policy that specifically regulates stunting control. However, Cirebon Regent Regulation Number 25 of 2023 on the amendment of Regent Regulation Number 57 of 2021 is one of the regulations used in Astanalanggar Village and Tegalgubug Village as a guideline for the village government in an effort to reduce stunting rates in Cirebon Regency.

According to the Head of the Astanalanggar Health Center,<sup>12</sup> the Astanalanggar Village Government has made various efforts to reduce the stunting rate through a program run with the Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team (TPPS) involving various related agencies, including the District, P5A, Police, Danramil, Village, Puskesmas, Education, Chairman of the TP PKK Astanalanggar Village, and the Village Family Planning Supervisor (PPKBD). The programs implemented in Astanalanggar Village are:

1. Chronic Energy Deficiency Pregnant Women Program (SEZ)

This program is intended for pregnant women who experience Chronic Energy Deficiency (KEK), by providing additional nutrition so that nutritional needs are met during pregnancy. This is important to support maternal health and fetal growth.

2. Blood Supplement Tablet (TTD) Program for Pregnant Women Pregnant women are encouraged to consume a minimum of 90 blood supplement tablets during pregnancy. The goal is to prevent anemia, which can adversely affect the health of the mother and baby.

3. Blood Supplement Tablets (TTD) Program for Adolescent Women Adolescent women are encouraged to take blood supplement tablets regularly to prevent anemia, support reproductive health, and prepare them for a healthy pregnancy in the future.

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<sup>12</sup> Prabowo Dwijo Anggoro, Head of the Astalanggar Health Center in Astanalanggar Village, Losari District, interview (Cirebon Regency, December 2, 2024. At 10.26 WIB)  
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4. Exclusive Breastfeeding Program for Infants Under 6 Months Infants less than six months old are encouraged to only get Breast Milk (ASI) as the sole source of nutrients. Exclusive breast milk supports optimal growth and boosts the baby's immune system.
5. MP-ASI Program for Children 6-23 Months Children aged 6-23 months are given Complementary Foods (MP-ASI) to supplement the nutrients that are not enough obtained from breast milk. This program helps ensure that children receive complete nutrition.
6. Handling of Malnutrition Toddlers Children under five with malnutrition conditions receive special services, including intensive malnutrition management. This step aims to restore the nutritional status of children so that they can return to health.
7. Toddler Growth and Development Monitoring Toddlers are monitored periodically to check their physical growth and mental development. This monitoring aims to detect early health or developmental problems.
8. Additional Nutrition for Undernourished Toddlers Toddlers with undernourished status get additional nutritional intake to prevent malnutrition and ensure optimal growth.
9. Complete Basic Immunization for Toddlers Toddlers are given complete basic immunizations to protect them from various dangerous infectious diseases.
10. Assistance and Referral for Stunting Toddlers Children who are stunted or at risk of stunting are provided with assistance and referrals to health services for further treatment. This aims to reduce the long-term impact of stunting.
11. The DEBEST Program is a collaboration between the TNI, the Health Office, Waled Hospital, and the Astanalanggar Health Center, especially in Tawang Sari Village. This program involves various parties to support the acceleration of handling public health problems, including child nutrition.

The entire program is designed to address various health and nutrition problems of the community, especially vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and adolescent girls. With focused interventions, it is hoped that it can improve the quality of public health and reduce *the prevalence of* nutritional problems such as stunting, anemia, and malnutrition. These programs also reflect a cross-sectoral approach and the active participation of various stakeholders.

Meanwhile, the midwife and PJ UKM of the Tegalgubug Health Center<sup>13</sup> explained that there is a stunting treatment program called BESTI ONCE (Stunting Free with Specific Interventions According to the Life Cycle). This program focuses on three main activities, namely: Besti Pregnant Women at the Forefront of the Guard, Besti Remaja Gerai Mamamia, and Besti Anak Teni Gesit. These three initiatives are carried out by the Tegalgubug Health Center, Cirebon Regency, to prevent stunting and improve public health, especially for pregnant women, adolescents, and children. These programs are designed to provide comprehensive education and intervention in addressing nutritional problems and supporting healthy development for future generations. The explanation related to the above is:

1. Besti Pregnant Women at the Front Line

Besti Pregnant Women Front Guard is a program aimed at mothers-to-be so that they can have a healthy pregnancy and give birth to babies who are free from stunting. This program provides education to pregnant women about the importance of eating a balanced nutritious diet, which includes enough protein, iron, folic acid, calcium, and vitamins. In addition, this program emphasizes regular monitoring of pregnant women's weight to ensure optimal fetal growth. Prevention of anemia, which is a major risk factor for stunting, is also emphasized, by providing information on iron-rich foods and the importance of supplementation if needed. One of the main focuses of the program is exclusive breastfeeding up to 6 months of age, which is essential to support the baby's development. This program also involves husbands to provide full support to their wives, as well as involving health cadres and medical personnel in accompanying pregnant women throughout pregnancy and childbirth. To ensure the success of the program, collaboration with various parties, such as health workers and nutritionists, is very necessary.

2. Besti Teen Mamamia Outlet

Besti Remaja Gerai Mamamia aims to increase the awareness of adolescents, especially young women, about the importance of preventing stunting from an early age. This program teaches adolescents about the causes and effects of stunting, as well as the importance of consuming balanced nutritious foods to prepare the body for a healthy pregnancy. The program also educates adolescents about the importance of pregnancy planning, including choosing the ideal age to get married as well as physical and mental preparation before becoming pregnant. One of the main goals of this program is the

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<sup>13</sup> Waroh. S. Bd, PJ UKM Tegalgubug Health Center, in Tegalgubug Village, Arjawinangun District, interview (Cirebon Regency, November 14, 2024. At 11.30 a.m.)

prevention of anemia in adolescents, which can be a major risk factor for stunting. In addition, adolescents who plan to become mothers are also given an understanding of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and its benefits for the baby's development. The role of parents and families in preventing stunting is also emphasized, especially in providing nutritious food and stimulating child development. This program involves the community to support stunting prevention efforts, by providing access to nutritious food, supporting immunization programs, and providing health education to the wider community. Cooperation with health workers, teachers, and community leaders is very important to ensure that this program runs well in each region.

### 3. Besti Kids Teni Agile

Besti Anak Teni Gesit is a program that focuses on handling children's nutritional status to prevent stunting. This program involves regular monitoring of children's nutritional status to detect malnutrition or stunting risk in children. If nutritional problems are found, the Tegalgubug Health Center immediately provides the necessary interventions, such as providing nutritious supplementary foods and vitamin supplements. In addition, this program also involves educating parents about the importance of a healthy and nutritious diet, as well as encouraging healthy living habits, such as exclusive breastfeeding and maintaining a clean environment. The health center collaborates with health workers, posyandu cadres, and community leaders to ensure that information about good nutrition can be well received by families. This program also plays a role in supporting child immunization and ensuring public access to nutritious food that can reduce the risk of stunting.

These three programs are mutually supportive with a comprehensive approach, which focuses on holistic nutrition prevention and intervention. The Tegalgubug Health Center emphasized the importance of cooperation with various parties to ensure the success of the program. Through education to the community, family involvement, and the provision of appropriate interventions to pregnant women, adolescents, and children, the Tegalgubug Health Center is committed to reducing the stunting rate in Cirebon Regency and creating a healthy, productive, and nutrition-free generation.

Based on the results of the research, both Astanalanggar Village and Tegalgubug Village have implemented various programs. However, the program in Astanalanggar Village has not been effective in its implementation due to several obstacles. These obstacles are related to a

lack of understanding of stunting, parenting is still not optimal, education is still low, and the economy is below average.

Not only that, Tegalbug Village also faces a number of challenges in the implementation of the BESTI program, which has an impact on the less optimal implementation of the program. In the Besti Remaja program, the coverage of anemia screening is not optimal because some students are not present at school and some forget to take blood tablets regularly. In the Besti Pregnant Women program, the obstacles found include low maternal knowledge about pregnancy, the rarity of health checks due to remote service locations and the lack of companions, as well as the unwillingness of pregnant women to take blood-boosting tablets due to side effects such as nausea. In addition, limited knowledge about balanced nutrition leads some pregnant women to experience chronic energy deficiency (KEK), and cases of high-risk pregnancies (resti) often go unreported. Cultural challenges, such as the belief that protein should not be consumed after childbirth, have exacerbated the situation. In the Besti Anak program, the main obstacles include the absence of mothers in bringing babies or toddlers to posyandu, lack of understanding of the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding, and minimal knowledge about complementary breastfeeding (MPASI). Therefore, collaborative efforts through community education and cross-sector support are needed to address these challenges and ensure the success of the program.

Although several policies have been implemented to tackle stunting, their effectiveness on the ground still needs to be evaluated, especially in rural areas that have their own challenges, such as lack of access to health facilities and low nutritional awareness among the community. The lack of coordination between related agencies and limited resources to implement these programs at the village level are one of the obstacles. In addition, social and economic factors, such as poverty and an unbalanced diet, also affect the success of existing policies.

Therefore, the success of stunting prevention depends on strong commitment and cooperation between village governments, health cadres, and the community, especially to parents. Through health cadres, the village government can ensure the adequacy of proper nutritional intake for children, considering that this has a great influence on their growth and development. The active involvement of parents in programs designed by the village government is very important for the success of this intervention, the village government in reducing stunting rates.

Reducing stunting rates in these villages requires a focused approach, such as improving nutritional quality, education for pregnant women and children under five, and more intensive health monitoring in areas with high stunting rates. On the other hand, villages with low stunting rates such as Tegalbugub Village need to be maintained by continuing programs that have proven effective in maintaining the nutritional health of their communities, such as providing nutritious food, routine counseling at posyandu, and optimal use of health services. This data-based approach allows stunting handling to be carried out more on target, by utilizing the strengths of villages that have succeeded in reducing stunting rates as a model for other villages that are still facing these challenges.

## CONCLUSION

The government has formulated a comprehensive policy to reduce stunting rates through various regulations and intervention programs. This policy, as stipulated in Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 and Cirebon Regent Regulation Number 25 of 2023, aims to accelerate stunting reduction with a convergent, comprehensive, integrative, and quality approach through cross-sector synergy. The main focus is to improve the nutritional status of the community, especially pregnant women, toddlers, and adolescent girls, in order to create a healthy, intelligent, and productive generation.

In Cirebon Regency, this policy is implemented through innovative programs such as DEBEST and BESTI ONCE, which focus on nutrition education and interventions. This program includes various activities, such as giving blood supplement tablets, monitoring nutritional status, immunization, and counseling on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and MP-ASI. The implementation involves health centers, health cadres, and the community to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the program. However, the implementation of this policy faces various challenges, especially in rural areas such as Astanalanggar Village and Tegalbugub Village. The main obstacles include low public understanding of stunting, suboptimal parenting, and limited access to health services. Although Tegalbugub Village shows better achievements than Astanalanggar Village, there is still room for improvement through intensive education and increased coordination between parties.

The success of stunting control requires a strong commitment and collaboration between the government, the community, and various stakeholders. This effort must be supported by increased education about the importance of nutrition and health, as well as better access to

health services. With a data-based approach and modelling the success of certain villages, it is hoped that this effort can produce a generation that is free from stunting and better prepared to face the future.

## **SUGGESTION**

Based on the results of research on stunting control efforts in Cirebon Regency, especially in Astanalanggar Village and Tegalbugub Village, several important recommendations need to be considered to increase the effectiveness of policies and programs that have been running. This study shows significant differences in program implementation and achievement of results between the two villages, signaling the need for a more targeted and integrated strategy. So the author gives suggestions, namely:

1. Increasing public understanding of stunting through comprehensive socialization and education needs to be carried out through various communication channels, involving community leaders and utilizing information technology to reach all levels of society. The educational materials that are loaded must include the causes, impacts, and strategies for stunting prevention in detail and easy to understand.
2. A thorough continuous monitoring and evaluation system must be implemented to measure the effectiveness of the interventions that have been carried out and identify the obstacles faced. Accurate and updated data is the basis for decision-making in improving stunting control strategies.
3. Strengthening coordination and collaboration between related agencies is crucial. Synergistic cooperation between the Health Office, Puskesmas, social institutions, and village governments must be maximized to ensure the consistency and effectiveness of the program. A clear and structured coordination mechanism needs to be established to avoid duplication of programs and ensure optimal distribution of resources.
4. An approach that focuses on areas with high stunting rates, such as Astanalanggar Village, needs to be implemented. More intensive and specific interventions should be given to the most vulnerable groups, taking into account the factors that cause stunting holistically, including economic aspects, education, and access to health services.
5. Community empowerment is the key to long-term success. The active participation of the community, especially the elderly, in stunting control programs must be maximized through training, coaching, and providing incentives. Increasing community capacity

in managing children's health and nutrition will increase the sustainability of the program.

6. The use of the success model from Tegalbug Village as a best practice needs to be considered. Programs that have proven effective in Tegalbug Village can be adapted and replicated in other villages taking into account their respective local contexts.
7. The preparation of specific and comprehensive Village Regulations (Perdes) regarding stunting prevention is highly recommended. This Regulation must include objectives, objectives, strategies, funding mechanisms, success indicators, as well as measurable monitoring and evaluation systems. The process of drafting the Regional Regulation must be participatory, involving all stakeholders to ensure mutual support and commitment in efforts to combat stunting.

Thus, stunting prevention efforts in Cirebon Regency can become more directed, effective, and sustainable. This approach is expected to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of the stunting control program.

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