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State instrumentalization village: A study on the implementation of the stunting program in Ngargosari village

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Abstract: The hopes and aspirations of Law No. 6/24 on Village autonomy has faced several problems and challenges. These problems and challenges arose when the village government had to undertake various delegated tasks assigned by the regency, provincial, and central governments. As a result, the village is preoccupied with delegated tasks assigned by supra-village authorities, straining its resources and budget. The shift in focus resulted the village government are unable to perform their main tasks and responsibilities. This situation is akin to the Village Head functioning as a state employee. Stunting is one of the assignment programs that causes various problems and instrumentalizes villages. This process involves mobilizing village institutions, human resources, and budgets to ensure the program's success. This study employed exploratory-qualitative approach to investigate the challenges arising from the stunting program's implementation in Ngargosari Village. The research informants included the village head, village officials, posyandu cadres, community leaders, and program beneficiaries. The data were gathered through in-depth interviews were validated and reconfirmed using Focus Group Discussions. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis was carried out to obtain findings related to village instrumentalization in the stunting program. The findings revealed that the stunting program's implementation involved mobilizing village institutions, resources, and budgets. The village government lacked bargaining power against supra-village policies, despite their alignment with local values and wisdom. The central government dictated the system, procedures, mechanisms, and methods for handling stunting in a centralized manner, disregarding local wisdom and the authority of village governments as outlined in Law Number 6 of 2014 on Villages. Consequently, the stunting program represents a form of village instrumentalization akin to the New Order era, with centralistic initiatives that relegate village heads to the role of state employees.

Keywords: stunting; state instrumentalization; local wisdom; centralized; village autonomy

1. Introduction

The Law No. 6/2014 on Villages has undertaken in its 10-year implementation and amended 2 times, which brought distinct phenomena. The initial implementation of this law gave hope to all stakeholders for the realization of a self sufficient, advanced and prosperous village. This belief is based on clear and strong village authority, namely authority based on the rights of origin and village-scale local authority. This implies that the villages have the potential to optimize the two inherent authorities to advance the village independently and improve community welfare. The law carries a mission to empower villages to become advanced, stronger, self sufficient and democratic. In other words, the village signifies values of resilience, independence, democracy, prosperity and progress (Eko et al., 2014).

In fact, villages are busy implementing sectoral programs starting from the district, provincial and central governments through delegated transferred authority to the village government. This is supported by a fiscal scheme where Village Funds sourced State Budget (APBN) received from Central Government. The allocation of Village Funds is an entry point for supra-village governments to impose sectoral policies on village governments. These policies have placed a burden on tasks assigned by supra-village governments, especially the central government.

Due to many assignments, the village government are unable to perform their main tasks and responsibilities. The village head, who are responsible as community caretaker or servant, is preoccupied with tasks that serve the interests and programs of the central government. These activities are akin to those of a state employee rather than a community servant, similar to how government workers often prioritize national interests over their role in serving and protecting their communities.

The modernist-developmental explains that the state builds while simultaneously destroying villages and advancing while also weakening them. Neoliberal agents, pragmatic politicians wielding influence, technocrats, academics, consultants, and the so-called “middle-class elites” support the modernist-developmental state, which effectively manipulates and weakens the villages (Tjahjoko et al., 2020). In this framework, central government sectoral programs are used as political tools to exert structured and covert control over villages. This is known as hegemonic policy; a policy imposed and is easily accepted by the community.

This study aims to examine the Stunting Program, a supra-village initiative imposed on the village government. Although many supra-village programs are assigned to village governments, this study focuses on the Stunting Program due to its significant impact on local officials, communities, and its substantial resources and funding. Stunting Program is an interesting phenomenon because it appears to be imposed and its context often seems irrelevant to local values. Stunting is an ambitious initiative aligned with World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines. However, the WHO’s indicators do not fully match the stunting metrics used in Indonesia, making them less relevant.

This program allows the central government to intervene with Village Heads and Village Apparatus as agents for stunting prevention. Because stunting prevention is a mandatory program from the government, further guidance is needed to enhance village officials understanding so that the program can run well (Rahmadi, 2022). It is therefore crucial to continuously update the understanding and knowledge of Village Heads—who are responsible for implementing the program—particularly regarding stunting prevention.

Normatively, the government has established a stunting prevention policy through Presidential Regulation No. 42/2013 concerning the National Movement on Accelerating Nutrition Improvement in the first 1.000 days of life. Several actions needed to prevent wasting and reduce stunting include identifying the program’s target community, conducting routine assessments, improving the knowledge of stunting, and expanding stunting prevention activities. It is crucial to strengthen assessment of the stunting to effectively and efficiently plan, design, and monitor the program. Additionally, incorporating linear growth assessment into routine child health services

is necessary to provide critical, real-time information for target setting and progress monitoring.

Integrating nutrition programs into health-promotion strategies and strengthen service-delivery capacity to prevent acute malnutrition. Promoting awareness campaigns and promotions about the effects of malnutrition, including recognizing that stunting, wasting, and micronutrient deficiencies can occur in the same child, family and community, and ensure services to overcome undernutrition are implemented more coherently (RI, 2022).

To support health sector programs, the government has established a new institution called Community-Based Health and Nutrition Project (PKGBM), aimed at preventing stunting. PKGBM was created to enhance the comprehensiveness and sustainability of stunting prevention efforts in specific areas. The government has also stressed the need for cross-Ministry/Institution coordination in addressing stunting.

At the village level, this effort involves forming institutions led by the village head or Lurah (the term for Village Head in the Special Region of Yogyakarta). The Lurah acts as both a recipient of the mandate and an agent for implementing the centrally designed stunting program. In this role, the Village Head has limited discretion to delegate tasks and essentially functions as a state employee. This arrangement reflects a balance of interests between the Village Head and the central government (Muzaqqi, 2017).

Research on stunting from the village government perspective is extensive, particularly highlighting the positive aspects of stunting programs. Many studies have showcased successful implementations in certain villages as best practices for reducing stunting rates (Widyastuti et al., 2022). Additionally, research has examined the role of Village Funds in stunting reduction (Norsanti, 2021; Supriyadi et al., 2022) and various strategies for addressing stunting (Priyono, 2020). There is also significant research on stunting prevention programs from a governance perspective, including studies on collaborative governance (Afandi et al., 2023; Adji Suradji Muhammad, 2016; Geiyono and Muhammad, 2018; Muhammad et al., 2017). Other studies have evaluated the impact of Village Fund policies on stunting reduction (Prihatini and Subanda, 2020). Moreover, research by Herawati and Sunjaya (2022) has demonstrated that stunting program policies are effectively converging towards reducing stunting at the local level.

Refer to previous studies on stunting prevention and reduction programs, this study seeks to explore gaps by focusing on the negative aspects of the stunting program and its effects on village governance. While extensive research has highlighted the benefits of these programs, their potential drawbacks and impacts on village administration remain largely unexplored. The proverb “no ivory is without cracks” aptly illustrates the situation, as every policy has both positive and negative aspects. Although the stunting reduction policy aims to improve human dignity and living standards, its universal implementation requires all villages, even those without stunting problems, to participate. This universal mandate imposes additional burdens on village heads, who must manage the program’s demands even in areas where stunting is not a significant issue.

Government policies inherently involve both positive and negative dimensions, or pros and cons, even when their objectives are well-intentioned. To achieve a

balanced perspective on policies, including stunting programs, research should examine both their positive and negative aspects. This comprehensive analysis can provide valuable feedback to the government, aiding in more effective management of stunting in diverse and pluralistic villages. Given that policy implementation in practice often faces challenges and may not always align with theoretical expectations (Elwan et al., 2022; S et al., 2020). Therefore, in studying public policy implementation, it is crucial to identify and understand the variables or factors that influence it. Similarly, researchers observe that the implementation of the stunting program reflects state dominance, or state instrumentalization, which diminishes the villages' bargaining power in these relationships.

Substantially, the relationship between the state and villages in Indonesia has been marked by ongoing challenges and inconsistencies. Despite numerous strategies and policies for village development, efforts have frequently faltered, like “sand castles” eroded by the tide. This trend persisted with the implementation of Law No. 6/2014, which, despite initial enthusiasm, encountered significant difficulties and resulted in the imposition of centralistic policies. The introduction of Village Law and the allocation of village funds initially generated excitement among stakeholders, but quickly became tools for the state to assert control under the pretext of guidance, coordination, and oversight. As the state exerts its authority, it disrupts village life by controlling and managing village affairs—overseeing workers, collecting taxes, and ensuring security (Befu, 1971).

Conceptually, the state's intervention in village life has been described by experts such as Clifford Geertz. Geertz argues that the state, characterized by arbitrary, cruel, hierarchical, and rigid tendencies, imposes itself on the “patriarchal communism” of village society. While it feeds on and occasionally disrupts this social structure, it never fully integrates or transforms it. (Geertz, 1976). The state, an external force imposed from outside, continually tries to absorb and integrate the village but primarily succeeds in exerting oppression. It intervenes through “state administration,” imposing policies and regulations based on its own needs and interests

The Village Law was designed to promote village self-sufficiency, but in practice, its intent has been undermined by centralistic policies that reduce villages to “agents” of the central government. As stated in article 19, the village authority shall include:

- a. Authority based on the rights of origin;
- b. Village-scale local authority;
- c. Authority assigned by the Government, Provincial Government, or Regency/City Government; and
- d. Other powers assigned by the Government, Provincial Government, or Regency/City Government in accordance with the provisions of the legislations.

The article above states that Village Government based on its original autonomy has authority based on the rights of origin and village-scale local authority. In addition, the village also has authority assigned by the Central, Provincial, and Regency/City Governments. This aspect of “assignment” opens the door for the central government to intervene in village governance.

Ideally, a village is more than just a stretch of land or an administrative unit; it is a distinct community with its own dynamics, not merely a region to be controlled by the central government. A village is not merely a local community, an empty plot of

land awaiting development, or a marketplace for projects. It is a distinct entity—a “small country” with its own territory, authority, resources, local institutions, and social fabric.

The state finds it easy to subdue villages, often transforming into an authoritarian force that imposes policies misaligned with the villagers’ aspirations. This coercion is frequently masked by a persuasive approach, leading the community to accept it willingly, resulting in the central government’s hegemony over the village.

Hegemony derives from the Greek, *hēgemonia*, which refers to the dominance (leadership) of a city-state over another city-state and preponderant position of one state over others. The concept of hegemony is widely adopted to explain the domination of the state over regions and villages in every aspect of life. In cases of hegemony, villagers may feel comfortable and consciously accept the control imposed upon them, even though this acceptance often leaves them disadvantaged and oppressed.

In his book *Understanding Social Theory* (2020), Bagong Suyanto, Gramsci, divided hegemony into three types, one of which is minimal hegemony. At this stage, hegemony rests on ideological unity of the economic, political, and intellectual elites, that goes hand in hand with the reluctance of any mass interference in state life. This dynamic gives rise to the concept of democratic corporatism or neo corporatism, where state policy-making is engineered to ensure societal obedience and submission. (Baccaro, 2014).

In the traditional corporatism model, two strategies are employed to foster societal submission and obedience, namely segmentary and bifrontal methods. The segmentary method involves the state creating external organizations (extra-state) with the intent to control and dominate them. This approach is evident in how many central programs are accompanied by the formation of institutions designed to exert control. The bifrontal method, on the other hand, is used by the state to disseminate programs and ideas that foster community loyalty (Permadi and Rasminingsih, 2023; Triyanto Purnomo Raharjo et al., 2023). This latter method is used by the government to exert control over villages through programs presented as poverty alleviation, including those targeting stunting reduction.

2. Materials and methods

This study explores the phenomenon of village nationalization through the implementation of the stunting program, which strains village government resources and creates societal dynamics. An exploratory research approach was chosen to examine various aspects of the stunting program in Ngargosari Village. This qualitative study aims to describe the process of village instrumentalization and identify the factors driving it. Qualitative methods are used to reveal the underlying meanings of data, understand complex social interactions, and uncover relationship patterns (Sugiyono, 2013).

Denzin and Lincoln (2018) explained that quantitative research is interpretive practices that examines an object into a series of interpretations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, and memos used to interpret a phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln, n.d.). This approach was chosen because it is relevant to the

research objective, namely to analyze the process of nationalization through a stunting reduction program at the village level. The subjects and informants in this study were village heads and village officials, driving cadres, community leaders and program recipients.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions with village stakeholders, including beneficiaries. Then, the collected data is analyzed (Miles et al., 2014). Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model, which involves stages of data collection, reduction, presentation, verification, and conclusion formulation. This process is complemented by comparing findings with previous studies to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the stunting program's impact on village instrumentalization.

3. Results and discussion

Presidential Regulation No. 72/2021 on the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction defines stunting as the impaired growth and development that children experience from inadequate fetal development through infancy and childhood. A key indicator of stunting is a child's height to not grow according his potential due to chronic nutritional deficiencies. In Indonesia, the approach to addressing stunting involves two interventions: specific and sensitive nutrition interventions.

Specific interventions are factors directly related to health, including: food intake, maternal nutrition, disease. While sensitive interventions address indirect stunting causes related to health issues, including clean drinking water and sanitation, nutrition and health services, education, behavior change and access to nutritious food (Ministry of PPN/Bappenas, 2018). The stunting indicator, based on WHO standards, is directly applied and practiced across all villages in Indonesia. As a result, babies born in Indonesia often have different physical appearances compared to those born in Western societies. This leads to Indonesian babies having different average lengths compared to their counterparts in Western countries. For instance, newborns in Europe generally have different lengths than those born in Indonesia.

The stunting program is based on the assumption that Indonesia continues to face significant nutritional problems that severely impact the quality of human resources. One major nutritional issue in Indonesia is the high prevalence of stunting and wasting in toddlers, as well as anemia and chronic energy deficiency (KEK) among pregnant women. Malnutrition among pregnant women can cause Low Birth Weight (LBW) and contribute to stunting in toddlers. However, since malnutrition and hunger are not prevalent in all areas, applying this program universally across villages can be misguided. This often results in the imposition of stunting indicators that may not align with the specific needs of each local context.

To reinforce stunting policies, the government introduced a series of centralistic measures. Stunting management became a national priority, highlighted as an Output Indicator in the 2015–2019 National Action Plan for Food and Nutrition. This emphasis made it crucial for villages to implement stunting interventions at the local level. With the Village Fund, as outlined in Government Regulation No. 60/2014, villages can use these funds for governance, development, and community empowerment. However, the central government's focus on stunting has influenced

how Village Funds are managed, often leading village governments to align their policies with the stunting program, sometimes at the expense of local deliberation processes.

Policy intervention in village planning is evident through the Regulation of the Ministry of Villages and Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration No. 19/2017, which outlines the priority use of Village Funds for stunting management programs. Additionally, the Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Villages, and Transmigration issued Regulation No. 7/2021, which emphasizes that Village Funds should be allocated to national priority programs, including stunting prevention, to promote healthy and prosperous villages.

The enactment of these regulations has significantly diminished the village government's autonomy in managing Village Funds. These regulations impose specific guidelines and constraints, effectively steering the allocation and use of funds. Consequently, the village government is often "played" by the central government, particularly through the role of cross-sector ministries involved in stunting interventions. For example, in Ngargosari Village, stunting-related activities include the construction or rehabilitation of health posts (Poskesdes/Polindes) and community health posts (Posyandu), nutrition counseling, provision of healthy food, healthcare for pregnant and lactating mothers, sanitation and clean water infrastructure, MCK construction, and training for community health cadres. As a result, the village becomes preoccupied with these central government tasks, which deplete its manpower and budget, while its original autonomous responsibilities are neglected. This diminishes the village's ability to exercise its authority independently.

To support these programs, substantial funding is required from the Village Fund scheme. From 2015 to 2023, the central government allocated a total of 538.9 trillion IDR to Village Funds, with an average of 993.8 million IDR per village in 2023 (Ministry of Finance, 2022). Of this, 43 trillion IDR was allocated specifically for stunting prevention from 2019 to 2022. This significant funding is believed to positively impact stunting reduction efforts. Therefore, continued and targeted interventions are necessary to enhance the effectiveness of these funds in decreasing stunting rates nationwide.

Based on these assumptions, the central government continues to increase the use of Village Funds with the aim of accelerating stunting eradication. However, in Ngargosari Village, Samigaluh District, Kulon Progo Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, the implementation of the stunting program has revealed unique dynamics. These dynamics are influenced by the complex social structure and governance characteristics of the village community. As noted by Fajri, village communities exhibit diverse and unique traits, both in terms of social structure and governance dynamics (Maulana et al., 2023). Additionally, villages in Java, particularly in Yogyakarta, experience distinct socio-cultural dynamics, leading to the following phenomena:

- 1) Local characteristics of stunting programs often diverge from their intended context-specific applications.

There is a fundamental difference in terminology: "stunting" refers to delayed growth or a short and thin body, with physical characteristics such as a birth length of less than 47 centimeters. In contrast, locally, the term often used is "malnutrition" or

“nutritional deficiency,” with severe cases including “hunger edema” and “kuntet” (in Javanese). The birth length criterion of 47 centimeters aligns with Western standards, but native Indonesians, who are ethnically Malays, generally have smaller physical statures compared to Westerners or Europeans as shown in the following **Table 1**.

Table 1. Comparison of stunting standards and criteria of the Ministry of Health vs WHO.

Standard/criteria	Age	Kemenkes RI	WHO
Weight according to General (BB/U)	0–60 bln	2.1–12.4	2–12.2
Height by General (TB/U)	0–60 bln	44.2–96.1	45–95.2
Weight by Height (BB/TB)	0–60 bln	5.9–65 cm 17.1–120 cm	6.1–67 cm 17.3–120.2
Growth Period Index (IMT)	0–60 bln	10.2–12.0	10.4–12.3

Source: Data processed, 2024.

In Ngargosari Village, issues have arisen with the stunting criteria, particularly when a baby born with a length of less than 47 centimeters was initially classified as stunted. However, subsequent monitoring during the First 1000 Days of Life (1000 HPK) revealed normal development. Further investigation revealed that this case was due to genetic factors, as both parents were of small stature. This indicates that the WHO’s stunting criteria may not fully apply to the Indonesian context and highlight the need for local contextual adjustments. Additionally, in 2023, 20 babies were initially identified as stunted, but after re-evaluation, only 19 met the criteria. This underscores that the accuracy of stunting criteria is not always perfect.

2) Stunting perceived as a social disgrace

In Javanese cultural tradition, having a child with stunting can be seen as a social disgrace. The label of stunting often brings shame to the family, causing them to feel embarrassed and isolated from their neighbors and community. This stigma can lead to sadness, withdrawal, and distress for the parents, particularly when visited by Posyandu Cadres or Health Center staff. In some cases, such conditions are even perceived as signs of divine disfavor or sin, leading to significant social discomfort and unrest within the village.

In Ngargosari Village, where Javanese socio-cultural values are deeply ingrained, the diagnosis of stunting is heavily stigmatized. When a baby is identified as stunted by a team of Posyandu Cadres and health center staff, it often leads to significant emotional distress for the family. For example, Tini’s family, whose baby was diagnosed with stunting, experienced profound sadness and isolation. Every visit from a Posyandu officer was met with tears and a sense of being cursed. The family became reclusive, avoiding interactions with neighbors and even stunting officers. This stigma surrounding stunting not only affects the families but also causes unrest within the community, reflecting broader issues with how stunting is perceived and managed. Even before the stunting program, similar issues related to malnutrition and the societal reactions to it were prevalent.

3) Village government as an agent and extension of the central government

The stunting program exemplifies centralistic governance, turning villages into mere instruments of central authority. This approach transforms the village

government into an extension of the central administration. Each year, the Minister of Villages and Development of Disadvantaged Regions issues regulations specifying how Village Funds should be allocated, including for stunting programs. This centralized control undermines the Village Law's principle, which mandates that village planning be driven by local deliberations at the village and hamlet levels.

The stunting policy is a top-down directive based on WHO guidelines, with no community input required, and it positions the village government merely as an executor. In Ngargosari Village, the government has complied by allocating budget, staffing a cadre team, and setting up institutions as per central government instructions. However, for the local community, the stunting program is less urgent compared to other priorities like improving infrastructure to boost economic growth and increase residents' income. Nonetheless, the Ngargosari Village Government must divert significant funds and resources to support the stunting program, despite its lower priority for the community.

4) The village head acts as the state

The village head occupies a contradictory position: as both the guardian of the village community and an implementer of central policies. This conflict stems from the delegation of authority and the imposition of external mandates. Lacking significant bargaining power, the village government often has little choice but to comply with central directives. This compliance frequently involves allocating village funds to support these externally mandated programs. Consequently, the village head often resembles a bureaucratic official, prioritizing adherence to central policies over serving as a true advocate for the community.

The Ngargosari Village Head, tasked with implementing the stunting eradication program, has limited autonomy and no option to refuse. As the designated program leader, the village head is responsible for securing and managing the necessary funds and resources to execute the stunting initiative.

5) Imposed Program

The stunting program, based on WHO guidelines, often clashes with local Indonesian contexts, leading to significant challenges. It appears that the government is prioritizing international standards over the needs and realities of its own people. This is evident in the top-down mobilization of resources, budgets, and institutions, which reflects a Western-centric approach rather than accommodating local wisdom. The Central Government's reluctance to adapt or learn from past failures of similar forced programs highlights a disconnect between policy implementation and local realities.

The stunting program faces several challenges when applied to the Indonesian village context. The program's nomenclature and approach often do not align with local realities, leading to implementation issues. Budgetary constraints further exacerbate these problems, as village governments are compelled to prioritize stunting policies despite other pressing needs. Institutional aspects also suffer due to forced mobilization of human resources without adequate funding, creating additional field-level difficulties. For instance, one cadre reported that during field visits, there was an expectation to provide gifts or souvenirs to families affected by stunting. With no budget allocated for these items, cadres had to use their own money, highlighting the program's disconnect from practical implementation needs and local conditions.

The implementation of the stunting reduction program in Ngargosari Village has revealed several persistent issues, reflecting the complexity and dynamism of the village context. This situation underscores the need for a nuanced approach. Previous research highlights several challenges: cultural factors and community beliefs that affect program effectiveness (Aminullah and Rini, 2023), low levels of community participation (Prabasari et al., 2021), and insufficient capacity among village leadership and officials (Indra and Khoirunurrofik, 2022). These factors collectively suggest that central government intervention alone is insufficient to ensure the success of stunting reduction efforts. A more context-sensitive approach, addressing local conditions and involving community input, is essential for effective program implementation.

To facilitate state instrumentalization, various mechanisms are employed to integrate central policies into local governance. These mechanisms serve as entry points for the central government to exert influence and control over village administration. The following **Table 2** outlines these key aspects:

Table 2. Instrumentalization of village for stunting program.

Regulatory Aspects	Institutional Aspects	Budgetary Aspects
1) Presidential Regulation No. 72/2021 on the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction to Villages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PKK (Family Welfare Program) Administrators and Activists • Human Development Cadres 	
2) Regulation of the Minister of Villages No. 13/2020, on Priority for the Use of Village Funds in 2021.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Village Houses (RDS) • Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team (TPPS) • Village/Local Assistants/PKH Facilitators • Extension Workers • Midwives/Healthcare Workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sectoral Assistance • Stunting Funds from KDPDTT
3) Regulation of the Minister of Villages No. 7/2021, on Priority for the Use of Village Funds in 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posyandu/BKB/Nutrition/Jumantik Cadres • Early Childhood Education Teachers • Family Planning Cadres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some Village Funds • Third-Party Assistance • Other Funds (individual)
4) Kulon Progo Regent Regulation concerning Stunting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village Cadres • Family Assistants • Village Consultative Body (BPD) • Village Head/Village Officials • Hamlet Heads 	

Source: Data processed, 2024.

The table highlights how regulatory and policy frameworks effectively enable the central government to implement various programs in villages. For instance, Presidential Regulation No. 72/2021 on the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction establishes guidelines for village institutions involved in stunting management. Additionally, the Minister of Villages and Development of Disadvantaged Regions has issued regulations prioritizing the allocation of Village Funds to support stunting control initiatives. These policies provide the central government with significant leverage in directing village resources and activities towards stunting reduction efforts.

In terms of legal hierarchy, higher laws and regulations set the framework that must be adhered to by lower laws and regulations. In the context of stunting policy, this hierarchy starts with Presidential Regulation No. 72/2021, followed by Ministerial Regulations regarding Village Fund usage, Regional Regulations on stunting institutions, and finally, Village Head regulations for establishing the Village Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team (TPPS). This sequence illustrates the structured

approach to implementing stunting policies. However, the issue is not just the delegation of authority from the Central Government to villages, but also the detailed regulations governing village institutions and Village Funds. These regulations, while intended to ensure effective stunting control, can also be perceived as central government intervention, potentially undermining the village’s autonomy and its right to manage its own resources and governance.

The central government has mandated the creation of institutions at various administrative levels to combat stunting, leading Ngargosari Village to form a dedicated Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team (TPPS). This effort mobilizes a broad network of village institutions, including PKK administrators, Human Development Cadres, Healthy Village Houses (RDS) representatives, and various health and community support roles such as Village Companions, Midwife Counselors, Posyandu Cadres, Paud (Early Childhood Education) Teachers, KB (Family Planning) Cadres, and Family Companions. This extensive institutional involvement reflects the comprehensive approach needed to tackle stunting within the village’s unique context. **Figure 1** below shows the character of the structure of handling stunting in Indonesia

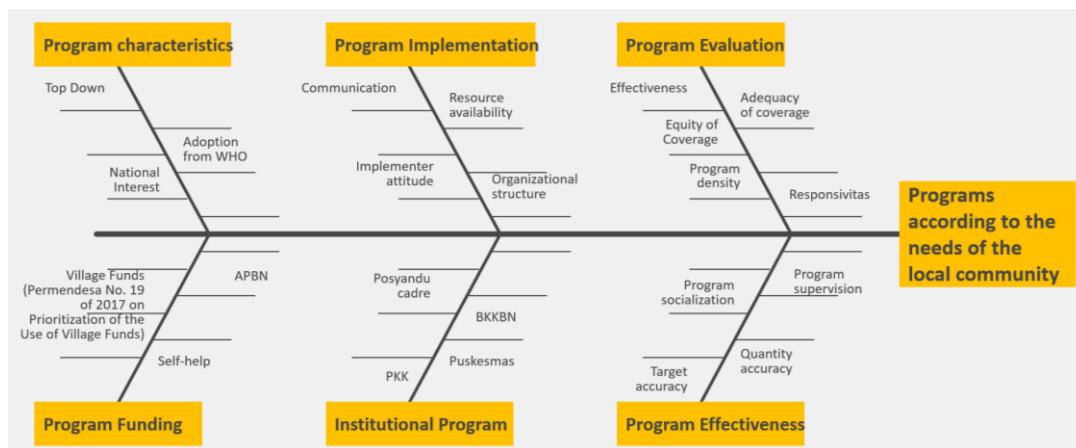


Figure 1. Structural characteristics of stunting programs in Indonesia.

Source: Data processed, 2024.

In the context of instrumentalization, the stunting program presents challenges for the target community, program implementation team, and village government. The community often views stunting as a social disgrace, causing stigma for families with affected children. The implementation team, despite their crucial role, faces inadequate compensation, receiving only IDR 100,000 per month despite the demanding nature of their work. For the village government, the focus on stunting diverts substantial human resources and budget from other critical areas that could directly enhance residents’ income and welfare.

4. Conclusion

Based on the practice of nationalization in the implementation of the stunting reduction and prevention program in Ngargosari Village, it can be concluded as follows:

- 1) The centralization of policies for accelerating stunting reduction in villages has overlooked Indonesia’s diverse local values and contexts.

- 2) The government has imposed a substantial mobilization of both material and human resources on villages to enforce the success of the stunting reduction and acceleration program.
- 3) The government has appropriated the Village Fund budget, which is meant for village governance, development, and community empowerment, by prioritizing its use for stunting reduction efforts.
- 4) Centralistic policies create challenges at the lower levels of government, leading to socio-cultural issues and complications in local implementation.

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