# Implementation of Government Policy in Efforts to Handle Stunting in North Bolaang Mongondow Regency

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## Abstract

*Stunting is a health problem that is a national priority. North Bolaang Mongondow Regency faces significant challenges in handling stunting due to limited resources and coordination between institutions. This research aims to analyze the implementation of stunting management policies in this region using a qualitative descriptive approach. The research results show that the success of policy implementation is influenced by communication factors, resources, disposition and bureaucratic structure. This study also provides recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of stunting management programs through a community-based approach and strengthening cross-sector collaboration.*

**Keywords:** *Policy implementation, stunting, North Bolaang Mongondow, public health, cross-sector collaboration.*

## INTRODUCTION

Policy implementation is a continuing process of policy formulation, starting from problem identification to implementation. Policy implementation clearly depends on hierarchical power and is in the hands of decision makers to achieve predetermined goals. This implementation stage is very important because it is the process where the policies that have been formulated come into effect. Implemented decisions become a guide for the government and are then presented to the community to implement. (Nurva & Maharani, 2023)

Policy implementation in general is the application of rules by actors who have responsibility for implementing the policy. Actors who have influence in implementation are specifically bureaucratic employees. In the implementation of policy implementation, it appears that the behavior of the implementers and organizational culture are also determining. (Sahroji et al., 2022)

Policy implementation is one of the things where the policy is translated into action with the aim of solving common problems. This implementation stage is specifically a strategy in

implementing a policy from a government organization to achieve a goal that is more effective than the previous process (Agustino & Eko, 2022). Policy implementation or implementation must have a management strategy in the program implementation process, clear content and context in implementation, as well as procedures that will be implemented to avoid failure of the policy implementation itself. Implementation is one of the demands for government officials to have networks such as stakeholders and other groups to be able to implement policies together, so that the policies implemented have a big influence when implemented or implemented. (Anggara Setya Saputra et al., 2022)

Strategic plans in implementing policies must attempt to look at the various conditions and environments that exist in society. This effort really needs to be done to see how the condition of the policy target group can be analyzed comprehensively to avoid various possibilities that cause the policy to not be implemented well as intended. One of the policy implementations that is currently receiving attention is the stunting prevention policy (Sunaryo et al., 2022). The Indonesian government continues to strive to overcome the problems of stunting and malnutrition, which are serious problems and must be handled systematically and structured, from the national level to the village and sub-district levels. Currently, the stunting rate in Indonesia is quite high, reaching 24.4 percent, although this figure is still below the standards set by WHO. (Ilham Nur Hanifan Maulana et al., 2023)

Based on data from the North Bolaaang Mongondow district government through the Ollot Community Health Center, the highest number of stunting reached 46. Followed by the Bolangitang Community Health Center with 38, Tuntung 36, Mokoditek 34, Bohabak and Sangkub 33, Bintauna 11, Sang Kunciang 9, Boroko 3, Bintauna Pantai, Buko, Biontong respectively. 2 cases each. Positive achievements occurred again in 2021, succeeding in reducing the stunting prevalence rate in Bolmut Regency to 1.61 percent. The Bolmut Health Service has again conducted research in 2022, the number of cases in Bolmut was 115 children with a figure of 2.21 percent. Looking at this data means that the regional government has succeeded in achieving the stunting target in the RPJMD of North Bolaang Mongondow Regency for 2018-2023, namely at 10 percent. and supporting the Central Government's stunting target in the 2020-2024 RPJMN, namely 14 percent. (Hermawati & Sastrawan, 2020)

Stunting, or the condition of failure to thrive due to chronic malnutrition, is a health problem that has a long-term impact on an individual's quality of life and the productivity of an area. In Indonesia, stunting is a national priority issue, including in North Bolaang Mongondow Regency (Pormes et al., 2023). Data shows that the prevalence of stunting in this region is still above the threshold set by the World Health Organization (WHO). Therefore, implementing stunting management policies is one of the regional government's strategic agendas. This research aims to analyze the implementation of local government policies in handling stunting, identify inhibiting factors, and offer solutions to increase policy effectiveness. Thus, this research can contribute to the development of better public health policies at the local level. (Folensino et al., 2023)

## RESEARCH METHODS

This type of research uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a research method based on problem formulation and research objectives. This research focuses on the stunting policy

implementation model. Qualitative research aims to find out the implementation model for stunting management policies in North Bolmong Regency. This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews with local government officials, health workers and communities involved in stunting management programs; field observation; and analysis of related documents.

Data were analyzed using a thematic approach to identify main patterns and themes in policy implementation. The data obtained was analyzed inductively. The collected data was analyzed by looking for naturally emerging patterns, themes and meanings related to the implementation of stunting policies. Researchers used a qualitative descriptive approach to interpret and provide rich explanations of the data collected. The results of this analysis are in the form of in-depth descriptions, theories developed based on data, or a holistic picture of the phenomenon being studied. Next, the final process is drawing conclusions. (Agustianti et al., 2022)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Indonesian government's efforts to handle national stunting are reflected in the priority programs in the 2020-2024 RPJMN (National Medium Term Development Plan), with the prevalence of stunting falling by 14%. This target has not been met, where in 2023 the stunting rate will still be at 21.5% (*healthy my country*, 2024). However, since 2018 the national stunting rate has decreased, although not much and has reached the target. (Purwanti et al., 2022)

Stunting is a serious problem for human resource development. According to Khairani (2020), stunting is not only a problem of impaired physical growth, but also causes children to become sick easily, apart from that there is also interference with brain and intelligence development, so that stunting is a big threat to the quality of human resources in Indonesia. (Nuramalia et al., 2020)

Handling stunting in Indonesia is a comprehensive effort involving various parties and sectors, from the central government to villages. These efforts include specific interventions related to health and nutrition, as well as sensitive interventions related to environmental, social and economic factors. Despite the challenges, various policies and programs that have been implemented have shown positive results, and continue to be improved to achieve the target of lower stunting prevalence in the future. multisectoral approach and involving central, regional and community governments. This policy sets a target to reduce the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia to 14% by 2024. (Wididiati et al., 2022)

Implementation of stunting management policies and programs in Indonesia is not only carried out at the central level, but also at the regional level through regional action plans. Local governments at the provincial, district and village levels play an important role in adapting national programs to local conditions. They are also tasked with forming a Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team whose function is to coordinate programs at the local level and optimize resource utilization. (Herawati & Sunjaya, 2022)

Various kinds of derivative policy products are implemented in various districts/cities throughout Indonesia to reduce or even eliminate stunting rates. In North Sulawesi province down to the district level, various innovations regarding the prevention and

management of stunting can be seen in existing programs. Indonesia's target to reduce the stunting rate by 2022 is around 14%, in fact it is inversely proportional to the conditions in the province of North Sulawesi. (Gitasavitri et al., 2024)

For example, this can be seen in the following table:

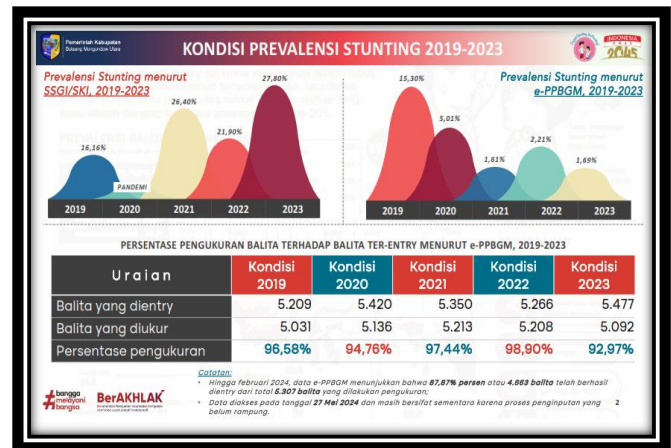**Table 1.1** Prevalence of Stunting in North Sulawesi 2023, (SKI, 2023)

| No. | Age | Stunting (%) |
|-----|-----|--------------|
| 1. | 0-23 Months | 14.6 |
| 2. | 0-59 Months | 14.8 |
| 3. | 5-12 Years | 12.2 |
| 4. | 13-15 Years | 16.6 |
| 5. | 16-18 Years | 20.1 |

Conditions according to the national target in North Sulawesi can only be reflected in children aged 5-12 years with a presentation of 12.2, while vulnerable ages 0-23 months, and 0-59 months as ages 1,000 HPK are above 14.00%. On the other hand, according to the North Sulawesi Indonesian Nutrition Status Survey (SSGI) in 2023, overall stunting has been successful, with a prevalence of 12.37%. North Bolaang Mongondow Regency, as part of North Sulawesi province, in 2022 contributed 2.21% to the accumulation of stunting in the province (North Sulawesi Province, 2022). (Aminah et al., 2024)

The Indonesian government's commitment to handling stunting is a strategic and integrated step that reflects serious efforts to overcome chronic nutritional problems that affect children's growth and development. The government has set a target to reduce stunting prevalence to 14% by 2024 as part of its national health development vision. This target is the basis for policies in various sectors, both at the central and regional levels. (Miswan, 2022)

Regional governments are instructed to include stunting management programs in regional development planning and budgeting, as well as allocate budgets specifically for related activities. This includes the integration of stunting management programs in the RPJMD and the involvement of village officials in efforts to prevent and handle stunting. (Melisa et al., 2022)

North Bolaang Mongondow has seriously made efforts to deal with stunting since 2019 with the issuance of Regent Regulation number 18 concerning *Efforts to Prevent and Reduce Stunting*. Since this serious effort began, the regional government claims to have succeeded in reducing the amount of stunting. Based on e-PPGBM data, in 2019, the prevalence of stunting which reached 15.30% has decreased in 2022 to 2.21% (Prasetyo et al., 2023). This illustrates that there has been an 85.54% reduction in the number of stunting that has been overcome, if we take a 100% reduction in the benchmark of a reduction of 15.30% to 2.21%. On the other hand, SKI (Indonesian Health Survey) data reveals that stunting in North Bolaang Mongondow Regency has increased, namely as follows:



*Figure 1.1 Prevalence of Stunting in 2019-2023*

Based on the research findings above, it shows that the existing implementation aspects of stunting management carried out by local governments have a strategic role in efforts to handle stunting at the local level. They are responsible for implementing national policies into concrete actions on the ground, taking into account the specific conditions and needs in each region. (Taofik et al., 2024)

Various efforts were also continued with the issuance of Regent's Decree number 447 of 2022 concerning the Determination of Mairu Molihut Stunting Innovations in Handling and Accelerating Stunting Reduction in the District. North Bolaang Mongondow. Mairu Molihuto stunting is a form of innovation by the district regional government. North Bolaang Mongondow for handling stunting. Mairu molihuto itself comes from the Kaidipang language which means 'let's work together'. Based on this understanding, Mairo Molihuto stunting aims at a joint movement to accelerate the reduction of stunting. This innovation is then often referred to with just two words 'molihuto stunting. Molihuto stunting in this research uses 4 indicators based on Edward III's theory, namely: Communication, Resources, disposition and bureaucratic structure. (Azis et al., 2023)

Overall, the success of implementing the stunting policy model really depends on how these four factors: communication, resources, apparatus attitudes, and bureaucratic structure are managed and integrated in the policy implementation process (Oktarina et al., 2022). A deep understanding of these factors will help identify areas that need improvement and ensure that stunting management policies can achieve the desired results. Policy implementation according to Edward III's theory emphasizes four important variables that influence the successful implementation of stunting management policies in North Bolaang Mongondow district. These four variables are:

**1. Communication**

Policy information regarding stunting has been disseminated through various media, such as posters, radio and social media. However, there are still obstacles in public understanding, especially in remote areas. Many families do not understand the importance of nutrition in the First 1,000 Days of Life (HPK), which is a critical period in preventing stunting. (Yusnita et al., 2024)

Findings in the field show that the implementation of the Molihuto stunting model in North Bolaang Mongondow has communication characteristics that place the village government as the main link

between the local government and the community. This creates a communication pattern that tends to move from top to bottom, or what is known as top-down. In this model, instructions and information from the regional government are passed on to the community through village or sub-district government intermediaries. The main features used in conveying this information include joint meetings and circulars issued by the regional government. The communication pattern above as shown by the results of the interview with the Head of East Bolangitan District, Mr. YB, is that:

*"The communication pattern is through interviews with cadres and communities whose families suffer from stunting, because cadres are the officers closest to the community, and families are the people who interact directly in handling stunting."*

YB's opinion is in line with what was expressed by KTU Biontong Community Health Center, YM's mother regarding communication patterns, who said that:

"…*From the regional government to the Working Group, they program stunting activities at posyandu in the form of letter notifications, the regional government receives monthly reports through the health service, the health service receives reports from the puskesmas through posyandu activities, "Because so far the implementation of activities is running well in accordance with the stunting intervention plan that has been carried out by officers and across sectors."*

Based on the results of the interview above, it shows that the elements involved in this top-down communication model include Regional Government Organizations, Village/District Governments, and the community. The regional government acts as the main authority that makes decisions and sets policies, while the village/district government acts as an intermediary that conveys information and instructions to the community (KONAY et al., 2022). In this framework, society is positioned more as a target group that receives direction rather than as an active participant in the decision-making process.

The top-down communication model in handling stunting is a communication approach where policies, directions and instructions are prepared by the central government and then passed on in stages to lower levels of government until they reach the community. This model prioritizes a centralized and systematic communication structure, aimed at ensuring uniform understanding and implementation of programs throughout the region. (Nurva & Maharani, 2023)

### 2. Resource

North Bolaang Mongondow Regency faces limited budget and health personnel. In several villages, health facilities such as Posyandu are inadequate. In addition, the distribution of health workers is uneven, with a greater focus on urban areas compared to remote villages.

Resources as a factor have four indicators, namely: 1) Human Resources (HR); 2) Financial Resources (SDF); 3) Equipment Resources (SDP); 4) Information Resources (SDI), and, 5) Authority Resources (SDK). Human resources in implementing molihuto stunting in Kab. North Bolaang Mongondow is a determining factor along with the SDF. These two elements can be said to have been fulfilled. Meanwhile Kab. North Bolaang

Mongondow has allocated APBD and APBDes to accelerate stunting reduction, from 2022-2024. (Sahroji et al., 2022)

Resources are one of the factors that have an important role in achieving organizational goals. According to Edward III, several resources are important factors in implementing policies. Implementation orders may be passed carefully, clearly and consistently, but if implementers lack the resources needed to implement existing policies, then policy implementation tends to be ineffective. Resources selected based on the principles of effectiveness and efficiency can be a driving force so that policy implementation can run well. (Agustino & Eko, 2022)

Resources are an indicator of the success of a work program. Where individual quality is prioritized in the process of implementing an activity. The human resources prepared must be trained and have high dedication. Related data can be seen from the following table.

Table 1.2 number of district health workers. North Bolaang Mongondow (BPS North Sulawesi Province, 2023)

| Nurse | Pharmacy | Nutritionist |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 38 | 324 | 182 |

The purpose of resources is to achieve success in achieving goals. all resources are mobilized to reduce stunting starting from human resources, equipment and others such as mobilizing health and nutrition workers. Resources in handling toddler stunting include human resources, equipment, authority and budget. Resources in handling toddler stunting need to be provided because without resource support, success will not be achieved.

Based on the results of an interview with Mrs. MT as Head of the North Bolmong Health Service, that:

*"The placement of human resources is the key to the success of stunting management. According to Mrs. MT, the placement of human resources is in accordance with standards and specifications, which are spread across various OPDs and related institutions in handling stunting. These human resources are also given training before they implement and educate the community regarding handling stunting in North Bolmong district."*

MT's opinion is in line with what was stated by YM who said that:

*"...resources for health personnel are adequate, but there are still overlapping activities between related agencies, so there is a need for standard SOPs for the division of tasks, then there also needs to be additional nutrition officers who provide education at all times regarding stunting management in remote areas. . Posiyandu cadres are very adequate, because they are taken from every village. However, these cadres still need regular training, because the stunting handling pattern is very serious and needs to be addressed together and thoroughly.*

Based on the results of the interview above, furthermore, the increase in the ratio of health workers in North Bolaang Mongondow Regency in the last four years shows encouraging progress. In 2018, this ratio was still at 0.49%, which reflects the limited health personnel available to serve the population.

However, efforts to improve and strengthen the health sector began to appear in 2019, where the ratio of health workers rose to 0.60%. This increase shows a significant increase in the number of health workers, although challenges in meeting ideal needs still exist. (Anggara Setya Saputra et al., 2022)

This improvement continued with an even bigger spike in 2021, where the ratio of health workers reached 1.25%. This increase indicates improvements in access and distribution of health workers, which is very important in ensuring better health services for the community. In 2022, this ratio will increase slightly again to 1.26%, showing the stability and commitment of local governments in strengthening the health sector. This increase reflects the success of various initiatives and programs that have been implemented to increase the number and distribution of health workers in this area, as well as showing that North Bolaang Mongondow is getting closer to adequate health service standards.

### 3. Brocratic Disposition/Attitude

The commitment of health workers and village officials in implementing stunting management programs is quite high. However, excessive workload and lack of incentives are the main obstacles. On the other hand, several community empowerment programs are starting to show positive results in increasing community participation.

The regional government of North Bolaang Mongondow Regency has demonstrated a proactive and responsive bureaucratic attitude in implementing stunting management policies, trying to ensure that these policies are effective and on target. Referring to Edward III's theory, the disposition or attitude of policy implementers is one of the main factors that determines the success of policy implementation. In this context, the bureaucratic attitude shown by local governments reflects a strong commitment and full awareness of their responsibilities as implementers of stunting management policies. (Sunaryo et al., 2022)

This is realized through several concrete actions, including the willingness to innovate and adopt a more inclusive and participatory approach in developing intervention programs. One concrete example of this innovation is the "Molihuto Stunting" program, which is designed to strengthen communication between policy implementers and the public, thereby creating better synergy in implementing stunting management policies. (Hermawati & Sastrawan, 2020)

In general, the government's attitude in dealing with stunting can be grouped into two broad categories: first, as preventing stunting; and second, as a handling of existing stunting cases. This grouping is based on the type of performance of each local government organization (OPD) involved. Prevention groups, for example, focus on outreach and advocacy activities to prevent stunting. This is reflected in a statement from the Department of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control and Family Planning (Dinas PPKBPPPA), which states that:

*"We at the PPKBPPPA Service are only tasked with prevention through counseling and advocacy, while handling is more up to the Health Service."*

On the other hand, OPDs such as the Health Service are more specifically tasked with directly handling stunting cases, although they are also involved in prevention outreach activities. This shows that although the type of OPD performance can vary, some agencies such as the Health Service are able to play a role in both work groups simultaneously, both as prevention and management of stunting. The following two interview excerpts illustrate the involvement of the Health Service in both roles:

Handling of Stunting by the Health Service as per the results of an interview with Mrs. MT:

*"The Health Service has clear technical instructions (juknis) and always follows established procedures. The first step they took was to trawl the data thoroughly. For example, within one month of intervention activities, all children's weights are first weighed to see which ones fall into the stunting category using data from MPPGBM (Toddlers and Community Growth and Nutrition Monitoring Mechanism). Children who are detected as stunting will then receive more specific interventions, such as providing additional food. If a child is found to be in the stunting category, the child will be directed for further examination at the community health center. From the health center, children can be referred to the hospital to be examined by a pediatrician to determine whether the child is stunted or has other conditions, such as hormonal disorders, which cause short growth. If a child is diagnosed with stunting, he will be given special milk according to a doctor's prescription - this milk is not available in regular shops. Furthermore, the child's development is monitored every week. For example, there are five children who went through this process, and now they are back to normal condition - not cured, but their weight and height have returned to normal ranges."*

Involvement of the Health Service in Stunting Prevention:

*"We will screen every teenager from school, village to door to door. "There is also kabuling (escorting pregnant women, escorting mothers giving birth and giving birth), katinting (escorting stunted children)."*

From the results of research interviews, the first one describes in detail how the Health Service handles stunting cases directly. With existing technical guidance, this agency carries out comprehensive nutritional weighing and monitoring to identify children who are indicated to be stunted. Furthermore, children who are detected as having stunting are directed for further examination at the health center or hospital to ensure the correct diagnosis and receive the necessary intervention, such as providing special milk according to the doctor's prescription. These steps are carried out systematically and measurably, with close monitoring of the child's development every week. (Pormes et al., 2023)

The second excerpt shows the involvement of the Health Service in prevention efforts, which are carried out through screening programs for teenagers in schools, villages and house to house. The program includes activities such as "kabuling" (escorting pregnant, laboring, and birthing mothers) and "katinting" (escorting stunted children), which reflect a comprehensive approach to stunting prevention, involving not only children, but also pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers.

### 4. Bureaucratic Structure

Coordination between agencies, such as the Health Service, Education Service and village government, is not yet optimal. Lack

of data integration between sectors hinders program monitoring and evaluation. In addition, overlapping programs often cause inefficiencies in policy implementation. The bureaucratic structure is basically not much different from the determining factors in the communication model used. The tendency is for local governments, in this case, agencies and departments to be at the highest level in implementing policies. Villages and Community Health Centers are units that connect with policy targets, namely the community. (Folensino et al., 2023)

The bureaucratic structure has a significant influence on policy implementation. The aspect of the bureaucratic structure is the standard operating procedure (SOP). The purpose of the bureaucratic structure is so that the policies made are carried out well in accordance with the provisions so that red-tape does not arise, namely complicated bureaucracy. In North Bolmong Decree No. 18 of 2019 concerning Stunting Prevention Efforts, it is explained that those involved in handling stunting start from the government, academics and others, and their duties are explained in the decree and what is done to handle stunting regarding the bureaucratic structure.

Head of PMD, Mr. ABD stated that:

> *"The bureaucratic structure can be seen from the decree of the team for accelerating the handling of stunting because everything from that decree carries out activities, as well as giving birth to a policy that likes to chat (an integrated joint movement to prevent stunting). Planned activities carried out jointly by all village governments and all components of society."*

In the field of HR analysis for apparatus in the field of socio-cultural planning and human resources at Bapelitbang, Mr. AP stated that;

> *"...We are always guided by the regent's regulations, so the structure can be seen in the Decree of the North Bolmong Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team (TPPS), as well as formulating integrated policies between OPDs by providing a budget for each relevant OPD to carry out obligations that are directly related to stunting management."*

Overall, this bureaucratic structure aims to create synergy between policy formulation at the regional level and implementation in the field. Even though each level has its own roles and responsibilities, they work in an interrelated system to achieve the same goal, namely improving community welfare, including handling the problem of stunting. Creating a good achievement is the right formulation in determining the structure. (Purwanti et al., 2022)

Handling stunting in North Bolaang Mongondow Regency reflects the importance of strengthening the policy implementation system at the local level. Effective communication between government and society is the key to increasing awareness and participation. Providing adequate resources, including a larger budget allocation for the health sector, is very necessary to support the success of the program (Wididiati et al., 2022). In addition, cross-sector coordination can reduce policy overlap and increase the efficiency of program implementation. (Nuramalia et al., 2020)

## CONCLUSION

Handling stunting in North Bolaang Mongondow Regency requires improvements in aspects of communication, resource allocation and cross-sector coordination. The process of implementing the Stunting Management Policy Implementation Model for the District Government. North Bolaang Mongondow has been running a stunting management program since 2019 through the innovation "Mairu Molihuto Stunting." This is an effort and implementation of policies carried out by the government to overcome the problem of stunting. Even though the prevalence has decreased from 15.3% in 2019 to 22.1% in 2022, the stunting rate in 2023 actually increased to 27.8. Approach model *top-down* implemented in the government's communication patterns and hierarchy, the transmission and clarity of information has not been maximized in the implementation of stunting handling policies in North Bolaang Mongondow Regency. This was then proven by the community health centers and villages, which should be the main pillars, not knowing precisely some of the policies in handling them. stunting. With persuasive steps and an emphasis on the policy process for handling stunting by involving cross-sectors, the prevalence of stunting in North Bolaang Mongondow Regency can be reduced significantly, as well as supporting sustainable health development.

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