

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Received: May, 28, 2025

Revised: September, 29, 2025

Available online: September, 30, 2025

at : <https://e-jurnal.iphorr.com/index.php/minh>

Implementation of village fund allocation in reducing stunting in children

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Abstract

Background: The effective allocation of village funds has become a strategic approach to addressing stunting in rural communities. By investing in health, nutrition, sanitation, and educational programs, villages aim to improve maternal and child health outcomes, increase community awareness, and reduce the prevalence of stunting among children.

Purpose: To analyze the implementation of village fund allocation in reducing stunting rates

Method: A descriptive qualitative approach, specifically focusing on exploratory study. The study took place December 2024 - January 2025, in Peudada District, Aceh. Using total sampling 2 participants were selected, contributor informant inquired head of the stunting locus and head stunting reduction acceleration team. Data collection was carried out using in-depth interviews. The data were analysed using thematic analysis technique.

Results: Village Funds have been instrumental in reducing stunting through programs targeting sanitation, supplementary food (PMT), Posyandu activities, direct cash assistance (BLT), and early childhood education (PAUD). Monitoring and evaluation by cadres and village midwives through home visits have improved children's nutritional status and access to sanitation. Village cadres and officials, supported by the Stunting Committee (Komting), coordinate planning, budgeting, supervision, and community collaboration. Despite challenges such as budget constraints, uneven facility access, and low participation, strengthening coordination, diversifying programs, and applying innovative education methods are essential for sustainable stunting reduction, emphasizing the synergy between health and education sectors.

Conclusion: Village officials contribute through budget planning, supervising cadres, and forming stunting committees to increase participation. Programs such as supplementary feeding, sanitation improvements, house rehabilitation, and PAUD have effectively reduced stunting and improved community quality of life.

Keywords: Program Implementation; Stunting Reduction; Village Fund Allocation.

INTRODUCTION

Village development is a key component of achieving equitable national development, with Village Funds serving as a crucial instrument to support such efforts, as stipulated in Law Number 6 of 2014 and funded through the APBN and APBD. The designation of stunting locus villages has fluctuated over recent years, with only one village in 2020, an increase to five villages in 2022, and none in 2021 and 2023, indicating dynamic factors influencing locus determination. According to Regent

Regulation Number 299 of 2023, 33 villages across five sub-districts in Bireuen have been designated as stunting loci for 2024, with Peudada Sub-district accounting for the largest share at 14 villages, including several re-designated villages. This significant increase highlights persistent challenges in village fund management and the implementation of stunting reduction programs, necessitating focused attention and strategic intervention (Andiny, Junita, Meutia, & Salman, 2024).

Stunting not only by poor nutritional intake but also by limited access to health services, low public awareness of healthy diets, incomplete basic immunization, insufficient exclusive breastfeeding, and inadequate sanitation and clean water. These issues requires a comprehensive, community-based approach that combines direct assistance with active community participation to create an environment conducive to child growth and development (Sufri, Nurhasanah, Jannah, Dewi, Sirasa, & Bakri, 2023). The effectiveness of stunting reduction programs depends on proper management of village funds and strong collaboration among village authorities, communities, and other stakeholders. Research is essential to evaluate the role of village fund utilization in supporting stunting reduction, identify implementation obstacles, and provide strategic recommendations for enhancing program effectiveness (Ilmi, 2023). Public policy implementation often encounters challenges such as political and economic constraints, institutional weaknesses, limited technical capacity, insufficient technical support, suboptimal decentralization, low community participation, misalignment of timelines and objectives among actors, and inadequate information system support (Roediger, Hendrixson, & Manary, 2020).

Not all public policies are successfully implemented, as many face challenges that may prevent them from achieving their intended outcomes. The success of a public policy can be assessed by examining whether the desired goals are achieved through the implementation process (Lestari, Shaluhiah, & Adi, 2023). Stunting, a chronic nutritional condition characterized by lower-than-standard height or length for a child's age, results from multiple factors, including socio-economic conditions, maternal nutrition during pregnancy, repeated infections in infancy, and insufficient nutrient intake during early growth. Children affected by stunting are at increased risk of impaired physical and cognitive development, highlighting the importance of effective intervention strategies (Agushyabana, Pratiwi, Kurnia, Nandini, Santoso, & Setyo, 2022).

Stunting is a developmental disorder caused by poor nutrition, repeated infections, and insufficient psychosocial stimulation, with children classified as stunted if their height falls more than two standard deviations below the WHO Child Growth Standards. Its impacts are both short-term, including increased morbidity and mortality, impaired cognitive and motor development, and higher healthcare costs, and long-term, such as suboptimal adult stature, higher risk of non-communicable diseases, reduced reproductive health, lower academic performance, and decreased productivity (Erlyn, Hidayat, Fatoni, & Saksono, 2021). The first 1,000 days of life represent a critical period for growth, and failure to optimize this window can lead to irreversible developmental deficits. Stunting remains a serious public health concern, prompting government reliance on village fund allocations to support various reduction programs (Sunarya, 2023). The effectiveness of these funds is unclear due to limited human resources, inadequate coordination among stakeholders, and inconsistent community involvement, highlighting the need for comprehensive evaluation to assess the impact of village fund implementation on reducing stunting prevalence (Bhutta, Akseer, Keats, Vaivada, Baker, Horton, & Black, 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

A descriptive qualitative approach, specifically focusing on exploratory study. The study took place December 2024 - January 2025, in Peudada District, Aceh. Using total sampling 2 participants were selected, contributor informant inquired head of the stunting locus and head stunting reduction acceleration team.

Data collection in this study was done through triangulation, which combines several data sources, methods, and theories to increase the validity of the results. For data collection, it was conducted using technique in-depth interviews. Indepth interviews were conducted with open-ended questions to evaluating the implementation of village funds in supporting the reduction of stunting rates. The data were analysed using thematic analysis technique to identify important information and understand the core meaning of each data.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33024/minh.v8i7.982>

RESEARCH RESULTS

Tabel 1. Informant Research (N=2)

Informant Code	Department
MRA	Head Of The Stunting Locus
DIW	Head Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team

Tabel 1. Shows from 4 informants, consisting head of the stunting locus and head stunting reduction acceleration team.

Table 2. Interview Results

Structured Interview	Outcome	Data review	Conclusion
What is the impact of limited village funds on the availability of sanitation facilities for the community?	Limited village funds often constrain the construction and maintenance of adequate sanitation facilities. As a result, many households are forced to share communal toilets or continue using unimproved latrines. In several villages, studies have shown that insufficient funding delays the implementation of household-level sanitation programs, leading to higher risks of waterborne diseases and poor hygiene practices.	Observation	Limitations in the budget led to the use of shared toilets.
What are the problems with health and nutrition interventions?	Limited budget and resources insufficient funding can restrict the provision of supplementary food, micronutrient supplements, and other program materials and low community participation some families may be reluctant to attend Posyandu or follow nutritional advice due to lack of awareness or cultural habits.	Observation	The participation of village officials in posyandu activities is still considered not optimal.

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Structured Interview	Outcome	Data review	Conclusion
How do volunteers coordinate with community health centers and village government in managing the program?	Kaders coordinate with the Puskesmas and village officials through regular meetings to report program progress and discuss challenges. They submit reports on Posyandu activities, growth monitoring, and community participation, receiving guidance and technical support in return. Additionally, cadres participate in capacity-building activities, including training and updates from the Puskesmas, to enhance their skills in program management, counseling, and data recording.	Observation	There are still village heads who do not fully understand the details of program implementation.
How the mekanisme to program evaluated?	The program is evaluated through a structured mechanism that includes regular data collection from cadres, Posyandu records, and child growth monitoring. Puskesmas and village officials review the data to track progress and address challenges, providing feedback to cadres and the community to improve implementation. Periodic assessments, such as surveys, are also conducted to measure outcomes in nutrition, health status, and community participation, ensuring the program achieves its objectives effectively.	Observation	Evaluations are conducted, but there is no optimally documented system in place.
How is parenting and nutrition education provided to mothers in this village?	Puskesmas staff and trained health cadres conduct regular Posyandu sessions, where mothers receive guidance on child care, breastfeeding, complementary feeding, and balanced nutrition. In addition, group counseling, home visits, and educational workshops are organized to reinforce key messages and address specific concerns.	Observation	Challenges in program continuity and poor documentation of activities

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Structured Interview	Outcome	Data review	Conclusion
How to monitor stunting?	Stunting is monitored through a combination of regular growth measurements, data recording, and community reporting. Health workers and cadres conduct monthly growth monitoring at Posyandu, measuring children's height and weight to detect growth delays early. The data is recorded in child health cards and compiled to track trends over time.	Observation	Not all villages have an effective reporting system
What are the limitations in providing supplementary food?	Supplementary feeding (PMT) is limited by budget constraints, short program duration, and uneven community compliance. Monitoring and evaluation are also not always optimal, making it difficult to measure long-term impact.	Observation	Limited variety of supplementary food items
What are the problems in running the Posyandu and Education Activities?	Running Posyandu and education activities faces challenges such as low community participation and limited cadre capacity. Budget constraints also hinder the provision of adequate materials, incentives, and facilities. Cultural factors sometimes make families less responsive to health education, slowing behavior change. In addition, monitoring and evaluation are not always consistent, making it difficult to measure outcomes effectively.	Observation	Community participation in health programs remains varied, with some families actively involved while others are less engaged. To address this, more innovation is needed in counselling methods to make the sessions more attractive and accessible to the community. Furthermore, there is a need to improve both the coverage and effectiveness of these activities to ensure that health messages reach a wider audience and have a lasting impact.
What are the challenges in socializing and evaluating stunting?	Challenges in socializing stunting include low community awareness and cultural practices that hinder behavior change. In evaluation, limited human resources and incomplete data recording often make monitoring less optimal. Budget constraints also restrict outreach and follow-up activities, reducing program effectiveness.	Observation	Not all villages have strong outreach programs.

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Structured Interview	Outcome	Data review	Conclusion
How to implement the Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) program for community well-being?	Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) program is implemented by coordinating with village officials to ensure that funds are distributed to eligible vulnerable families. Health workers and cadres provide guidance so that part of the assistance is used to support nutrition, sanitation, and basic health needs. Monitoring is carried out through community visits and reporting to ensure the program contributes to improving family well-being.	Observation	Those who have received PKH are no longer eligible for BLT.
How can stunting be prevented early on in early childhood education?	Stunting prevention in early childhood education can be done by educating parents and caregivers about balanced nutrition. Growth monitoring and routine immunizations are conducted to detect developmental issues early. The health center also promotes clean and healthy living practices in schools to support optimal child development.	Observation	Not all villages have active early childhood education centers.

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DISCUSSION

Table 2 shows Village Funds have played a significant role in reducing stunting through programs that improve sanitation, provide supplementary food (PMT), support Posyandu activities, offer direct cash assistance (BLT), and develop early childhood education (PAUD). Monitoring and evaluation, carried out by cadres and village midwives through home visits and supervision, have helped track program success and improve children's nutritional status and access to sanitation. Village cadres plan, budget, and evaluate programs, while village officials provide oversight, guidance, and financial support, with the Stunting Committee (Komting) strengthening collaboration among community leaders, youth, and cadres. Despite challenges such as budget limitations, uneven access to facilities, low community participation, and the need for better monitoring, close coordination and strengthened community involvement, program diversification, and innovative education methods are essential to make stunting reduction efforts more effective and sustainable, highlighting the synergy between health and education sectors.

The utilization of Village Funds in stunting reduction programs demonstrates a comprehensive approach that integrates health, nutrition, and education interventions at the community level. By improving sanitation infrastructure, providing supplementary food (PMT) for toddlers and pregnant women, and supporting Posyandu activities, these programs directly address key determinants of stunting. The inclusion of early childhood education (PAUD) further reinforces this effort by promoting nutritional awareness and healthy behavior from an early age, thereby creating a foundation for long-term child development. This multi-sectoral approach reflects the alignment of health and education initiatives in accordance with national regulations and policy frameworks. The effectiveness of these programs is influenced by several operational challenges (Huljannah & Rochmah, 2022). Budgetary limitations restrict the construction of sanitation facilities and the provision of adequate supplementary food, while uneven access to PAUD and low community participation can reduce program impact. Monitoring and evaluation, led by village cadres and health personnel, remain critical in identifying gaps and ensuring program

accountability. Strengthening community engagement, optimizing the use of Village Funds, diversifying program strategies, and innovating educational and extension methods are essential steps to enhance sustainability and maximize the positive outcomes of stunting reduction efforts (Radjulaeni, Masriadi, & Ahri, 2024).

Monitoring and evaluation conducted by cadres and village midwives play a pivotal role in ensuring the effectiveness of stunting reduction programs. Through systematic home visits and supervision of Posyandu activities, these health workers are able to assess the nutritional status of children, identify early signs of growth faltering, and ensure the proper distribution of supplementary food (PMT) to toddlers and pregnant women. This continuous oversight allows for timely interventions, supports evidence-based decision-making, and enhances the overall quality of program implementation at the village level (Widyastuti, Arenawati, & Prafitri, 2022). Monitoring and evaluation contribute to improving access to sanitation and promoting healthy behaviors within the community. By tracking household sanitation facilities and educating families about hygiene practices, cadres and midwives help reduce environmental risk factors associated with stunting. Their active engagement not only strengthens the accountability of village programs but also fosters community participation and awareness, which are essential for sustaining long-term health improvements and achieving measurable reductions in stunting prevalence (Mediani, Nurhidayah, & Lukman, 2020).

Village cadres play a critical role in the operational management of stunting reduction programs, including planning, budgeting, and evaluating their implementation. Their involvement ensures that interventions are tailored to the specific needs of the community, such as the provision of supplementary food, sanitation improvements, and early childhood education programs. By engaging directly with families through home visits and Posyandu supervision, cadres help monitor children's growth and nutritional status, providing timely feedback for program adjustments and ensuring that resources are used effectively. Village officials provide essential oversight, guidance, and financial support, creating a structured framework

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that enables program continuity and accountability (Syamsuadi, Febriani, Ermayani, Bunyamin, & Nursyiamah, 2023). The establishment of the Stunting Committee (Komting) further strengthens collaboration among various community stakeholders, including leaders, youth, and cadres, facilitating coordinated efforts in stunting prevention. This multi-level engagement not only enhances program efficiency but also promotes community ownership, social accountability, and sustainability, reflecting an integrated approach that aligns health initiatives with local governance structures (Laili & Andriani, 2019).

The challenges faced in stunting reduction programs, including budget constraints, uneven access to sanitation and early childhood education facilities, and limited community participation, underscore the need for a comprehensive approach that goes beyond mere fund allocation. Effective monitoring and evaluation are critical to ensure that interventions such as supplementary feeding (PMT), Posyandu activities, and the development of PAUD are implemented efficiently and achieve measurable improvements in child nutrition and health (Widiastiy & Harleli, 2021). Without systematic oversight and active community engagement, the intended outcomes of Village Fund programs may not reach their full potential, highlighting the importance of strategic planning and accountability mechanisms at the village level. Strengthening community involvement and fostering innovation in education and extension methods are essential to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of stunting prevention efforts. Diversifying program approaches, optimizing resource use, and integrating health and educational initiatives can create a supportive environment that encourages behavioral change and promotes nutritional awareness from an early age. Such integrated efforts demonstrate the critical synergy between the health and education sectors, ensuring that children benefit from both proper nutrition and early learning opportunities, ultimately contributing to long-term improvements in public health and human development (Wahab, 2021).

Village Funds have been instrumental in supporting health programs aimed at improving community sanitation and nutrition. The construction of healthy latrines targeted the achievement of Open Defecation Free (ODF) status, contributing to better

hygiene practices, although budget constraints necessitated some shared facilities. The supplementary feeding program for stunted children, implemented over three months, has demonstrated measurable benefits, reducing malnutrition in approximately 12% of the targeted toddlers. Additionally, educational initiatives such as pregnancy classes and nutrition counseling have been conducted to enhance maternal knowledge and awareness regarding proper nutrition and child health. Despite these achievements, challenges remain in optimizing the effectiveness of these programs (Tasic, Akseer, Gebreyesus, Ataullahjan, Brar, Confreda, & Bhutta, 2020). Community participation in health and educational activities is still limited, which may reduce the overall impact of the interventions. Efforts should focus on increasing community engagement, improving resource allocation, and ensuring equitable access to sanitation and nutrition programs. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms can further enhance program effectiveness, ensuring that Village Funds contribute sustainably to stunting reduction and overall public health improvement (Putri, Sulastri, & Apsari, 2023).

Village Funds are effectively utilized to reduce stunting through targeted programs like rehabilitating uninhabitable houses and providing nutritional supplementation for vulnerable groups. These initiatives are strengthened by cross-sector collaboration involving health cadres, community health centers, and PKK organizations, which facilitate counseling and monitoring. Additional allocations for sanitation infrastructure, such as building clean water networks and latrines, have helped several villages achieve Open Defecation Free (ODF) status. Awareness is further raised through community forums like Musrenbang and Rembuk Stunting, which focus on nutrition and sanitation education. The results demonstrate a positive impact, with significant nutritional improvements in children, proving these Village Fund-supported programs are effectively contributing to stunting reduction (Hidayatillah, Astuti, & Kumala, 2023).

The results indicate that programs supported by Village Funds have had a measurable positive impact on child nutrition, highlighting their effectiveness in reducing stunting. Improvements in

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children's physical growth and nutritional status reflect the success of integrated interventions, including supplementary feeding, Posyandu activities, sanitation upgrades, and early childhood education initiatives. These outcomes demonstrate that targeted, well-coordinated programs, when properly monitored and evaluated, can lead to tangible health benefits for communities (Akseer, Vaivada, Rothschild, Ho, & Bhutta, 2020). The findings underscore the importance of multi-stakeholder involvement, where village cadres, health workers, and community leaders collaboratively implement and supervise stunting reduction efforts (Mulyani, Khairinisa, Khatib, & Chaerunisaa, 2025). The role of the Stunting Committee (Komting) and active community participation has been critical in ensuring program sustainability and responsiveness to local needs. Ongoing challenges such as budget constraints, uneven access to facilities, and the need for innovative education and outreach methods suggest that continuous planning, supervision, and adaptation are necessary to maintain and enhance program effectiveness over time (Nugroho, 2023)

CONCLUSION

The evaluation showed significant improvements in nutrition and public awareness, highlighting the key role of Village Funds and community cooperation in stunting reduction. Village officials contribute through budget planning, supervising cadres, and forming stunting committees to increase participation. Programs such as supplementary feeding, sanitation improvements, house rehabilitation, and PAUD have effectively reduced stunting and improved community quality of life.

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