

ADVOCACY STRATEGY IN OPTIMIZING THE USE OF VILLAGE FUNDS FOR THE STUNTING PREVENTION PROGRAM IN EAST SUMALATA DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Stunting is a critical public health issue in North Gorontalo Regency, and efforts to prevent it during the First 1000 Days of Life face significant challenges, particularly due to insufficient allocation of village funds for stunting prevention initiatives. This research aims to explore effective communication and advocacy strategies for securing village fund support for the stunting prevention program focused on the First 1000 Days of Life at the village level in East Sumalata District, North Gorontalo Regency. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing document analysis, observations, interviews, and focus group discussions to examine village fund management and assess the effectiveness of advocacy strategies. The findings indicate that an effective advocacy strategy for securing village fund allocations for the stunting prevention program involves informal communication with a persuasive approach directed at regional leaders. Key elements include presenting accurate target data, referencing relevant regulations, submitting well-prepared activity proposals, and obtaining recommendation letters from local authorities such as the Head of the Office or the Subdistrict Head. Given the sensitivity and limitations of village budget discussions, consistent monitoring of advocacy proposals is essential to ensure program implementation. Support from regional leaders and partner organizations is crucial for successful advocacy efforts.

Keywords: Advocacy Strategy; Stunting; Village Fund.

INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a serious public health problem, especially in North Gorontalo Regency. Data from the 2022 Indonesian Nutrition Status Survey (SSGI) shows that the prevalence of stunting in North Gorontalo Regency reached 29.3%, which is a high and worrying figure (Asiku, 2022). According to the definition of the World Health Organization (WHO), stunting is a developmental disorder in children caused by poor nutrition, recurrent infections, and inadequate psychosocial stimulation (Anton et al., 2023). Children are categorized as stunted if their height for age is more than two standard deviations below the WHO Child Growth Standards.

In order to tackle this stunting problem, the Indonesian Government issued Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 concerning the Acceleration of Reducing Stunting. The National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) is mandated as the chief implementer of the stunting reduction program with a target of stunting rates of 14 percent by 2024. The BKKBN is tasked with coordinating, synergizing and evaluating the implementation of the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction in an effective, convergent and integrated manner by involving cross-sector. As Chief Executive for the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction, BKKBN uses an upstream approach that focuses on preventing stunting by providing assistance to families at risk of giving birth to stunted children (Anton et al., 2023).

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A rapid reduction in stunting is difficult to achieve because of the many obstacles in implementing stunting reduction policies in Indonesia. These obstacles include problems with coordination and surveys between government agencies, several policies that do not achieve targets, problems with standardization of health services and training of health workers, as well as governance obstacles such as optimizing the use of central regional and village budgets to target stunting (Prasetya, 2024).

Implementation of various stunting reduction policies is carried out in various service lines, starting from sub-districts, villages/sub-districts to sub-districts/RWs and RTs. Through the main activities of operational mechanisms to accelerate stunting reduction in the field, this requires effective, convergent and integrated communication and advocacy strategies to better provide services to families at risk of stunting (Nur, 2022).

One of the strategies explained in the Presidential Regulation is increasing the allocation of village/district funds for specific and sensitive interventions in reducing stunting, as well as implementing Toddler Family Development (BKB) classes on parenting for the First 1000 Days of Life (HPK) with a target of 90% by 2024. Apart from that, Regulation of the Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration Number 13 of 2023 also provides direction regarding the types of activities carried out to overcome indirect causes of stunting, such as education about early childhood care and capacity building for human development cadres, Integrated Service Post (Posyandu), and Building Toddler Families (Anton et al., 2023).

Policy advocacy is a planned and systematic process carried out to improve or change a public policy in accordance with the wishes or interests of those who are pushing for these improvements and changes by influencing policy makers (Djani, 2020). The policy analysis approach is very relevant in the context of advocacy for optimizing the use of village funds. Village funds are a policy instrument that aims to improve the welfare of rural communities (Ashar, & Agustang, 2020). In this study, we will review policy analysis approach that can be used to support effective advocacy regarding village funds.

Prevention of stunting in the First 1000 Days of Life (HPK) through education is one of the efforts to increase parents' awareness and knowledge about nutrition and health care, encourage behavioral changes in providing nutrition, and care about preventing stunting. However, the implementation of this stunting reduction program still faces several challenges. One of them is the low village fund allocation policy for stunting prevention activities at the village level. In East Sumalata District, North Gorontalo Regency, in 2023, only 4 out of 10 villages will budget for a stunting prevention program. This is caused by a lack of complete information to villages and the role of cross-sectors which has not been optimal in supporting the program.

This study aims to investigate effective communication and advocacy strategies for obtaining village funds support for the 1000 first day of life in stunting prevention program at the village level in East Sumalata District, North Gorontalo Regency. Therefore, specific and targeted communication and advocacy strategies are needed to support the success of the stunting prevention program in 1000 HPK in 10 villages in East Sumalata District, North Gorontalo Regency. Through policy advocacy to the village government, it is hoped that it can increase the allocation of village funds for stunting prevention activities in the 1000 HPK period, as well as providing information and education to target groups of families at risk of stunting during that time. In this way, it is hoped that it can prevent new stunting cases and reduce the stunting rate significantly in East Sumalata District, North Gorontalo Regency.

METHOD

In the context of village fund advocacy, the qualitative descriptive method is an effective tool for understanding how village fund management is carried out, the challenges faced, as well as tactical advocacy strategy steps that can be taken to increase the effectiveness of the use of village funds for the 1000 HPK program. The research locations determined by the researchers were 10 villages in East Sumalata District, North Gorontalo Regency. The research was carried out from October to December 2023. The method for determining research informants used the purposive sampling method. The main informant in this research is the village assistant of East Sumalata District. Types and sources of data include primary data and secondary data. The primary data in this research is data obtained directly from subjects or village assistants in East Sumalata District through interviews with resource persons regarding the strategy used by village fund advocacy for the stunting prevention program at 1000 HPK. And data information and supporting regulations in carrying out advocacy.

Data collection methods use interviews, document studies, observations and discussion group forums (FGD). In this case, the interview method was carried out with village assistants in East Sumalata District. In addition, interviews were carried out with additional informants, including the District Head and Village Secretary. In this case, the document study method analyzes regulations supporting advocacy, including Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 concerning the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction. Regulation of the Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration (Permendesa PDTT) Number 13 of 2023 concerning operational instructions regarding the focus on the use of village funds in 2024, Permendesa PDTT Number 21 of 2020. Regarding general guidelines for village development and empowerment of village communities and BKKBN Regulation Number 12 of 2021. Regarding the national action plan to accelerate the reduction of stunting rates in Indonesia in 2021-2024. Observation Method The researcher made direct observations of the village head's response to advocacy for village funds for the stunting prevention program at 1000 HPK. The Discussion Group Forum (FGD) method, in this case, is a focused discussion with the village head in an effort to advocate for village funds for the stunting prevention program at 1000 HPK. Data analysis was carried out by reduction data, data display and drawing conclusions.

RESULTS

Based on the research conducted, the effectiveness of the village fund advocacy strategy for the 1000 HPK stunting prevention program can be identified through four main approaches. The first step involves analyzing data on families at risk of stunting and reviewing relevant regulations regarding the use of village funds to identify potential opportunities for funding allocation. The following figure presents the analysis of data on families at risk of stunting in East Sumalata District for the year 2023:

- 1. Analyze data on families at risk of stunting and analyze regulations on the use of village funds to look for opportunities.**

Figure 1 Analysis of data on families at risk of stunting in East Sumalata district in 2023.

NO.	SUBDISTRICTS OF NORTH GORONTALO DISTRICT	FAMILY REGISTRATION 2021			2021 FAMILY REGISTRATION COMPARISON AND 2022 FAMILY REGISTRATION UPDATE			FAMILY REGISTRATION UPDATE 2023		
		TARGET FAMILY	FAMILIES ARE AT RISK OF STUNTING	PERSENTAGE	TARGET FAMILY	FAMILIES ARE AT RISK OF STUNTING	PERSENTAGE	TARGET FAMILY	FAMILIES ARE AT RISK OF STUNTING	PERSENTAGE
1	TOMILITO	665	469	71%	1739	793	46%	1705	709	42%
2	ANGGREK	1074	509	47%	3043	1617	53%	3049	1416	46%
3	KWANDANG	1637	781	48%	4775	1775	37%	4772	1639	34%
4	ATINGGOLA	864	401	46%	2110	782	37%	2103	555	26%
5	BIAU	905	101	11%	905	323	36%	904	290	32%
6	GENTUMA RAYA	1732	1248	72%	1662	658	40%	1583	585	37%
7	MONANO	476	122	26%	1331	514	39%	1336	476	36%
8	PONELO KEPULAUAN	215	174	81%	696	197	28%	672	186	28%
9	SUMALATA	195	114	58%	1427	544	38%	1465	473	32%
10	SUMALATA TIMUR	460	295	64%	1310	455	35%	1287	409	32%
11	TOLINGGULA	1375	746	54%	1552	602	39%	1530	457	30%
DISTRICT RECAPITULATION		9598	4960	52%	18949	8262	44%	20406	7195	35%

Source: Family Data Collection 2021-2023.

This data explains that there are still families at risk of stunting who need to receive IEC intervention in preventing stunting at 1000 HPK. The families at risk in question are families with pregnant women, toddlers and toddlers who fall into the category of not having a latrine, access to sanitation and fall into the fourth category (too young, too old, too close and too many) to give birth.

Next, the East Sumalata sub-district village assistant provided input on the analysis of PDTT Village Ministerial Regulation Number 7 of 2023 concerning details of the use of village funds and Permendesa PDTT Number 13 of 2023 concerning Operational Guidelines for Focus on the use of village funds in 2024. To determine program proposals and the budget needed for stunting prevention activities through village funds. The village assistant stated that *"After analyzing the data. Understand the character of the decision maker (village head). And obtain complete information about the conditions of the area and village communities. As a start, a proposal for a stunting prevention outreach program for 1000 HPK through village funds in 2024 is determined. Next, prepare an interesting activity proposal containing background, objectives, benefits, detailed activities and budget details and reinforced by a letter of recommendation from regional leaders such as the head of the department or sub-district head"*.

Table 1 Analysis of Permendesa PDTT Number 13 of 2023 concerning Operational Instructions for Focus on the Use of Village Funds in 2024.

Num.	Activity	Volume (person)	Minimum fee (IDR)	Information
1	Family planning education and prevention of stunting at 1000 HPK to the Community especially KRS	20	2.529.000	One activity
2	Increasing the Capacity of Posyandu Cadres, Paud and BKB in prevention stunting.	20	2.529.000	One activity
3	Orientation of BKB Cadres regarding the Use of BKB Stunting Kits, especially the Use of KKA	20	2.529.000	One activity
4	Implementation of Great Parent Classes (Relative)	20	2.529.000	One activity
5.	KKA Printing	100	1.000.000	10.000 per KKA
6	PPKBD cadre operations, Sub. PPKBD, BKB and TPK)	5	6.000.000	@100.000/person x 12 month
7	Operational BKB activities for	20	936.000	One activity

Consumption or PMT				
8	Nutritional Education and Counseling, Breastfeeding Exclusive and MPASI (DASHAT)	20	2.529.000	One activity

Source: Personal Data.

From this table it can be concluded that the use of village funds in 2024 is in accordance with Permendesa PD TT Number 13 of 2023 concerning Upper Operational Guidelines. Focus on using village funds in 2024. One of the main focuses on using village funds is reducing stunting at the village scale. Details of activities and budget were obtained from group discussion forums (FGD) with sub-district heads, village heads, village assistants and family planning instructors.

The next stage is Flow Analysis The stages of preparing and determining the Village RKP in accordance with Permendesa PD TT Number 21 of 2020 concerning General Guidelines for Village Development and Village Community Empowerment. to prepare the stages of advocacy to the village head.

Table 2 Analysis of Permendesa PD TT Number 21 of 2020 concerning General Development Guidelines Villages and Village Community Empowerment.

Num.	Month	Activity	Action	Target
1	June	Formation of the RKP DESA Drafting Team	Conduct FGDs with partners to look for program proposal opportunities	District Head, Ka. Community Health Center, PD, Midwife, Village Head etc
2	June	Review and Alignment of Activity plans.	Strategizing Advocacy	Supporting regulations
3	July	Re-examination VILLAGE RPJM	Drafting a Proposal Activity	Rational Activity Proposals
4	July	Prepare Village RKP DESA and DU-RKP Drafts	Carry out Advocacy	Kadis, Subdistrict Head, Village Head, Village Secretary, BPD etc
5	August	MUSREMBANG VILLAGE RKP VILLAGE and DU RKP VILLAGE	Attend Village Musrembang and Socialize Proposed Activities	BPD and Society
6	September - December	MUSDES ratifies RKP DESA and DU DESA	Overseeing Program Proposals	Subdistrict Head, Village Head, PD and BPD

Source: Personal Documentation.

The table above can be used as a strategy for implementing a proposed stunting prevention program for 1000 HPK through village funds by following the flow of the village fund budget planning process. This is in accordance with what was stated by the East Sumalata sub-district village assistant, Reyfoll Kai ST, who stated that *"in the village fund budgeting process, the village government will consider proposals from across sectors, especially regarding stunting prevention programs, because the village government still has minimal knowledge about stunting"*.

2. Involve regional leaders and partners to get support.

Researchers made direct observations of the village head's response when advocating for village funds for the stunting prevention program at 1000 HPK. In this case, the advocacy process will be easier if many parties are involved in the implementation of advocacy, especially regional leaders because they have influence, this is in line with the statement of the East Sumalata sub-district village assistant. The village assistant stated that *"The village head will pay more attention to proposals if there are instructions or recommendations from regional leaders such as the sub-district head or regent"*.

Table 3. Regional leaders and partners who can be involved in the village fund advocacy process for the stunting prevention program at 1000 HPK

Num.	Target	Role	Information
1	Representative of BKKBN Gorontalo	Development and Activity Standards for Bangga Kencana and PPS	Coordination
2	North Gorontalo PPand KB Department	Support activities and facilitate strengthening o sub-district heads and village heads	Coordination
3	Head of East Sumalata District	Support and Recommendations for the proposed PPS program through Village Funds	Advocacy
4	Head of UPTD PKM Dulukapa with midwives and nutrition officers	Data sharing and Recommendations for Activity Targets.	Coordination
5	Village Companion	Input and information in the preparation and determination of the Village RKP	Advocacy
6	Village Head and BPD	Facilitate FGDs related to Stunting problems in villages	Advocacy
7	PPKBD, Sub PPKBD, BKB, TPK cadres	Help provide reinforcement to villages regarding proposed activities.	Coordination
8	Village Secretary	As Chair of the Village RKP Drafting Team, he will inform regarding the condition of village funds.	Advocacy

Source: Personal Documentation.

This table provides an overview of regional leaders and partners who can carry out coordination and advocacy in an effort to support the proposed stunting prevention program for 1000 HPK through village funds.

3. Carry out informal channels of communication with a persuasive approach

Effective communication is very important in developing issues in simple language based on data and facts. Proposed programs that benefit the village must be conveyed with a consistent and attractive message so that they can touch feelings and encourage the village head to act. One of the most effective methods in advocating village funds for the Bangga Kencana program is policy communication through informal channels with a persuasive approach. This is important because village budget discussions are usually carried out on a limited basis.

Figure 2 Advocacy from the head of Buladu village, East Sumalata subdistrict.



Source: Research Documentation.

4. Monitor advocacy consistently and measurably.

To ensure consistent advocacy, a comprehensive and integrated communications strategy is needed. This strategy must prioritize joint efforts between the government and the community to ensure village fund allocations support stunting prevention programs through the First 1000 Days of Life (HPK) program. It is important to take advantage of every opportunity, both formal and informal, to continue to advocate for village heads. The aim is to get support for commitment, policy, budget, convenience and community participation in stunting prevention activities through the 1000 HPK program.

Figure 3 East Sumalata Subdistrict Head's Advocacy in Gathering Support.



Source: Research Documentation.

5. Advocacy Results

After obtaining specific and targeted tactical steps for communication and advocacy strategies, the researcher conducted a village fund advocacy test for the stunting prevention program at

1000 HPK to 10 village heads in East Sumalata sub-district, North Gorontalo Regency and in January 2024 the researcher conducted an interview with the Head of Buluwatu village, Mr. Irfan Rahman. "Thank God, we will facilitate your proposal regarding the 1000 HPK extension activities with a budget of 4.250.000 IDR", then the researcher analyzed the Village Government Work Plan documents in 10 villages in East Sumalata sub-district and obtained the following results:

Table 4 Budget support for the stunting prevention program for 1000 HPK through village funds in East Sumalata sub-district, North Gorontalo Regency in 2024.

Num.	Villages	Activity	Budget
1	Deme Satu	Counseling 1000 HPK	3.280.000 IDR
2	Koluwoka	-	-
3	Buluwatu	Counseling 1000 HPK	4.250.000 IDR
4	Dulukapa	Counseling for Pregnant Women and Mothers who have <i>Baduta</i>	5.000.000 IDR
5	Motihelumo	Cadre Training for Stunting Prevention	17.890.000 IDR
6	Deme Dua	Counseling 1000 HPK	3.500.000 IDR
7	Buladu	Counseling 1000 HPK	3.320.000 IDR
8	Hulawa	Counseling 1000 HPK	3.280.000 IDR
9	Wubudu	Prevention Counseling Stunting	5.000.000 IDR
10	Bubalango	Prevention Counseling Stunting	3.000.000 IDR
Amount			48.520.000 IDR

Source: RKPDES in 10 villages in East Sumalata subdistrict.

In the table above it can be concluded that there has been an increase in the number of villages that budget for stunting prevention program activities at 1000 HPK through village funds. Previously, in 2023 only 4 villages had budgeted. In 2024 there will be 9 villages that will budget 48.520.000 IDR.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of research conducted in East Sumalata sub district, North Gorontalo district, researchers found that an effective village fund advocacy strategy for the stunting prevention program in 1000 HPK was communication through informal channels with a persuasive approach. By providing target data and supporting regulations as well as submitting an interesting activity proposal containing background, objectives, benefits, activity details and budget details and reinforced by a letter of recommendation or support from regional leaders such as the head of the department or sub-district head. This is important because village budget discussions are usually carried out limitedly because it is sensitive.

Monitoring advocacy proposals becomes a monitoring tool in advocacy for village funds for the stunting prevention program at 1000 HPK. To ensure program proposals will be followed up. Monitoring the program requires assistance from regional leaders and partners so that the advocacy process can run effectively.

This is in line with the concept of policy advocacy. It is a planned and systematic process carried out to improve or change a public policy in accordance with the wishes or interests of those who are pushing for these improvements and changes by influencing policy makers (Djani, 2020). The policy analysis approach is very relevant in the context of advocacy for optimizing the use of village funds. Village funds are a policy instrument that aims to improve the welfare of rural communities (Ashar & Agustang, 2020).

Table 5 Advocacy strategy for stunting prevention programs in 1000 HPK through village funds in East Sumalata sub-district, North Gorontalo Regency in 2024.

Num.	Advocacy Step	Target	Objectives
1	Analyzing data on families at risk of stunting and analyzing regulations on the use of village funds to look for opportunities	Data on intervention targets and supporting regulations	Obtain advocacy opportunities to village heads
2	Involve regional leaders and partners to get support	Regent, Head of Service, Subdistrict Head and Partners in the subdistrict.	Raising support for village fund advocacy
3	Carrying out informal communication channels with apersuasive approach	Village head and Village Secretary	Influence policies for stunting prevention programs
4	Carry out advocacy monitoring consistently and measurably.	Village Head and Village Secretary	Confirm the proposal processed

Source: Personal Documentation.

The table above explains the tactical steps for advocacy for village funds for the stunting prevention program in 1000 HPK in East Sumalata sub-district, North Gorontalo district. By using these steps, it has been proven that village heads feel helped in determining stunting prevention activities in the village in accordance with the mandate of Permendesa PDDT Number 13 of 2023 concerning Operational Guidelines on the focus of using village funds in 2024, one of which is the focus of using village funds in 2024 is to reduce stunting at the village scale. This is in accordance with what was conveyed by the head of Buluwatu village, Irfan Rahman, *"Thank you for providing input on activities in the village that are right on target, because we previously did not understand how to prevent stunting"* and was reinforced by the statement made by the village assistant for East Sumalata subdistrict, Reyfoll Kai, ST. *"Village governments need input and assistance from across sectors regarding stunting prevention programs, so that convergence in handling stunting can run optimally"*.

The results of this research have proven to be effective in increasing the convergence of accelerating stunting reduction at the East Sumalata sub-district level, North Gorontalo district so that the village government will carry out stunting prevention activities in the First 1000 Days of Life (HPK) throughout reach. This is one of the efforts to increase parents' awareness and knowledge about nutrition and health care, encouraging behavioral changes in providing nutrition, and concern for preventing stunting.

This is in accordance with the results of the 2023 BKKBN stunting secretariat online survey which revealed that the main factors were coordination and investigations that were not yet optimal between government agencies, policies that had not yet achieved their targets, problems related to standardization of health services and training of health workers, as well as challenges in government governance such as optimizing budget utilization from the central to the village level (Prasetya, 2024).

Therefore, the results of this research can be used as a guide for Family Planning Counselors, Rural Community Institution (IMP) Cadres, Integrated Service Post (Posyandu) Cadres, Toddler Family Development (BKB) Cadres and other related parties in advocacy efforts for village funds for the 1000 HPK program so that they can increase good cooperation between stakeholders and implement policies that are appropriate. Effective as the key to reducing the prevalence of stunting with a target of 14% and realizing a healthier future for Indonesian children and free from stunting. In the end, Indonesia's gold mission in 2045 can be realized optimally.

CONCLUSION

The research results show that an effective village fund advocacy strategy for the stunting prevention program during the First 1000 Days of Life (HPK) is communication through informal channels with a persuasive approach. This strategy involves presenting target data, supporting regulations, and attractive activity proposals, and is backed by recommendation letters from regional leaders, such as the Head of the Service or the Sub-district Head. Given that village budget discussions are sensitive and conducted on a limited basis, monitoring advocacy proposals is crucial to ensure that programs are followed through. Support from regional leaders and partners is essential for the advocacy process to run effectively.

This advocacy strategy serves as a tactical approach to securing village funds for the stunting prevention program during the First 1000 Days of Life (HPK) in East Sumalata Sub-district, North Gorontalo Regency. The strategy can be used as a guide for Family Planning Counselors, Rural Community Institution (IMP) Cadres, Integrated Service Post (Posyandu) Cadres, Toddler Family Development (BKB) Cadres, and other relevant parties to ensure the optimal convergence of stunting prevention efforts. However, the researchers acknowledge that implementing this advocacy requires strong communication skills. Therefore, further research is needed to explore policy advocacy communication techniques at the village level.

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