

Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The Resilience of 'Posyandu Cadre' in Promoting Stunting Reduction Program

Yessi Olivia^{1*}, Yusnarida Eka Nizmi², Umi Oktyari Retnaningsih³, Rahmi Yulia⁴, Tuah Kalti Takwa⁵

¹²³⁴⁵ Universitas Riau

* Corresponding Author: yessi.olivia@unri.ac.id

ORCID ID: 0009-0007-6285-9573

Abstract

Since the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were first adopted in New York in 2015, the Indonesian government has taken a collaborative governance approach to achieving the SDGs targets. This means that several institutions and different levels of government have been involved in the same SDG initiatives, such as reducing the prevalence of stunting. While collaborative governance highlights the dominance of state actors, this paper argues that regarding the stunting reduction, the backbone lies in the hands of Posyandu cadres, a voluntary group of women who have effectively provided maternal and child health education to the village women. These mothers, who work with expectant mothers, pregnant mothers, and mothers with children under 1000 days old, are the unsung heroes of the war against stunting. This research applies the localization of the SDGs framework to demonstrate how local actors also play essential roles in implementing international norms and initiatives. This research uses the experience of Posyandu cadres in Banjar Semina village, Siak Regency, as a case study of community resilience in reducing stunting.

Keywords: stunting interventions, posyandu cadres, SDG policies, localization

1. Introduction

On January 1, 2015, United Nations member countries' leaders met at three-day summit on sustainable development. They aimed for endorsing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which is carried out through under 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, which contain 169 targets from 17 interrelated goals, aim to "end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 everyone enjoys peace and prosperity" (1).

SDGs are an improvement on the previous global initiative, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs, which were agreed in September 2000, also aimed to eradicate poverty. Although the MDGs and SDGs have similar goals, and the SDGs follow up what has been achieved through the MDGs, there are several fundamental differences between the two. In contrast to the MDGs, which only focus on poverty alleviation for developing countries, the SDGs eliminate the differences between rich and developing countries. The SDGs initiative is aimed at all countries without any discrimination. The themes of the SDGs are also broader compared to the MDGs, which only look at poverty from a narrow perspective. The SDGs see development using poverty, where the environment, economy, and society are "embedded systems" (2) rather than elements competing.

The inception of SDGs is also different from MDGs. For example, the formulation of the MDGs failed to take input from various stakeholders. The SDGs, designed in 2015, involved a lot of input from multiple parties ranging from countries and local governments to civil society organizations. Learning from the experience of the MDGs, which were lagging in the plan execution, the SDGs initiatives emphasize the involvement of parties outside the central government. The MDG initiatives were criticized for their lopsided achievement because they only prioritized the role of the central government when many essential services, such as health, sanitation, etc., involved institutions at the sub-national and local levels.

In the SDGs, the creators highlight the principle of inclusivity where all parties, be it central government, regional government, local communities, the private sector, etc., have their share of responsibilities. The keyword that has been often used is localization. The United Nations Development

Program (UNDP), as an organization under the UN responsible for supporting the implementation of the SDGs, frequently raises the topic of localization. Haoliang Xu, a representative of UNDP, stated that 110 out of 169 of the SDGs targets "require actions at the local level" (3) in creating stability, reducing poverty, and improving the environment. He continued that firm policies and good coordination from global to local levels are very necessary to meet the 2030 target.

This article analyzes the localization of stunting alleviation programs in Indonesia. A case study of the role of Posyandu cadres in Kampung Banjar Seminai in helping eradicate stunting will be further discussed. Stunting, a condition where a child's growth is obstructed by malnutrition, poor maternal health, limited access to sanitation, etc., is one of the targets of SDGs. Stunting is included in the Second Goal of the SDGs, which aims to eliminate hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. This paper argues that although the government and complex bureaucracy dominate the implementation of programs to achieve SDG targets, the government also depends heavily on the activeness and resilience of local actors. Their awareness of the issues raised and how they impact their lives also determines the success of a program.

This article will be divided into several parts. After discussing the research method, the authors will elaborate a literature review regarding the localization of SDGs. Next, the authors will provide an overview of stunting governance in Indonesia and the involvement of local actors, especially Posyandu cadres, in stunting reduction programs in Indonesia.

2. Method

This research has been part of the larger project the authors instigated since July 2024. Funded by the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Riau, the authors visited Kampung (Village) Banjar Seminai, in Siak Regency, Riau Province. This research, which looks at that implementation of stunting reduction program in the local level, focuses on the role of Posyandu cadres and their relationship with the head village (kepala desa/dusun). The authors gathered information on the stunting reduction program through focus group discussion with the head village, Posyandu cadres, and the head of local paramedic. The authors also interviewed the Siak Regency Health Office, part of the regency task force in reducing stunting. In addition to that, the authors also rely on the government's publications, the media, and scholarly journals on stunting and the localization of SDGs.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Localization of the SDGs

The UN defines localization as the "process of defining; implementing; and monitoring strategies at the local level for achievable global, national and subnational sustainable goals and targets" (4). Localization or localizing the SDGs contains two different meanings even though they complement each other (5). The first is monitoring the implementation of the SDGs at the sub-national level. Sub-national here is an area where the party responsible for managing it is from somewhere other than the central government. This could be provinces, regencies, etc. Monitoring at the sub-national level is aimed at assessing resource inequalities across regions. To avoid this inequality, the High-Level Panel for Sustainable Development provided several suggestions, such as setting targets to make monitoring easier. Understanding localization in the context of embeddedness monitoring implies that disaggregation at the sub-national level is necessary to see whether there is alignment. Another definition of localizing is the involvement of local governments in realizing SDG goals. In this context, the significant role of local governments is highly anticipated because they are the parties responsible for ensuring essential services such as sanitation, health, education, etc., reach the community. Defining localization as the involvement of local governments also implies that local governments can "adopt some of the goals and targets for which they are responsible for implementation" (5).

It is important to note that the second definition of localizing, which emphasizes the role of local governments, is more recognized than the first one. This is understandable because several local governments have been involved in initiatives such as the Global Taskforce of Local Regional Government

for Post-2015 and Habitat III to encourage the implementation of SDGs, which are not only centered on the central government (6). Great attention to the role of local government is even manifested in one of the SDG goals, namely goal 11, which focuses on developing more resilient and sustainable cities. Even in the report to the Secretary General of the United Nations, the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda recommended that the local authorities should be given “a bigger role in setting priorities, executing plans, monitoring results and engaging with local firms and communities” (7).

As an academic subject, localizing SDGs has attracted scholarly attention since the initiation of SDGs since 2015. Research on the localization of SDGs can be grouped into several categories. First, some examine the localization of SDGs in countries, such as Jönsson & Bexell (8), Hu, et al. (9), and Sarkar et al. (10). The second category is research on localizing SDGs by focusing on one SDG goal, for example, Kushwaha, et al. (11), and Smith (12). The next category looks at factors that support or challenge the achievement of SDG targets, for example, Annan-Aggrey et al. (13), Lanshina et al. (14), and Perry et al. (15). Meanwhile, for research on SDGs in Indonesia, the most often raised theme is collaborative governance, a concept that refers to a set of actions involving multiple stakeholders or cross-sector partnerships (see 16–18). It can be said that the localization of SDGs in Indonesia is a potential research subject, considering the complexity of development problems in the country.

b. Indonesia’s Collaborative Governance to Reduce Stunting

As part of the UN member country committed to achieving the SDGs, Indonesia has issued several regulations to implement the SDG. The primary regulation is Presidential Regulation Number 59 of 2017 on implementing sustainable development goals. This rule contains the organizational structure and the sources of SDG funding. Based on this regulation, the central and regional governments prepared the National and Regional SDGs Action Plans, which elaborate all the activities related to meeting the SDGs targets. The following regulation is the Regulation of the Minister of National Development Planning/Head of the National Development Planning Agency of the Republic of Indonesia Number 7 of 2018, which serves as a guide in coordinating, planning, monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. SDGs are also incorporated into the National Medium-Term Development Plan. Apart from the abovementioned, the government has implemented policies supporting SDGs, such as women's empowerment, climate change, and stunting alleviation policies.

Regarding reducing stunting rates, the Indonesian government has also issued several regulations. Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 is the primary regulation concerning the acceleration of stunting reduction. This regulation serves as a foundation to the National Strategy for Accelerating Stunting Reduction to:

1. reduce the prevalence of stunting;
2. improve the quality of preparation for family life;
3. ensure adequate nutritional intake;
4. improve parenting patterns;
5. increase access and quality of health services;
6. increase access to drinking water and sanitation;

According to the National Strategy for the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction, the targets of the stunting reduction program in Indonesia are “pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and children aged 0-23 months, or so-called 1000 HPK households” (19). The National Strategy also determines provinces as priority areas, for example, East Nusa Tenggara and Papua, because of their high prevalence rates. The Indonesian government has established several interventions to reduce stunting rates, from immunization and providing supplements/vitamins to providing regular check-ups.

This regulation also describes the synergy between the central, district/city, and village governments to accelerate stunting reduction. Similar to the presidential regulation on SDGs, the presidential regulation on reducing stunting also contains the organizational structure containing responsible state institutions. This regulation shows that stunting requires the collaboration of more than

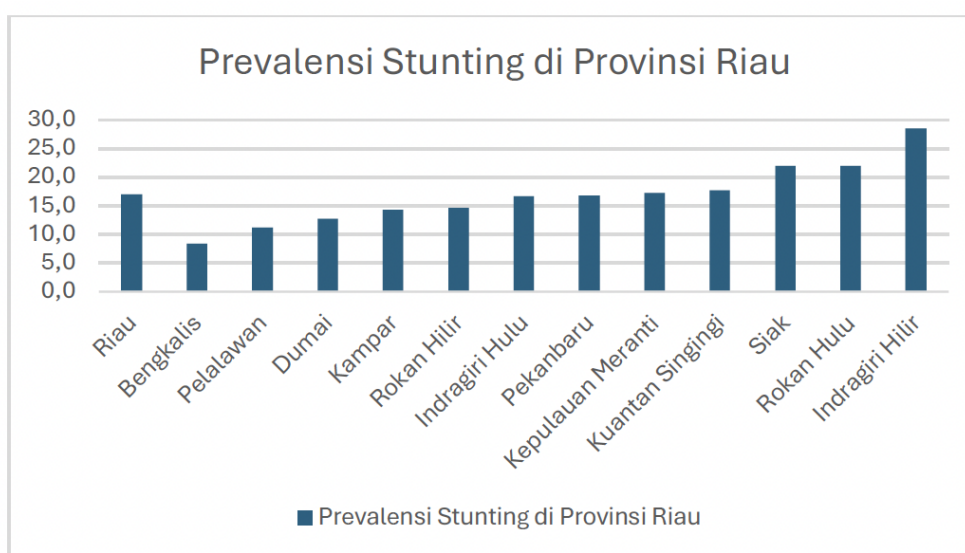
one ministry/state agency. The Vice President, appointed as head of the Team for the Acceleration of Reducing Stunting, is assisted by several ministries, from the Minister of Home Affairs, Minister of Health, Minister of Finance, and Minister of Social Affairs. The problem of stunting, in this case, is not seen only as a health issue, but a problem that also has economic and social dimensions.

All pillars above involve policy stakeholders from the national to village level. The National Strategy for Accelerating Stunting Reduction outlines the roles and responsibilities played by each level of government, from the central, provincial, district/city to the village. For the delivery of interventions, as outlined in the third pillar, the central government is responsible for coordinating all government and non-government institutions, ensuring planning and budgeting, and strengthening nutrition interventions. At the provincial level, the government is responsible for facilitating counseling, monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up on program implementation policies in district/city areas, coordinating the involvement of non-government institutions to support accelerated convergence/integration actions for stunting prevention. At the district/city level, the government is responsible for improving service management for priority nutrition interventions and ensuring that priority targets receive the interventions that have been provided. Meanwhile, the village-level government is responsible for ensuring that each priority target receives and utilizes nutrition intervention services and strengthens monitoring and evaluation of service implementation for all priority targets (19).

3.3 Stunting Reduction Program in Banjar Seminai

Based on the report on the implementation of the acceleration of stunting reduction in Riau Province, the stunting rate in the province has decreased by 5.3% (20). The most significant decline was in Rokan Hilir Regency (15%) and Bengkalis Regency (13.5%). Three regencies and city, Siak Regency, Indragiri Hilir Regency, and Pekanbaru City, experienced increased stunting. Diagram 1 shows the stunting rates in regencies and city in Riau Province. For prevalence at the district level throughout Riau Province, there are five districts whose stunting rates are above the provincial stunting average: Meranti Islands Regency, Kuantan Singingi Regency, Siak Regency, Rokan Hulu Regency, and Indragiri Hilir Regency. Bengkalis Regency is the district with the lowest stunting rate, 8.4%, while Regency Indragiri Hilir is a district with a high stunting rate in the province 28.5%. As we can see from the Table below, Riau Province is targeting a stunting rate of 12.38% in 2024, 1.62% below the national target set by the central government.

Diagram 1 Prevalensi Stunting Provinsi Riau



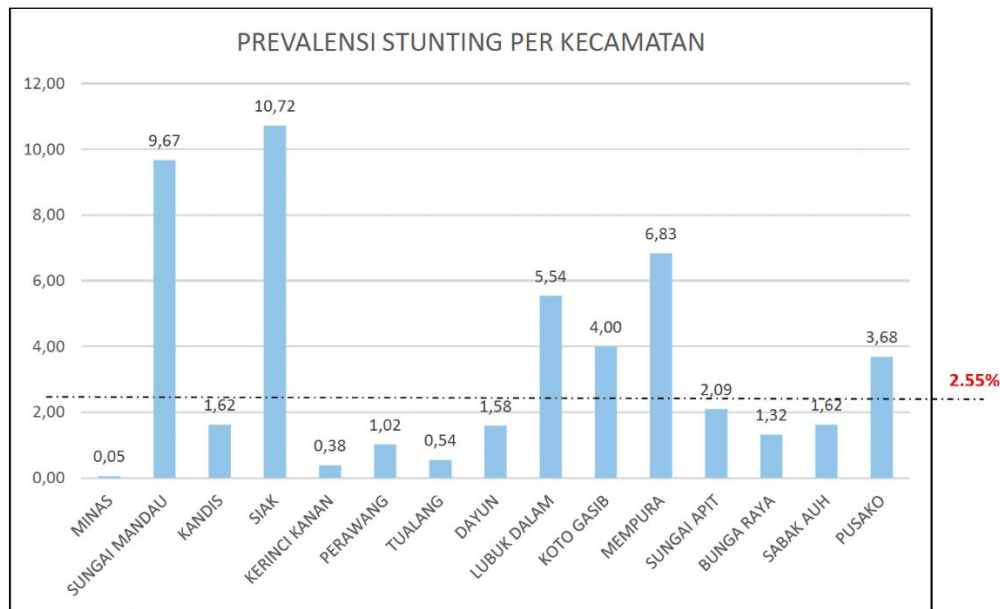
Source: Riau Province's Acceleration of Stunting Prevention Team

Table 1 Stunting Target and Realization in Riau Province

District/City	Target 2022	Achievement 2022	Target 2023	Target 2024
Kuantan Singingi	19.07	17.80	16.11	13.09
Indragiri Hulu	19.87	16.70	16.61	13.34
Indragiri Hilir	24.06	28.50	20.23	16.35
Pelalawan	17.28	11.20	13.98	10.87
Siak	15.85	22.00	13.12	10.45
Kampar	21.53	14.50	17.91	14.32
Rokan Hulu	20.54	22.00	16.24	12.34
Bengkalis	18.56	8.40	15.61	12.62
Rokan Hilir	24.82	14.70	20.59	16.42
Kepulauan Meranti	19.90	17.50	16.87	13.75
Pekanbaru City	9.54	16.80	7.93	6.34
Dumai City	19.37	12.80	16.18	13.00
Riau	18.86	17.00	15.59	12.38

Source: Riau Province's Acceleration of Stunting Prevention Team

The data below shows us tha Siak Regency is a regency with a considerably high stunting rates. Banjar Seminai is one of the villages in Siak Regency. The trend of stunting prevalence in Siak fluctuates from 2021 to 2023. In 2021, the prevalence of stunting is 19%, in 2022 22% and in 2023 10.4%. The subdistrict with the highest prevalence rate is Siak, 4.95% and the lowest is Minas 0.06% (21)



Source:BKKBN Siak

Source: Analisis Hasil Pengukuran Stunting Balita Kabupaten Siak Tahun 2023

Based on an interview with the Siak Health Office, the main causes in Siak regency vary from economic status, recurrent infection or disease, and poor parenting style. In the case of Banjar Seminai, things are relatively different from the Siak regency outlook. In our interview with Banjar Seminai's head

of the village, she claimed that the main cause of stunting is not the economic background of the parents/caregivers:

There are no poor people in this village. As you can see, most of the people here own a car. It implies that they do not have problems with money. Economy is not the factor, bad parenting style is. I see mothers who are glued to their phones and not paying attention to what their children consume. (22)

The head of Banjar Seminai village continued to comment how children's poor diet due to the parents/caregivers' lack of awareness of stunting has become a major problem:

While they are busy with their Instagram or TikTok, they just handed unhealthy snacks to their children so that the children stop bothering them. That is unwise because that kind of food is not good for their growth. (22)

She said that the success of Banjar Seminai village in eliminating stunting by 2024 was the result of collaboration between various parties, from village officials, health workers, and Posyandu cadres who visited residents' homes to disseminate information about stunting. The head of the village insisted that all of the key persons in the village should be made aware of stunting.

Every one must know about stunting, even RT and RW, because stunting cases will affect the village funds (dana desa) that we receive, as the government will allocate them to stunting reduction program. (22)

3.4 The Role of Posyandu Cadres in Stunting Reduction Program

Posyandu is a community-based health service that was established in the 1970s. The focus of Posyandu services is pregnant women and children under the age of five. Since it was first established, Posyandu has experienced several political changes in Indonesia. Regional autonomy, for example, means that Posyandu funding, which initially came from the center, is now the responsibility of the regions. However, one thing that remains the same about Posyandu is how it was formed voluntarily. Posyandu cadres come from a village community, usually dominated by housewives. Some claim that they became Posyandu cadres because of "heart's calling" (23). Since it is based on voluntarism, Posyandu cadres cannot be considered formal workers that receive regular paycheck. Posyandu cadres that we met admitted that some of them were given official letters from the government for their involvement in Posyandu.

In the program to reduce stunting rates, Posyandu cadres do not only carry out routine activities, such as monthly meetings with expectant mothers, pregnant women, and children under five. They must also involve in carrying out the national policy in stunting reduction program. For example, they have to help the allocation of intervention products, such as milk or supplements. They also have to disseminate information about stunting through house visits or through sharing on social media. One cadre said she often shared videos about stunting with Posyandu cadres or residents. When asked about their approach to residents, one of the cadres said they took careful steps to discuss stunting with parents.

We don't directly tell them that their child is stunted. We even use the word "stunting" to avoid the parents disappointment or anger. We don't want them to be offended and not want to go to the Posyandu. (23)

Posyandu cadres also report stunting data, summarized at the provincial level. In this case, Posyandu cadres are required to master the reporting application that the government has created. Posyandu cadres admitted that data input errors would have fatal consequences because villages would be recorded as having cases of stunting. Another challenge that Posyandu cadres face is inadequate supporting infrastructure. As one cadre told us: I have to input data at night because, during the day, the data is difficult to input.

Based on our interviews, the village head indeed took the reporting of stunting cases seriously because the results were announced to the public. Stunting cases in villages will be linked to the village head's failure to mobilize village officials, including Posyandu cadres, to implement anti-stunting programs.

It will be mentioned and exposed in the coordination meeting [with the regent], Ma'am. The satisfaction you will get [if you succeed] is beyond words. Stunting has a significant impact, ma'am, even on the province. Representatives from 1500 villages will gather [in one place] and wait for the results to be announced. (22)

What the posyandu cadres have done should be appreciated because they are not people with a special educational background in health or nutrition. Their approach is purely based on their position as part of a community of citizens who must maintain good relations with each other. It is not an understatement to say that Posyandu cadres are the spearhead of the stunting reduction program. As told by the head village:

If someone from another village asks what made us successful in reducing stunting, I answer by looking after [Posyandu] cadres. Without Posyandu cadres, it was impossible to do all of the hard work. The cadre is like the backbone. We went to Bandung to learn how other villages were doing. One of the head villages told me that I had to take care of Posyandu cadres first. They said that the cadres were essential to the Posyandu. Make them happy so that everything they do in Posyandu will be something you look forward to seeing. (22)

4. Conclusion

This article has discussed the localization of SDGs at the local level by highlighting the case of the stunting reduction program in Banjar Semina village, Siak Regency. From the results of interviews with key actors in Banjar Semina, implementing the stunting program requires good coordination with government institutions and Posyandu cadres. Posyandu cadres are the spearhead of the success of the stunting alleviation program because they have easy access to approach residents to provide information about stunting. The note that can be given regarding the involvement of Posyandu cadres is that the government should offer better rewards for Posyandu cadres who are involved in efforts to meet the SDGs targets.

5. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

6. Acknowledgement

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