Implementation of The Convergence Program to Accelerate Stunting Reduction in Sibolga City

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Abstract

Sibolga City is one of the priority cities in the effort to accelerate stunting reduction. Sibolga City implements an accelerated stunting prevalence reduction program that involves cross-sectors, better known as the convergence action to accelerate stunting reduction. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the implementation of the convergence program to accelerate stunting reduction in Sibolga City. This research is a qualitative study involving 18 informants from Regional Work Units that are members of the Sibolga City Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team. This research was conducted in November 2023 in Sibolga City, which consists of 4 sub-districts and 17 villages. Data were collected by conducting Focus Group Discussions and in-depth interviews. Furthermore, Data is analyzed through triangulation of methods, sources, and between researchers. The results of the analysis of the effectiveness of the program show that the quality of human resources and financing sources is good enough to reduce the stunting rate in the kelurahan which is the locus of stunting. Likewise, the results of the analysis of the program implementation process. The program planning that was prepared was in accordance with the problems obtained in the situation analysis and had targeted the locus villages determined in the situation analysis. The implementation and evaluation process has also been carried out well, which ultimately has an impact on reducing the stunting prevalence rate by 11.3%. As an effort to encourage a greater reduction in stunting prevalence, we recommend that the Sibolga City Government increase human resource capacity and funding, encourage the involvement of various parties including the private sector in accelerating stunting reduction programs in Sibolga City, improve coordination between Regional Work Units in the planning, implementation and evaluation processes and encourage the availability of a quality and sustainable data management system in each village

Keywords: Accelerate, Convergence, Reduction, Prevalence, Stunting

INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a condition causing children to be shorter due to malnutrition, with 150.8 million children under five affected globally in 2017. Indonesia ranks third in stunting rates, with 30.8% of children affected (Kemenkes RI, 2018). World Health Organization (2018) data shows that Indonesia ranks third in stunting rates among under-fives in the Southeast Asia/Southeast Asia Regional (SEAR) region. Stunting can inhibit brain neuron maturation, leading to cognitive and learning impairments, decreased attendance, and academic achievement (Gurning, 2021; Mulyani, 2022). The long-term impact of stunting can result in impaired growth for generations and increased risk of developing degenerative diseases in adulthood (Trihono et al., 2015; Yadika et al., 2019; Roediger et al., 2020).

The Indonesian government is implementing an accelerated stunting reduction program, outlined in Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021, with a goal to reduce stunting prevalence to 14% by the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (BAPPENAS, 2020). This will involve involving various sectors and ensuring coordination at the lowest unit level. The government encourages leadership commitment and vision (BKKBN, 2022).

Sibolga City has implemented 8 Convergence Actions in the government program addressing stunting. Sibolga City is designated as a priority district to accelerate stunting reduction. In 2021, stunting in Sibolga City was 25.8% (Kemenkes RI, 2018). The Ministry of Health reported a decrease of 14.5% in 2022 (Kemenkes RI, 2018). By 2023, there will be 17 neighbourhoods in Sibolga City targeted for stunting intervention. These areas are determined based on the Decree of the Mayor of Sibolga Number 050/078 of 2022, concerning the Determination of Integrated Stunting Priority Locations in Sibolga City. The selection of focus locations for stunting interventions at the district/city level is based on a number of indicators, including the number of stunted children under five, the prevalence of stunting and the poverty rate.

Convergence efforts refer to intervention methods that are synchronized, integrated, and collaborative. The implementation of convergence in Sibolga City is carried out through a targeted nutrition approach and non-nutrition interventions. The targeted nutrition approach is designed to target the main causes of stunting. Nutrition-sensitive interventions address the underlying factors contributing to stunting (BAPPENAS, 2020).

The research found that the main problems in implementing convergence initiatives are the sectoral ego of each Regional Device Organization, lack of proper socialization, and lack of adequate understanding of the program (Permanasari et al., 2020). The programs that have been prepared have yet to be executed properly, so the coverage, quality, and achievement of program targets still need to be higher. In addition, the cooperation of each responsible institution has yet to show satisfactory results, which has slowed down the implementation of the program (Hidayat, 2019).

METHODS

The research was a qualitative assessment strategy to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of convergence actions to reduce stunting in Sibolga City. This research was conducted in November in Sibolga City, which consists of 4 sub-districts and 17 villages. The participants of this study consisted of Sibolga City Regional

Work Units consisting of representatives from Regional Development Planning Agency, Health Office, Population Control and Family Planning Office, family planning cadre, Human Development Cadre. This study used primary and secondary data. Primary data collection was conducted through observation, focus group discussions (FGDs), and in-depth interviews with informants who comprehensively understand the activities undertaken. The informants were determined from the relevant government agencies, family planning cadres, and Human Development Cadres, totaling nine people. This study used secondary data in documents related to convergence activities carried out by various agencies. This study used source triangulation, involving several stakeholders such as Regional Work Units, Population Control and Family Planning Office, and Human Development Cadre responsible for implementing the stunting convergence program. In addition, the study also involved beneficiaries of the stunting convergence program. This research uses triangulation, namely triangulation of methods, namely in-depth interviews, FGDs, observation, documentation and anthropometric measurements. This study used source triangulation, namely Sibolga City Regional Work Units, and stunting convergence program implementers (family planning cadres dan Human Development Cadre). Triangulation between researchers was carried out, namely researchers involving researchers from various agencies, namely researchers from university education, researchers from National Population and Family Planning Agency and freelance researchers. This study used a qualitative descriptive analysis technique for data analysis. After the interview transcripts from each informant were collected, a data reduction process was carried out, which led to the formulation of research conclusions.

RESULTS

1. Informant Overview

Informants in this research are divided into 2 (two) categories. The first category came from each of the Regional Work Units that constitute the Sibolga City Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team consisting of Regional Development Planning Agency, Health Office, and Population Control and Family Planning Office. The second group are family planning cadre and Human Development Cadre who implement nutrition-specific and sensitive intervention programs or activities in the field. The following table describes the description of the informants.

Table 1. Informant Overview

No.	Initials	Gender	Origin
1	BS	Men	Regional Development Planning Agency
2	EA	Women	Regional Development Planning Agency
3	SMP	Women	Health Office
4	KL	Women	Health Office
5	ASS	Men	Population Control and Family Planning Office
6	SA	Men	Population Control and Family Planning Office
7	DKS	Men	Sambas Port Community Health Center
8	SAM	Women	Family Planning Field Officer
9	UK	Women	Family Planning Cadres

2. Resource Effectiveness

Human resources come from each of the Regional Work Units that make up the Sibolga City Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team consisting of Regional Development Planning Agency, Health Office, and Population Control and Family Planning Office. In addition, there are also implementing human resources, namely family planning cadre and Human Development Cadre, who implement programs and activities in the field.

A good understanding of the convergence action will be one of the factors that can encourage the successful implementation of the convergence action. Based on the results of interviews with human resources in charge of agencies that are Regional Work Units that are members of the coordination team, it was found that most of them understand stunting. The following are excerpts of information from Regional Development Planning Agency informants regarding the national program for overcoming stunting.

The implementation of accelerated stunting reduction is a major national program, followed by supporting legal instruments and regulations.(BS, 30 November 2023)

In general, informants understood that stunting is a national government program. Understanding the stages of convergence action is good enough to know how to implement convergence action to accelerate stunting reduction. The following is an excerpt from an interview with one of the informants.

In the 8 Convergence Actions, the Health Office is in Action 7, which measures and publishes stunting. Related to our measurements and interventions are in the Body Mass Index, socialization to pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, exclusive breastfeeding, Posyandu, nutrition counselling, supplementary feeding, and services have been carried out by each puskesmas. The Health Office itself monitors the implementation. (SMP, 30 November 2023)

In addition to asking about the understanding of convergence actions in each Regional Work Units, the quality of human resources implementing the program in the

community was also assessed. Human Development Cadres are informants who are expected to be able to provide an overview of the quality of implementing human resources. The following are the results of interviews with human development cadres to measure the extent of their understanding of stunting.

> *As family planning cadres, we are assigned as Family Support Team to assist the community. So, we will assist pregnant women, toddlers, postpartum women, and marriage partners every month. For toddlers, we monitor their food every day, what they eat every day, and their height and weight every month. We also provide food to toddlers and monitor it daily to see whether the mother continues to provide the food that we provide. (UK, 30 November 2023).*

Based on the results of in-depth interviews and observations, the understanding of Human Development Cadres on the problem of stunting is quite good. This can be seen from the cadres' ability to explain the meaning of stunting, things that encourage stunting and efforts that the community can make to prevent stunting.

Funding sources are an important factor in implementing convergence actions. For programs run by Regional Work Units, the funds used are sourced from regional own-source revenue, as well as funds sourced from the State Budget in the form of balancing funds in the form of General Allocation Funds, special allocation funds, and revenue sharing funds. Financing for programs related to accelerating stunting reduction in Sibolga City is mostly sourced from the State Budget.

> *The state budget in Sibolga City is very low in handling stunting reduction, so it centres on the state budget Fund. Funds for reducing stunting are unevenly distributed in each agency (BS, 30 November 2023)*

Based on the findings in the field, the available data shows that financing intervention programs in Sibolga City for nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions is mostly sourced from the State Budget and the General Allocation Fund. The private sector also contributes to stunting-related issues. Companies can determine the desired contribution according to the conditions of their respective companies. In this case, Pelindo and Pertamina have allocated assistance to help implement activities from the Convergence Action to Accelerate Stunting Reduction in Sibolga City.

3. Process Effectiveness

The implementation of convergence action begins with planning. Planning includes three stages of action starting from Action 1, namely situation analysis; Action 2, namely activity plan; and Action 3, namely stunting consultation. Good planning is expected to

improve program integration from the central to the village level. In addition, program planning is also expected to improve the suitability between existing problems in the community and the availability of existing programs to encourage increased effectiveness of convergence actions.

The following is an excerpt of an explanation from the Regional Development Planning Agency regarding planning in accelerating stunting reduction in stunting.

The stunting reduction plan is 9% of Sibolga City's 2024 target. The role of Regional Development Planning Agency *is four actions: 1) Situation analysis, 2) Program mapping, and 3) This is by PERMENPAN and by the technical guidelines in the eight convergence actions. Actions 1, 2, and 3 are the roles of* Regional Development Planning Agency. *(BS, 30 November 2023)*

To find out the implementation of programs and activities in the community, FGDs and in-depth interviews were conducted to determine whether the service recipients could feel the benefits of the program. The informants selected were representatives of Regional Work Units. The aim was to determine whether there were differences in the programs or services they received before and after implementing the convergence action to accelerate stunting reduction. In addition, information from implementing human resources is also used to clarify the results of interviews with service recipients.

Based on program planning, the specific nutrition intervention programs implemented by the Health Office are mostly implemented in all puskesmas in Sibolga City. This is reflected in information from informants from the Sibolga City Health Office.

"Posyandu visits, immunizations. The puskesmas have made provisions for supplementary food, milk, and implementation. Action 7 in measurement and publication. In measurement, the Health Office takes the approach of height-for-age. This implementation is carried out at Posyandu in stages. From the c, we did not get data by name or address, so the data sources obtained were Indonesia Nutrition Status Survey and EPPGBM data. In 2021, 257 stunted babies out of 6006 toddlers in Sibolga City and in 2022, there were 235 stunted babies out of 5734 toddlers measured. In 2023, 7215 babies were measured, and 225 were stunted in Sibolga City. From special allocation fund Health, standard anthropometric tools. Measurements are available in full, starting from baby measurement tools at the posyandu, and the data will be complete in 2023. Each health centre already has an ultrasound, and training is conducted on ultrasound at each health centre. Suplementary feeding from regional fund and Health Office funding sources.

Suplementary feeding from moringa leaves has a significant impact on reducing stunting. Cross-sector cooperation with National Population and Family Planning Agency with the Latin program. Cooperation with PERSAGI and other hospitals in providing animal source nutrition. (KL, 30 November 2023)

Based on information obtained from the Public Health Nutrition program staff from the Sibolga City Health Office, the intervention programs to reduce stunting have been very good, and almost all have been realized. As mentioned, one of the programs carried out in supplementary feeding from moringa leaves has contributed significantly to supporting the reduction of prevalence in Sibolga City.

The program has also been carried out quite well by the Sibolga City Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team at the puskesmas level. Namely, nutrition officers in the Pelabuhan Sambas sub-district in Sibolga City, who provide information on the implementation of stunting convergence actions.

Pregnant women are given a minimum of 90 tablets of blood supplementation. Provision of local and manufactured supplementary feeding from the Ministry of Health and cooperation between the village and the MCH program to target pregnant women who are categorized as chronically malnourished for 90 days. PMPA, or infant and young child feeding counselling, is conducted by nutritionists. Adolescent girls also receive nutrition counselling, communication, education, and information on anaemia. (DKS, 30 November 2023)

In addition, Population Control and Family Planning Office has also carried out various activity programs in realizing the stunting convergence action. This is in accordance with information from the following informants:

They formed a family assistance team of 153 Family Support Team who run and advocate for the Elsimil application. Creation of the DASHAT Program in the Family Planning Village, namely in 2022 in Pancuran Bambu. Cross-sectoral advocacy and to the community where the resource person can influence and cross-sector and community in reducing stunting. Toddler Family Development where each field team provides advocacy for stunting reduction. Toddler Family Development received the first best award for forming Toddler Family Development at the North Sumatra level and the first award in the coverage of families under five.(ASS, 30 November 2023)

Other programs are also implemented, including in accordance with the excerpts of answers from informants.

They are providing socialization and nutritious food to mothers with babies starting from first 1000 days of life and providing socialization of the simile application to actin. Eighty-one can (prospective brides) were registered in the simile application, 584 pregnant women, then post-coital 184 people, 826 under-fives, so 1675 people recorded have been assisted. Family Support Team is 153 people with 51 teams in 1 team of 3 people consisting of health workers, cadres, and sub-cadres. (ASS, 30 November 2023)

The Sibolga City Population Control and Family Planning Office through Human Development Cadre also contributed. The following is an excerpt from an interview with the Sibolga City Human Development Cadre:

The role of family field officer in reducing stunting rates: We are the spearhead in the village conveyors of IEC about first1000 days of life especially if from the family field officer. We are the Population Control and Family Planning Office *of Sibolga City, generally National Population and Family Planning Agency; our target is not in the stunting but in families at risk of stunting. Our assistance is especially from prospective brides; from there, we assist prospective brides. There are our Family Support Team in the field who carry out assistance to these prospective brides. (SAM, 30 November 2023)*

Based on information from in-depth interviews with Human Development Cadre, it was found that because of the Family Planning Village and Healthy Kitchen Overcomes Stunting (DASHAT) program, there was a decrease in stunting in Pancuran Bambu Village, such as the following interview excerpt:

In the Pancuran Bambu urban village, the Family Planning *village was formed for the first time in Sibolga City and thank God, thanks to this* Family Planning *village, we have funds rolled out to the* Family Planning *village for activities, and we are utilizing this to reduce the stunting rate. First, we implement a healthy kitchen to overcome stunting or DASHAT program. (SAM, 30 November 2023)*

Most programs that have not been realized will be re-evaluated, and solutions will be sought for the future. This will be discussed in Action 8 Annual Performance Review to achieve the stunting reduction target in Sibolga City by 9% by 2024. In general, the evaluation of the implementation of the convergence action to accelerate stunting reduction in Sibolga City has gone well. The relevant agencies that run the program only carry out the evaluation process. Team coordination meetings have been held specifically to discuss the evaluation of the ongoing program.

4. Goal Effectiveness

To accelerate stunting reduction, the target effectiveness assessment compared stunting prevalence rates in the locus villages before and after the convergence action. The data used is infant and toddler measurement data based on the e-Community-based Nutrition Recording and Reporting Application. It can be seen that after the implementation of convergence actions, not all locus villages/sub-districts experienced a decrease in stunting prevalence rates. Sibolga City is one of the cities that managed to reduce the stunting rate. Based on the results of Indonesian Nutrition Status Survey in 2022, the reduction in stunting prevalence in Sibolga City was 11.3%. In addition, the results of measuring food consumption in stunted children under five are quite good. This is due to education and counselling conducted by Human Development Cadres, and nutrition officers.

DISCUSSION

1. Resource Effectiveness

The effectiveness of resources can be divided into human resources and funding sources. Human resources are crucial for an organization's progress, retreat, and sustainability. According to Lawrence Suprihanto (2007), human resource development aims to make it easier to achieve goals, with quality employees capable of fulfilling their dutiesPolicy implementation is influenced by social, political, and economic conditions, including environmental resources, interest groups, participant characteristics, and public opinion(Apriliana & Nawangsari, 2021).. The social environment and political interests can either support or inhibit policy implementation (Priyanto & Noviana, 2019)..

The coordination team, comprising human resources from Regional Work Units, coordinates program implementation, planning, and budgeting, particularly in high-prevalence areas or service gaps. They also manage service management, facilitating, monitoring, and evaluating to identify problems and find solutions.

Leadership and group members' activeness are crucial for successful stunting reduction governance(Prasetyo et al., 2023). Local leadership plays a significant role in implementing policies and coordinating efforts to address stunting . This approach involves high concern and willingness from agencies involved in handling and preventing stunting(Huicho et al., 2020). Benefits of integrating local policies and leadership include increased professional and cultural skills, commitment, welfare support, open communication, and appropriate decision-making actions (Habiburrahman et al., 2022; Aldawood et al., 2020).

The research indicates that Regional Work Units and village-level human resources cadres have a good understanding of stunting, its causes, and prevention methods. They can explain the causes and prevention methods to stunted children. Assessing the quality of cadres' knowledge in stunting prevention activities is crucial (Sri Hendrawati, Fanny Adistie, 2018). However, the cadres' quality is not wider than their understanding of the basic concepts of stunting. Qualified cadres are expected to be able to pass on the knowledge and knowledge they have to the community. With the transfer of knowledge from cadres, community awareness about stunting can be built to encourage better behaviour change. This behaviour change will greatly affect the success of the stunting reduction acceleration program.

The problem of stunting is cross-sectoral. Therefore, efforts to accelerate stunting reduction are not only the government's responsibility but are a shared responsibility, including the community and the private sector. This is based on Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 concerning the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction. Article 27 states that the funding source for accelerating stunting reduction comes from the State Budget, Regional Budget, and other legal sources through the provisions of laws and regulations. Based on the Presidential Regulation, financing for the program can utilize other sources from the private sector (Bappenas, 2019).

Nutrition-sensitive intervention programs contribute more to reducing the prevalence of stunting by 70%, while nutrition-specific interventions contribute 30%. This is because nutrition-sensitive intervention programs have a broader target audience: the community. Because of the large contribution of the nutrition-sensitive intervention program to reducing stunting prevalence, the allocation of funds for this intervention program is larger (Peraturan Presiden, 2013).

Based on the description above, to assess the effectiveness of resources through understanding Regional Work Units, the understanding of Regional Work Units regarding convergence actions must still be improved through continuous training/scientific meetings. As for HR implementation in the field, understanding stunting is good enough but not optimal in shaping behaviour change. Therefore, assessing effectiveness with a resource approach in the quality of human resources is quite effective. However, funding still needs more funding assistance.

2. Process Effectiveness

The Sibolga City Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team has identified existing problems and gaps in service coverage in areas with high stunting incidence and prevalence rates. They have identified several villages as locus villages for convergence actions in 2023. The coordination team developed a program plan matrix to address these problems. Global experience shows that focusing on locus villages is crucial for accelerating stunting prevalence reduction, as demonstrated in Cambodia. The nutrition interventions focused on the determinants that had the greatest impact and prioritized improving community-based nutrition understanding (Zanello et al., 2016).

According to George R Terry, planning can be said to be effective if it contains five elements, namely (1) What, Talking about the problem of what is the purpose of a plan and the things that need to be done to achieve the planning objectives. (2) Why (why), discussing the issue of why these goals must be achieved by why various activities are carried out to achieve these goals (3) Where (where), discussing the issue of where the program in the planning is implemented (4) When (when), discussing the issue of when these activities will be carried out and ended. (5) Who (who) talks about the problem of who will carry out the program? 6. How. Discusses the issue of how to implement the planned program (George R. Terry, 2019).

The technical guidelines in Sibolga City have successfully implemented planning stages, but the coordination team should monitor targets to evaluate implementation. Implementation involves assessing the success of programs by Regional Work Units and service recipient informants. Most health office programs have been implemented, with informants aware and receiving related services.

Efforts to increase mothers' understanding of stunting have been routinely carried out using counselling methods and the Healthy Kitchen Overcomes Stunting (DASHAT) program. When parents visit the posyandu to measure their children's growth, nutrition officers or cadres can explain the results of their children's growth measurements accompanied by counselling. If this is not possible, health workers and cadres can conduct home visits so that parents with stunted children can receive nutrition counselling.

Counselling is crucial for parents to understand their child's growth, but time lag and lack of facilities at posyandu can hinder attendance. Research shows that counselling and group counselling significantly impact mothers' attitudes and behavior towards nutrition, with counselling having a greater impact on improving attitudes and behavior towards malnourished toddlers compared to group counselling. Counselling has a greater impact in

improving the attitudes and behaviour of mothers to deal with malnourished toddlers compared to the group counselling method (Hesti Sukma Wijayanti, 2010) .

The evaluation process is crucial for program implementation, monitoring progress and providing learning for improvement. Most programs are running well, with some yet to be realized. Future solutions will be discussed in the Action 8 Annual Performance Review to reduce stunting in Sibolga City by 9%. The coordination team should improve the evaluation process and assess nutrition-sensitive and specific interventions. Understanding the program implementation process, its reasons, and environmental context is also important.

3. Goal Effectiveness

Quality improvement is crucial for accelerating stunting reduction in Sibolga City. This includes planning, implementation, and evaluation. Program implementers must understand their roles and responsibilities, and continuous efforts to improve human resources are necessary. High motivation from cadres can accelerate the implementation of the program. Forming Posyandu cadres is the right step, but implementation requires effort to ensure cadres do not easily resign. Therefore, strong efforts are needed to motivate cadres so that existing cadres do not easily resign (Afifa, 2019).

The results showed that the convergence implementation program had an impact on accelerating stunting reduction at the village level. Specific and sensitive interventions which are direct and indirect activities in overcoming the causes of stunting are quite effective, but still require strengthening bottom-up policies that are long-term through an educational and participatory intervention approach. This is in line with the results of research which states the importance of long-term stunting reduction interventions that must be complemented by improvements in nutritional determinants, such as poverty, low education, disease burden, and lack of women's empowerment (Vaivada et al., 2020).

The implementer is said to be good if the implementer or implementor has carried out the task in accordance with the procedure, it means that they have understood what is related to the program and what is the task of the implementer (Serli Ani ; Eko Budi Sulistio, 2017). Overall, all implementers in Sibolga City have carried out stunting prevention activities. Based on the description above, the effectiveness of the convergence action to accelerate stunting reduction in Sibolga City is quite good. However, the reduction in stunting prevalence rates has yet to reach the target set by the government; evaluating the programs implemented to obtain even better performance achievements in 2024 is still necessary.

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the convergence program to accelerate stunting reduction in Sibolga City is quite good. The results showed that human resources members of the Sibolga City Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team all understood their respective duties and responsibilities in accelerating stunting reduction in Sibolga City. Program implementers in the field, namely nutrition officers, Human Development Cadre, and family planning cadres, are very important in encouraging behaviour change to accelerate stunting reduction. Providing additional food to toddlers and pregnant women by adding moringa leaves and fish effectively reduces stunting rates in Sibolga City. The Family Planning village and Healthy Kitchen Overcomes Stunting (DASHAT) programs contribute to reducing stunting in Sibolga City. However, funding to address stunting is still limited.

As an effort to encourage a greater reduction in stunting prevalence rates, efforts are needed from the Sibolga City Government to increase human resource capacity and funding, encourage more involvement of the private sector in accelerating stunting reduction programs in Sibolga City, improve coordination between Regional Work Units in the planning, implementation and evaluation processes and encourage the availability of a quality and sustainable data management system in each village.

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