

# Cultural Innovation in the Foster Family Program for Stunted Toddlers: Integrating Traditional Practices and Modern Governance in Ciamis Regency

*Imam*, Maulana Yusuf<sup>1</sup> ([imam.yusuf@mhs.unsoed.ac.id](mailto:imam.yusuf@mhs.unsoed.ac.id))

*Nurrekta*, Yuristrianti<sup>2</sup> ([nurrekta.y@mhs.unsoed.ac.id](mailto:nurrekta.y@mhs.unsoed.ac.id))

*Tobirin*<sup>3</sup> ([tobirin@unsoed.ac.id](mailto:tobirin@unsoed.ac.id))

1. Doctoral Student in Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Indonesia
2. Doctoral Student in Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Indonesia
3. Lecturer in the Doctoral Program of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Indonesia

## ABSTRAK

*Stunting among toddlers remains a serious public health issue in Indonesia, including in Ciamis Regency, West Java. Socio-cultural factors, such as local beliefs and low health literacy, exacerbate the high prevalence of stunting. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Foster Family Program for Stunted Toddlers in Sindangrasa Urban Village, Ciamis Regency, as a culturally based public innovation that integrates traditional approaches with modern governance. The research focuses on exploring how the integration of local values and modern mechanisms can enhance the effectiveness of stunting interventions. This study employs a qualitative ethnographic method, with data collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings indicate that the program has successfully reduced stunting rates by leveraging strong kinship ties and the spirit of mutual cooperation within the Ciamis community. It also involves multiple stakeholders, including local civil servants, community leaders, health cadres, and local entrepreneurs. The culturally rooted approach—especially the principles of *silih asah*, *silih asih*, *silih asuh*—has proven effective in strengthening social solidarity, active participation, and collective responsibility. These findings highlight the importance of holistic and collaborative public policies that are culturally sensitive, not only in terms of nutritional interventions but also in community empowerment. The program contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) and Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being). This study offers a potential model for other regions with similar characteristics, emphasizing the integration of local wisdom and modern policy for sustainable solutions.*

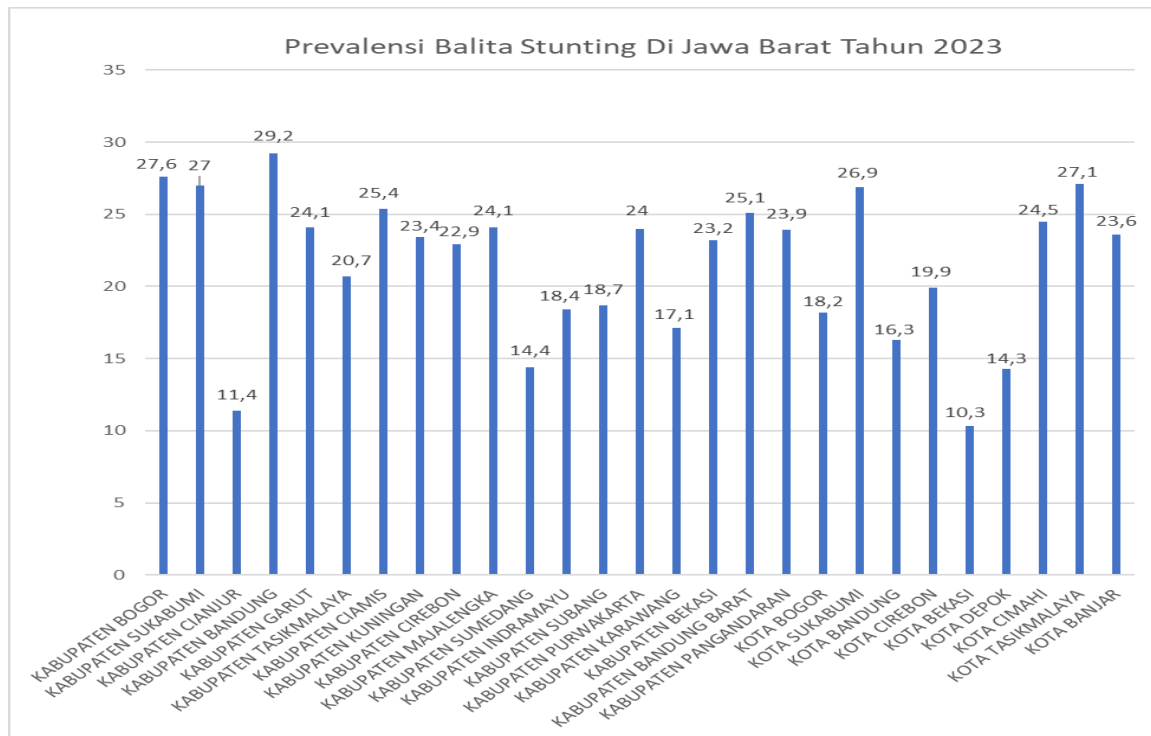
*Kata kunci: Stunting, public innovation, cultural approach, modern governance, Sindangrasa Urban Villag*

## 1. Introduction

Stunting, or impaired child growth due to malnutrition, is a major public health issue that has garnered global attention (Maliati, 2023; Mauluddin & Novianti, 2021). The World Health Organization (WHO) has even set a target of a 20% reduction in stunting rates for all countries (C. N. Dewi & Tjenreng, 2025; Ulfah & Nugroho, 2020). This target also supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 2, which aims to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030 and to ensure food security (Haskas, 2020; Sumanti, 2024).

Currently, Indonesia ranks fifth in the world in terms of the highest number of stunting cases (Dermawan et al., 2022; Sriwindy & Permana, 2025). According to the 2022 Indonesian Nutritional Status Survey (SSGI) released by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, the national stunting prevalence reached 21.6%—a figure that remains above the 20% threshold set by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the benchmark for successful management of chronic malnutrition in toddlers (Ministry of Health RI, 2023; WHO, 2014). This indicates that nearly one in four Indonesian children under the age of five suffers from growth impairment due to long-term chronic malnutrition, particularly during the critical window of the first 1,000 days of life.

Although the Indonesian government has made efforts to reduce the prevalence of stunting by issuing various policies and regulations and involving multiple stakeholders—from government agencies, businesses, and communities to other relevant parties—the results have yet to meet expectations (Sugianto, 2021). This is evident from the widespread presence of stunting across all provinces in Indonesia, with uneven prevalence rates (S. K. Dewi, 2022). One of the affected regions is West Java Province, which recorded a stunting prevalence rate of 21.70% in 2023 (West Java Regional Development Planning Agency, 2024; Trihandani, 2024). This condition is observed across all regencies and cities within West Java, with prevalence rates that vary significantly and tend to fluctuate (Nuryartono, 2024). Further details are illustrated in Figure 1 below:



**Figure 1.** Graph of Stunting Prevalence Among Toddlers in West Java in 2023 (Source: Data@Jabarprov.go.id – West Java Provincial Office of Communication and Informatics, 2024)

Out of the 27 regencies and cities in West Java Province, 17 are still reporting stunting prevalence rates among toddlers that exceed the 20% tolerance threshold set by the World Health Organization (WHO). These areas include: Bogor Regency, Sukabumi Regency, Bandung Regency, Garut Regency, Tasikmalaya Regency, Ciamis Regency, Kuningan Regency, Majalengka Regency, Cirebon Regency, Purwakarta Regency, Bekasi Regency, West Bandung Regency, Pangandaran Regency, as well as Sukabumi City, Cimahi City, Tasikmalaya City, and Banjar City. The high prevalence of stunting in most of these areas reflects the ongoing significant challenges in the implementation of stunting reduction policies and programs across West Java Province.

In general, the seventeen regencies and cities share similar policies and regulations aimed at reducing the prevalence of stunting among toddlers. However, in practice, stunting cases continue to occur, and in some areas, the numbers have even increased. This situation is not without cause. The people of West Java continue to hold strong to local wisdom values, which often give rise to community habits in interpreting the concepts of health and illness in toddlers, as well as in feeding practices and child-rearing approaches.

Social and cultural factors play a significant role in shaping the public's perception of health issues, including how stunting is understood and addressed

(Wiliyanarti et al., 2022). Such patterns of thinking are often the result of deeply rooted local traditions that have been passed down through generations (Pelto et al., 2003). These local customs, which have become a form of social reality, often shape behaviors that conflict with formal and scientific norms (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Consequently, this can lead to low levels of community participation in supporting public health programs and policies (L. D. Putri et al., 2025; Torri, 2012).

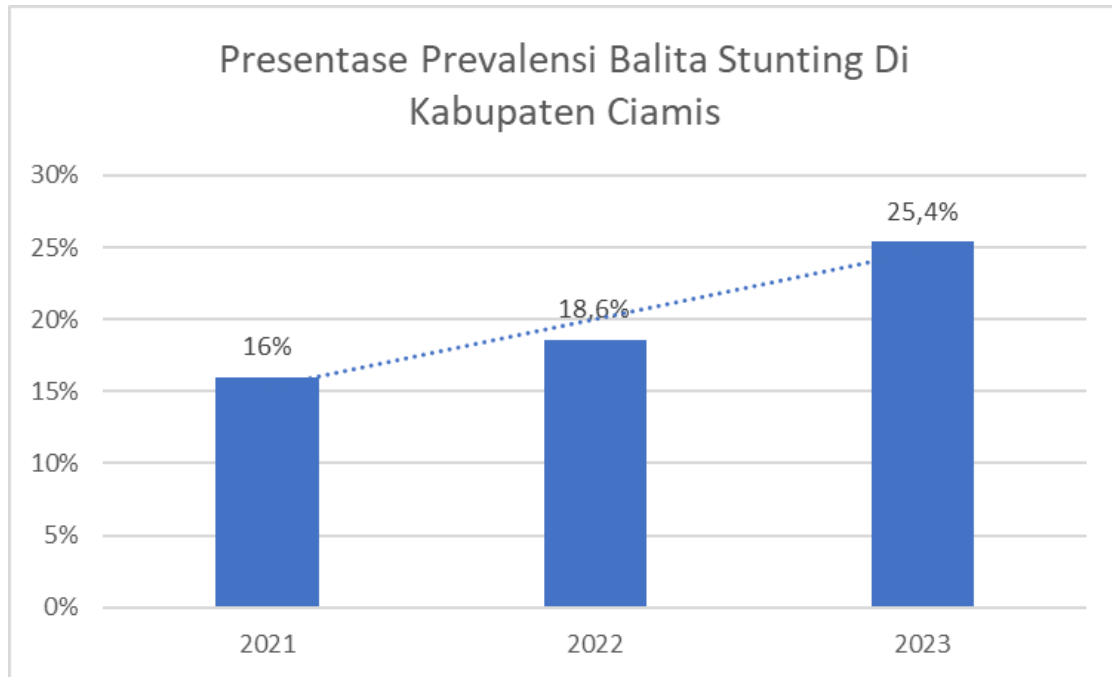
Local belief systems strongly shape community perceptions of child growth, including the interpretation of stunting as something natural or an “inborn trait,” rather than a chronic nutritional problem that requires medical and social intervention (Alfianti et al., 2023; Nshimayesu et al., 2025). As a result, community acceptance of various nutritional intervention programs—such as supplementary feeding, health education, and maternal and child health services—often encounters resistance at the local level (Astuti et al., 2024; Diana et al., 2022; Moreno et al., 2023).

A clear example of this phenomenon can be found in Ciamis Regency, where part of the community still attributes a child's short stature solely to hereditary factors, without considering the possibility of nutritional deficiencies during early life. Cultural norms related to child-rearing practices, feeding habits, and traditional beliefs about health and nutrition remain the primary reference points, often leading to the neglect of other critical determinants such as adequate nutrition, sanitation, and healthcare services.

The lives of the people in Ciamis Regency are still deeply influenced by entrenched local cultural values, particularly the Kagaluhan culture, which originates from the heritage of the Galuh Kingdom (Kusmayadi, 2021). These values shape the community's social perspectives and behaviors and are reflected in daily practices across various domains, including health (Ningrum et al., 2022), education (Wijayanti et al., 2025), and cultural preservation (Hidayatuloh et al., 2019). The Kagaluhan culture has established a belief system passed down through generations, which constructs the community's mindset and social behavior (Berkah et al., 2022; Yusuf et al., 2024). This culture not only reflects a cultural identity but also shapes the relationships between humans, nature, and spiritual forces believed to influence the balance of life (Berkah et al., 2022; Purnama et al., 2021; Yusuf et al., 2024).

As a result, conflicts often arise between modern evidence-based interventions and principles rooted in the Kagaluhan cultural values (Berkah et al., 2022; Ningrum et al., 2022). This is evident in the implementation of stunting prevention programs in Ciamis Regency, where modern medical approaches are often not fully accepted by the community because they are perceived as inconsistent with long-standing local value systems. For example, in child feeding practices, the community tends to rely on traditional beliefs and customs that have not been medically or scientifically validated, making it difficult to effectively implement evidence-based health interventions.

This situation has led to a continuous increase in the prevalence of stunting among toddlers in Ciamis Regency. This trend is evident from the data on toddler stunting prevalence in Ciamis Regency over the past three years, from 2021 to 2023, which shows an upward tendency. For a clearer view of the stunting rate developments in Ciamis Regency during this period, please refer to Figure 2 below:



**Figure 2.** Graph of Stunting Prevalence Presentation in Ciamis Regency from 2021 to 2023 (Data@Jabarprov.go.id\_Communication and Information Office of West Java Province, 2024)

The data indicate a fundamental problem in the efforts to tackle stunting in Ciamis Regency. This issue is estimated to involve several critical aspects, such as weak policy implementation at the local level, low active community participation in intervention programs, and a lack of alignment between intervention approaches and the local cultural values that still strongly influence daily life. The mismatch between program design and the socio-cultural context can lead to resistance and directly impact the program's effectiveness, as reflected in the increasing trend of stunting prevalence.

The increasing prevalence rate of stunting among toddlers in Ciamis Regency from 2021 to 2023 indicates that the challenge in reducing stunting is not solely a technical issue but also concerns how program approaches are designed and implemented contextually. Therefore, it is crucial to consider culturally sensitive approaches in the planning and implementation of health programs, especially in stunting prevention efforts in areas with strong belief systems, as a key factor that must be addressed.

In line with this, Sindangrasa Village, located in the Ciamis District as an administrative unit of the Ciamis Regency Government and a local government apparatus at the district level, has launched an innovative program to address and reduce the prevalence of stunting in Ciamis District through the Toddler Foster Family program. This program provides assistance to families at risk of stunting as well as families with stunted toddlers, involving Civil Servants, the Village Sector, PKK cadres, Posyandu cadres, and entrepreneurs in the Sindangrasa area.

The Toddler Foster Family Program in Sindangrasa Village represents an intervention to reduce stunting carried out by the local government by integrating an adaptive socio-cultural approach. This program aims to sustainably change community mindsets and practices through a multisectoral collaboration scheme involving government elements, the community, and entrepreneurs. The active involvement of the community and local stakeholders as a form of moral, educational, and material support is a key characteristic of this approach, reflecting policy adaptation that is sensitive to the local socio-cultural context (Adnan et al., 2021; Balis et al., 2021; R. J. Donovan et al., 2024).

Observing the pattern formed in this innovation reveals a cultural innovation that integrates traditional governance based on local wisdom values with a modern governance system oriented towards effectiveness and efficiency in public service delivery. This approach aligns with the principles of collaborative governance, which emphasizes community participation as active partners in public service administration (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Warsono et al., 2023). This adaptive cultural innovation is embodied in the Toddler Foster Family Program in Sindangrasa Village, involving Civil Servants (ASN), community leaders, local entrepreneurs, and informal community structures to internalize health messages more effectively and contextually. Consequently, the program bridges the gap between traditional norms and interventions based on national policy (Herni et al., 2024; Pelto et al., 2003, 2013).

Based on this, the purpose of this study is to examine the implementation of the Toddler Foster Family program as an adaptive cultural innovation that integrates traditional and modern governance in supporting the effectiveness of stunting mitigation policies in Sindangrasa Village, Ciamis Regency.

## **2. Research Method**

### **2.1 Research Location and Subject**

This study was conducted in Sindangrasa Village, Ciamis Regency, which serves as the locus for the implementation of the Toddler Foster Family program for stunting.

### **2.2 Research Design**

The research design used to analyze the implementation of the Toddler Foster Family Program for Stunting is a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. This approach aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the culture, values, and social practices related to the issue of stunting. Ethnographic research allows the researcher to directly

observe and interact with the parties involved in the field, thereby obtaining a holistic understanding of the social and cultural contexts that influence the perceptions and responses of the community towards the Toddler Foster Family Program for Stunting in Sindangrasa Village.

The ethnographic approach in qualitative research enables researchers to describe and interpret patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language within a specific cultural group through participatory observation and in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, ethnography provides insights into how social interactions and power structures within communities influence the implementation of health programs (Morgan-Trimmer & Wood, 2016). Therefore, this approach is relevant for analyzing the Toddler Foster Family Program for Stunting, as it allows researchers to understand how cultural values and social structures affect the acceptance and effectiveness of the program.

### **2.3 Data and Data Sources of the Research**

The data for this study were collected through observation, interviews, and literature/documentation review. The data sources included informants or respondents such as the village head, posyandu cadres, community leaders, and the target community of the Stunting Foster Family program in the Sindangrasa Subdistrict.

### **2.4 Data Analysis Techniques**

In qualitative research using an ethnographic approach, data analysis techniques typically involve three main stages: coding, thematization, and interpretation (Lim, 2024; Wæraas, 2022; Zinyama et al., 2022). These stages serve as processes aimed at identifying patterns, themes, and relationships that emerge in the implementation of the Stunting Foster Family Program in the Sindangrasa Sub-district.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 Implementation of the Stunting Toddler Foster Parent Program in Ciamis Village**

The research results indicate that the implementation of the Stunting Toddler Foster Parent Program in Sindangrasa Village is driven by the demands and obligations of the local government to reduce the prevalence of stunting in Ciamis Regency. This program is part of the strategic policy implementation of the Ciamis Regency Government, which refers to national guidelines for accelerating stunting reduction, as outlined in the National Action Plan for Accelerating Stunting Reduction (RAN PASTI) initiated by the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) and supported across multiple sectors.

The Stunting Toddler Foster Parent Program in Sindangrasa Village is a cultural innovation in nutritional intervention that integrates local values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) and togetherness to improve child health. This community-based approach is effective because it leverages social capital as a collective strength in implementing public policies (Beal et al., 2018; Ehsan et al., 2019; Suharto et al., 2020). This aligns with the findings of Chapman et al. (2024), which show that local cultural values can enhance community participation in stunting interventions. Meanwhile, studies

by Setianingsih et al. (2024) and Lendriyono et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of community empowerment and multi-stakeholder collaboration in sustainably reducing stunting prevalence.

This culture-based approach is considered more effective because it fosters a sense of ownership and active involvement among local communities in stunting prevention efforts. This aligns with previous research findings indicating that community-based interventions rooted in local norms tend to be more accepted and sustainable compared to top-down approaches (Aprillia et al., 2023; Beatty et al., 2023; Jalaludin et al., 2025; Kang et al., 2017).

In line with the findings from an in-depth interview with the Head of Sindanggrasa Village, who stated that:

*The Stunting Foster Family Program originated from community concern for toddlers from families with low socio-economic status who have not yet been reached by government assistance programs such as the Family Hope Program (PKH), Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT), or the Indonesian Health Card (KIS). The economic inability of these families results in limitations in fulfilling nutritional intake and caregiving practices that meet health standards.*

This statement affirms that a social solidarity-based approach in stunting intervention programs, such as implemented through the Stunting Foster Family scheme, represents active community participation that not only strengthens program effectiveness but also builds a social safety net rooted in local values. This approach enables stunting interventions to be conducted contextually and inclusively by involving local actors in advocacy, education, and direct nutritional assistance (Ridho et al., 2024; Starkweather et al., 2020; Titaley et al., 2019). The social solidarity formed in this context is not merely understood as empathy or generosity but emerges from a collective awareness to address problems together through structured and organized actions (Prainsack, 2020). Furthermore, this solidarity reflects efforts to create social justice and collective protection in facing inequalities, especially for vulnerable groups such as toddlers from poor families (Rodger, 2003).

Social solidarity in the context of stunting intervention conducted by Kelurahan Sindanggrasa assigns each involved party according to their respective social responsibilities. Although not established through a formal structure, this solidarity has successfully strengthened the social capacity of the community and laid the foundation for the sustainability of stunting management in Kelurahan Sindanggrasa. Each party involved in the implementation of the Stunting Foster Family program has a role determined by their awareness and capabilities.

The following outlines the roles of each party involved in the implementation of the Stunting Foster Family program in Kelurahan Sindanggrasa, as explained by Lurah Sidangkasih, visualized in Table 1 below:



**Table 1.** Structure of the Stunting Foster Family Program in Kelurahan Sindangrasa

Structure Arrangement	Roles of the Foster Family	Responsibilities
Civil Servants in Ciamis Sub-district	Foster Family Head	Responsible for the condition of stunted children in the target families.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Posyandu Cadres</li> <li>- PKK Cadres</li> <li>- Local Entrepreneurs</li> <li>- Community Leaders</li> </ul>	Foster Family Companion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitor the condition of stunted toddlers in target families</li> <li>- Provide regular reports to the foster family head regarding the child's development and progress</li> <li>- Educate the community on nutritious food and public health</li> <li>- Build collaborative networks among relevant stakeholders</li> <li>- Foster a sense of solidarity in addressing stunting issues</li> </ul>
Midwife of Sindangrasa Urban Village	Health Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct regular monitoring of the condition of stunted toddlers</li> <li>- Provide health education to target families</li> <li>- Offer recommendations on nutritious food intake for target families</li> </ul>
Target Families	Parents of Stunted Toddlers in Sindangrasa Village	Carry out and follow all instructions from the Head of the Foster Family.

Source: Interview Results, 2025.

Table 1 above illustrates the roles and responsibilities of each party involved in the Foster Family Program for Stunted Toddlers in Sindangrasa Village. The active participation of all involved parties reflects a collective responsibility to comprehensively address the issue of stunting. Collaboration among the village government, posyandu cadres, community leaders, entrepreneurs, and civil society volunteers has created a mutually supportive social intervention ecosystem, ranging from nutritional assistance,

family education, to direct aid for target families. This approach demonstrates that efforts to reduce stunting cannot be conducted in a sectoral manner but must involve multiple actors across sectors and be long-term, focusing on tangible results, namely the removal of toddlers from stunting risk (Beatty et al., 2023; Lestari et al., 2024; Starkweather et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the collaborative structure formed through the involvement of various parties in the Foster Family Program for Stunted Toddlers in Sindangrasa Village illustrates a systematic division of roles. Civil Servants (ASN) at the village level act as the primary foster parents who not only perform administrative functions but also serve as social mobilizers providing direct assistance to families with stunted toddlers. This role strengthens the institutional capacity of the village government in a community-based approach that is responsive to the needs of its residents (Nisbett et al., 2014; Rahayu et al., 2022). Meanwhile, non-governmental actors such as community leaders and entrepreneurs hold strategic responsibilities in building social support networks, including educating the community about the importance of nutrition, parenting, and a healthy environment for child growth (Rahayu et al., 2022; Sentika et al., 2024).

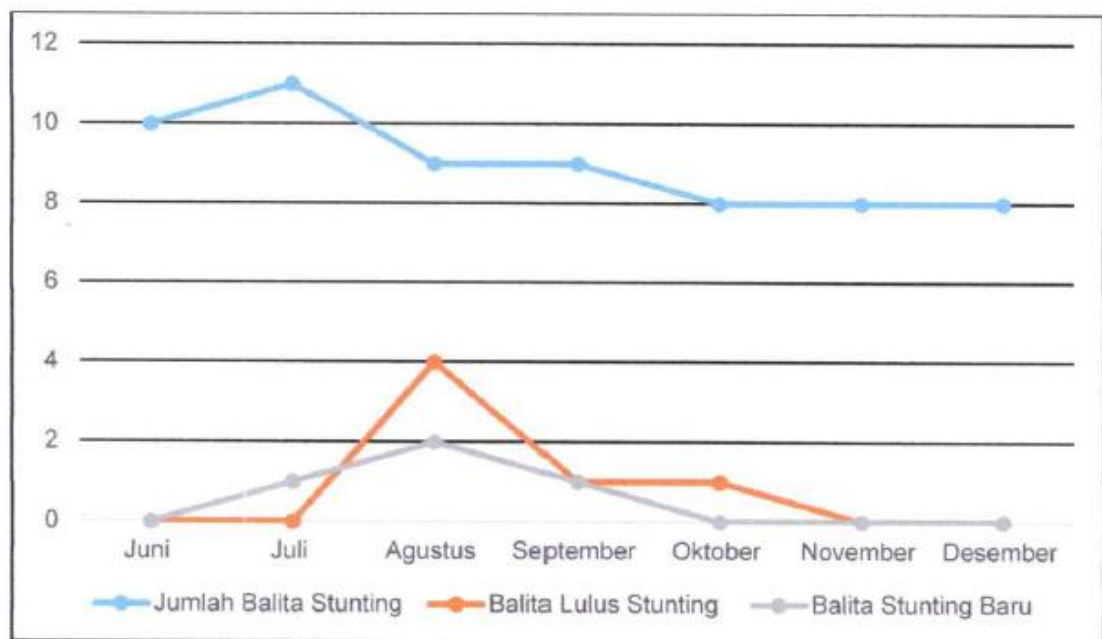
This structural model aligns with the concept of governance networks, which involve actors from the public, private, and civil society sectors collaborating complementarily to achieve common goals (Burgos & Mertens, 2022; Wegner & Verschoore, 2022), particularly in the sustainable reduction of stunting prevalence (Agranoff, 2006; Kickbusch & Gleicher, 2012). The involvement of community leaders in this context includes providing nutrition education and monitoring child health, making it a highly effective communication strategy within communities still heavily influenced by customary patterns and local cultural elements.

This has proven effective in the implementation of the Stunting Toddler Foster Family program in Kelurahan Sindangrasa. Based on field data obtained from in-depth interviews with the Head of the Neighborhood Association (RT) who is also a local community leader, the following information was revealed:

*The Stunting Toddler Foster Family program has been deeply felt by the community of Kelurahan Sindangrasa, especially by the target families with toddlers at risk of stunting. Out of a total of 12 target families who received assistance from June to December 2024, there was a significant decrease in the number of toddlers at risk of stunting. Gradually, these families managed to move out of the risk status after receiving intensive guidance, nutritional education, and material and moral support from the various parties involved in the program.*

This statement aligns with the official data released by the Ciamis District Health Center, which shows a significant downward trend in stunting prevalence in the Sindangrasa Subdistrict throughout 2024. To provide a clearer illustration of the dynamics of this decline, the data visualization is presented in Figure 3 below:

### The Progress of Toddlers at Risk of Stunting in Sindangrasa Subdistrict



**Figure 3.** Progress of Toddlers at Risk of Stunting in Sindangrasa Subdistrict in 2024, Source: Research Results, 2025.

Referring to the information presented in Figure 3, there is a significant change in the condition of the target families, particularly regarding their success in overcoming the risk status of stunting each month. The declining pattern shown in the graph reflects the program's success in influencing family caregiving behaviors and practices, as well as the increased community awareness of the importance of fulfilling nutritional needs and health care during the first 1,000 days of a child's life.

This indicates that sustainable and contextual interventions, such as those implemented through the Stunting Toddler Foster Family program, can trigger social change and transformation in the mindset of target families (Herawati & Sunjaya, 2022; A. P. Putri & Rong, 2021). These changes are not only quantitative, as evidenced by the decline in stunting rates, but also qualitative, through the increased capacity of families to

understand and independently fulfill the basic needs for their children's growth and development.

These findings indicate that a structured and integrated community-based approach can produce tangible changes in reducing stunting rates. Furthermore, the data reinforces the argument that the participation of community leaders within local social structures plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of programs based on values of solidarity and adaptive cultural innovation (Chapman et al., 2024; Moreno et al., 2023).

Thus, the successful implementation of the Stunting Toddler Foster Family program in Kelurahan Sindanggrasa can serve as a replication model for other areas with similar social and cultural characteristics. Moreover, the collective responsibility fostered through this program aligns with the whole of community approach concept in health development, which emphasizes the vital role of local communities in supporting and strengthening government programs (Crane et al., 2022; Jenkins et al., 2020; Wolfenden et al., 2014).

### **3.2 Adaptive Cultural Innovation in Supporting the Effectiveness of Stunting Mitigation Policies in Kelurahan Sindanggrasa**

The Foster Family Program for Stunted Toddlers, initiated by the Sindanggrasa Village, Ciamis Regency, represents a concrete integration between public policy implementation and the internalization of local socio-cultural values. In this context, the spirit of collectivism and the principle of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), which are deeply rooted in the local community, serve as the main foundation for developing culture-based innovation. Mutual cooperation as a social norm emphasizing solidarity and collective responsibility not only strengthens community participation but also fosters a sense of ownership toward the program being implemented (Achyar et al., 2024; Diana et al., 2022; Harahap et al., 2024; Trisilawati et al., 2025).

These local cultural values then become social capital that plays a significant role in enhancing the effectiveness of public policy through a contextual and sustainable approach (Edwards & Foley, 1998). The integration between modern governance and traditional value systems aligns with the concept of *culturally informed innovation*, where social innovation is adapted to local social structures and norms to create more inclusive and deeply rooted community changes (Gamlath, 2020; Greenhalgh et al., 2004). Therefore, the success of the Foster Family Program for Stunted Toddlers in Sindanggrasa can be understood as an adaptive cultural innovation that leverages social capital and local wisdom as strategic instruments in public health governance.

In this context, cultural innovation is not only viewed as a creative form of social problem-solving but also as an effort to preserve local values modernized within the framework of public governance. This approach positions culture as a strategic medium for designing policies sensitive to the social characteristics of the community, as well as an empowerment tool for communities through the internalization of local values into public service mechanisms (Durose & Richardson, 2016; Mulgan, 2007).

Moreover, the Foster Family Program for Stunted Toddlers implemented in Sindanggrasa Village represents a concrete form of cultural adaptive innovation, emphasizing the importance of harmonizing traditional systems with modern policies to

make the policies more relevant, acceptable, and sustainable (Chapman et al., 2024; Oktarina et al., 2022; Utami et al., 2025). Such innovation not only stresses technocratic effectiveness but also social legitimacy, understood as the interconnectedness between policy and the collective identity of the local community (Kleinhou-Vliek et al., 2024). Therefore, the success of the program should not only be measured by technical indicators such as the reduction of stunting prevalence but also by its ability to build collective awareness, public trust, and the revitalization of local values as the foundation for shared decision-making and action (Edwards & Foley, 1998; Hood et al., 2023).

This is supported by in-depth interviews with the head of the Neighborhood Association (RT), who also serves as a community leader in Sindangrasa Village, stating:

*The Foster Family Program for Stunted Toddlers is not just about providing food aid or health check-ups. What the community truly feels is how this program has revived the spirit of mutual cooperation (gotong royong) that had somewhat faded. Now, residents in Sindangrasa Village care more about their neighbors' conditions. We help each other not only because it is a government program but because we feel a shared responsibility. This is what we call our own culture, known locally as the culture of silih asah, silih asih, silih asuh — a tradition of mutual sharpening, caring, and nurturing — which has now been revived through this program.*

The statement illustrates the active involvement formed through the environment as an emotional bond capable of reviving local cultural values such as silih asah, silih asih, and silih asuh. These values foster social solidarity, collective responsibility, and neighborly care. This phenomenon aligns with the social capital theory, which posits that strong social ties can enhance the effectiveness of community collaboration in addressing social issues (Fowler Davis & Davies, 2025; Prieto et al., 2023; Sayuti et al., 2023).

Moreover, culturally based approaches in public policy are considered more capable of building trust and legitimacy compared to technocratic interventions that neglect local values (Durose & Richardson, 2016; Greenhalgh et al., 2004; McMullin, 2016). In the context of social innovation, the revival of mutual cooperation and local togetherness represents a form of cultural embeddedness, which serves as an essential foundation for designing inclusive and sustainable policy interventions (Durose & Richardson, 2016; Howaldt et al., 2016; McMullin, 2016).

Through the Stunting Foster Family Program in Kelurahan Sindangrasa, a pattern of integration between traditional governance and modern governance in handling stunting has been established. This creates an innovative governance model in public administration to tackle stunting issues. The integration of local wisdom with evidence-based interventions has proven to enhance program effectiveness, as highlighted by Ruel & Alderman (2013), who found that nutrition interventions involving local social structures have more sustainable impacts (The Lancet). Black et al. (2013) also emphasized that multisectoral approaches, including community participation, significantly reduce stunting prevalence (The Lancet Global Health). Furthermore, Dewey & Begum (2011)

underscored the importance of family-based nutrition education strengthened by modern mentoring systems (Maternal & Child Nutrition).

The participation of community leaders and health cadres in this program aligns with the findings of Peltz et al. (2013), who reported that cultural adaptation enhances the acceptance of health interventions (Social Science & Medicine). Meanwhile, Bhutta (2022) emphasized that integrating primary healthcare services with traditional community mechanisms accelerates stunting reduction (PLOS Medicine). A similar approach was highlighted by Victora et al. (2016), who affirmed that combining modern knowledge transfer with local practices results in more effective behavioral change (The Lancet). Furthermore, Hoddinott et al. (2013) demonstrated that family-based programs with intensive mentoring reduce stunting risk by up to 20% (American Journal of Clinical Nutrition).

In addition, the role of entrepreneurs as funders in this program acts as a crucial catalyst to ensure the sustainability of nutritional interventions for stunted toddlers. Donovan and Gelli (2019) showed that public-private partnerships significantly improve poor families' access to nutritious food, especially when companies are involved in financing and distributing fortified foods. This is consistent with Alderman and Bundy's (2012) view, which states that financial contributions from the private sector can alleviate government budget burdens while expanding the coverage of community-based nutrition programs (World Bank Research Observer, 27(1), 29-50). In Kelurahan Sindangrasa, the involvement of local entrepreneurs in providing supplementary feeding packages (PMT) has proven to increase toddlers' intake of nutrients and protein, as evidenced by Hoddinott et al. (2013) on the effectiveness of private resource transfers for short-term nutrition interventions (American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 98(5), 1170-1174).

Thus, the Stunting Foster Family Program in Kelurahan Sindangrasa offers an integrative model that is relevant not only in the local context but also as a reference framework for public health interventions in other regions with similar socio-cultural characteristics. Overall, the program's success demonstrates that culturally based approaches that combine local wisdom (such as gotong royong and the values of *silih asah*, *silih asih*, *silih asuh*) with modern governance can create sustainable solutions to complex health problems like stunting (Greenhalgh et al., 2004; Voorberg et al., 2015). These findings align with global evidence indicating that nutrition and health interventions are more effective when incorporating social capital (Baum & Ziersch, 2003; Deroose & Varda, 2017) and community-based participatory mechanisms (Bhutta, 2022; Black et al., 2013).

Furthermore, this program strengthens the proposition that public policies should be designed with cultural embeddedness, where local values are not merely viewed as supports but as the core of intervention design (Howaldt & Schwarz, 2011). The multi-stakeholder involvement—from civil servants, community leaders, health cadres, to the private sector—is key to building a holistic ecosystem for stunting management (Allen et al., 2019; Ruel & Alderman, 2013). Consequently, similar models can be adapted in other

regions based on the principles of: (1) contextual adaptation, adjusting interventions to local social and cultural structures; (2) multi-stakeholder collaboration, ensuring clear role division among government, community, and private sectors; and (3) cultural legitimacy, where programs gain social support through internalization of local values. Therefore, the Stunting Foster Family Program in Kelurahan Sindangrasa is not merely an isolated example but evidence that integrating traditional and modern systems in health governance can be a transformative strategy to achieve inclusive and sustainable global stunting reduction targets.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the research findings on Cultural Innovation in the Stunting Toddler Foster Family Program as a form of integration between traditional practices and modern governance in Sindangrasa Village, Ciamis Regency, it can be concluded that efforts to reduce stunting prevalence should not only focus on nutritional interventions but also involve local wisdom values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) and the principles of “*silih asah, silih asih, silih asuh*” to build social solidarity and active community participation.

This program has successfully reduced stunting prevalence significantly while also strengthening the community’s capacity to understand and address nutrition-related issues aligned with global goals, namely supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 2 (ending hunger and malnutrition) and Goal 3 (good health and well-being). Furthermore, the study highlights several important points regarding human resource development (HRD) perspectives, including:

1. The Importance of a Holistic Approach, demonstrating that HRD requires not only technical interventions such as fulfilling nutritional needs but also socio-cultural approaches that consider the local context. The integration of modern policies with traditional values has proven effective in creating sustainable change.
2. Multisector Collaboration, involving various stakeholders including government, community leaders, the private sector, and local communities, showing that HRD requires synergy from all parties. This aligns with the whole of community approach principle emphasizing collective roles in achieving development goals.
3. Community Empowerment, through the Stunting Toddler Foster Family program, which has successfully empowered the community via education and guidance, thereby increasing family awareness and capacity in child-rearing. This reflects that HRD should focus on empowerment and active community participation.

The findings prove that culturally based and collaborative approaches are not only effective in producing short-term impacts but also play a crucial role in building a sustainable foundation for stunting reduction programs at the community level. To

strengthen these findings, it is recommended that future research expand its analytical scope through a multidisciplinary approach covering health, social, economic, and cultural aspects. Additionally, in-depth evaluation of long-term impacts and replication testing of the model in various socio-cultural contexts are necessary to ensure its adaptability and effectiveness. Thus, these research findings can provide more comprehensive and evidence-based policy recommendations to support accelerated stunting reduction efforts while also strengthening the development of quality human resources (HR).

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