

# Empowerment of PKK members for reducing stunting in the Tasikmalaya City

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to identify empowering PKK members to optimize activities and programs related to *stunting*, which is in line with one of the goals of sustainable development (SDGS) in the world, called creating a healthy and prosperous life.

**Research Methodology:** Data were collected through a literature review and consultation with village officials and community groups participating in empowerment. Data reduction was performed, and the results of the analysis were explained and clarified with descriptive descriptions.

**Results:** This study reveals that PKK members, in this case, are partners with the Tasikmalaya city government, who have been empowered with several programs to accelerate stunting reduction, but the results of implementation from society have not been maximized.

**Limitations:** This study also specifically examines women's empowerment in Mugarsari Village, Tamansari District, Tasikmalaya City, which has a high prevalence of stunting.

**Contributions:** This study contributes to the field of healthy living and the welfare of the Indonesian people in handling stunting, starting from the smallest scope, surrounding community organizations. The findings and recommendations are relevant to policymakers, city governments, and researchers of local governance and community empowerment.

**Keywords:** *Empowerment, PKK, Strategy, Stunting, Sustainable Development*

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## 1. Introduction

Stunting has been identified as a top priority in global health. The World Health Assembly's ambitious target is to reduce stunting by 40% between 2010 and 2025. While impressive progress has been made in Asia, with a reduction in the proportion of stunted children from 49% to 28% between 1990 and 2010, it is still an Asian continent with the shortest children globally of around 100 million (Prendergast & Humphrey, 2014). Although many studies have focused on the impact of women's empowerment on stunting worldwide, little is known about how empowering women organizations become government networks for stunting reduction (Galvin et al., 2023; Heckert et al., 2023; Mridha et al., 2016; Njuki et al., 2023; Onah, 2021; Quisumbing, Sproule, Martinez, & Malapit, 2021). The implementation of innovations or programs carried out by the government is mostly due to the emergence of literature on government policies, but it does not explain the role of the stakeholders involved and the process of empowering and distributing programs to the community. Therefore, this study aimed to answer this question.

In Indonesia, the acceleration of the handling of stunting is carried out with reference to the Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 72 of 2021 concerning the Acceleration of the

Reduction of Stunting. In addition to increasing its human resources to become valuable for the nation, the government also has the responsibility and influence to reduce the prevalence of stunting (Kesumasari, Kurniati, Syam, Salam, & Virani, 2020; Munawaroh, Syakur, Fitriana, & Muntaqo, 2020; Saputri, 2019) to realize one of the goals of development, namely a healthy and prosperous life (Apriliani, Sadhana, & Fristin, 2023; Chandra, Darwis, & Humaedi, 2021). The Indonesian government also allocates funds or budgets to this stunt-management program. Based on data from the Public Relations Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia (2022), Indonesia allocated Rp. 44.8 trillion in the stunt reduction program in 2022, in which the budget was spread across 17 ministries/agencies in the amount of Rp. 34.1 trillion and local governments through the Special Physical Allocation Fund of Rp. 8.9 trillion and the Non-Physical Allocation Fund at Rp. 1.8 trillion. It is hoped that this will provide benefits or have a positive impact on reducing the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia from the allocation of these funds. However, with efforts involving various parties and funds, Indonesia still has difficulty reducing the prevalence of stunting, which will affect the quality of human resources in Indonesia in the future (Budiastutik & Nugraheni, 2018). The following is a graph of the distribution of stunting fund allocations in 2022.

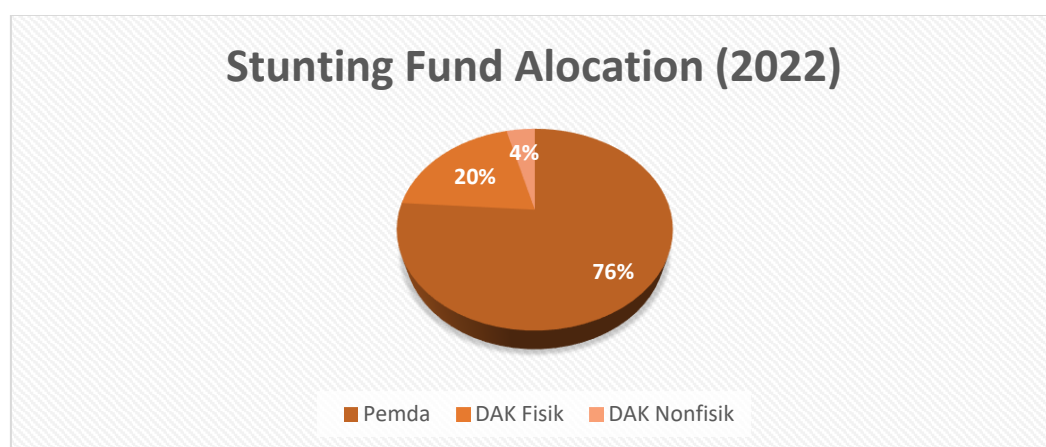


Figure 1. Allocation of Stunting Funds in 2022  
Source: Alamsyah (2022)

Stunting can slow the development of a child's brain, mental retardation, and difficulty in capturing lessons. Additionally, stunted children easily become sick, have reduced cognitive abilities and suboptimal body functions, and have the potential to experience severe illnesses as they age (Jalpi, Rizal, & Fahrurazi, 2020). If this is allowed to continue, then the goal of sustainable development of a prosperous and healthy life cannot continue. Therefore, the government issued a stunting reduction policy through an intervention strategy, namely specific and sensitive interventions.

The city of Tasikmalaya is the focus of integrated interventions in 2021 as a basis for ministries/agencies, provincial governments, districts/city, and village governments in efforts to accelerate the reduction of stunting (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2020). The Tasikmalaya City government released mayoral regulation policy number 42 of 2021 to accelerate the reduction of stunting in Tasikmalaya City. According to the 2020 Tasikmalaya City Open Data, most cases were in the Kawalu sub-district, and the lowest stunting cases were in Tamansari District with 174 cases. In the working area, namely Mugarsari Village, cases of stunting have decreased drastically, and there are only six babies with sufferers. For this reason, women's empowerment activities and current achievements should be evaluated.

The purpose of this research is to determine the empowerment of community organizations in the case of PKK members and existing government policies in handling stunting prevention. In addition, the purpose of this research is to serve as an evaluation material to optimize the activities and programs of the PKK Mobilization Team regarding stunting, which is in line with one of the goals of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) in the world, namely, creating a healthy and prosperous life. Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGS) are world development goals based on many aspects and networks, such as social, economic, and environmental factors. The development goals have 17 objectives related to each other to realize global welfare. Starting from economic development to its relation to the quality of human resources which is the main focus or priority in this goal. Then this study also answers the challenge from Sarinegsih (2019) regarding other factors that affect the reduction of stunting in an area. This study shows the impact of empowerment by PKK members in each village. Knowledge about preventing stunting in mothers increases and stunting can be handled properly.

This study consists of four parts. First, it discusses the relevant literature on stunting management by empowering PKK members. Then, the research methods and data analysis techniques are discussed. Next, we discuss the results and discuss these problems. This article also includes conclusions both in theory and in reality in the field and suggestions for future researchers.

## 2. Literature Review

Women play a very important role in the management of child nutrition. Moreover, stunting babies are heavily influenced by women's lack of power (Chandra et al., 2021; Jalpi et al., 2020; Rahayu, Yulidasari, Putri, & Anggraini, 2018). Understanding the relationship between women's empowerment and child nutrition is strongly based on the UNICEF framework for child nutrition. In their work on the concept and measurement of nutritional care and family participation (Mulyana et al., 2022), and various studies on resource allocation within households (Santoso et al., 2019). The conceptual framework also emphasizes that the level of women's power can vary over time and across domains, and empowerment in one domain can affect child nutrition differently, even during pregnancy (Dandona, 2015). Therefore, it is important to consider the life-cycle stages involved in the analysis.

The position of women will improve only when they can be independent and able to control decisions related to their lives (Zaki, 2010). Women's empowerment has been identified as an important strategy for improving child nutrition in many places. An empowerment index built from routine cross-country surveys is increasingly being developed, and further disaggregated analysis of this index is needed to examine the relationship between women's empowerment and outcomes, including child nutrition. This occurred in Mugarsari Village, which became the research locus.

In addition to the relationship between community participation and stunting prevention behavior (Sinaga, Sidin, Jalal, Fatmawati, & Hardisman, 2023), preventing *stunting* through the empowerment of women's organizations or PKK in various regions in Indonesia is urgently needed. The empowerment of women's organizations gives power to communities made up of women. This concept has been developed; therefore, this research focuses on women's organizations. PKK is divided into four working groups, abbreviated as Pokja (Sumarah, Wulandari, Tafrikhatin, & Pambudi, 2022). Working Group I describes the appreciation and practice of Pancasila and its mutual cooperation. Working Group II discussed education, knowledge, and cooperative lives. Working Group III covers food, clothing, housing, and households. Finally, Pokja IV, which became the main topic of discussion, had responsibilities in the areas of Health, Environmental Preservation, and health planning.

Based on this, we focused on empowering PKK members working in group IV in charge of health to reduce the prevalence of stunting. PKK whose members are women, Kabeer proposed categorizing indicators of women's empowerment into 3 dimensions along the process of empowerment: resources, agency, and achievements (Kabeer, 1999). The concept of each indicator can be observed in the three indicators. "Resources," also called "preconditions" or "opportunity structures," are the material, human, and social resources and institutional environments that would allow one to make a decision. Resources include not only material resources in a more conventional economic sense but also various human and social resources that function to increase the ability to make progress or move towards renewal. Resources in the broader sense of the word are obtained through the multiplicity of social relations carried out in the various institutional domains that make up society (e.g., family, market, and community). In the Mugarsari sub-district, examples of general indicators of women's empowerment in the resource dimension include women's education, social capital, and asset ownership.

“Agency” captures critical thinking skills and the ability to make independent decisions. The ability to define one's goals and follow through with them. Agency is more than an observable action; it also includes the meaning, motivation, and purpose that individuals bring to their activities, their sense of agency, or the 'power within.' This can be achieved by individuals or collectives. Finally, the achievement of measuring empowerment draws attention to the second interpretation problem, which stems from the central place chosen in our definitions of power. This is the result of optimal empowerment.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The scope of this research is to empower PKK members in preventing and reducing stunting (Implementation of the Trusteeship Policy on Accelerating the Reduction of Stunting in Tasikmalaya City) in order to prevent and reduce integrated stunting. Study in Tamansari Kelurahan, Tasikmalaya City) The location in this study was Mugarsari Village, Tamansari District, Tasikmalaya City, West Java.

Techniques for determining sources using *Purposive Sampling*. The informants in the study consisted of three groups, namely the Mugarsari village head who represented the village government, Community Health Center staff representing experts in the field of health, and PKK members, where the Chair of Pokja IV was asked to find out how to empower PKK members in preventing stunting.

The data analysis technique used was descriptive analysis. The data analysis technique used the analytical method proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, namely, data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification.

### **4. Results and discussions**

Effective stunting management involves many sectors or is commonly called cross-sectoral management, such as collaboration between the health sector and the government sector, which is then based on a national strategy known as an intervention strategy. These interventions consist of specific and sensitive nutritional interventions. Specific nutrition interventions are divided into three categories according to the circumstances that occur: priority nutrition interventions, supporting nutrition interventions, and priority interventions. Specific nutritional interventions cover the health sector, which has an impact of 30% on reducing stunting.

From the point of view of Specific Nutrition, Governance and financing are very important in assessing the extent to which evidence-based nutrition interventions are integrated into existing health policies and strategies, as well as the extent to which funds for specific nutrition interventions are allocated through existing programs. Information systems and health workers help assess how well existing information systems integrate nutritional status and coverage of nutrition-specific services as well as facility and community health workers (CHW) available to offer nutrition-specific services.

The next treatment method was sensitive. Handling sensitive interventions leads to the implementation of policies to resolve this stunting case. In this case, government programs include the provision of clean water, access to sanitation, food fortification, National Health Insurance, Maternity Guarantee, Education for early childhood, community nutrition, parenting patterns, social assistance, and sexual and reproductive health education. However, reducing the prevalence of stunting is still far from being targeted.

This is supported by the results of interviews between the researcher and the Mugarsari village head as the first informant who stated "Of course the handling of stunting is not only from the health side but there are interventions from the government such as the Supplementary Feeding Program (PMT), Education for early childhood, community nutrition, parenting pattern, social assistance and education on sexual and reproductive health from an early age to the community."

The intention of an individual toward the goal of health, the presence or absence of support from family or community, the availability or absence of health-related information, the freedom of individuals to act or make decisions, and the circumstances that permit such behavior or action are all factors that affect an individual's or society's health behavior. The public's contributions are crucial for attempts to control and prevent stunting. In this scenario, the public comprises pregnant women, mothers with young children, and the social context in which they live. Public leaders, such as the head of the hamlet and head of the RT/RW, also belong to the public.

In the village of Mugarsari, posyandu has been conducted frequently, PKK cadres conduct home visits, the majority of expectant mothers and mothers of young children routinely undergo checks at posyandu, the coverage of blood-supplementing tablets has been attained, and the following immunization targets have also been met. Although not all posyandu have the same complaint, the coverage of family planning participants has also attained the aim of vitamin A.

Development (i.e., public empowerment) is another sign of public participation. Development is an act of enhancing human and public resources so that individuals can become more autonomous, keep up with modern society, and have deeper thought processes to address pressing issues. Public resource development, which refers to attempts to avoid stunting, is defined as community empowerment through an increase in the knowledge, awareness, and skills of all stakeholders, namely the family and general public, all of which are under a single stunting prevention and management program.

Stunting management should include women. Pregnant women who lack nutrition have disrupted fetal development in their womb. When the mother is healthy and nutrition is provided, the baby receives adequate nutrition. This effort can be carried out in sensitive or specific interventions that are reviewed from the first 1000 Days of Life (PHK). Therefore, it is necessary to promote health related to stunting prevention from an early age through government policies and the stakeholders and parties involved.

Handling stunting is very important because it affects the quality of human resources in the future. One of the obstacles to the ineffectiveness of the policy to reduce stunting apart from health facilities could also be the fact that community-based programs that are effective have not been run optimally, such as the task of the team that accommodates women in Indonesia, namely Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK). The role of members of the family welfare empowerment or Indonesians said *Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK)* in overcoming the problem of stunting in terms of coordination, synergy, campaigns, and evaluation of the acceleration of stunting reduction. In its implementation, the PKK Mobilization Team is required and empowered to disseminate information about stunting, with the results and objectives of overcoming stunting problems in society or problem solvers.

This was also supported by the results of the researcher's interview with the Chairperson of the PKK Pokja IV (Health) Members, "We also received socialization about stunting, how to prevent it and evaluation of stunted babies in Mugarsari, but the problem was when it was socialized to the community, some thought it was It's normal and not a matter of urgency."

The role of PKK is very important because it is a pillar of change in the surrounding environment. PKK members are involved in campaigns to disseminate information about health and to strengthen participation. In Mugarsari, PKK members are mothers with children and family backgrounds who live in the local area. This makes it easier for the pkk to communicate with the community, and the reach of the service area can be wide. The utilization of the local mugarsari people as a means of government and society is effective because of similarities in language, culture, social environment, and other supporting aspects. Pkk is also a bridge between related agencies and the community in Mugarsari village in terms of socialization and real contributions, so the acceleration of stunting prevalence in Mugarsari village itself decreases drastically.

In addition, coordination with the lurah as a local government, PKK members, and posyandu cadres to prevent stunting has also been carried out based on one of the five specific objectives of the stunting

program in Mugarsari: conducting meetings or convergence in a hierarchical manner between the center, regions, and villages. The policies that have been implemented at the village stage are certainly the result of synergy from many parties, such as the village government, health departments, and members of related community organizations. This is supported by the statement of the village head of Mugarsari, Mr. Rival that "village officials cannot handle stunting in Mugarsari by themselves, it must be together, we need everyone's involvement and awareness about the importance of health for ourselves and our families." Then, the evaluation of services and data collection are implemented on an ongoing basis.

The indicator or level of measurement of PKK members' success or failure can be seen from three things, namely resources, agency and achievement. For these three indicators, the following will explain what happened at the location with supporting data and evidence.

#### 4.1. Resources

Resources encompass a variety of human resources that are utilized to strengthen the capacity for decision-making, as well as tangible resources in an economic sense. The numerous institutional domains that constitute society (such as the family, market, and community) acquire resources in this broader sense. These resources may consist of current allotments, aspirations, and future claims. Guidelines and standards governing exchange and distribution in various institutional contexts are reflected in how these resources are accessed. The distribution of "allocative" resources tends to be embedded in the distribution of "authoritative resources" as a result of these rules and norms giving certain actors authority over others in establishing the principles of distribution and exchange. In the Mugarsari sub-district, examples of general indicators of women's empowerment in the resource dimension include women's education, social capital, and asset ownership. The focus of the problem of empowering PKK members in Mugarsari Village is stunting. The latest data from eight posyandu show 81 children who are stunted.

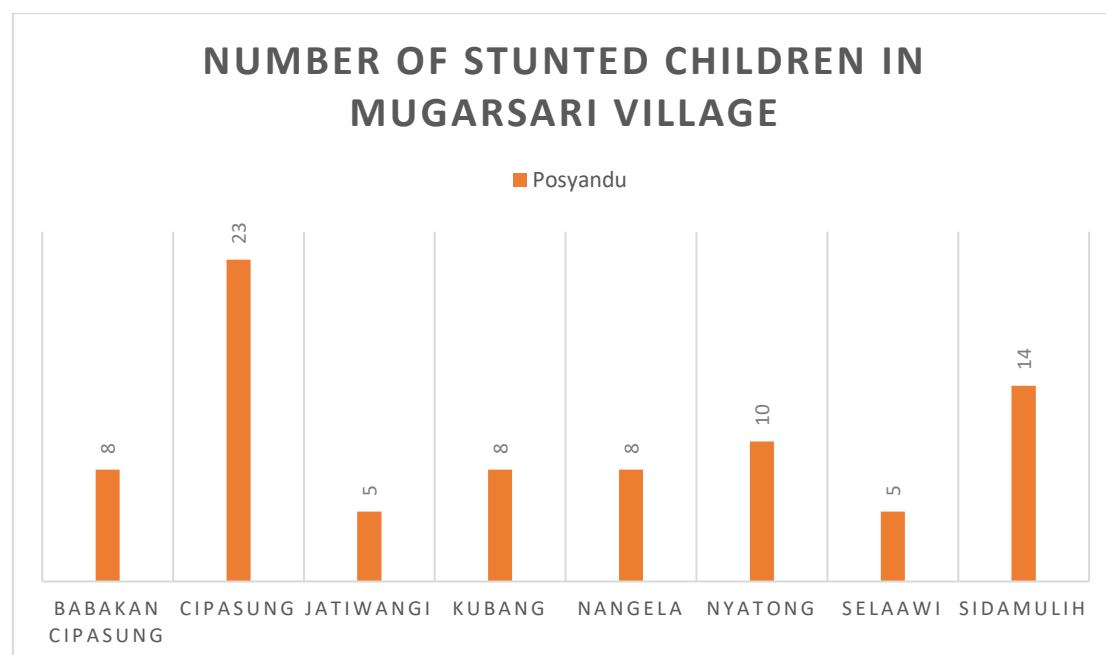


Figure 2. Number of Stunted Children in Mugarsari Village, Data from Sangkali Health Center  
Source: Sangkali Health Center, 2023

From these data, we can conclude that the number of stunted children is highest in the Cipasung posyandu, with 23 children, and the lowest prevalence of stunting is in the Jatiwangi and Selaawi posyandu, both of which have the same number of 5 children. This is supported by the statement of the head of working group IV PKK Mugarsari that "stunting cases are highest in Cipasung posyandu, therefore we continuously invite parents who have children who need medicine/vitamins or routine

measurements, please come to the posyandu to be checked. The only obstacle is that many parents in Cipasung posyandu still underestimate this, and there is already a stigma that seeing a health worker is bad for their children. So many children are afraid to come for fear of being injected". Nevertheless, there has been a significant change in the data from the results of the Sangkali Puskesmas and the data listed in Kelurahan on mobile applications (Kelom).

These data are different from the data in the Kelurahan On Mobile application, which is used by the Tasikmalaya city government as an application to inform the number of people who are poor and stunted. In the Kelom application, stunting data reached 45 stunted babies in this subdistrict (<https://kelom.tasikmalayakota.go.id/>). With these invalid data, the Tasikmalaya city government is working with the Praja Institute of Home Affairs (IPDN) to verify stunting or poverty data. Thus, the stunting cases can be handled. "We really hope for collaboration from the praja and also the health department in the sub-district to reduce the stunting rate in the Mugarsari area," said the lurah during a meeting welcoming the field practice team in Mugarsari, June 16, 2023.

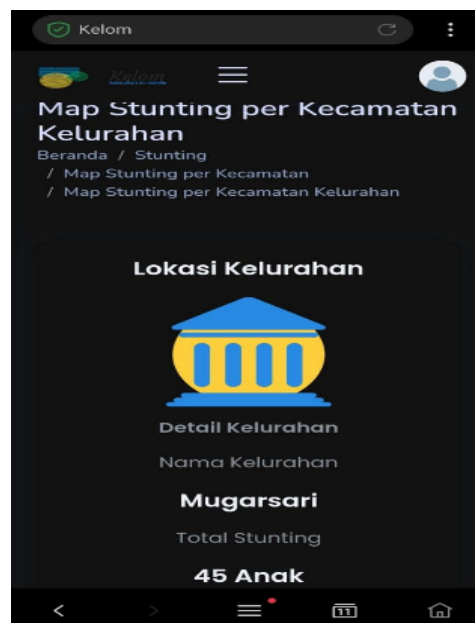


Figure 3. Stunting Data in the Tasikmalaya City Government Application, Kelurahan On Mobile (2023)

Source: <https://kelom.tasikmalayakota.go.id/>

PKK members, through working group IV in charge of health, also continue to carry out interventions even though the data are not categorized as valid. "Many programs are still being carried out, outreach to the community, distributing eggs, to interventions in the form of activities in the KB village" the results of an interview with Ms. Mela, a member of the PKK head of Pokja IV. In addition, members of the PKK Pokja IV in charge of Public Health in Mugarsari have seven members consisting of one senior high school with an educational background, one of them had junior high school, and four elementary schools.



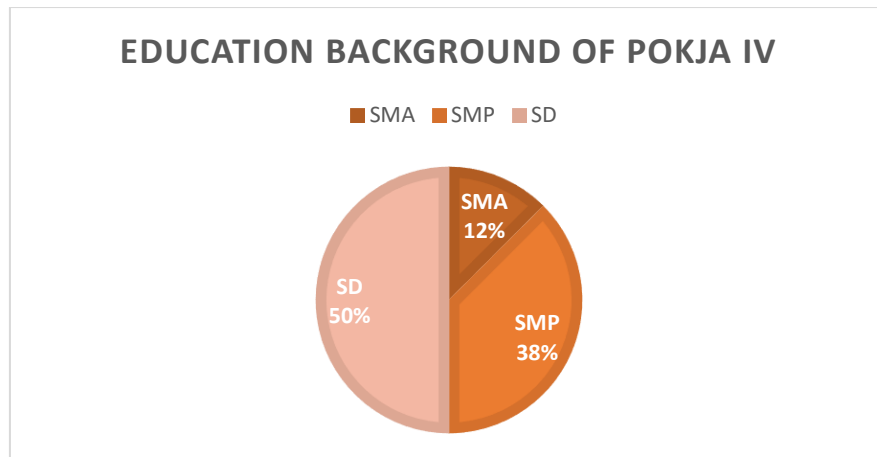


Figure 4. Education Background of PKK Pokja IV Mugarsari Members in 2022  
Source: Processed by Researchers, 2023

It can be seen that none of the PKK members held a bachelor's degree. The head of Pokja IV was also appointed by the sub-district apparatus (interviews with the informants). However, various socialization programs from the Tasikmalaya City government support the empowerment of these members to achieve optimal words.

In the Tamansari sub-district, a program to accelerate the reduction of stunting is carried out by the sub-district apparatus, one of which is Mugarsari. This is known from the results of the researcher's interview with Mugarsari Village Head, Mr. Rizal, regarding the prevalence of stunting in the village. It is known that cases of stunting have decreased drastically, and now, there are only six babies with sufferers. For this reason, what women's empowerment activities must be evaluated makes these programs work properly, and what are the obstacles during program implementation because theory and implementation in the field are different.

#### 4.2. Agency

The ability to define one's goals and follow through with them. The bottom line, according to Kabeer, is progress in empowerment. The stunting program targets are divided into two: the short-term goal is for government programs to be properly realized, malnutrition under five can be handled, and the long-term goal is to achieve a healthy and prosperous life. In this case, the collectivity of PKK members in Mugarsari Village has several programs to achieve the goal of reducing stunting.

1. The program was implemented by Bappenas in Kampung KB RW 005 Kelurahan Mugarsari, providing additional food in the form of 10 eggs and 1 kg of milk. In the Mugarsari sub-district, there is an area called a Family Planning (KB) village. The reality is that the village is still descriptively in the development stage, focusing on the importance of health. This can be seen in the implementation of government programs, namely the establishment of a smoking corner and sustainable and regular Posyandu activities in RW 005, Mugarsari Village.
2. Holding an Integrated Nutrition Program Meeting, it was discovered that there were many stunted children in Mugarsari. PKK and posyandu members started using electronic data or data collection to obtain posyandu. The integrated nutrition program is a pre-existing program coordinated by various parties, including the village government and health stakeholders.
3. The Sangkali Health Center, which oversees four sub-districts, one of which is Mugarsari, has conducted socialization regarding stunting and its treatment of PKK Pokja IV members. in this case it is supported by the statement of Ms. Mela, the head of the working group IV that "socialization activities are often carried out especially on the issues of child and mother nutrition, I often attend the meetings as well."
4. In 2022, the Tasikmalaya City Health Office in synergy with the Tasikmalaya social service and police has empowered members through stunting counseling programs and providing basic food needs for parents with stunted children, Mugarsari health officials also experienced the same thing during this activity.



5. Implementation of the Regional Development program once a year, notebooks were collected and evaluated in a coordination meeting by the City Government of Tasikmalaya. "Usually, yes, we will record in a book how many children are stunted and who are not healthy and prosperous in Mugarsari, even though it is modern now, the leadership still wants to see the physical report.

However, there are several obstacles to its implementation, namely,

1. Lack of knowledge of PKK/posyandu cadres about measuring children's bodies. This affects the presentation of stunting in the future. In reality, there were 24 babies who had measurement errors influenced by when the measured children were crying, or the officers did not check the size of the baby beforehand. There are also those who are very short, but I apologize for those who experience measurement errors.
2. Lack of awareness of mothers to bring their children to posyandu, providing nutrition only once every three months is not effective. In the Mugarsari sub-district, the highest prevalence of stunting is in the Cipasung Posyandu, the problem is that children are not weighed every month. Should have brought it every month. For this reason, it is hoped that the participation of parents and approaches to their children can be invited to Posyandu to conduct examinations and re-examinations of their children's health conditions.

Even though Posyandu, recitation and madrasah are a means of outreach regarding nutrition and stunting, there are still people who are less sensitive and aware of preventing the prevalence of stunting. In order to achieve the SDGS goal, namely a prosperous family, the Mugarsari sub-district apparatus has resolved problems related to obstacles that occur in the field for 45 babies who are at risk of stunting, so that the handling is faster.

#### **4.3. Achievements**

The use of achievements to measure empowerment draws attention to the second problem of interpretation, stemming from the central place given to choice in our definitions of power. Is there a possible output during which it is carried out that does it appear to contribute to the welfare of society? Based on the results of interviews with the chairman of the working group IV in the Mugarsari sub-district as the third informant, PKK members in Murgasari have succeeded in holding activities or programs that have been explained in the agency section, but several factors have made this not optimal, namely

1. Even though socialization and interaction activities have been carried out, the increase in stunted babies is mostly due to "measurement errors." "For example, three months ago, the baby was measured and the result was 60 cm; now, it was measured again, and the length was 59 cm. This doesn't make sense, so the "measurement error" greatly affects the output of stunting prevention," said the lurah in an interview with researchers at the Mugarsari Village Office, June 19, 2023.
2. PKK members are optimally empowered by the puskesmas or other health sectors who are already responsible for empowering roles, but there is a lack of awareness and the community

Judging from these results, it can be understood that the empowerment of PKK members has been optimal with the program, but the government still has to pay attention to monitoring and evaluation in the next step, whether the information is conveyed properly, and whether the community implements it.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Researchers believe that this study explains the empowerment of PKK members in preventing stunting. Among the three indicators used—resources, agency, and achievement—the lack of resources is the educational background of PKK members, who have not attended further education related to their responsibilities. The empowerment of PKK members in the Mugarsari sub-district can be categorized as optimal in terms of the ongoing socialization of maternal and child nutrition for PKK members. However, supervision is needed in the realization of existing programs, the village government must also play an active role in coordinating with PKK members, and community awareness is needed as a stunting prevention strategy from an early age.

### 5.1 Limitation/s and study forward

Nonetheless, we recognize the limitations of this study. The researcher did not analyze every sub-district in Indonesia in detail, including the sub-districts in West Java. Instead, we focused on one village in the Tamansari sub-district, which was key. Second, we excluded the details of village fund distribution for the allocation of stunting funds (because we focused on whether the empowerment of PKK members was maximized).

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