

# Empowerment Of Cadres Caring For Stunting Among Pregnant Women

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## Abstract

Stunting remains a global and national health issue. In Seluma Regency, the prevalence of stunting increased from 21.1% (2022) to 24.4% (2023), with Sukaraja District contributing the highest number of cases. One strategy for addressing this issue is empowering health cadres as agents of change in education and early detection of stunting among pregnant women. The general objective of this community service activity was to improve the knowledge of cadres and pregnant women regarding early detection of stunting risk during pregnancy as an effort to reduce stunting cases in Cahaya Negeri and Sidoluhur Villages, Sukaraja District, Seluma Regency. The activities were carried out in these villages from January to October 2025. The implementation methods included preparation, execution, and evaluation stages. The main activities consisted of cadre training using lectures, group discussions, role plays, demonstrations, and early stunting detection simulations. Evaluation was conducted through pre- and post-tests. Empowering cadres to care about stunting among pregnant women significantly increased their knowledge and skills in stunting prevention. The average cadre knowledge score increased from 80.75 (pre-test) to 92.5 (post-test), an increase of 11.75 points. The program also resulted in the establishment of stunting care cadre organizations in both villages, serving as a forum for continuous discussion and education. This empowerment program effectively enhanced cadres' capacity in early detection of stunting risk during pregnancy and is expected to continue with support from the local government and health centers.

## A. Introduction

In 2018, approximately 22.2% or about 150.8 million children under five experienced stunting globally. More than half of these cases (55%) occurred in Asia, while 39% were in Africa. In Asia, South Asia recorded the highest number of stunted children (58.7%), while in Southeast Asia, Timor Leste had the highest prevalence (50.2%). The lowest proportion was in Central Asia (0.9%) (WHO, 2019).

Globally, stunting is one of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Indonesia is working to achieve SDG 2: ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture. This goal includes efforts to reduce stunting by 2025, which is closely related to SDG 3: ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages (INFID, 2017).

The national prevalence of stunting in Indonesia was 30.8%, which is above the WHO target of below 20%. In Bengkulu Province, the prevalence was lower than the national rate (22.1%), yet efforts are still needed to reach the national target of 14% by 2024. In Seluma Regency, stunting reduction has been a priority since 2022, but the prevalence increased from 21.1% in 2022 to 24.4% in 2023, with Sukaraja District recording the highest rate at 3.7%. Malnutrition remains a serious issue in Indonesia.

The 2018 Basic Health Research Report showed that the country had significant nutrition problems: 6.2% of infants were born with low birth weight (LBW), 17.7% of children under five were undernourished, 10.2% were wasted, and 30.8% were stunted (Ministry of Health RI, 2018). Cadres play an essential role in improving community nutrition by recording data on children under five, distributing vitamin A, weighing, providing supplementary feeding, conducting counseling, and performing home visits for breastfeeding mothers and families with toddlers. Their active involvement supports health workers in achieving a healthy society (Hamdy, 2023).

The situation analysis in Tumbuan Village, Lubuk Sandi District, shows that the total population is 2,021 people, consisting of 573 families, with 306 couples of reproductive age (PUS), and 285 adolescents aged 12–19 years. Considering the high prevalence of stunting in this area and the substantial number of women of childbearing age, an initiative was undertaken to establish a group of Women of Childbearing Age (WUS) who are concerned about stunting and the prevention of early marriage in Tumbuan Village, Lubuk Sandi District. The implementation of this community service activity resulted in an improvement in the knowledge of the WUS group, with an average increase of 4.8 points. In conclusion, this community service successfully provided socialization related to stunting and early marriage prevention to the WUS group in Tumbuan Village, Lubuk Sandi District.

Cadre knowledge and activeness can influence mothers' behavior and awareness about child growth and stunting prevention. Cadres need adequate knowledge and counseling skills to perform weighing and other posyandu services (Ministry of Health RI, 2018).

Delivering educational material on early detection of stunting risk during pregnancy through leaflets and PowerPoint presentations, followed by a question-and-answer session and group discussion on the topic.

Improving mothers' knowledge about stunting prevention can be enhanced through social approaches such as cadre training. Cadres, chosen by midwives or community health centers, act as community representatives who deliver information and monitor health programs. Activities such as socialization, seminars, and focus group discussions (FGDs) can help increase public awareness and prevention of stunting (Khitam, 2019). Preventive programs focus mainly on pregnant women, as awareness during pregnancy plays a vital role in preventing stunting. Post-pregnancy education for mothers and cadres about child development is equally important.

The objectives of this Community Service Program are to carry out activities under the theme *“Empowering Stunting-Aware Cadres in Pregnant Women’s Groups in Sidoluhur and Cahaya Negeri Villages, Suka Raja District, Seluma Regency, in 2025.”* The program aims to enhance the knowledge of cadres and pregnant women about early detection of stunting risk, to develop cadre groups capable of identifying stunting risks during pregnancy, and to form an organizational structure for stunting-care cadre groups in Sidoluhur and Cahaya Negeri Villages, Suka Raja District, Seluma Regency.

## B. Methods

This community service program uses a cadre training method aimed at pregnant women's posyandu cadres in Sidoluhur Village and Cahaya Negeri Village, Sukaraja District, Seluma Regency. This empowerment program consists of three stages: preparation, implementation, and monitoring/evaluation. 1. Preparation: Planning activities include analyzing the current situation of partners, coordinating with village officials and health centers, socialization and FGDs, identifying cadres, and determining the schedule and objectives of activities. 2. Implementation: Coordination with local stakeholders, distribution of leaflets, pre- and post-tests, and three-day training consisting of lectures, brainstorming, discussions, role-playing, accuracy, and practical simulations, including

antenatal examinations. 3. Monitoring and Evaluation: Monitoring includes assessing cadres' abilities in interviewing and examining pregnant women for early detection of stunting risks, followed by follow-up plans and reporting by the Polkeslu review team. The number of cadres trained is 20 people with a work period of more than 1 year. The evaluation instrument is an interview format for early detection of stunting, the results are tested using simple statistical tests.

**C. Results and Discussion**

**1. Results**

The outcomes of the community service activities carried out from January to October 2025.



**Figure 1.** managing permits, coordinating with partners and targets for implementing community service activities.



**Figure 2.** Opening ceremony of community service activities



**Figure 3**filling out the pre-test and post-test questionnaires



Figure 4. Providing training materials for Stunting Care Cadres to Pregnant Women's Groups



Figure 5. Cadre assistance in conducting interviews and early detection examinations for stunting in pregnant women

Results of community service activities carried out from January to October 2025

Table 1. Knowledge of Health Education Participants Regarding Early Detection of Stunting

Knowledge Level	Pre-test Mean Score	Post-test Mean Score	Different Means
Correct Answer	80,75	92,5	11,75

Based on table 4.1, it can be seen that there was an increase in the average knowledge score of participants from the pre- and post-test questionnaire measurements of 11.75.

2. Discussion

Improving cadre knowledge is directly related to the effectiveness of community empowerment programs, as cadres serve as the spearheads bridging health information and services between health facilities and the community (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021; UNICEF, 2020).

Community service activities carried out in Sidoluhur Village and Cahaya Negeri Village, Sukaraja District, Seluma Regency, from January to October 2025 showed significant achievements. Prior to the training, a pre-test was conducted to measure the level of knowledge of community health cadres regarding early detection of stunting risks in pregnant women, as the importance of increasing cadre capacity is explained by Notoatmodjo (2018).

The pre-test results showed that cadre knowledge was at a moderate level, with an average score of 80.75. After receiving health education through lectures, group discussions, role-playing, and counseling simulation practice, the post-test results showed an increase in the average score to 92.5. Training methods such as lectures, discussions, and simulations have been shown to be effective in

improving cadre understanding in various previous studies (Sari & Rahman, 2020; Aryani & Putra, 2021).

This showed an increase of 11.75 points, reflecting an increase in cadre understanding and skills post-intervention. Furthermore, this activity resulted in the formation of stunting awareness cadre groups in both partner villages, complete with an organizational structure that serves as a forum for ongoing discussion, education, and advocacy, as recommended in the cadre empowerment guidelines (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020).

Educational media in the form of leaflets were developed as teaching materials that cadres can use to provide health counseling to pregnant women in their respective areas, in line with WHO guidelines on community education (WHO, 2020).

These findings demonstrate that participatory training methods are effective in improving cadres' capacity to understand and detect early stunting risks. This result aligns with previous studies asserting that cadre empowerment directly contributes to increasing public awareness and knowledge about stunting. The formation of stunting care cadre groups is also an important step, as organized cadres can act as agents of change within their communities. Cadres with adequate knowledge and skills are more confident in delivering health information to pregnant women, thereby increasing community compliance with stunting prevention efforts.

The contribution of this activity goes beyond improving cadre knowledge, it also provides empirical evidence that simple community-based interventions can effectively build groups of cadres who act as agents of health change (UNICEF, 2020; WHO, 2020). This can serve as a foundation for developing sustainable stunting prevention programs involving cross-sector collaboration between village officials and community health centers (Ministry of Health, 2021).

However, this activity has several limitations. The number of participants was limited to two partner villages, so the results cannot be generalized to the entire Seluma Regency. Evaluation of cadre skills was primarily conducted through training simulations and has not been tested in long-term field practice, a common limitation of cadre empowerment research (Sari & Rahman, 2020). Furthermore, external factors such as family support, socioeconomic conditions, and cultural influences were not measured, even though these variables have been shown to influence the success of public health interventions (Notoatmodjo, 2018).

Based on these findings, it is recommended that ongoing monitoring be conducted through routine monitoring by village midwives and community health center (Puskesmas) health workers (Ministry of Health, 2020). The cadre empowerment program also needs to be expanded to other villages with a high stunting prevalence. Further research with a broader scope and long-term evaluation is needed to assess the real impact on reducing stunting rates (Aryani & Putra, 2021). Furthermore, support from local governments, particularly through village budget allocations, is crucial to ensure that stunting cadre groups can continue to operate and provide sustainable benefits to the community (UNICEF, 2020). A limitation of this study was limited funding for community service activities.

The results showed that empowerment through nutrition training, growth and development monitoring, and family education increased cadre understanding by 35–50%, consistent with the findings of Adriani and Wirjatmadi (2016) and Rahayu and Suryani (2020). Simple linear regression analysis shows that cadre empowerment has a significant effect on increasing maternal visits to Posyandu with a regression coefficient of  $\beta = 0.482$  (Sari & Rahman, 2020). Interpretation shows that cadre empowerment contributes 31% to the variation in increasing Posyandu visits (Sugiyono, 2018). Cadre empowerment significantly increases cadre knowledge about nutrition and stunting ( $p < 0.05$ ) and has a positive effect on reducing the risk of stunting ( $p = 0.009$ ) (WHO, 2020; UNICEF, 2020).

#### D. Conclusion

Based on the outcomes of the community service program, it can be concluded that the intended goals were successfully met. The initiative titled “Empowerment of Stunting Care Cadres for Pregnant Women in Sidoluhur Village and Cahaya Negeri Village, Suka Raja District, Seluma Regency in 2025” was effectively implemented. The knowledge level of the stunting care cadres in both villages showed an average improvement of 11.75 points. Furthermore, a cadre group with heightened awareness and concern for stunting was established and is now able to conduct early detection of stunting risks during pregnancy. An organizational structure for the stunting care cadre group was also successfully developed in both Sidoluhur and Cahaya Negeri Villages, Suka Raja District, Seluma Regency.

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#### F. Author Contribution Statement

EW designed and coordinated the overall community service activities. TCM served as a resource person in the field of nutrition, while M prepared the training materials related to midwifery and stunting. RB coordinated with the village head, health center (puskesmas), and subdistrict authorities, and supervised the implementation of field activities. DA prepared the proposal, managed administrative tasks, and organized the publication of the activity results. All authors contributed to the writing, revision, and approval of the final manuscript.

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