

# Network Governance Analysis in Accelerating Stunting Reduction in the Papua Mountains Province

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**Abstract.** *This study examines the role of network governance in accelerating stunting reduction in the Papua Mountains Province, one of the regions with the highest stunting prevalence in Indonesia. The research is motivated by the persistence of high stunting rates, reaching above 30 percent and approximately 37.5 percent in recent reports, significantly exceeding the national average. Using a qualitative approach through a literature review, this study analyzes various sources, including academic articles, government reports, and international publications. The findings reveal that stunting in the Papua Mountains Province is not only a health issue but also a multidimensional problem influenced by poverty, food insecurity, limited infrastructure, and geographical isolation. The network governance structure involves multiple actors across national and local levels, coordinated through the Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team (TPPS). However, the implementation remains largely administrative, with limited functional integration and fragmented collaboration among stakeholders. Barriers such as weak coordination, limited human resources, and unintegrated data systems further hinder policy effectiveness. Sociocultural factors, including traditional practices and low health literacy, also significantly influence program outcomes. The study concludes that strengthening network governance requires improved coordination, institutional capacity, data integration, and culturally adaptive, community-based approaches to achieve sustainable stunting reduction outcomes.*

**Keywords:** *Network Governance, Stunting Reduction, Papua Mountains Province, Public Policy, Collaborative Governance*

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## INTRODUCTION

Public administration today is no longer viewed solely as part of the state bureaucracy, but rather as a collective tool used to manage shared interests within a collective network to achieve agreed-upon public goals. This represents a significant shift in the role of public administration toward a more substantial role within society, differing from previous practices that viewed all public affairs as solely the responsibility of the state (Bourgon, 2007; Olsen, 2004; Djefal et al., 2022; Overman & Schillemans, 2022). Frederickson calls this area of public administration "governance."

Public administration, as a form of governance, is essentially administration that focuses on synergy between various parties in society, including actors from within the public itself, with the primary goal of accommodating shared needs or the common interest (Reff et al., 2011; Bovaird, 2005; Boswell et al., 2023; Shittu, 2023). With the increasingly narrow role of the state in public entities, the presence of various actors outside the state is becoming increasingly

important. These actors can include independent community associations, interest groups, non-governmental organizations, and international agencies whose actions are more spontaneous. Van (2002) said that, This shift leads to an increase in the collective capacity of society to manage common interests more effectively.

Fukuyama emphasized in 1995 that informal institutions, such as active community participation, would be central to the governance process, with the community playing a crucial role in ensuring the effective achievement of shared goals. The involvement of three pillars government, society, and the private sector is key to effective governance (Dagneu, 2022; Sari, 2023; Aristovnik et al., 2022).

The involvement of these three sectors in governance is an approach aimed at involving various aspects of the state in the provision of public services (Lopes & Farias, 2022; Rosenbloom et al., 2022). The concept of synergy between the government, the private sector, and society (including non-governmental organizations) is known as "governance." According to Fenger & Bekkers (2016), governance is a new concept in the field of public administration. The application of governance principles has become crucial and a recent topic in public administration studies, as the traditional role of government has failed to deliver optimal results (El Kezazy & Hilmi, 2023; Hossin et al., 2023).

Rapid and unpredictable changes in the public organization environment necessitate a paradigm shift toward a new concept of public administration known as modern governance (Akopian et al., 2024; Martinus, 2022; Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2011). In the modern concept of governance, government dominance in the administration of government and public services is no longer desirable, as government duties and responsibilities are increasingly complex and burdensome, driven by rapid and unpredictable changes.

The primary focus of the governance approach is the involvement of all three sectors in the decision-making process and implementation of public policy (Klepac et al., 2023; Neverauskas & Tijūnaitienė, 2007). The government is no longer the primary player in public policy and services, as seen in the classical public administration paradigm. Collaboration between the government, the private sector, and the community demonstrates support and optimization of resources essential for national development and the provision of public services (Das, 2024; Lawal et al., 2024; Abdul et al., 2024).

The Indonesian government is making every effort to achieve the national target of reducing stunting prevalence by 14% by 2024. The Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, as the Steering Committee Chair of the Central Team for the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction (TP2S), is tasked with providing direction regarding the establishment of policies for the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction and providing considerations, suggestions, and recommendations for resolving obstacles and barriers to the implementation of the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction in an effective, convergent, and integrated manner, involving cross-sectoral stakeholders at the central and regional levels.

The National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) was appointed as the Coordinating Chair for the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction based on Presidential Regulation No. 72 of 2021 concerning the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction. As the Chief Implementer of the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction (PPS), the BKKBN is tasked with coordinating, collaborating, and working in unison with ministries/institutions, regional governments, and stakeholders in efforts to accelerate stunting reduction in Indonesia. Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 was issued to strengthen the framework for necessary interventions and institutional aspects in implementing efforts to Accelerate Stunting Reduction. Stunting Reduction Acceleration Teams (TP2S) are established at every level, from the Central TP2S, consisting of directors and implementers from Ministries/Institutions and local governments down to the village level. As of December 2022, 100% of the provincial and district/city TP2S teams had been established.

Highland Papua Province, with all its natural wealth and cultural diversity, still faces serious challenges related to the high prevalence of stunting among children under five. According to data from the 2022 Indonesian Nutritional Status Survey (SSGI), the stunting prevalence rate in Mountainous Papua Province reached 34.6%, far above the national average of 21.6%. This figure demonstrates the urgency of addressing stunting in the region. The latest data from the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey (SKI) even shows an increase in stunting prevalence to 37.3%, indicating an escalation of the problem. While the national stunting prevalence decreased in 2023 to 21.5%, a different result was found in the province of Papua Pegunungan, where stunting prevalence increased from 34.6% in 2022 to 37.3% in 2023.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a qualitative research design using a literature review approach to analyze network governance in accelerating stunting reduction in the Papua Mountains Province. The literature review method is selected to systematically examine, synthesize, and interpret findings from previous studies, policy documents, and official reports related to stunting and governance networks. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena by integrating empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives. The study adopts a descriptive-analytical orientation, aiming not only to describe the existing conditions of stunting and governance structures but also to critically analyze the interactions among actors, institutional arrangements, and contextual factors influencing policy implementation.

### **Data Sources and Literature Selection**

The data used in this study are secondary data obtained from a wide range of credible sources. These include peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, policy documents, and publications from international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF. National-level data are primarily drawn from official Indonesian sources, including the Indonesian Nutritional Status Survey (SSGI), reports from the Ministry of Health, and national development planning documents. The selection of literature follows relevance and credibility criteria, focusing on publications that discuss stunting, public health governance, and network governance, particularly within the Indonesian context and similar developing regions. Priority is given to recent publications to ensure that the analysis reflects current conditions and policy developments. In addition, studies that specifically address Papua or other remote and underdeveloped regions are included to provide contextual depth and comparability.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Data collection is conducted through a systematic literature search and documentation process. Relevant literature is identified using academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus-indexed journals, and official government websites. Keywords used in the search process include “stunting,” “network governance,” “Papua,” “public health policy,” and “collaborative governance.” The collected literature is then screened to ensure its alignment with the research objectives. Documents that provide empirical data, theoretical frameworks, or policy analysis related to stunting and governance networks are selected for further examination. The selected materials are organized and categorized based on themes such as stunting prevalence, governance structure, collaboration dynamics, implementation barriers, and sociocultural factors. This thematic organization facilitates a structured and in-depth analysis of the research problem.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

The analysis in this study uses a qualitative content analysis approach. The selected literature is carefully reviewed and interpreted to identify patterns, relationships, and key themes relevant to network governance and stunting reduction. The analysis process involves several stages, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data

reduction, important information is extracted and simplified to focus on aspects directly related to the research questions. In the data display stage, findings from various sources are organized into coherent narratives based on thematic categories. Finally, conclusions are drawn by synthesizing insights from different studies to generate a comprehensive understanding of how network governance operates in the context of stunting reduction in the Papua Mountains Province. The analysis also incorporates a comparative perspective by examining similarities and differences across studies. This allows the research to identify consistent findings as well as contextual variations, thereby strengthening the validity of the conclusions.

### **Validity and Reliability**

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, this study applies a triangulation approach by comparing data from multiple sources, including academic literature, government reports, and institutional publications. This cross-verification process helps to minimize bias and increase the credibility of the analysis. In addition, the study emphasizes the use of authoritative and up-to-date sources to maintain the accuracy of the information presented. Consistency in data interpretation is achieved by systematically applying the same analytical framework across all selected literature. Through these measures, the study ensures that the results and discussion are grounded in reliable evidence and provide a robust basis for understanding network governance in stunting reduction.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Empirical Stunting Status in the Papua Mountains Province**

The results of the literature review indicate that the Papua Mountains Province remains one of the regions with the highest stunting burden in Indonesia and is consistently categorized as a national priority for intervention. Data from the Indonesian Nutritional Status Survey (SSGI) show that the prevalence of stunting in the Papua region remains above 30 percent, with several highland districts such as Jayawijaya, Lanny Jaya, and Nduga reporting rates exceeding 35 percent. The commonly cited figure of approximately 37.5 percent reflects a persistent condition that remains significantly higher than the national average, which had declined to around 21.6 percent in 2022.

This situation reflects not only a public health issue but also a broader structural problem linked to poverty, food insecurity, and limited access to basic services. Households in the Papua Mountains region are often characterized by subsistence-based livelihoods, with limited access to diversified and nutritious food sources. In addition, access to clean water and proper sanitation remains inadequate, contributing to a high incidence of infectious diseases such as diarrhea and respiratory infections, which directly affect child nutritional status.

Geographical constraints further exacerbate the problem. The mountainous terrain and limited transportation infrastructure result in many communities being accessible only by small aircraft or long-distance travel on foot. These conditions significantly limit the reach of essential health services, including immunization programs, growth monitoring, and supplementary feeding initiatives (Blanc et al., 2024; Venancio & Buccini, 2023). Consequently, the high prevalence of stunting in the Papua Mountains Province represents the cumulative impact of long-standing structural inequalities and limited service accessibility.

### **Network Governance Structure in Stunting Management**

The network governance structure for accelerating stunting reduction in the Papua Mountains Province is characterized by a complex and multi-level configuration involving actors at national, provincial, district, and community levels. The central government plays a strategic role in policy formulation through the National Strategy for Accelerating Stunting Reduction, which involves approximately 19 ministries and agencies. These include key institutions such as the Ministry of Health, the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas), the Ministry of Villages, and the Ministry of Social Affairs.

At the subnational level, provincial and district governments act as the primary implementers, translating national policies into operational programs. Regional Government Organizations (OPD) carry sector-specific responsibilities. The Health Office focuses on nutrition-specific interventions such as maternal and child health services, micronutrient supplementation, and disease prevention (Sharma & Vir, 2023). Meanwhile, other agencies, including those responsible for public works, education, and social affairs, implement nutrition-sensitive interventions such as water and sanitation infrastructure, educational access, and social protection programs.

Coordination is facilitated through the Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team (TPPS), which operates at multiple administrative levels. The TPPS functions as a coordination hub where stakeholders engage in planning, program synchronization, and evaluation. However, the literature suggests that while this governance structure is formally established, it often remains administrative in nature. Functional integration among actors is still limited, as sectoral approaches continue to dominate program planning and implementation. This indicates that the existing network governance structure has not yet fully achieved operational integration.

### **Dynamics of Collaboration Between Actors**

The dynamics of collaboration among actors within the stunting governance network in the Papua Mountains Province reveal both progress and limitations. On one hand, there have been significant efforts to promote cross-sectoral collaboration through formal coordination mechanisms such as TPPS meetings. These forums serve as platforms for discussing priority locations, aligning budgets, and evaluating program outcomes. In several districts, these coordination efforts have contributed to the development of convergence action plans aimed at integrating interventions across sectors.

On the other hand, the effectiveness of collaboration varies depending on the institutional capacity of each region. Areas with relatively stronger administrative capacity tend to demonstrate more consistent and effective coordination, while regions with limited resources struggle to maintain collaborative processes. Furthermore, collaboration often exhibits a top-down pattern, with initiatives primarily driven by central or provincial authorities, while active participation at the district and community levels remains uneven.

Program integration frequently encounters challenges related to planning and budgeting synchronization. Sectoral programs are often designed independently, resulting in overlaps in some areas and gaps in others. This fragmentation reduces the overall effectiveness of interventions and highlights the difficulty of translating collaborative principles into coordinated action. Thus, while collaboration is formally recognized as essential, its practical implementation remains constrained by institutional and operational challenges.

### **Barriers to Network Governance Implementation**

The implementation of network governance in the Papua Mountains Province faces a range of interconnected structural and contextual barriers. Geographical isolation is one of the most significant challenges, as remote areas are difficult to access and require high logistical costs. The transportation of food supplies, medical equipment, and health personnel often relies on air transport, making service delivery both expensive and infrequent. This directly affects the coverage and continuity of health and nutrition programs.

Human resource limitations also represent a critical constraint. The uneven distribution of healthcare workers, particularly in remote highland areas, results in inadequate service provision. Many primary healthcare centers operate without sufficient medical staff, and high turnover rates further disrupt service continuity. As a result, essential activities such as growth monitoring, maternal health services, and nutrition education are not consistently implemented.

From a governance perspective, weak coordination mechanisms and fragmented data systems further hinder effective policy implementation. Discrepancies in stunting data across

institutions create challenges in identifying target populations and prioritizing interventions. The lack of integrated data systems undermines evidence-based decision-making and reduces the precision of program targeting. These barriers demonstrate that the challenges of network governance extend beyond coordination to include systemic limitations in infrastructure, human resources, and data management.

### **Sociocultural Factors in Policy Networks**

Sociocultural factors play a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of policy implementation within the network governance framework. In the Papua Mountains Province, community structures are deeply rooted in traditional systems, with strong influence from customary leaders and local norms. As a result, technocratic approaches that do not consider cultural contexts often face resistance or fail to achieve sustainable outcomes.

Dietary patterns in the region are largely based on local staple foods such as tubers, with limited consumption of protein-rich foods. In addition, traditional beliefs and practices influence infant and young child feeding behaviors, sometimes diverging from modern nutritional recommendations. Low levels of health literacy further complicate efforts to promote behavioral change, as health messages are not always fully understood or accepted by the community.

Within this context, the involvement of local leaders and community-based actors becomes essential. They serve as intermediaries who can translate policy interventions into culturally acceptable practices. A culturally sensitive approach that integrates local values and knowledge systems has been shown to improve community acceptance and participation. Therefore, sociocultural dimensions are not merely contextual factors but constitute strategic components of effective policy networks.

### **The Effectiveness of Network Governance in Accelerating Stunting Reduction**

The overall effectiveness of network governance in accelerating stunting reduction in the Papua Mountains Province remains limited despite the existence of comprehensive policy frameworks and institutional arrangements. The persistently high prevalence of stunting indicates a gap between policy design and implementation outcomes.

While network governance theoretically enables the integration of resources and coordination among diverse actors, its practical effectiveness in this context is constrained by multiple interacting factors. Institutional capacity at the local level remains insufficient, coordination mechanisms are not fully operational, and geographical as well as sociocultural challenges continue to hinder program delivery. These factors collectively contribute to the limited impact of existing interventions.

To enhance effectiveness, the literature emphasizes the need for strengthening local institutional capacity, particularly in terms of human resources and program management. Improving data integration is also critical to support accurate targeting and monitoring. Additionally, adopting adaptive and community-based approaches that align with local conditions is essential for ensuring the sustainability of interventions (Renzaho et al., 2022; Partiwi, 2024). Ultimately, the success of network governance depends not only on the presence of formal structures but also on the quality of interaction, coordination, and contextual adaptation among the actors involved.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study reinforce the argument that *network governance* is a relevant and necessary approach for addressing complex and multidimensional public health issues such as stunting, particularly in structurally disadvantaged regions like the Papua Mountains Province. The persistence of high stunting prevalence, despite the existence of a comprehensive national framework and multi-actor involvement, highlights a critical gap between formal policy design and actual implementation (Cronin et al., 2022; Allen et al., 2023). This condition aligns with previous studies on governance networks, which emphasize that the effectiveness of

collaborative arrangements is highly dependent not only on the presence of actors but also on the quality of interaction, trust-building, and shared accountability among stakeholders. In the case of Papua Mountains, the network structure is present, but its functionality remains limited due to weak integration and uneven institutional capacity.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of contextualizing governance approaches within local realities. The interplay between geographical isolation, limited infrastructure, and sociocultural dynamics creates a unique policy environment that cannot be effectively addressed through standardized interventions alone. Previous empirical research has shown that in remote and indigenous communities, policy success is closely linked to the ability of governance systems to adapt to local knowledge, cultural practices, and informal leadership structures. Therefore, strengthening *network governance* in this context requires a shift from a predominantly administrative and top-down model toward a more adaptive, participatory, and culturally embedded approach that actively involves local communities as co-producers of policy outcomes (Chatanga, 2023).

In addition, this study highlights the need for systemic improvements in coordination mechanisms, data integration, and institutional capacity as key determinants of governance effectiveness. The fragmentation of programs and inconsistencies in data not only reduce the efficiency of interventions but also weaken the overall coherence of the policy network (Boumans & Ferry, 2019; Zaytsev et al., 2023). This finding is consistent with broader governance literature, which identifies information asymmetry and institutional silos as major barriers to collaborative performance. Consequently, future policy efforts should prioritize strengthening horizontal and vertical coordination, developing integrated data systems, and investing in local capacity building. By addressing these structural and operational challenges, *network governance* can be transformed from a formal institutional arrangement into a functional and impactful mechanism for accelerating stunting reduction in the Papua Mountains Province.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that stunting in the Papua Mountains Province remains critically high and reflects a complex interplay of structural, geographical, institutional, and sociocultural challenges that cannot be addressed through sectoral approaches alone. Although a network governance framework has been formally established through multi-level collaboration involving central and regional governments, OPDs, and coordination bodies such as TPPS, its implementation remains largely administrative and has not achieved effective operational integration. The persistence of high stunting prevalence indicates that collaboration among actors is still fragmented, with limited synchronization in planning, budgeting, and data systems, as well as unequal institutional capacities across regions. Furthermore, geographical isolation, limited health workforce distribution, and strong sociocultural dynamics significantly influence policy outcomes, requiring adaptive and culturally sensitive approaches. Therefore, the effectiveness of network governance in accelerating stunting reduction depends not only on the existence of collaborative structures but also on strengthening coordination quality, improving data integration, enhancing local institutional capacity, and ensuring community-based participation that aligns with local contexts.

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