



## **Food Security Office Strategies for Addressing Stunting Issues in Medan City**

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### **Abstract**

Food availability is one of the important aspects in overcoming stunting. Food is a source of nutrition that can prevent stunting. Food diversity requires the development of a system that can guarantee the availability of food diversity. The purpose of this study was to describe the role of food availability in stunting prevention. The research method used is descriptive qualitative. The results show that efforts to strengthen food security by increasing the availability of diverse food requires collective awareness that places food as an important part of overcoming stunting. Increasing food production is a basic need by building a sustainable food system. Meanwhile, in increasing awareness of fostering a healthy culture, the intensity of education and socialization needs to be increased to encourage the importance of food for health development.

**Keywords:** Food Availability, Stunting Prevention, Health

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Stunting is a condition of chronic malnutrition that results in reduced cognitive abilities and suboptimal posture (Suryawan et al., 2022). Stunting is a form of linear growth failure that is the most common manifestation of global malnutrition (Dukhi, 2020). Stunting is a condition of growth failure in children under five years of age due to chronic malnutrition (Ergin et al., 2007). One of the factors that can cause stunting in children is poor maternal nutrition during pregnancy (Titaley et al., 2019). It is important to fulfill food needs for mothers and children to improve nutrition as a prevention of stunting.

Stunting in Medan City In February 2022, there were 550 children with stunted growth, but in April 2023, the number dropped to 359 (Pemkomedan.go.id, 2023). The decrease in stunting is due to the Tim Percepatan Penurunan Stunting (TPPS) program in Medan City, which has five components (Utomo, 2023). The prevalence of stunting in North Sumatra, the province where Medan is located, has also decreased from 25.8% in 2021 to 21.1% in 2022 (Sumutprov.go.id, 2022). The North Sumatra government is working with various parties, including local governments and community organizations, to continue reducing the prevalence of stunting in the province. Overall, the number of stunted children in Medan City has decreased significantly, and this is due to the Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team program.

The Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team Program in Medan City involves the Food Security Office in improving nutrition for both pregnant women and children (Rianda,

2022;Pemkomedan.go.id, 2022). The Food Security Office of Medan City plays an important role in preventing stunting by ensuring food security and improving nutrition. The purpose of this study will explain how to strengthen food security by increasing the availability of diverse, nutritious and safe food through increased food production. In addition, how to organize training and education programs for the community to improve knowledge and skills in food production and nutrition. Moreover, it encourages the utilization of home gardens and other local food sources to increase access to nutritious food. By implementing these strategies, the Food Security Office can help prevent stunting by ensuring that children have access to nutritious food that supports their growth and development.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach. The descriptive method is used to describe or make generalizations from the data and facts found. The data found is then described descriptively. Qualitative descriptive research is often used to analyze social events, phenomena or circumstances. This method is considered appropriate in explaining the phenomenon of food security in stunting prevention.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Strengthening the Integration of Food Security and Nutrition Improvement**

Food expenditure is one of the indicators that can provide a picture of community welfare. Household food insecurity, lack of protein, vitamin A and zinc intake are the factors most at risk of increasing the incidence of stunting (Aritonang et al., 2020). Efforts to strengthen food security programs to support the acceleration of stunting prevention are one of the important strategic steps. Despite the limitations of the Implementation of the Acceleration of Stunting Prevention, stunting prevention programs have not been effective. Starting from the lack of optimal coordination in the implementation of specific and sensitive nutrition interventions at all levels - related to planning and budgeting, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Ineffective and inefficient allocation and utilization of resources and funds. Limited capacity and quality of program implementation. The lack of advocacy, campaigns, and dissemination related to stunting, and various prevention efforts. (Satriawan, 2018; Suryawan et al., 2022). This means the importance of food security development in stunting prevention.

Strengthening food security by increasing the availability of diverse, nutritious and safe food through increased food production is a basic need that must be met. Food is the main source of nutrition and nutrients needed by the body. It can prevent stunting. Healthy and nutritious food intake is important to fulfill the body's nutritional needs. Adequate and diverse food availability is essential in ensuring the adequate intake of nutrients required by individuals. On the other hand, with good food availability, people can obtain various nutrients needed for optimal growth, development and health. Balanced and adequate nutrition from food plays an important role in maintaining a healthy body, preventing infectious diseases, and increasing productivity. Local food diversification is also important in strengthening food security and ensuring the availability of diverse and nutritious food. This means strengthening the integration of improving food security and nutrition with reducing stunting.

The Medan City Government through the Medan City Health Office has a planning strategy and program to overcome stunting by counseling or counseling about nutrition (Rianda, 2022). Furthermore, the Food Security Office (Ketapang) formed an integrated strengthening of food security and nutrition improvement. The program is carried out by providing additional food (PMT) both for toddlers, pregnant women and nursing mothers to be able to meet nutrition. This program aims to avoid food insecurity. If food insecurity does not occur, the stunting prevention program can automatically be resolved (Waspada.co.id, 2022;beritanasional.id, 2022).

### **Education and socialization in stunting prevention**

The supplementary feeding program (PMT) conducted by the Medan City Government through the Ketapang Office with the main target of toddlers, pregnant women and lactating mothers is important to be encouraged with awareness about the negative impacts of stunting. The PMT (Supplementary Feeding) program not only helps prevent stunting by providing additional food for toddlers, pregnant women, and breastfeeding mothers. In order to achieve the goal of ensuring children's growth and development according to their age and preventing stunting, intense socialization efforts are needed to support the plan. The development of food security is important in preventing stunting. The synergy between food security and stunting reduction needs to be improved through integration and convergence actions. These efforts require education that places food as important. Education to parents is important. Children are stunted and there is a relationship between food diversity and the incidence of stunting (Prastia & Listyandini, 2020).

Training and education programs for communities to improve knowledge and skills in food production and nutrition. Education and socialization of stunting prevention is important, focusing on pregnant, breastfeeding mothers, toddlers, adolescent girls, and through counseling. This means increased knowledge, understanding and awareness of the importance of healthy and nutritious food consumption in preventing stunting. These conditions can change people's consumption patterns to a diverse, nutritionally balanced and safe pattern. Education in providing awareness is important to promote nutrition and healthy lifestyles. Encouragement of clean and healthy living behavior will encourage someone to cultivate clean and healthy living behavior. Education can also be done by providing educational materials in the form of posters, providing information about stunting and good nutrition that is distributed to families and communities to raise awareness and promote healthy habits.

Educational campaigns as a form of awareness are important in preventing stunting. By promoting healthy nutrition and lifestyle, we can help ensure that children grow and develop well. One of the sub-districts targeted by the program, Medan Belawan. In February 2022, the number of stunted children in Medan Belawan sub-district was around 142 children. But that number, he said, decreased by 96 children in August 2022, and in February 2023, the stunting rate decreased again by about 36 percent to 60 children (armadaberita.com, 2023). The Medan City Food Security Office and TP PKK Medan City play an important role in providing knowledge to parents to provide the importance of additional food with high nutritional value. The PMT program can also increase the nutritional awareness of the community.

### **Food System Development in Stunting Prevention**

The Mayor of Medan has issued Medan Mayor Regulation No. 18/2020 on Convergence of

Stunting Prevention in Medan City, which includes efforts to improve food security and family nutrition. A well-integrated food system can prevent stunting from occurring. It needs to pay attention to the availability, affordability, consumption of healthy and nutritious food. Food system development is an effort to improve the quality and quantity of food production in a sustainable manner. The effort requires the development of. First, sustainable agriculture. Sustainable agriculture can be carried out by increasing the scale of business through upstream-downstream integration and involving technology in the scope of agriculture (Ekon.go.id, 2021;Pikiran-rakyat.com, 2021). Second, institutional strengthening is one way to achieve sustainable food system development.

This strengthening can encourage increased internal coordination for food strengthening. Third, strengthening food production. Increased food production encourages nutritional availability. This condition can encourage diverse food choices. These three aspects, with the development of a sustainable food system, can also have an impact on public health. A sustainable food system can increase intelligence and avoid stunting. The adequacy of efforts to prevent and overcome stunting must start from paying attention to the adequacy of food needs at the family level. In supporting this, new programs and innovations based on food improvement and empowerment are needed (Sihite et al., 2021).

The government needs to make synergized and sustainable coordination efforts between institutions in improving food security and handling stunting (Riajaya & Munandar, 2020). Government support in improving food can encourage the improvement of facilities and infrastructure in both the food and health sectors. The acceleration of diversification programs will encourage understanding of the importance of fulfilling nutrition to prevent stunting. So far, the Medan City Government has implemented food system development in stunting prevention starting from the supplementary food program (PMT), increased coordination between the Health Office and the Food Security Office. The health Office is responsible for providing information and education on balanced nutrition and monitoring children's growth and development. Meanwhile, the Food Security Office is responsible for providing healthy and nutritious food for the community, including supplementary food for toddlers, pregnant women, and nursing mothers. This collaboration is evident in the PMT program.

## **CONCLUSION**

Food strengthening is one of the important aspects in reducing stunting. The availability of nutrients resulting from the abundance of food requires a food development system that can maintain the availability of nutrients in the field. Preventing stunting is not only a matter of nutritional availability, but also a culture of healthy living. Awareness of a healthy living culture can be increased by providing intensive education and socialization. Food availability and proper nutrition education are essential in stunting prevention. By promoting access to nutritious food and providing education on healthy eating habits. Thus, food plays an important role in preventing stunting. The availability of nutritious food promotes the fulfillment of nutrients that prevent stunting. Ensuring access to an adequate and diverse food supply requires developing improved agricultural practices and promoting sustainable agriculture to ensure food security.

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