



## Students care about stunting in children: Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia community service program in Karawang Village Cianjur Regency

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### ABSTRACT

Indonesia still faces nutritional problems, which seriously impact the quality of human resources (HR). One of the problems of malnutrition that is still relatively high in Indonesia includes the issue of stunting and emaciation in toddlers, as well as the problem of anemia and chronic energy deficiency (CED) in pregnant women. The theme "The Important: Caring for Stunting" invites UPI KKN students to play their role as agents of change to overcome the problem of stunting in society. Students are expected to be able to get closer to communities affected by stunting, learn about the root causes, and develop concrete solutions that can be implemented on a local scale. This KKN activity was carried out on 26 July - 26 August 2023. Located in Karangwangi village, Ciranjang District, Cianjur Regency. The work program procedures for this activity were carried out in collaboration with the TP-PKK regarding posyandu services, stunting outreach to PAUD, and PHBS outreach to Karang Sari Elementary School. From the results of this work program, it is hoped that we will know more about stunting and can prevent stunting in children in the future. The hope is that the stunting rate in Indonesia can decrease, especially in Karangwangi Village itself; the stunting rate is at 0 (zero), so this hope can be maintained.

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### ABSTRAK

Indonesia masih menghadapi permasalahan gizi yang berdampak serius terhadap kualitas sumber daya manusia (SDM). Salah satu permasalahan gizi buruk yang masih cukup tinggi di Indonesia antara lain masalah stunting dan kekurangan pada balita serta masalah anemia dan kekurangan energi kronik (KEK) pada ibu hamil. Tema "Si Penting: Peduli Stunting" mengajak mahasiswa KKN UPI untuk menjalankan peran sebagai agen perubahan dalam upaya mengatasi masalah stunting di masyarakat. Mahasiswa diharapkan dapat mendekatkan diri dengan masyarakat yang terkena dampak stunting, belajar tentang akar penyebabnya, serta mengembangkan solusi konkret yang dapat diterapkan dalam skala lokal. Kegiatan KKN ini dilaksanakan pada tanggal 26 Juli - 26 Agustus 2023. Bertempat di desa Karangwangi, Kecamatan Ciranjang, Kabupaten Cianjur. Prosedur program kerja kegiatan ini dilaksanakan dengan kerjasama dengan pihak TP-PKK mengenai pelayanan posyandu, sosialisasi stunting ke PAUD, dan sosialisasi PHBS ke pihak SD Karang Sari. Dari hasil program kerja tersebut diharapkan dapat lebih tahu tentang stunting dan bisa mencegah terjadinya stunting pada anak ke depannya. Harapannya adalah agar angka stunting di Indonesia dapat menurun, terlebih di Desa Karangwangi sendiri angka stunting berada di angka 0 (zero), sehingga harapan tersebut dapat dipertahankan.

**Kata Kunci:** Kuliah kerja nyata; PHBS; sosialisasi stunting; stunting

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia continues to face nutritional problems that have a profound impact on the quality of its human resources (Bima, 2019). One of the major malnutrition issues that remains prevalent in Indonesia includes stunting and wasting in toddlers, as well as anemia and chronic energy deficiency in pregnant women (Dewi et al., 2023). Although there has been a decline in the prevalence of stunting in recent years, the figure remains concerning. As a country with a high stunting rate, Indonesia continues to face various negative impacts, ranging from health, social, and cultural aspects to economic consequences (Martony, 2023).

It is essential to acknowledge that inadequate nutrition in pregnant women is a significant contributor to child stunting (Pebriandi et al., 2023). Malnutrition during pregnancy can lead to low birth weight and malnutrition in toddlers, including delays in growth and development. Stunting can occur due to nutritional deficiencies, especially during the *1000 Hari Pertama Kehidupan (1000 HPK)* (Nadimin et al., 2021; Reviani et al., 2023). The *1000 HPK* movement is considered a crucial period for addressing or preventing stunting, as it is a critical window for brain growth and development (Arnita et al., 2020). According to Suryawan et al. (2022), malnutrition and stunting affect children's intelligence and adult health. The consequences of malnutrition during the *1000 HPK* period are permanent and difficult to reverse. Therefore, providing nutritional and health services to pregnant women requires special attention in order to prevent stunting (Ekayanthi & Suryani, 2019; Nur et al., 2023). Nutrition education is a key strategy in addressing stunting. Through this approach, the community can gain a better understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition for pregnant women and their children. Additionally, family education is crucial in supporting changes in dietary patterns and promoting healthier lifestyles (Wigati et al., 2022).

Universities play an important role in making tangible contributions to addressing the social problems faced by communities. One significant form of contribution is through the *Kuliah Kerja Nyata (KKN)* program, which provides students with the opportunity to engage directly with the community, understand the challenges they face, and design relevant solutions. In this context, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) has placed special emphasis on this by assigning the theme '*Si Penting: Peduli Stunting*' to students participating in KKN.

The '*Si Penting: Peduli Stunting*' theme encourages KKN UPI students to act as agents of change in efforts to combat stunting within the community. Students are expected to build close relationships with those affected by stunting, learn about its root causes, and develop practical solutions that can be implemented on a local scale. Through this direct involvement, students not only gain valuable field experience but also contribute to raising public awareness of the importance of caring for children during critical growth periods.

Several activities and programs aimed at addressing stunting have been implemented within communities. One such initiative was conducted by Syafari et al. (2023), outlined in an article titled "*Penguatan Kapasitas Publik Terhadap Stunting di Kelurahan Antasan Kecil Timur Kota Banjarmasin.*" The article states that South Kalimantan is among the regions still vulnerable to stunting, including five subdistricts in the city of Banjarmasin. The *Dosen Wajib Mengabdikan* program was implemented to address this issue. The main objective of the program was to encourage the community to pay greater attention to knowledge and information about stunting so that it can be prevented as early as possible. The activity took the form of a counseling session held in the hall of Kelurahan Antasan Kecil Timur, targeting PKK cadres, *posyandu* mothers, and women in the surrounding area (Syafari et al., 2023).

In addition, a similar program was carried out by Ekayanthi and Suryani (2019), as detailed in the article titled "*Edukasi Gizi pada Ibu Hamil Mencegah Stunting pada Kelas Ibu Hamil.*" The article explains that the causes of stunting include conditions related to mothers or expecting mothers, fetal development, or illnesses experienced during early childhood. One necessary intervention is specific nutritional support for

pregnant women. In response to this, a prenatal class (*Kelas Ibu Hamil*) was organized to disseminate information related to nutrition and health during pregnancy, with the aim of preventing stunting. The class had a significant impact on improving knowledge and attitudes among pregnant women regarding stunting prevention.

The activity conducted in this study differs in its approach. A holistic approach to the theme “*Si Penting: Peduli Stunting*” helps students understand that stunting is not solely related to physical health, but is also closely connected to social, economic, and cultural factors that affect children's well-being. In this context, students are encouraged to think in a multidisciplinary way, integrating knowledge from various fields such as health, nutrition, education, and social sciences.

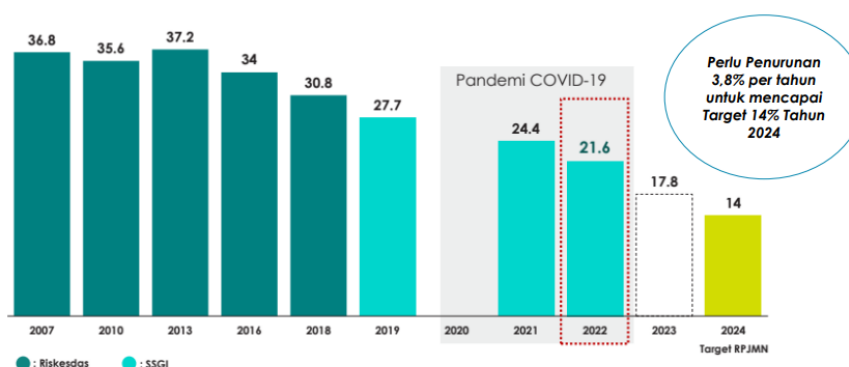
Thus, the “*Si Penting: Peduli Stunting*” theme in the *KKN UPI* program is not merely an academic task, but a moral responsibility for students to help create positive change in the community. Through collaboration among students, faculty advisors, local governments, and the community, the program is expected to have a real impact in reducing stunting rates and improving the quality of life for Indonesian children. With the spirit of collaboration and awareness of the importance of children's well-being, let us together turn “*Si Penting: Peduli Stunting*” into a positive movement for a better future.

## **Literature Review**

### **Stunting**

Stunting is one of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically under the second goal of sustainable development, which aims to eliminate hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030 and to achieve food security. The set target is to reduce stunting rates by 40% by 2025. Efforts to reduce stunting—both globally and nationally—are grounded in strong foundations, as the issue of stunting has a significant impact on the quality of future human resources (Pebriandi et al., 2023).

### Angka stunting SSGI turun dari 24.4% di 2021 menjadi 21.6% di 2022



**Figure 1.** Survei Status Gizi Nasional (SSGI) 2022

Source: Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia 2022

<https://sehatnegeriku.kemkes.go.id/baca/rilis-media/20230125/3142280/prevalensi-stunting-di-indonesia-turun-ke-216-dari-244>

Stunting remains a global health issue affecting children, with a high incidence rate, particularly in Indonesia (Nugroho et al., 2021). According to **Figure 1**, which presents data from the 2022 *Survey Status Gizi Nasional* (SSGI) conducted by the Kemenkes RI, the stunting prevalence rate in Indonesia stands at 21.6% (Gita et al., 2023; Syafari et al., 2023). Although this figure has decreased from the previous year (24.4%), it remains high and poses a serious threat if left unaddressed. Stunting is a disorder of growth and development in children caused by chronic malnutrition, recurrent infections, and poor psychosocial stimulation (Ruswati et al., 2021). Stunting can begin as early as the fetal stage; therefore, the nutritional status of pregnant women must be carefully considered (Rahmadhita, 2020).

### Factors Causing Stunting

Stunting in children can be caused by several factors, categorized into two types: direct and indirect factors (Ruswati et al., 2021). Direct factors include the nutritional intake received by the child and recurrent infections, while indirect factors include food availability, maternal nutrition during pregnancy, *ASI eksklusif*, and others (Damayanti et al., 2016). Direct factors consist of 1) Nutritional intake, which refers to the food and beverages consumed by an individual, including nutrients such as carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, and minerals (Nugroho et al., 2021). The critical period of growth and development occurs during early childhood. Toddlers who have previously experienced malnutrition can still recover with proper intake, allowing them to catch up with expected developmental milestones. Furthermore, 2) Recurrent infections, which are conditions where children experience repeated infectious diseases. These infections can worsen a child's health, especially when accompanied by poor nutrition. Malnourished toddlers are more susceptible to infectious diseases (Sumartini, 2022).

Indirect factors causing stunting consist of factors 1) maternal nutrition during pregnancy, because a mother's knowledge about nutrition indirectly influences the occurrence of stunting (Mirza et al., 2023). A mother's nutritional intake during pregnancy is influenced by several factors that can occur before or during pregnancy. Several measurement indicators, such as hemoglobin (Hb) levels in the blood, determine the status of anemia. Then, *Lingkar Lengan Atas (LILA)* is a depiction of the mother's past nutritional fulfillment to determine *KEK* status. *KEK* is a condition that indicates a long-term deficiency of energy and protein. The last is the result of weight measurement to determine weight gain during pregnancy, compared to the

mother's *IMT* before pregnancy. The next factor is 2) food availability, which is crucial and closely related to food security and a person's ability to access it (Islamiah et al., 2022; Yustika et al., 2020). Inadequate food availability can lead to a lack of nutritional intake within the family. The average calorie and protein intake of toddlers in Indonesia remains below the Angka Kecukupan Gizi (AKG), which can lead to babies being born with weight and length below ideal standards. The final factor is 3) ASI Eksklusif, where the oral needs of infants aged 0–6 months can be fulfilled solely through breastfeeding. *ASI*, or breast milk, is produced by a mother and contains the nutrients needed by the baby for growth and development (Sampe et al., 2020). Exclusive breastfeeding is very important because, at this age, food other than *ASI* cannot yet be digested by the enzymes in the baby's intestines.

## Prevention of Stunting

In addition to its causes and risks, stunting in children can also be prevented and addressed in various ways. The first step that can be taken is to increase awareness about stunting and the importance of nutrition and vitamins for both prospective brides and grooms, as well as pre-reproductive couples (Lestari et al., 2023). Then, it can be followed by several efforts such as 1) maintaining emotional and nutritional stability during pregnancy, 2) providing *ASI Eksklusif*, 3) giving *MPASI* with proper nutrition to children, 4) conducting regular health check-ups, 5) paying attention to the child's meal composition, and 6) giving positive psychological attention to support ideal psychosocial development.

According to Martony (2023), solutions to reduce or prevent stunting in Indonesia will depend on the comprehensive approaches implemented. Some efforts that can be undertaken include 1) implementing integrated interventions, where thorough actions are required to reduce the number of stunting cases in Indonesia. The government must provide health services focused on child nutrition and growth through *puskesmas* and *posyandus*, including increasing food intake, providing nutritional supplements, and conducting regular growth monitoring (Regita & Prathama, 2023). Next is 2) strengthening cross-sectoral collaboration, where one of the leading solutions to reduce stunting is to apply a cross-sectoral approach involving multiple stakeholders, such as the central government, local governments, social and religious institutions, academics, and the mass media. The aim of this approach is to combine efforts and resources from various sectors to achieve more efficient results in stunting prevention and management (Situmeang et al., 2023). Next is 3) women's empowerment, which involves enhancing women's agency, as one of the most crucial strategies in stunting prevention. Increasing the role and access of women in various aspects of life has a significant positive impact on family welfare and child health (Santoso et al., 2019; Vikram & Vanneman, 2020). By empowering women, they can gain better access to education, health information, and economic opportunities. The next effort is 4) creating policies and programs that support stunting alleviation, where the government, through the issuance of *Peraturan Presiden Nomor 72 Tahun 2021 tentang Percepatan Penanggulangan Stunting*, has formulated an action plan to reduce stunting rates over the next five years. As part of the stunting prevention effort, the public is encouraged to pay attention to nutritional aspects and give special attention to the nutrition of pregnant and breastfeeding mothers by promoting the consumption of a variety of healthy foods (Achmad, 2022).

## METHODS

Community service is one of the activities carried out by students of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia through the *Kuliah Kerja Nyata* (KKN) program. This *KKN* program is designed to serve as a bridge for students to take on the role of agents of change in addressing the issue of stunting in society, learn about its root causes, and develop concrete solutions that can be applied on a local level. This *KKN* activity was carried out from July 26 to August 26, 2023, in Karangwangi Village, Ciranjang Subdistrict, Cianjur Regency. The work program procedure for this activity was conducted in collaboration with *TP-PKK*,

focusing on posyandu services, stunting socialization in PAUD, and PHBS socialization at Karang Sari Elementary School.

The target of this community service was the residents, especially pregnant women and mothers with toddlers, in Karangwangi Village, Cianjur. The main participants involved in this program and research were the *PKK* mothers. The stages of this activity began with 1) a survey, followed by 1) observation, then 2) planning, which includes making broad decisions related to objectives, policy determination, program selection, methods, and procedures for the activity, 3) implementation, which is the process of executing the plans that have been prepared beforehand, and finally 4) evaluation, which is conducted to identify issues encountered during the implementation of the program. The data source used was primary data, which was obtained directly through field observations and health education conducted under actual conditions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

Based on the explanations provided in the introduction and methodology sections, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia organized a *Kuliah Kerja Nyata (KKN)* program, which students attended. The focus of this *KKN* program was the prevention of stunting, as highlighted through the thematic title “Si Penting: Mahasiswa Peduli Stunting.” This theme was specifically designated for students who chose stunting as the core topic of their *KKN* activities. The deployment of *KKN* participants was arranged accordingly. One of the *KKN* groups located in Karangwangi Village, Cianjur Regency, designed several work programs aligned with this theme, as described below.

### **Stunting Socialization at Al-Mubarak Early Childhood Education Center**

The stunting awareness activity at *PAUD al-Mubarak* was held on Wednesday, August 9, 2023. During the event, students explained key points, including what stunting is, its causes, the risks associated with it, and how to prevent and address stunting. Additionally, students introduced *DASHAT (Dapur Sehat Atasi Stunting)* as an initiative to inspire the consumption of healthy daily meals. All presented materials were compiled into posters and brochures, which were distributed during the session. At the end of the activity, a prize-based Q&A session was held to increase participant engagement.

The primary goal of this activity was to inform the community that stunting is a serious issue requiring collective attention. Families must be mindful of their daily food intake, in accordance with experts' views that limited access to food can result in health problems. Children under five are especially vulnerable to nutrition and health issues due to their rapid growth. Children with stunted growth are typically affected by chronic nutritional deficiencies, often stemming from limited access to and affordability of nutritious food ([Islamiah et al., 2022](#)). Therefore, this type of nutrition education, through the *Dapur Sehat* initiative, can help raise public awareness and knowledge.

### **PHBS (Perilaku Hidup Bersih dan Sehat) Socialization at SDN Karang Sari**

The stunting awareness session at SDN Karang Sari was held on Thursday, August 10, 2023. It was conducted for 3rd-grade students in the classroom. The university students presented a PowerPoint on PHBS using a projector. The presentation was interspersed with games, and at the end of the session, jelly was distributed to each participating student.

This *Perilaku Hidup Bersih dan Sehat (PHBS)* awareness is important because one of the indirect factors influencing stunting is poor hygiene habits. Through this socialization, it is hoped that clean habits, such as washing hands with soap and proper parenting, can be improved, enabling children to receive adequate nutrition and thus prevent stunting (Purwanto, 2020).

### **Posyandu Activities**

*Posyandu* activities were held five times. During implementation, students assisted *posyandu* cadres with administrative tasks, measuring height and weight, measuring MUAC (Mid-Upper Arm Circumference), and recording the data. Additionally, students conducted awareness sessions on stunting with mothers and distributed brochures on the topic.

These awareness sessions at *posyandu* can help reduce stunting by educating mothers and cadres about stunting prevention and balanced nutrition. Moreover, *posyandu* serves as a health check-up point for toddlers at the village level, where education on stunting prevention can be delivered. This activity is expected to provide the community with the knowledge and skills needed to prevent stunting (Aji et al., 2023).

The three programs mentioned above were conducted with the goal of increasing awareness among the residents of Karangwangi Village about stunting and how to prevent it in children. The expectation is that the stunting rate in Indonesia will decline—especially considering that Karangwangi Village currently has a 0% stunting rate—so it is hoped this condition can be maintained.

### **Discussion**

The *KKN* program themed "*Si Penting: Mahasiswa Peduli Stunting*", organized by Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia in Karangwangi Village, Cianjur Regency, has resulted in a series of activities aimed at increasing public awareness and knowledge about stunting and its prevention measures. Through socialization activities at PAUD al-Mubarak, students provided comprehensive information about stunting, including its causes, risks, and prevention strategies, as well as introducing the concept of *DASHAT (Dapur Sehat)* as inspiration for daily nutritious meals. The *PHBS (Perilaku Hidup Bersih dan Sehat)* session at SDN Karang Sari targeted 3rd-grade students, using visual presentations and games to maintain their interest and engagement, along with prizes as positive reinforcement. In addition, regular *posyandu* activities provided students with the opportunity to directly educate mothers about stunting and distribute brochures to raise awareness about the importance of preventing stunting (Tyarini et al., 2023). All of these activities were designed to achieve the program's primary goal—reducing stunting rates in Karangwangi Village, with the ultimate aim of achieving zero cases. The collaboration between *KKN* students and the local community in conducting outreach and practical activities at the *posyandu* demonstrates a shared commitment to comprehensively and sustainably addressing the issue of stunting.

In this *KKN* program with a stunting prevention theme, students also played an active role in raising awareness of the importance of collaboration among families, schools, and communities in stunting prevention efforts. They not only delivered direct information, but also aimed to change community behavior and lifestyle patterns through outreach and hands-on activities such as measuring children's height and weight at the *posyandu*. Through these efforts, it is hoped that new, sustainable patterns will emerge in the fight against stunting, creating an environment that supports optimal child growth and development, and ultimately improving the overall quality of life in the community.

## CONCLUSION

The prevalence of stunting in Indonesia remains high, at 21.6%. Various parties, including the government and the entire Indonesian society, must urgently address this issue. One of the institutions that plays a crucial role in shaping the next generation of the nation is the university. Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, among others, participates in efforts to care for and prevent the rising stunting rate by organizing the *Kuliah Kerja Nyata (KKN)* program with the theme “*Si Penting: Mahasiswa Peduli Stunting*”. This program was implemented in several regions in West Java by groups of assigned students. Each group developed and carried out work programs aligned with the KKN theme, including *Sosialisasi Stunting di PAUD al-Mubarak*, *Sosialisasi Perilaku Hidup Bersih dan Sehat di SDN Karang Sari*, and *Kegiatan Posyandu*. Through the implementation of these activities, it is hoped that the surrounding communities will become more aware and pay closer attention to the growth and development of children in their vicinity, thereby helping to prevent stunting.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The author affirms that the data and content of the article are free from plagiarism.

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